

PROGRAMME CODE: MAEL 20

SEMESTER III INDIAN AESTHETICS (MAEL 604)

SEMESTER IV MODERN LITERARY CRITICISM (MAEL 506)

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Edition: 2020 ISBN : 978-93-84632-19-9

Copyright: Uttarakhand Open University, Haldwani

Published by: Registrar, Uttarakhand Open University, Haldwani

Email: books@uou.ac.in

Printer

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SEMESTER

III

INDIAN AESTHETICS

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

If you carefully analyze a common feature of the great works of literature, you would come to realize that they provide a kind of joy to you and for that matter, to any other reader. In other words, reading literature is an experience of joy and fulfillment. As students of literature, you must have often wondered as to why and how a piece of literature, be it a poem or a play, gives delight to our hearts, even if it is tragic in nature. With a view to probing deeper into these questions, various theories have been developed. They seek to analyze the factors which constitute the beauty of literary works and the modes through which the sense of delight is conveyed to the reader. This is the subject-matter of aesthetics. Simply stated, aesthetics is that field of knowledge which studies the elements of beauty in literature and art, and 'poetics' is the study of the science and philosophy of art.

You must also have read, or at least heard about some theories of literature as well as about some exponents of literary theories. For example, Aristotle Longinus, Coleridge, Mathew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, and many other thinkers developed ideas and theories of the elements of literature which transport us into a world of joy, which may technically be called aesthetic delight or relish.

The above names are of Western literary theorists and critics. However, it would be interesting as well as enlightening to know that long back in Indian history, there were some very profound thinkers who developed specific and detailed theories of poetry or literature. So there were definite schools of thought in the history of Indian aesthetics such as *Rasa*, *Dhvani*, *Vakrokti* and *Alamkāra*, the theories which we will discuss in the following units.

Here, a natural question arises as to why, after all, should we study Indian aesthetics as part of English literature? You are very much aware that actually there are no boundaries, national or other, in the field of knowledge such as literature and art, as also in science and technology. What matters is the study of essentials in any discipline or form of human activity. Just as English Literature is read, taught and even created by scholars of various nationalities, similarly it is of utmost value to understand what great Indian Sanskrit scholars thought about the elements, functions and effects of poetry or literature in general, as much as it is essential to comprehend Western aesthetics or poetic theories. Moreover, Indian theories have relevance and validity in the present context too. They are suited not only to the Indian context but are universally valid and applicable to western texts also. You might have read or heard that some prominent Western thinkers like T. S. Eliot, Ferdinand de Saussure had a fine knowledge of Sanskrit. There are other thinkers who believe and have endeavoured to prove that English poets like William Blake, Wordsworth and W. B. Yeats were deeply influenced by Indian thought and philosophy. So, it would, of course, be a very interesting and rewarding exercise to study and comprehend the basic tenets of various schools of Indian aesthetic theories. On the one hand, it will make you aware of the rich heritage of Indian scholarship and on the other, it will enable you to examine, analyze and appreciate English texts in the light of Indian classical theories.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through the present unit you will be able to:

- Appreciate the basic tenets of the *Rasa* theory;
- Analyze the theory in terms of its distinguishing features as compared to the other major theories of Indian poetics;
- Assess its impact on literary criticism that followed over centuries;
- Develop an insight into the limitation and shortcomings if any, in the theory; and
- Evolve a balanced view of the theory as one of the major and very significant theories in Indian aesthetics

1.3. AESTHETICS: INDIAN AND WESTERN CONTEXTS

Before embarking on the study of specific Indian theories, it is important that you understand the meaning of ‘Aesthetics’ from various perspectives, especially Western and Indian. The word “Aesthetics” is borrowed from Greek and originally meant “of or pertaining to things perceptible by senses, things material, as opposed to things thinkable or immaterial.” From the point of view of Friedrich Hegel, a great German philosopher, it means “philosophy of fine art.” Hegel includes architecture, music, poetry and painting among fine arts. A more comprehensive and popular meaning in the Western context would be “a theory of the beautiful in general, whether in art or in nature.” The concept on “Beauty” in art has been studied from various points of view in different theories of aesthetics. However, since we are primarily concerned with the Indian theories, we shall not go deeper into Western aesthetics and limit ourselves to the Indian context.

In the context of Indian aesthetics, the word “aesthetics” means the “science and philosophy of fine art”. First of all, the Indian scholars recognize mainly architecture, music and poetry as fine arts as they have independent existence. Painting and sculpture are considered to be subordinate to architecture. Hence Indian aesthetics is primarily concerned with the three arts mentioned above. Now we shall come to the first part of the definition. Aesthetics is a “science” because it is concerned with the technical aspects of a work of art – it studies the technique and the components which go into the making of a literary text; and it is also a “philosophy” because different schools of Indian philosophy have tried to analyze the experience that a work of art imparts to the aesthete and still more so because thinkers and scholars believe that art is a manifestation of the Absolute (or the Divine) through the senses. It leads to the experience of the Divine by appealing to the senses.

Since Indian aesthetics is primarily concerned with the three arts - poetry, music and architecture, there are three schools of philosophy of art: i) *Rasa-Brahm Vāda* (poetry), ii) *Nāda-Brahm Vāda* (music) and iii) *Vāstu-Brahm Vāda* (architecture). Among these, poetry is considered to be the highest form of art and drama is considered to be the highest form of poetry because the different experiences of life are best represented in drama. Moreover, drama appeals to both visual and aural senses as against the other two which appeal to either of the two senses. In this context, we must remember that drama in ancient times was written in verse form and hence, more often than not, drama is

synonymous with poetry in Indian classical context. In fact Bharata, the author of *Nāṭyaśāstra* asserts the superiority of drama by saying that drama “marshals all other arts, including that of poetry, to its assistance.” Therefore, most of the Indian theories have been propounded mainly in relation to the dramatic art.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF RASA THEORY

As you are aware, several theories of literature had been developed and propounded in Ancient India. Four major theories are:

- ‘*Rasa*’, which concentrates on emotive expression;
- ‘*Dhvani*’ which connotes indirect or suggestive expression;
- ‘*Vakrokti*’ which relates to style in general, and structured expression in particular; and
- *Alamkāra* which means figurative speech or expression.

However, out of these theories, ‘*Rasa*’ theory occupies a very pivotal and significant place. In a way, it is the ultimate criterion of literary creation. Broadly speaking, this theory lays emphasis on meaning and emotion conveyed in and by a work of literature, which evokes delight (*ānanda*) in the hearts of the readers, spectators or the audience. This special kind of delight has been proposed as the essence of poetry. It is *rasa* that renders all the elements *sārthaka* (meaningful) in poetry. It is said: “*na hi rasādrite kaschidarthah pravartate*” (no meaning can be rendered in the absence of *rasa*). In the present chapter, we shall discuss the significant features of *rasa* theory and its impact on the literary criticism that followed.

1.5. BHARATA’S NĀTYAŚĀSTRA

The first known exponent of the *RasaSiddhānta* was Bharata Muni, the 3rd BC aesthetician, who enunciated the theory in his treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Bharata ascribed a divine origin to drama and considered it to be the fifth *Veda*. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* is considered to be the first Sanskrit work on dramaturgy. In the sixth and seventh chapters of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* known as “*Rasādhyāya*” and “*Bhāvādhyāya*” respectively, Bharata explicates his concepts of *bhāva* and *rasa* which later became the basic principles for all deliberations on Indian aesthetics. The chapters are in the nature of answers to the questions raised by the pupils of Bharata.

Bharata Muni propounded his theory in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* not only in great detail, but also in great depth. You know that drama was a very popular form of literary activity in Indian Sanskrit literature. So Bharata interpreted the principles of poetics in general and drama in particular. In fact, Bharata recognises drama as *kāvya*. At some places he simply uses the word, ‘*kāvya*’, without any such qualifying word such as ‘*nāṭaka*.’ So, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is basically in the mode of instruction to the actors to perfect the art of acting, and to the dramatist to write immaculately. It also seeks to help the aesthete in appreciating a work of art in a better way.

1.6. COMMENTATORS ON THE NĀTYAŚĀSTRA

The *Nātyaśāstra* is one of the greatest works in Sanskrit criticism. It must have invited a number of commentaries. However, unfortunately most of them are lost, except for *Abhinavbhārati* by Abhinavgupta which is our only source of information regarding the commentators on the *Nātyaśāstra*. Besides Abinavgupta, three commentators are considered to be significant because their theories have been discussed by Abhinavgupta while explaining Bharata's definition of *rasa*. i) Bhatta Lollata, ii) Śri Śankuka and iii) Bhatta Nāyaka.

Bhatta Lollata was both a philosopher and literary writer. He analyzed the aesthetic object, its constituents and also how they combine in a subtle manner to produce *rasa* on stage and in the spectator. Śankuka was a younger contemporary of Bhatta Lollata and belonged to Kashmir. While discussing the theory of aesthetics, he adopted the ancient logic (*prāchya nyāya*), which believes in the reality of external objective world. He gave a new point of view for the study of the aesthetic problem as he differentiated between *rasa* as an aesthetic object on stage and *rasa* as an aesthetic representation in the spectator's consciousness.

The third commentator of Bharata is *Āchārya* Bhattanāyaka who discussed the concept of *sādhāranīkarana* (generalization) based on the three powers of poetic language. The most renowned exegete of Bharata is Abhinavagupta who enriched Bharata's theory by providing a sound philosophical basis to the concept of *rasa*. In his book *Abhinavbhārati*, he dealt with the problem of aesthetics in a very comprehensive manner, by analyzing aesthetic experience at various levels.

Post-Abhinavgupta, there are many other scholars who discussed the concept of *rasa* in their works. *Āchārya* Vishwanath, among them, was a staunch advocate of the *rasa* theory. He is known for his famous definition of poetry; "*Vākyam rasātmakamkāvyam*" (Poetry is an aesthetically emotive statement or sentence) in his treatise *Sāhityadarpana*. Another great exponent of Sanskrit poetics was Panditraj Jagannath. He asserts that the word which connotes pleasurable meaning is poetry: "*Ramniyārtha pratipādakahśabdahkāvyam*". Here the question that arises is whether *rasa* is dependent on *śabda* and *artha* (word and meaning)? The answer is in the negative because it is based on four kinds of expression, which will be discussed later. Here we must clearly understand that the term 'word' (*śabda*) has been used in its broadest connotation. It means in fact, the signifier, which communicates delightful meaning (the signified). The experience of *rasa* is neither completely *laukik* (worldly) nor purely *alaukik* (superhuman). It is rooted in the worldly experience, yet it is quite different from the other worldly pleasures in which the senses are directly involved. In the relish of *rasa*, the experience reaches such a heightened state wherein one receives *alaukik ānanda* (transcendent bliss) in every *bhāva*, even in deep sorrow or disgust.

In this context it would be pertinent to mention the name of *Āchārya* Ram Chandra Shukla, the great Hindi literary critic and the author of the *History of Hindi Literature*. He is a relatively recent *rasa* theorist. He says that the emotive state of a liberated heart is '*rasa*', just as the mental state of a liberated mind is '*jnāna*' (knowledge).

1.7. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RASA THEORY

Initially, it would be beneficial for you to have a clear idea about the word 'rasa' itself. As you already know, it is very difficult, and at times impossible to exactly translate a Sanskrit word in English. However an attempt is made to translate the word as faithfully as possible. In simple English, it may be translated as 'aesthetic relish' (*āswad*) or 'emotive aesthetics'. It has been likened to the pleasure and taste which we derive out of food. In fact, poetry has been defined as "*Rasātmakam vākyam kāvyam.*" Bharata says that there is no object, no activity in dramaturgy which is devoid of *rasa*. Abhinavagupta, in respect to the above statement says that in drama it is *rasa* which runs through and through like a thread. The *rasa* theorists assert that it is the harmonious combination of various elements like *bhāva*, *sanchāri bhāva*, *anubhāva* etc. that creates aesthetic delight. In the following sections, we shall discuss these expressions in greater detail.

It may be relevant here for you to understand that Bharata had enunciated this theory of poetics with regard to poetry and drama or dramaturgy, although later on the theory came to be evolved as a theory of aesthetics in general, enveloping practically every genre of artistic expression.

According to Bharata, *rasa* is all pervasive and a work of poetry or drama worth the name must have emotional element as a shaping principle of artistic expression. It is the emotive content in a work of literature that provides it the desired aesthetic value. Thus in view of the *Rasa Siddhānta*, a work of poetry or drama expresses emotive meanings, and is essentially an emotive discourse. It concerns itself with the portrayal of human feelings and attitudes. Emotions are manifested in poetry, as in life, by a combination of various factors depending on the situation. In this way, poetry is entirely different from a philosophical or spiritual treatise which necessarily deals with ideas or concepts.

Moreover, it would be wrong to look for any moral lessons in a literary work. So, it is neither didactic nor normative in nature, nor even esoteric, since it portrays feelings and emotions of living human beings. A poem or a play arouses certain emotions, since it is itself the concrete representation or objectification of such emotions. In fact, the delight apprehended by the reader or the audience is the aesthetic joy manifested in the work of literature itself. The aesthetic experience is fundamentally different from the religious or spiritual experience, since the aim of poetry or drama is the expression and evocation of human emotions and delight is the cardinal factor over there.

Again, it is essentially different from the Platonic tradition according to which the active writer has a vision of reality which is hidden behind the appearance of things. A work of literature is an object of delight and enjoyment, rather than a medium to communicate any vision of ultimate reality. However, you must remember that the theory of poetic or dramatic emotions relates to a theory of literature in its broadest Aristotelian sense.

1.8. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF RASA (RASA-NISHPATTI)

As regards the mode of creation of this delight, Bharat says in his famous *Rasa- Sūtra*:

"tatra vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicāri samyogādrasnishpattih"

(through co-mingling of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *sanchāribhāva*, maturing, accomplishment, consummation of *rasa* takes place).

It means that this aesthetic delight is created through a proper, harmonious blending of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhichāri bhāvas*. Thus there are four necessary conditions for the evocation of *rasa*: (i) causes (*vibhāvas*), (ii) symptoms (*anubhāvas*), (iii) ancillary feelings (*vyabhichārins*), and (iv) their conjunction (*samyoga*).

Rasa theory is structured around the concept of *bhāva* which is subdivided into *vibhāva*, *sthāyibhāva*, *sanchāribhāva*, *anubhāva* and *sāttvikabhāva*. To give you a clear idea of these terms, a detailed description has been given in the next section.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. How is aesthetics both a science and philosophy of fine art?
2. What is the relevance of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in the context of Indian aesthetics?
3. Write a note on the meaning of *rasa*.
4. Describe the basic tenets of *Rasa* theory?
5. Explain Bharata's *rasa-sūtra*.

1.9. CONSTITUENTS OF RASA

1.9.1. *Bhāva*

Bhāva means both emotion and a mental state and it has been variously translated as feeling, emotion, psychological state etc.

The word *bhāva* has its roots in \sqrt{bhu} which means "to be". Thus *bhāva* means something that causes something to be and also that which affects. As Bharata says, *bhāvas* are so called because "they exist, denote existence of things (*bhavanti*), or because they bring about the existence of something." According to Abhinavagupta, the living being is possessed of the different kinds of knowledge (*Samvit*). They pervade the mind, so their influence is also great. They are also called the *Vāsanās*, the *Chittavritis* and the *Samvits*. We can simply understand *bhāva* as that which pervades the mind of human-beings. However, you must remember that although Bharata used it in the sense of mental states, "emotion" cannot be treated as an exact verbal equivalent of *bhāva*. In dramaturgy, the emotive or mental states are termed as *bhāva* for two reason:

- (i) They bring about poetic meaning (*kāvyaārtha*) through words, physical gestures and movements and psycho-physical representations.
- (ii) They pervade and intensely affect the minds of the reader/spectator just as musk imparts its fragrance to the piece of the cloth in which it is kept.

Though *bhāvas* are innate, their intensity varies in degree in different persons. For example, in some persons they are very powerful and intense, whereas in others they might exist only in name. In a traditional couplet, the concept of *bhāva* is thus explained: "The emotional states are so known by the designers of dramatic art because they (the

bhāvas) bring to the spectators an emotional awareness (*bhāvanti*) of the sentiments as connected with various modes of acting or dramatic representation.”

1.9.2. *Abhinaya*

You must be wondering how a specific emotion is aroused in the audience / spectators or the readers. Bharata talks about *Abhinaya* in this regard. The actors convey the *bhāva* using *Abhinaya*. The Sanskrit root \sqrt{abhi} means “to lead,” “to go together”. *Abhinaya* is the process by which the meaning of the play is led towards the audience.

According to Bharata, *bhāva* is the basis of *rasa*, as one which brings into existence the sense (*artha*) of poetry through four kinds of histrionic representations (*Abhinaya*):

- i) *Vāchika*: imitation by speech, language, metre imitation by physical gestures
- ii) *Āngika*: imitation by expressions and movements
- iii) *Āhārya*: imitation by costume and makeup
- iv) *Sāttvika*: imitation by psychic change

Sāttvika, among these, is a very important kind of *Abhinaya*. “*Sattva*”, which literally means purity, is the psychological ability of the actor to identify with the character and his/her emotions. It is the most difficult part to understand and master and shows the highest level of the actor’s achievement. Mrinalini Sarabhai, the famous dancer, uses the famous *sloka* from *Abhinava-Darpanam* in this context:

Where the hands go, the eyes follow (*anubhāva*), where the eyes go the mind follows (*sāttvikabhāva*), where the mind goes, the word (*bhāva*) follows, where the word goes, there is *rasa* born.

Thus *bhāvas* are expressed in characters and situations in *Nātya* and transferred to the reader/viewers by means of empathetic induction. We shall explain the process of empathetic induction in the next chapter. For the time being, let us concentrate on the constituents of *rasa*. Bharata enumerates forty- nine *bhāvas* out of which eight / nine are *sthāyi* or stable, the transitory (*vyabhichāri*) states are thirty-three and there is a further separate group of eight psycho-physical states (*sāttvika*).

1.9.3. *Sthāyibhāva*(basicmentalstates):

According to *Rasa* theory, certain basic emotions are present in every human heart, lying in a dormant state. They can be understood as the modified versions of basic instincts which our culture has provided us with. They are part of our psychic heritage. They are very powerful and long-enduring emotions. They exist in the form of impressions. On finding favourable conditions, exciting causes and circumstances, they are aroused and transformed into *rasa*. They become *rasa* when they are aesthetically presentable or enjoyable: *rasa* is an emotion excited by artistic circumstances or situations.

Being very powerful and dominant, *sthāyi bhavas* are like kings or preceptors whereas other emotions serve them like subjects or pupils. As K.C.Pandey explains, other *bhāvas* are very much like the paraphernalia of a king. Just as in the midst of the entire paraphernalia it is the king, who is the centre of attraction to the spectator, so is the basic mental state to the audience.

According to *Āchārya* Vishvanath, the *sthāyibhava* underlies all the other *bhāvas* just as the thread runs through the whole garland. You can refer to the following quote in this regard: “The emotion which is not swallowed up by other emotions whether friendly with it or unfriendly, which quickly dissolves the others into its own condition like the salt sea, which endures continuously in the mind, and which, in conjunction with other feelings and circumstances, attains to its fullest expression as *rasa* – that is the dominant emotion.”

Bharata identifies eight *sthāyibhāvas* which effect eight dominant *rasas*: *rati* (erotic love), *hāsa* (laughter), *śok* (sorrow), *krodh* (anger), *utsāh* (enthusiasm), *bhaya* (fear), *jugupsā* (disgust), and *vismaya* (astonishment). These correspond to eight *rasas* namely: *śringāra* (amorous), *hāsya* (comic), *karuna* (compassionate), *raudra* (wrathful), *vīr* (heroic), *bhayānaka* (fearful), *bībhatsa* (odious), and *adbhuta* (marvellous).

1.9.4. *Vibhāva*

Vibhāva refers to the objective conditions or reasons for producing or exciting an emotion. It is the main stimulating cause or the object of the emotion. It is defined as, “that thing, resting on which, as its object, emotions like love are born.” Bharata gives the equivalents of the *vibhāva* as the *kāraṇa* (the cause), the *hetu* (the reason), etc. He also says that the verbal, the physical and the psychic representation (*Abhinaya*) is known through it. It is divided into two kinds:

1.9.4.1. *Ālambana Vibhāva*

It refers to the person, scene, object or thought that excites a person’s emotions. It is further divided into two kinds.

- (i) *Āśraya* : the person or persons in whom the emotion is aroused.
- (ii) *Vishaya*: the person or object for whom the emotion is awakened.

You must have heard the story of king Dushyanta and the beautiful maiden Shakuntala as elaborated by Kālidāsa in his play *Abhijnānśākuntalam*. In the story, Dushyanta is enamoured of the beauty of Shakuntalā. Here Shakuntala can be said to be the *vishaya* whereas the king is the *āśrayālambanavibhāva*.

1.9.4.2. *Uddipana Vibhāva*

It is the exciting cause. It refers to the external conditions or background features which enhance the dominant emotions. It is the enhancing stimuli. In the context of the story cited above, the beautiful surroundings, the flora and fauna of the hermitage, the pleasant breeze, the gentle sunshine etc. are the *uddipana vibhāvas*, as they set off Shakuntala’s beauty and make it more enduring. Another example would be from T.S.Eliot’s monumental poem *The Waste Land*, wherein the images of sterility, aridity, agony and death reinforce the emotive tone of the poem:

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no
relief,

And the dry stone no sound of water.

1.9.5. *Vyabhichārībhāva*

They represent the external factors of the experience and do not leave any lasting impression on the mind. These are transient, ancillary emotions which nurture the dominant expressions, or the expression of the dominant *sthāyībhāva*. Thus they help to stabilise the principal emotion. They are like ripples on the surface of the ocean, emerging out of and submerging in the *sthāyībhāva*. According to Panditraja Jagannath, the manifestation of the *vyabhichārībhāva* is like the flash of lightning. They are thirty-three in number:

1. *Nirveda* (indifference)
2. *Glāni* (debility)
3. *Śankā* (apprehension)
4. *Asūya* (envy)
5. *Mada* (intoxication of pride)
6. *Śrama* (weariness)
7. *Ālāsya* (indolence)
8. *Dāinya* (depression)
9. *Chintā* (painful reflection)
10. *Moh* (delusion)
11. *Smriti* (recollection)
12. *Dhriti* (contentment)
13. *Vrīda* (shame)
14. *Chapaltā* (unsteadiness)
15. *Harsha* (joy)
16. *Ālvega* (agitation)
17. *Jadatā* (immobility)
18. *Garva* (arrogance)
19. *Vishāda* (despondency)
20. *Autsukya* (impatience)
21. *Nidrā* (sleep)
22. *Apasmāra* (dementedness)
23. *Swapna* (dreaming)
24. *Vibodha* (awakening)
25. *Amarsha* (animosity)
26. *Avhittha* (indignation)
27. *Ugratā* (ferocity)
28. *Mati* (resolve)
29. *Vyādhi* (sickness)
30. *Unmāda* (madness)
31. *Trāsa* (alarm)
32. *Vitarka* (trepidation)
33. *Mārana* (demise)

They are also known as *sanchāri-bhāvas* as they can accompany more than one *sthāyībhāva*, appearing and disappearing at will. They reside in many *rasas*

and pervade many of them. In other words, there is a dominant *bhāva* among a number of ancillary emotions.

It may be interesting for you to note that Bharata does not draw any distinctions between *sthāyibhava* and *vyabhicāhribhāva*. It is Abhinavagupta who explains the distinction between the two in *Abhinavabhāratī*. He gives a very interesting and appropriate comparison in this regard. He compares *sthāyibhāva* to many coloured strings to which the *vyabhichāribhāvas* remain sparsely tied. The *vyabhichāribhāvas* may be compared to stones of different hues. Just as the colour of the string reflects itself on the stones, the *sthāyibhavas* reflect themselves on the *vyabhichāribhāvas*. As the stones of different shades tinge intervening threads with their attractive hues, similarly the *vyabhichāribhāvas* influence *sthāyibhāva* and render them relishable.

1.9.6. Anubhāva (consequents)

In simple terms, *anubhāva* refers to the physical manifestations the expressions or the symptoms of the emotional states. It is the emotive reactions in or on the body through which the inner feelings are communicated. Since emotions are internal conditions, they must be expressed or objectified in an explicit or visible way, as in speech, gesture or action. In actual life they can be perceived as the effect of emotion. The dominant *bhāvas* produce some inevitable physical reactions; for example, sorrow often leads to tears. The word “*anubhāva*” means- (i) that which is produced afterwards (*anu paśchād bhavo yasya sah*) or (ii) that which makes the reader apprehend a particular emotion (*anubhavyate*). *Anubhāvas* are so called because they are manifested in the actor after the awakening of the emotion and they make the spectator experience a similar emotion. For the spectator, they are the indicative signs of the emotions.

The physical changes and movements may be of two kinds: (i) voluntary and (ii) involuntary. The voluntary changes are simply called *anubhāvas*. They are produced by deliberate efforts of the character, such as the movement of the eyes and the eyebrows. But there are certain changes which automatically follow the rise of an emotion. Such involuntary gestures are called *sāttvikabhāvas*.

1.9.7. Sāttvika-bhāva

They are natural, involuntary, inbuilt body responses which arise as a result of successfully experiencing the portrayal of an emotion, such as horripilation and tears etc. Therefore Bharata treats them as a separate class as distinct from verbal expression and bodily gestures. They can take place only when the particular emotion is actually present in the heart. They are born out of *sattva*, which is the essence of being. When the mind attains perfect concentration, *sattva* is produced. So *sāttvikabhāvas* cannot be represented by one whose mind is distracted. They are eight in number:

- Stambha* (paralysis)
- Sveda* (perspiration)
- Romāncha* (horripilation)
- Svarbhanga* (change of voice)
- Kumpa* (tremor)
- Vaivarṇya* (change of colour)

Āśru (tears)

Pralaya (loss of consciousness)

1.11. NUMBER OF RASAS

The question of the number of *rasas* is a much debated issue in Sanskrit poetics. As we have already discussed, Bharata lists eight emotions as, “basic or durable emotions” and accordingly eight *rasas* which correspond to them. Later writers added ninth basic emotion *śama* or *Nirveda*, (quietude) which evokes *Śāntarasa* (serenity). Abhinavgupta tried to expand the scope and the content of the *rasa* spectrum by adding the *ŚāntaRasa*. He explained that all the other *rasas* emanate from the *Śāntarasa* and resolve into it. It underlies all the other *rasas*. *Śāntarasa* is a state where the mind is at peace, free from all passions and disturbances. This is the condition that wise men and *yogis* are known to enjoy. Hence it is the ultimate *rasa*, the *sumnum bonum*. In fact, Wordsworth’s poem, “Tintern Abbey” provides a very fine example of *Śāntarasa*. In the poem, he talks about “that blessed mood”

In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:- that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul.

Furthermore, other categories like filial love which evokes *Vātsalya rasa*, and love of God which awakens *Bhakti rasa* were also added. So Bharata considers eight *rasas* to which three more have been added by later scholars like Udbhata and Abhinavgupta. It would be useful for you to have a close look at the following table denoting the *sthāyi bhāvas* and the *rasas* evoked by them.

Sthāyi bhāva

Rati (erotic love)
Hāsa (laughter)
Śoka (sorrow)
Krodha (anger)
Utsāh (enthusiasm)
Bhaya (fear)
Jugupsā (disgust)
Vismaya (astonishment)
Śama, Nirveda (quietude)

Rasa

Sringāra (amorous)
Hāsya (Comic)
Karuna (compassionate)
Raudra (furious)
Vīra (heroic)
Bhayānaka (fearful)
Bībhatsa (odious)
Adbhuta (marvelous)
Śānta (serenity)

1.11. RASĀSVĀDANA / RASĀNUBHŪTI

Thus, through the proper *samyoga* (conjunction) of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *sanchāribhāva*, *rasa* becomes manifest. This is not a simple process, as you must have realized by now. When this complex event is enacted on stage or in a text, the viewer/reader experiences *rasa* in a similar fashion, or in aesthetic terms, *rasāsvādana* (experience/relish of *rasa*) takes place. Bharat likens this complex process to the process of preparing the ultimate product called "food" which is the outcome of proper combination of several food grains, spices, herbs etc.:

Just as noble minds consuming cooked foods, seasoned with various kinds of spices, relish the taste thereof and become excessively delighted, so also an onlooker relishes *sthāyibhāva*, indicated through gesticulation of *bhāva*, through verbal, physical and temperamental activities and becomes delighted.

In this context, you may refer to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's lecture on Art wherein he makes a reference to the theory of *rasa* : "our emotions are the gastric juices which transform this world of appearance into the more intimate world of sentiments. On the other hand, this outer world has its own juices, having their various qualities which excite our emotional activities. This is called in Sanskrit Rhetoric *Rasa* which signifies outer juices having their response in inner juice of our emotions. And a poem according to it is a sentence or sentences containing juices, which stimulate the juice of emotion. It brings to us ideas vitalized by feelings ready to be made into the life style of nature."

Thus, *rasa* is something that can be relished - "*Rasayate anenaitirasa*" (*āsvadayata*). The actor acts as a bearer and conveyer of the emotions of the character. He creates a special emotional atmosphere by opening up the inner emotional world (*bhāvajagat*) of the character. He introduces and involves the spectator into this emotional ambience. The emotions of character are passed on to the viewers who relish them collectively. Thus emotions are embodied and transferred from the actor to the audience. In this context, Bharata talks about the greatness of literature and the ability of the literary writer who can achieve and evoke *rasa* in the mind of the spectator/reader.

Abhinavgupta elaborates this event in terms of *Karunarasa*, which is generated in the hearts of those who experience grief. The source of grief lies in a number of *vibhāvas* like the death of a loved one, loss or misfortune, separation etc. There the *vishaya* is the person who dies or the event that brings about the misfortune. *Āśraya* is the person who experiences grief. Once it emerges, the *sthāyibhāva* of grief deepens through various *uddipānavibhāvas* such as the memories of the dead person or the things used by him. The *sanchāribhāvas* or the ancillary emotions that accompany grief are *moh*, *chinta*, *glani*, *jadata* etc. The physical manifestations of this *bhāva* are tears, change of voice, paleness of face, immobility etc.

1.12. ILLUSTRATION OF VARIOUS RASAS

Till now, we have been discussing the various constituents of *rasa* and the process of *rasa-nishpatti* through their conjunction. To provide you a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the same, we shall illustrate them through examples from some

seminal English texts. Technically, all the constituents of *rasa* are known as *rasa prapancā* (paraphernalia of *rasa*).

1.12.1. *Sringāra Rasa*

Śringāra primarily means love as experienced aesthetically. You can consider the following lines from Shakespeare's famous love-tragedy. *Romeo and Juliet*:

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing, and think it were not night.
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch her cheek!

The above lines depict the awakening of love in Romeo when he sees the beautiful Juliet onto the balcony.

In the above instance, Juliet is the *vishayā lambana* and Romeo is the *āsrāyā lambana*. The moonlit night, the dazzling beauty of Juliet serve as the *uddipānavibhāvas*, enhancing the feeling of love in Romeo. The *anubhāvas* or the visible effects are Romeo's steadfast gaze on Juliet's charms, the expression of desire to touch her cheek. *Vyabhichāri* or transitory emotions are anxiety, agitation, eagerness and joy arising in the lover's heart.

Thus with the proper conjunction of various ingredients, the *sthāyibhāva* of *rati* is converted into the aesthetic experience of *Sringāra rasa*.

1.12.2. *Hāsyā Rasa*

For the constituents of *Hāsyā Rasa*, you can refer to Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, wherein Puck, the mischievous sprite creates many funny situations. In Act 3, Scene 1 of the play he transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass (donkey). Seeing Bottom thus transformed, men around him run away in panic. Puck follows them, leading them in circles about the dark woods and chasing them in the guise of scary things: a headless bear, hounds and flames. Bottom is clueless that he has been transformed. Unawares, he declares that his friends have run away from him in fear because they are trying to "make an ass out of him". This is a hilarious situation. Here the *sthāyibhāva Hāsa* is nurtured by the *viśayā lambana* Bottom, and the *āsrāyā lambana*, the spectators. The *uddipānavibhāvas* are the ridiculous appearance of Bottom and the funny acts of Puck; the *anubhāvas* are smiling and laughter, and the *vyabhichāri bhāvas* are joy, eagerness, happiness etc.

1.12.3. *Karuna Rasa*

Karuna Rasa is generated by the loss of someone or something dear to us. In this context, you can refer to Alfred Lord Tennyson's ballad "Home They Brought the Warrior Dead" which depicts a tragic situation of the death of a warrior. The following lines present the widowed woman's reactions when the dead body is brought home:

Home they brought her warrior dead
She nor swooned, nor uttered cry;
All her maidens, watching, said
‘She must weep or she will die’

.....
Rose a nurse of ninety years
Set his child upon her knee
Like summer tempest came her tears
‘Sweet my child, I live for thee.’

In the above instance, the *sthāyibhāva* of *śoka* is nurtured by the *vishayā lambana* (the dead body), the *āsrāyā lambana* (the widow), the *uddipana vibhāva* (the wailing and mourning of women around, the placing of his child upon her knee), the *anubhāvas*, (motionlessness, tears and lamentation) and the *vyabhichāri bhāva* (stupor, tears, immobility etc.). Thus an extremely pathetic situation is rendered vividly in the above stanzas and it successfully generates grief in the heart of the reader.

1.12.4. Raudra Rasa

A very fine example of *raudra rasa* is taken from John Webster’s revenge tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi*. The protagonist of the play is the Duchess, who marries her steward Antonio secretly. When her villainous brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand come to know about it, they are infuriated since they consider it an awful act of treachery. Ferdinand is the more temperamental one. In Act 2, Scene 5 of the play, an enraged Ferdinand is shown to be ranting while the Cardinal tries to calm him down:

Rhubarb, O for rhubarb
To purge this choler. Here’s the cursed day
To prompt my memory, and here’t shall stick
Till of her bleeding heart I make a sponge
To wipe it out.

Here the Duchess is the *vishayā lambana*, Ferdinand is the *āsrāyā lambana*; the knowledge of her relationship which they consider illicit is the *uddipana vibhāva*, his distorted expressions, his rolling eyes, his violent raging and ranting are the *anubhāvas*, and the *vyabhichāri bhāva* are agitation, indignation, ferocity and trepidation.

1.12.5. Vīr Rasa

For the illustration of *Vīr rasa*, we have chosen a very famous poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson: “The Charge of the Light Brigade.” The poem tells the story of the charge of a brigade consisting of a six-hundred British soldiers who rode on horseback into the “valley of death.”

Flash’d all their sabres bare
Flashed as they turn’d in air
Sabring the gunners there
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder’d
Plunged in the battery-smoke

Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six-hundred.

In terms of *rasa-sutra*, we can analyse the above lines as follows:

Vishayāmbana : The enemy (Cossack and Russian) soldiers.

Āśrayāmbana : The British cavalry.

Uddīpana Vibhāvas :The command to charge the enemy forces.

Anubhāvas : Flashing the swords, the enthusiastic demeanour of the soldiers, their lightning speed, and the war-cries.

Vyabhichāri : Agitation, tremor, eagerness, vehemence, threatening etc.

Thus the *sthāyi-bhāva* of *utsāha* is awakened into *vīra-rasa*.

1.12.6. *Bhayānaka Rasa*

The “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is a very famous ballad by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It narrates the story of a mariner who is punished for the sin of shooting an albatross, a bird of good omen. The following lines depict the spirits inhabiting a ghostly-ship who are playing dice for the soul of the crew. Notice how the description generates a feeling of fear in the reader:

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold;
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man’s blood with cold

In terms of *rasa-sutra*, we can analyze the above lines as follows:

Vishayāmbana: The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH

Āśrayāmbana: The Mariner

Uddīpana Vibhāva: The horrible appearance of the Spirit, her pale skin.

Anubhāva: The fright, the shudder, the dilated eyes of the Mariner, his parched throat etc.

Vyabhichāri : Tremor, immobility, alarm etc.

1.12.7. *Bībhatsa Rasa*

The following lines are taken from Wilfred Owen’s poem “Dulce et Decorum est” wherein he describes the gruesome effects of chlorine gas-attack on a soldier who is unable to get his mask on time:

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin;
If you hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud

Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,

Here the feeling of disgust arises when the *sthāyi-bhāva* of *jugupsā* is coupled with the *ālambanas* (the poet and the suffering soldier), the *uddipana* (the white-eyes, the oozing of blood, the froth etc.), the *vyabhichāri* (sickness, weakness, exhaustion, stupor etc.), the *ānubhāvas* (repulsion, nausea, cringing) and *sāttvikas* (pallor, tremor, perspiration etc.).

1.12.8. *AdbhutaRasa*

The following lines from Keats's sonnet, "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" express his wonderful sense of discovery on reading Chapman's translation of Homer's poetry:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific – and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Here Homer's poetry is the *vishayālamhana*, the poet is the *āśrayālamhana*, the act of reading poetry is the *uddipana vibhāva* and the *vyabhichāribhāvas* are joy, astonishment, eagerness etc. Thus, with the conjunction of these elements, the *sthāyi-bhāva* of *vismaya* matures into *AdbhutaRasa*.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. What is the difference between *ānubhāva* and *sāttvika bhāva* ?
2. Why does Abhinavagupta consider *Śānta rasa* to be the ultimate aesthetic experience?
3. experience?
4. What are the necessary conditions for *rasa-nishpatti*?

1.13. SUMMING UP

Rasa theory is one of the most significant theories of Indian poetics. In the present unit, you learned about the basic components of this theory in detail. We began with a discussion on the relevance of Indian aesthetics as part of English curriculum. In this context, various perspectives on the meaning of aesthetics were discussed.

As the propounder of *Rasa* theory, Bharata holds an unchallenged position in Sanskrit aesthetics. In this unit, you learned about his treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Apart from Bharata, some other important *rasa* theorists were also discussed.

Bharata asserts that *rasa* is essentially a product of dramatic art and hence the importance accorded to drama among other arts. The accomplishment of *rasa* was the prime concern of Bharata. So the meaning and implications of *rasa* were discussed in detail. After a brief note on the basic assumptions of *Rasa* theory, an account of the process of *rasanishpatti* was provided through an analysis of Bharata's famous *RasaSūtra*.

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According to him, *rasa* is primarily an aesthetic experience. It is awakened through a proper conjunction of various elements. You learned about these constituents in detail. The experience of *rasa* is a complex process and it has been compared to the preparation and relish of food. You must have gained an insight in the process of *rasa* realization through our discussion on *rasānubhūti*.

Any theory, if not applied to the literary text, may remain drab, uninteresting and unillustrated. To make *Rasa* theory more interesting and easier to understand, illustrations from various literary texts were given. A glossary has also been provided for the benefit of the students at the end of the second unit.

1.14. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to the section 1.3.
2. Refer to the section 1.5.
3. Refer to the sections 1.4 and 1.7.
4. Refer to the Sections 1.7 and 1.8.

II

1. Refer to the sections 1.9.6 and 1.9.7.
2. Refer to the Section 1.11.
3. Refer to the Sections 1.8 and 1.11.

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1.16. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is the relevance of studying Indian aesthetics in the present context?
2. What do you understand by the term '*rasa*'? Write a detailed note on its constituents.
3. How is the accomplishment of *rasa* similar to the preparation of food?
4. Write a note on various *rasas* giving suitable examples from English literary texts.

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Objectives
- 2.3. *Kāvyaaprayojana* (Function of Poetry)
 - 2.3.1. Aesthetic Relish
 - 2.3.2. Moral Improvement
- 2.4. Nature of *Rasa*
 - 2.4.1. Objectivity
 - 2.4.2. Universality
 - 2.4.3. De-individualization
 - 2.4.4. *Sādhāranīkaraṇa* (Generalization)
- 2.5. Imitation and Poetic Truth
- 2.6. Illusion
- 2.7. Empathy
- 2.8. *Sahridaya* (The Model Spectator/Reader)
- 2.9. *Rasaviḡhna* (Impediments to Aesthetic Experience)
- 2.10. Eliot's Objective Correlative and *Rasa-Sūtra*
- 2.11. Summing Up
- 2.12. Glossary
- 2.13. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 2.14. References
- 2.15. Terminal and Model Questions

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about *Rasa-Siddhānta*. We noted that according to the *Rasa*-theorists, *rasa* is the soul, the essence of poetry and all the other things are only the means of presenting *rasa*. We discussed the meaning of aesthetics in general and also the relevance of Indian aesthetics in the present context.

We learnt about Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the most significant treatise on the *Rasa-Siddhānta*. In this context, we noted that certain basic emotions (*sthāyībhāvas*) are present in every human heart. On finding favourable conditions, they are transformed into *rasa*. We also discussed the various constituents of *rasa* like *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *vyabhicārībhāva* and also about the process of *rasānubhūti* (*rasa*-realization). To provide you a better understanding of the *rasa*-related concepts, the illustrations of various *rasas* from English literary texts were provided.

The *Rasa-Siddhānta* is a very profound and complex theory of Sanskrit aesthetics. Other pertinent issues of literature, like the purpose of poetry, poetic truth, generalisation, and objectivity etc. are related to it. In this unit, we shall delve deeper into these issues and explore the nature of *rasa* in detail.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through the contents of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- know about the functions of literature;
- acquire a deeper understanding of the nature of *rasa*;
- understand the process of de-individuation and generalization in aesthetic experience;
- learn about the qualities of a model audience/reader; and
- identify the impediments to *rasa* experience.

2.3. KĀVYAPRAYOJANA (FUNCTION OF POETRY)

According to the *Rasa* theory, the function of literature, especially poetry and drama, is evocation of emotion rather than statement of scientific facts or truths or boosting up human beings into action. Bhattnāyaka, a staunch exponent of the doctrine of *rasa* distinguishes the poetic forms of literature from other forms. According to him, in poetry, both word and meaning contribute to the aims of evocation of *rasa* and are subordinated to that activity. Abhinavagupta too has similar ideas. He says "pleasure alone is the primary end of poetry: the instruction provided by it is but a remote aim", and that "poetry lives by *rasa* alone." It necessary follows that other elements of poetry like images, figures and ideas are secondary and are subordinate to the primary element. Statements of facts and events are history, they assume the status of literature only when they evoke emotion and lead to emotional delight. Unless facts and ideas are infused with '*rasa*' they are not poetic. So *rasa* alone is intrinsic, other elements are rather extraneous. Even Ānandvardhana, the great theorist of *dhvani*, says that figures (*alamkāras*) form the "body of poetry" (*kāvya śarira*), not the *ātma* or the soul, which is *rasa*. They represent

merely the peculiarities of expression. So figures of speech, meter, rhyme and other phonological devices are subordinate to the essential function of evocation of *rasa*.

2.3.1. Aesthetic Relish

According to the proponents of *rasa* theory, the end of dramatic art is to impart the aesthetic experience to the aesthete and subsequently to provide him pleasure (*ānanda/āhlāda*). But the aesthetic experience is not merely limited to the sensual pleasure. It is, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, an experience that affects the mind, the body and even the soul of the aesthete; an experience in which the individual is able to transcend the limitations of the material world and relish *alaukika ānanda* (supreme bliss).

Abhinavagupta says that there are three kinds of *ānanda*: *viśayānanda*, *kāvyaānanda* and *paramānanda*. The first one is related to the satisfaction of the material appetites and the third to the supreme bliss experienced on the union with the Brahma (the Absolute). The second one is our prime concern here. It is a kind of bliss which can be experienced even by common people, and yet it can transcend the worldly. It is invested with the three word powers – *abhidhā*, *laksnā* and *vyājanā*. It creates such a state of joy that the word (*Śabda*) itself becomes Brahma. Since this *ānanda* is closely associated with *rasa*, the experience of *rasa* by an aesthete is very much similar to the experience of a yogi (ascetic).

Bharata holds that the aspect of sensuous pleasure is an inseparable part of dramatic presentation, but it is not the only one. The ultimate end of poetry is to provide such an experience of bliss or *ānanda* which leads us to the virtuous path. It is because of this *ānanda* that the experience of *kāvya* is different from that of the *jagat* (world). In fact, Achārya Mammata finds a *kavi*'s (poet's) creation to be greater than that of God. Abhinavagupta, however, rejects the view of poetry as a medium of moral edification: "*na hi anena sāmājiko vinīyate.*" Poetry is simply a dramatization of human emotions and it has no other purpose than that it should be relished by the reader: "*tat kāvyārtho rasah.*"

2.3.2. Moral Improvement

You may wonder as to how this experience brings about the moral improvement of the aesthete as the *rasa* theory is based on the perception through the senses. The basic emotion is aroused and accomplished into *rasa* through sensory perceptions. But the *Rasa* theorists insist that the experience of *rasa* leads men to virtue. In this regard, you must remember that in Bharata's times, the hero necessarily used to be a man of high moral character. The conflict between the hero and the villain was the eternal conflict between good and evil, the struggle in which good ultimately and inevitably triumphs. So, Bharata's spectators or readers identified with the virtuous hero and witnessed the victory of good over evil, say, for example Rāma's victory over Rāvana. Moreover the representation of the fall of the villain dissuaded them from the sinful path. Thus, when the spectators realized that there is a direct relation between action and its consequences; that we reap what we sow, then they were inspired to follow the virtuous path. This is how drama not only provided aesthetic pleasure to the viewers but it also, improved them

morally. The moral improvement of the aesthete was realized through *rasa* and hence, *rasa* was considered to be the most important aspect of dramatic art.

Thus, apart from the bliss, the aesthetic experience also helps in promoting ethical goodness. So, it follows that the end of dramatic art is instruction through an experience which provides pleasure. This instruction is not direct, as it would make poetry mundane and monotonous. On the contrary, the poet or the dramatist makes the audience realize the goodness of the virtuous path through a presentation of what is pleasing to the eyes and ears. (Bharata includes only the sense of sight and sound in the aesthetic senses because they are the only senses which can commonly share the representation on stage).

2.4. NATURE OF RASA

A deeper study of the principles of poetics enunciated by Bharat and explained by his commentators would elucidate that the aesthetic emotion is neither the projection of a reader's or spectator's emotions, nor the expression of some obscure private feelings of the poet or the dramatist. It can neither be called real because it is not a creation of nature; nor unreal as it does have its existence in the aesthetic world. It cannot be considered even illusory because it is apprehended by the senses. According to Prof. K.C.Pandey, *rasa* is a "configuration or pattern of which *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *vyabhicāri* and *sthāyi bhāva* are the constituents" and the fusion of these elements can only be represented in a human being.

Here, you might usefully refer to Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. The over-vaulting ambition of Macbeth is neither the reflection of the reader's personal ambitions nor the representation of the dramatist's own inner feelings. It is the objective situation of the play, portrayed through the characters of Macbeth or Lady Macbeth that forms the emotion. Similarly the intellectual conflict in *Hamlet* is not the personal conflict of either the spectator or the dramatist.

2.4.1. Objectivity

Therefore, this element of objectivity has to be emphasized while appreciating the poetics of *Rasa*. Here the aesthetic emotion inheres in the poem or the play itself - it is *kāvya-gata*, and it can hardly achieve the status of poetry without this objectivity, as against the subjectivity of the reader or spectator or of the poet or the dramatist. So, "one recognizes feelings without oneself having these feelings...we can recognize the presentation of grief without being grief-stricken ourselves."

The poet is not an isolated individual. He is an organic part of a society, a country or of humanity as a whole. As such, the emotions that are the materials of his art cannot be strictly personal. They must be impersonal in the sense that they must represent the emotions of the whole tradition of which he is an organic part. This is what T.S. Eliot says in his essay "Tradition and Individual Talent": "the feeling, or emotion, or vision, resulting from the poem is something different from the feeling or emotion or vision in the mind of the poet"; and, "the emotion of art is impersonal." According to Bhattanāyaka also, the aesthetic experience is due to the "objective cognition of the presented."

However, we have to remember that although art aspires for a certain degree of objectivity and universality, it cannot be completely objective. It is a human experience and it has to maintain its individual, specific character. So, the experience of art is universal as well as particular. According to *Rasa* theorists, aesthetic experience cannot be equated with any ordinary world-experience. In this experience, the spectator's consciousness is free from all limitations – physical or psychological; and he reaches a state of perfect bliss (*ānanda*)

2.4.2. Universality

Ford Madox Hueffer says "Poetry consists in so rendering concrete objects that the emotions broadened by the objects shall arise in the reader." It is this element of universality that lends literature, or for that matter all art, a unique status. According to Bharata, *rasa* is there in a poem potentially. It is the meaning (*artha*) of the poem that evokes emotions. So, the aesthetic delight produced in the reader is occasioned: "When a meaning, charged with emotions, strikes the heart of the sympathetic reader, it courses through the body like force through a dry log." This is something akin to what A.E. Houseman says about sending "shivers down the spine", and the sensations in the "pit of the stomach."

While discussing the universality of poetic emotion, one has to understand the true implications of the word "meaning". Every word has a meaning, but poetic meaning is not confined to the literal meaning or the dictionary meaning. Poetry conveys meanings which are of the words, between the words and even beyond the words. It is a unique quality of the poetic word that it is not a mere verbal statement. It is so full of emotive content and suggestiveness that it produces the desired aesthetic delight. This is how a word becomes a metaphor.

You must have read the poem "Ode to Nightingale" by the great Romantic poet John Keats. Notice the expressions "beaded bubbles winking at the brim" or "sun-burnt mirth" or "leaden-eyed despair". Here the images seem to come alive as the words evoke some magical qualities. The richness of suggestion is so much in the hands of a poet or dramatist that it arouses the desired emotion in the readers.

Here you can also refer to the oft-quoted statement of Lady Macbeth in the Sleepwalking Scene: "All the perfumes of Arabia can't sweeten this little hand". Notice how this seemingly small statement brings out the whole trauma and guilt of Lady Macbeth and the reader/ viewer automatically becomes a part of her sufferings! So, you must keep in mind that a word in poetry does not have only one meaning; it is full of a world of meanings.

2.4.3. De-Individualisation

While experiencing the culmination of a basic emotion into *rasa*, the aesthete undergoes a process of de-individualization. According to Prof. K.C. Pandey, de-individualization is a gradual process and it takes place in many stages:

Self-forgetfulness- While witnessing a dramatic presentation, you must have noticed that sometimes we become unaware of ourselves and our surroundings. We become so much

engrossed in the experience that we forget ourselves for the time being and become interested in only what is happening on stage

Identification- Once we forget ourselves, we tend to identify ourselves with the characters on stage, mostly the hero. In other words, the assumption of another personality takes place. That is to say, we start thinking like the character. We place ourselves in the entire situation and get “emotionally affected”. We are happy in his happiness and grieve when some misfortune befalls him. Similarly, we are angry with the villain when he does some harm to the hero.

Universalization- When the aesthetic experience of *rasa* reaches its climax, we forget even the assumed personality. Thus our selves are completely de-individualized, that is the emotion that we experience becomes universal, shared as it is by the entire congregation of the spectators. As K.C. Pandey claims, “aesthetic experience at the Cathartic level is the experience of completely de-individualized self, having no other affection than that of the universalized basic emotion.”

2.4.4. *Sadhāranīkarana* (Generalization)

In the experience of a poetical work, generalization takes place. It consists in the realization of the universal and impersonal in poetry as opposed to the particular and the individual. In fact, to enjoy *rasa*, one has to transcend all limitations. It is the sharing of emotions by the author, actor and spectators that leads to generalization. The spectators, while witnessing a dramatic representation, have to identify completely with the characters that become universalized. They have to lose their identity. The evocation of *rasa* is possible only through generalization. This is why a work of literature is able to produce feelings and emotions which are universal in character. And this is where literature differs from history. According to Abhinavagupta, generalization is but a by-product of imagination or manifestation through a power of suggestion.

The concept of generalization is the contribution of Bhattanāyaka in the field of aesthetic thought. He says that this process is connected with the three word-functions – *abhidhā* (the power to evoke the primary meaning), *bhāvana* or *bhāvakatva* (the power which universalizes the aesthetic object), and *bhojakatva*. *Bhojakatva* is the power which brings the quality of *sattva* to the foreground. As we have already discussed, *sattva* is the innate goodness of human nature, a state of psychological poise. It renders the other two states-*rajas* (physical dynamism) and *tamas* (total ignorance) totally ineffective.

The spectator enjoys the aesthetic emotion through *bhojaka-bhojya* relationship, that is, through the relationship of the enjoyer and the enjoyed. Bhattanāyaka, thus lays great emphasis on the *bhāvana-vyāpara* or imagination which comes into play as an aspect of aesthetic experience. Poetic expression, he says, has another power besides *abhidhā*. It enables the *sahrdaya* or the aesthetically sensible person to see the characters presented in a literary work in a generalized way. This power makes him independent of any relationship with his ordinary life or the life of the actor or the hero of the play or poem, and so universalizes the aesthetic object. It is due to this power that we relish the experience presented in a poetic creation, not at the practical but at the aesthetic level. At this level, all practical considerations fade away due to the predominance of *sattva*. Thus

the *bhoga* or enjoyment of *rasa* is a process of delectation. It is very much similar to the state of supreme bliss (*ānanda*) which one experiences on realising the Absolute (*Brahman*). All these processes are internal, connected with the three word-functions. The *sahrdaya* does not even realize the subtle stages of transition from the first to the second and then to the third. Thus, according to Bhattanāyaka, the aesthetic experience is “the experience of the universalized aesthetic object by the universalized subject in a state of perfect bliss, due to the predominance of *sattva*”.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. Discuss the function of poetry according to the *Rasa* theorists.
2. What do you understand by “de-individuation”? Mention the different stages involved in the process of de-individuation.
3. “The emotion of poetry is universal as well as particular.” Explain.
4. Mention the process through which poetry acquires its universal character.

2.5. IMITATION AND POETIC TRUTH

Now, we shall discuss the nature of poetic truth. You are aware of the theory of imitation propounded by Greek thinkers like Aristotle. Bharata also speaks of drama as a mimetic reproduction (*anukarana*): “Drama is a reproduction of the mental states, actions and conduct of people.” Lollata and Śankuka, the commentators on *Nāṭyāsāstra*, also consider aesthetic perception as *mithyājñāna* (illusory cognition)

In simple words it means that the events, attitudes and emotions portrayed in a play do have certain likeness to what happens in the day to day activities of human beings. But, if such imitation (*anukarana*) were only factual, it could hardly evoke powerful emotions. As Aristotle says, poetry does not merely imitate things as they are, but also “things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be.” In fact, art which is just an imitation cannot evoke any strong emotion. So a poet or a dramatist concerns himself with the emotional import or significance of the events or facts portrayed in the work. This significance may be highlighted directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly. So when Othello is portrayed as strangulating Desdemona due to jealousy or suspicion, the emotional significance springs up from the fact that the feeling of jealousy is shared by human beings in general.

Abhinavagupta, however, rejects the theory of imitation. He holds that emotions and mental objects cannot be imitated. So, instead of *anukarana*, he uses another term used simultaneously by Bharata – *bhāvānukīrtanam*, which means “relating”, “narrating” or “describing” emotive conditions. He says, “...in drama, the characters and events are not seen as contemporaneous, and their particularity is accepted in its generalized form. In poetry too, the same generalization (*sādhāranikarana*) of the emotive factors takes place.” So the nature of poetic truth is much more complex and profound than the physical or objective reality.

2.6. DRAMATIC ILLUSION

For a moment, imagine yourself to be sitting in a theatre where Shakespeare's famous tragedy Othello is being staged. You would realize that the actors are neither Othello nor Desdemona nor any other character. Even then, when you watch Othello strangling Desdemona to death, you are moved and the tragic emotion is aroused in you. You feel that innocence is being butchered. And it can't be the truth that real emotions cannot be evoked without something real somewhere. Obviously, the staged Othello or Desdemona are not real. They are only represented imaginatively by the actors. So there is illusion, something unreal, a part of fiction. Yet when acted on the stage, one believes that actors are the portrayed characters. This is what Coleridge so aptly calls "willing suspension of disbelief." This is how the fictitious, the unreal is believed to be real.

But, as already discussed, you would agree that real emotions are evoked, and that there must be something real. What is that? It is definitely not physical or historical reality. It would rather appear that the human feelings and situations, which are exhibited, are real. Jealousy is real. It is also true that in the dramatic situation, sympathy or pity is real, as an innocent lady has been murdered so ruthlessly by her husband who loved her so much. Therefore, there is the reality of human emotions which evokes the tragic emotion, and leads to the evocation of aesthetic delight. And this reality is the product of generalization.

You may like to learn something about the views of the theorists of rasa in this regard. Lollata believes that the illusion is complete. The spectator is deluded into believing that the actors are Othello and Desdemona. But the views of Śankuka are different. According to him the actor is not seen as the character but as a representation thereof, just as a lion in a painting is not believed to be a real lion. So, he asserts that the dramatic representation is illusory.

However, the theory of Abhinavagupta is differently oriented. According to him, what is significant is not the particular or specific person or situation, but the theatrical representation in the generalized human situation leading to universal emotions. So, in a way, there is no delusion.

Here, it would be worthwhile to refer to the views of the philosopher Rāmānuja. According to him, the semblance of truth too is a kind of truth, since it is an object of experience. Abhinavagupta says that the question of semblance or illusion of reality is not relevant, since the generalized human situations and emotions are real, and through a process of generalization, aesthetic pleasure is derived.

2.7. EMPATHY

As already discussed, the attribute of empathy makes this transformation possible. Empathy is different from sympathy which means a feeling of pity or sorrow for the suffering or distress of another. Empathy, on the other hand means the intellectual identification of the spectator/reader with the thoughts, feelings or state of the character. A reader or spectator immediately relates himself or herself to the characters or events portrayed in a poem or a play and subsequently rasa or aesthetic delight is experienced.

In short, it may be asserted that poetic or dramatic truth is not the truth of actual facts or events, but the truth of emotions and feelings of human-beings. So Hamlet or Othello may not have been actual names, but their feelings and conflicts have the grain of truth in them. And Julius Caesar and Henry IV were real names in history, but the plays are not concerned about what happened as historical facts in their lives, rather they depict their feelings and inner conflicts as human beings, which alone creates the derived aesthetic pleasure.

2.8. SAHRDAYA (THE MODEL SPECTATOR/READER)

A poet communicates with a reader who has more or less a similar sensibility. So, in order to appreciate a work of art, the reader/viewer should, also be accomplished and gifted with *rasikatva*. Only a worthy reader/spectator can experience the aesthetic pleasure. In this context, Bharata uses the term *prekṣaka* for a spectator. He says that only a responsive and sympathetic spectator enjoys the *sthāyibhava* evoked and consummated as *rasa* in a dramatic presentation. Such spectator is a person "who can watch the dramatic performance with all his senses undisturbed, is pure and honest, is expert in judging the pros and cons, who can ignore a fault and lovingly appreciate merit of the performance." In the 27th chapter of his *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharata talks about the qualifications of the spectator in detail:

- intellectual background, including the knowledge of arts and literature in general and of the dramatic art in particular
- knowledge of the various types of aesthetic configuration, of the accompanying psycho-physical states and of the subtle distinctions among them
- knowledge of various languages, including the provincial dialects, which are used in drama
- the capacity of concentration
- the power of quick understanding
- the capacity to maintain impartial attitude
- character and breeding
- interest in the presentation
- and, above all, the capacity to identify with the human focus of the situation so as to have the identity of experience.

Abhinavagupta uses the term *sahrdaya* for a sensitive spectator. According to him, the model reader or spectator should have taste or *rasikatva* (taste), *sahrdayatva* (aesthetic susceptibility), power of visualization, intellectual background contemplative habit (*bhāvnā*), the necessary psychophysical condition and the capacity to identify his own self with the aesthetic object.

Abhinavagupta explains how a *sahrdaya* experiences the delight of a poetic expression. The *sthāyibhāva* latent in the mind in the form of an impression is awakened by the depicted *vibhāva*. It is taken in a general form without specific connection. The generalization that takes place excludes the individuality of the character as well as the reader/spectator.

2.9. RASAVIGHNA (IMPEDIMENTS TO AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE)

Anything that hinders the process of aesthetic relish is called an impediment (*rasavighna*). *Rasavighna* may be related to poetry, or to actor, or even to the reader/spectator. Abhinavagupta has referred to the following seven impediments which cause hindrance in the uninterrupted aesthetic perception:

i) Inability to get at the meaning

It arises from the impossibility of the presented. It refers to the lack of imagination on part of the poet in the presentation of an event which is not known to the spectator; or the lack of *sahridayatva* on part of the audience. In the absence of imagination, the poet cannot create a relishable poetic experience, and the reader cannot perceive the same.

ii), iii) Subjective and Objective Limitations of Time and Space

Sometimes the audience or the readers fail to attain that level of generalization which is necessary for aesthetic relish. This happens because they are unable to view the aesthetic situation objectively.

iv) Influence of Personal Joys and Sorrows

This kind of *vighna* arises when the spectator or reader approaches the work in such a state when his mind is already engrossed in his personal joy or sorrow. This preoccupied state of mind creates a barrier between him and the aesthetic experience

v) Lack of Clarity due to Insufficient Stimulus

The mind does not get restful satisfaction if the knowledge is based on inferences or verbal symbols (*upmāna*) instead of direct experience and. The experience of rasa depends on the clear cognition of the determinants and the consequents (*vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*); and the cognition (or knowledge) depends on direct experience. As such, the lack of clarity in expression also proves to be a hindrance in the process of aesthetic appreciation.

vi) Subordination of the Principal

The basic mental states (*sthāyi bhāvas*) are of primary importance in the aesthetic perception. If they do not get the due importance, the secondary things may gain prominence. As a result, the reader's attention is diverted and the aesthetic experience may be obstructed. .

vii) Dubiousness of Presentation

This impediment arises when the determinants and the consequents are not combined in a proper way. The situation, mimetic changes and transient emotions, have no clear meaning in isolation from each other. If they are taken up separately, they may create doubts in the minds of the spectator and cause *rasavighna*.

2.10. ELIOT'S "OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE" AND RASA-SŪTRA

It would be an interesting exercise for you to notice how Bharata's *rasa-sūtra* corresponds to T. S. Eliot's formula of objective correlative. Both are concerned with the portrayal of emotion in poetry and its transmission to the spectator / reader. According to Eliot, since the emotion of art is impersonal, it cannot be transmitted directly to the reader. There has to be some medium, which he calls "objective correlative." In his essay on Hamlet he defines it as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion." He gives the example of sleepwalking of Lady Macbeth wherein the unconscious repetition of her past acts serves as the objective equivalent of her present trauma. The effect of this objectification is enhanced by her lack-lustre eyes and the burning taper in her hand. Thus what Shakespeare has to convey gets objectified and the interaction between the poet and the reader takes place. The reader/spectator can respond to the medium, and through that to the character. Similarly, *rasa-sūtra* also stresses that the primary objective of poetry is the arousal/awakening of emotion and its reception and realization by the gifted reader or *sahrdāya*.

2.11. SUMMING UP

In this unit we discussed many issues related to literature in general and poetry in particular. One of the questions generally asked about literature is – what is the function of literature or why do we read literature? According to the *rasa* theorists, the most important function of poetry is to provide aesthetic pleasure through the evocation of *rasa*. However, this pleasure is not a profane kind of pleasure – it is not merely limited to the senses. Poetry also promotes ethical goodness through the experience of pleasure. That is why the poetic pleasure (*kāvyañānda*) has been differentiated from the worldly pleasure (*visayāñānda*). Thus, according to *rasa* theorists, poetry serves the dual purpose of delight and instruction.

In this unit, we have discussed the nature of *rasa* in detail. You have learnt that *rasa* is ultimately a human experience and, as such it is universal as well as particular. In the poetic experience, the processes of de-individualization and generalization are very important. You learnt how the individual experience of poetry acquires its universal character through these processes. In this context, we have also discussed the nature of poetic truth.

Poetry is an experience common to the writer and the reader/spectator. Hence it is important that the reader is also worthy of the same. In this context, you have learnt about the qualities of the model spectator/reader and also about the impediments to the aesthetic experience as elaborated by the *rasa* theorists.

Rasa is a theory that has influenced the reading and writing of literature for centuries not only in India but even outside India. It is a theory of aesthetic pleasure that takes into account the various constituents of literary experience – the text, the reader, the writer, the context and other related issues that ultimately make the aesthetic experience possible. The influence of this theory was so much on literature and other branches of knowledge that the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was called the fifth *Veda*. Any serious student of

literature should read this theory in a more comprehensive and detailed manner than what is given in this small unit written for the specific purposes of this course.

Self assessment Questions II

1. Discuss the concept of dramatic illusion.
2. Write a note on the qualities of the model reader/spectator.
3. Identify the impediments to the aesthetic experience.
4. What do you understand by empathy? How does it help in experiencing aesthetic relish?

2.12. GLOSSARY

<i>abhinaya</i>	dramatic representation
<i>ācharya</i>	teacher, thinker
<i>āhlāda</i>	delight, joy
<i>ālambana</i>	the cause (person or event) with reference to which a rasa arises
<i>ālasya</i>	indolence (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>alaukika</i>	supernatural, divine
<i>ānanda</i>	bliss, joy
<i>āngika</i>	body movement (a mode of dramatic representation)
<i>anubhāva</i>	external manifestation of <i>rasa</i>
<i>ānubhūti</i>	realization, felt experience
<i>apasmāra</i>	epilepsy (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>artha</i>	meaning
<i>āśrayalambana</i>	the person in whom the emotion is aroused
<i>asūya</i>	envy (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>āsvādana</i>	relish
<i>autsukya</i>	impatience (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>āvega</i>	agitation (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>bhakti rasa</i>	emotion of love towards God
<i>bhāva</i>	feeling or sentiment
<i>bhaya</i>	fear
<i>bhayānaka</i>	terrifying
<i>bibhatsa</i>	loathsome, disgusting
<i>capaltā</i>	unsteadiness (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>cintā</i>	painful reflection
<i>cittavrtti</i>	cognition, knowledge
<i>dainya</i>	state of self-pity, depression (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>garva</i>	pride (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>glāni</i>	remorse (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>harsa</i>	joy (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>hāsa</i>	laughter (a <i>sthāyi-bhāva</i>)
<i>hāsyā</i>	comic
<i>hetu</i>	cause, reason
<i>jadtā</i>	immobility (a <i>vyabhichāri bhāva</i>)
<i>jnāna</i>	knowledge
<i>jugupsā</i>	disgust (a <i>sthāyi-bhāva</i>)

kāraṇa cause
kāvya literary composition
krodha anger (a *sthāyi-bhāva*)
laukika worldly
māraṇa demise (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
nāṭya drama
Nāṭyaśāstra Bharata's treatise on dramaturgy
nidrā sleep (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
nirveda detachment (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
nispatti consummation, accomplishment
pralaya fainting, loss of consciousness (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
raṃanīyārtha delightful meaning
rasa siddhānta the principle of *rasa*
rasānubhūti experience of *rasa* literary composition
rasa sūtra *rasa* aphorism, verse 32, chapter 6 of *Nāṭyaśāstra*.
rati love (a *sthāyi-bhāva*)
raudra furious (one of the nine *rasas*)
romāncha horripilation (a *sāttvika-bhāva*)
śabda sound, a word
sādhāranikarāna generalization, universalization
sādrśya similarity
sama indifferent, unaffected by passion
samyoga conjunction, union
śankā doubt (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
śānta tranquil (one of the nine *rasas*)
sārthaka meaningful
śāstra a scientific treatise
sattva essence, intrinsic nature
sāttvika-bhāva instinctive response to experience
siddhānta basic principle
śoka grief
śrama weariness (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
śrngāra erotic, pertaining to love
stambha paralysis (a *sāttvika-bhāva*)
sthāyi-bhāva any of the basic emotions in the *rasa* theory
svarabhāṅga change in the quality of voice (a *sāttvika-bhāva*)
sveda perspiration (a *sāttvika-bhāva*)
trāsa terror, alarm (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
uddipana exciting causes
ugratā ferocity (a *vyabhichāri bhāva*)
utsāha enthusiasm (a *sthāyi-bhāva*)
vātsalya affection towards one's offspring
vibhāva any condition or event which excites the basic emotion
vismaya wonder, astonishment (a *sthāyi-bhāva*)
vyabhicari ancillary emotion that accompanies the basic emotion

2.13. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to the sections 2.3, and its sub - sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.
2. Refer to the section 2.4.3.
3. Refer to the sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.
4. Refer to the section 2.4.4.

II

1. Refer to the section 2.6.
2. Refer to the section 2.8.
3. Refer to the section 2.9.
4. Refer to the section 2.7.

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2.15. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a detailed note on the nature of *Rasa*.
2. Elucidate the concept of *Sādhāranikarana* (generalization). What is its importance in the experience of *rasa* (*Rasānubhuti*)?
3. Define Eliot's concept of Objective Correlative. How can we relate it to the *Rasa* Theory?

UNIT 3 DHVANI SIDDHĀNTA

- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. Objectives
- 3.3. Meaning of *Dhvani*
- 3.4. Levels of Meaning
- 3.5. Illustration of *Dhvani*
- 3.6. *Sphota*
- 3.7. *Pratibhā* (Creative Genius)
- 3.8. Exponents of *Dhvani*
- 3.9. Classification of *Dhvani*
 - 3.9.1. *Laukika Vyangya*
 - 3.9.1.1. *Vastu Dhvani*
 - 3.9.1.2. *Alamkāra Dhvani*
 - 3.9.2. *Alaukika Vyangya (Rasa Dhvani)*
 - 3.9.3. *Avivaksita Vācya*
 - 3.9.3.1. *Arthāntara Samkramita Vācya*
 - 3.9.3.2. *Atyanta Tiraskrita Vācya*
 - 3.9.4. *Vivaksitānyapara Vācya*
 - 3.9.4.1. *Samlaksyakrama Vyangya*
 - 3.9.4.2. *Asamlaksayakrama Vyangya*
- 3.10. Functions of *Dhvani*
- 3.11. *Dhvani* and Western Aesthetics
- 3.12. Summing Up
- 3.13. Glossary
- 3.14. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 3.15. References
- 3.16. Terminal and Model Questions

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to study one of the most significant theories of Sanskrit poetics- *Dhvani* theory. *Dhvani Siddhānta* occupies the most prominent place amongst the theories of Indians aesthetics. In the history of Indian aesthetics, *dhvani* has always been referred to by the aestheticians in one way or the other. It is so significant for the purposes of literary studies that even when well-organized formulations on *dhvani* theory were not propounded by any theorist, there were suggestions in Vedic literature about the suggestive power of language. In the *Vedas*, the goddess *Vāk* proclaims that she resides in the sea. This utterance suggests that *Vak* (language) has its domain of meaning as vast as the sea. In other words, it means that the resonating power of language can always manifest to the reader or listener, if one is capable of hearing that. Metaphorically, it means that language reveals only some of its potentiality of creating meanings to a reader. The potentiality to create an endless chain of meanings is basic to language and it becomes a kind of power in the hands of literary writers, who are known to be the most creative users of language.

The theory of *Dhvani* is very vast in its scope. However, we would try to understand the basic theory in a simple way.

3.2. OBJECTIVES

After completing the study of this unit, you should be able to:

- comprehend the various meanings of the term *dhvani*,
- assess the importance of *Dhvani Siddhānta* in the context of Indian Aesthetics,
- identify the various levels of meaning,
- learn about the prominent *dhvani* theorists, and
- recognize various kinds of *dhvani* and their significance in the interpretation of literature.

3.3. MEANING OF DHVANI

As regards the literal meaning of the word *dhvani*, it means ‘sound’ in a simple way. But the connotation of this word with regard to the exposition of the theory is not that simple. It is much deeper. Dhvanikāra says: “*Dhvani* is a name given by the learned to that kind of poetry in which words or meanings convey the suggested sense by subordinating themselves (i.e. their soul and meanings) to the suggested sense.” Ānandvardhana says in *Dhvanyāloka* that following the grammarians, he has chosen the term *dhvani* to denote: (i) the sound structure of words, (ii) the semantic aspect of words, the *vyanjakas* or the suggesters, and (iii) “the revealed suggested meaning as such and the process of suggestion involved.”

Ānandvardhana believes that suggestion depends on denotation. The suggestive meaning of a word or a sentence is not communicated directly, but through the denotative element. To further elaborate his concept of *dhvani*, he has divided speech into two kinds: *vācya* (denotative), and *pratīyamāna* (suggestive/symbolic). According to Ānandvardhana, the

suggestive elements are more important in poetry than the denotative ones. However, it does not mean that the primary meaning is not important. The suggestive elements cannot exist without the denotative elements because they are made manifest only through the denotative elements. So, both of them are important for poetry.

Ānandvardhana explains the relation between the denotative and the suggestive aspects of a word by giving the example of a *dīpaka* (earthen candle). Though the light is evidently different from the candle, yet without the candle, there cannot be any light. Similarly, suggestion cannot operate in a vacuum. The word forms the basic vehicle. However, when generated, light becomes much more important than the candle. The suggestive meaning overtakes the word but there cannot be any suggestion without the word. In this context, *dhvani* encompasses the suggestive elements in literary language. It is imbued with aesthetic content. It incorporates not only the stated elements of literary expression, but also the ‘resonance’ generated in the unconscious mind about the overt meaning. As S.K.Dey observes, “When the words and senses subordinate their primary signification to evoke some other meaning, namely suggested meaning, the *dhvani* language emerges.”

According to Hota, the definition of *dhvani* contains three elements:

- There should be the suggestive element;
- The said suggestive element must be predominant.
- It should shine ‘prominently,’ (*sphutatva*).

In this way *dhvani* may be perceived as the evocative power of language. Through this power language seeks to express the unexpressed and to reveal the concealed. Abhinavagupta says that “*Dhvani* is indeed the basic sphere of suggestion.” It is the “subtle core of meaning”, which “lacks any material substrate”. It is inherent in language itself: “Both *abhidhā* and *laksanā* are subordinated and conquered by *dhvani* when it moves on, being carried away by its passionate longing to reveal something about the universe that only language can know.”

You have learnt the essential features of the *Rasa* theory, according to which a genuine work of literature (especially poetry and drama) evokes *rasa*, i.e. aesthetic delight. Ānandvardhana says that *rasa* is the aim, the object, whereas *dhvani* is the method or the means for that end. So, according to Ānandvardhana, *rasa* is the effect of suggestion. It is the *vyanjaka* (suggestive) power of the word or language which evokes emotions (the permanent ones known as *sthāyi bhāvas* – nine in number, such as *sringāra*, *hāsyā* and so on). And it is due to this potency of the word that *rasa* is accomplished. That is why Ānandavardhana says that *dhvani* is the soul of all literature: ‘*Kāvyaśyātmā dhvani*’. So it would be clear that for Ānandavardhana, the term *dhvani* has been used to refer to the world of suggestion. K.C.Pandey sums up the various meanings of the term as:

- (i) the conventional symbol, the articulate sound (*vācaka*);
- (ii) the conventional meaning (*vācya*);
- (iii) the power of the word to convey the suggestible meaning (*vyanjanā*);
- (iv) the suggestible meaning itself (*vyangyārtha*); and
- (v) The poetic work, containing the suggestible element (*vyangyakāvya*).

3.4. LEVELS OF MEANING

Basically *Dhvani* theory is a theory of 'the word' and of meaning. So let us, first of all, comprehend the different levels of meaning. According to Ānandvardhana, there are three levels of meaning:

- i. *Abhidhā* – the literal meaning
- ii. *Laksanā* – the metaphorical meaning, and
- iii. *Vyanjanā* – the suggestive meaning.

The meaning that we understand as soon as the word is uttered is its primary meaning or *abhidhā*. The word which conveys the meaning is *vācaka* (the signifier) and the meaning conveyed is *vācya* (the signified). They are related to each other by *vācyavācaka* (signified-signifier) relationship. We all know that there is a literal meaning of every word, which is the dictionary meaning, and every word has both synonyms and antonyms.

The level of *Laksanā* relates to the metaphorical meaning of a word. It is that meaning which is different from the primary sense but also related to it in some way. You are aware of the figures of speech: simile and metaphor. Simile refers to the likeness or similarity between two things, just as the face of a beautiful girl is likened to a rose, or moon and so on. Obviously, there is some similarity between the two. As regards the metaphor, the likeness is not highlighted. The two are said to be one, as the smiling face of a child is said to be a lotus flower. Thus *laksanā* is the secondary level of meaning.

According to the *dhvani* theorists, there is one more sense which a word conveys. This sense is called *vyangyārtha* (the suggested sense) and the word which conveys this sense is *vyanjaka*. The relationship between them is known as the *vyangyavyanjaka* (suggestive-suggest relationship). Thus, *Vyanjanā* refers to the world of suggestions which a word used in a particular context evokes in a literary work.

Dhvani is best translated as suggestion, which we find between the word and lines, and even beyond them. The levels of meaning can be illustrated by a stock example offered in Sanskrit poetics: “*Gangāyām ghosah*” (Hamlet on the Ganges). Here, the primary meaning does not work because a hamlet cannot exist on a current of water. So the secondary meaning is drawn that the hamlet is situated on the bank of the Ganges. The tertiary meaning suggests that the hamlet situated on the bank of the Ganges is cool and holy. *Vyanjanā*, thus is the tertiary meaning of a word, just as *abhidhā* is the primary or the literal meaning of a word.

The suggested meaning is communicated through word, context, gestures and even sounds. Another term, *pratīyamānārtha* has been used for *vyangyārtha*, suggested meaning. Here, you can refer to what Bhartrhari has to say in this connection: “The meanings of sentences are determined according to the situation, word- meaning, propriety... form... Meaning depends on connection, separation, opposition, context, indication, the presence of another word... suitability.” The context of situation plays a very important role in determining the meaning of a particular statement.

Essentially, therefore, *dhvani* is a theory of suggestive meaning and of symbolism. Ānandvardhana claims that poetic language is entirely different from ordinary language. In poetic language, it is *dhvani* which is the distinguishing factor. Although it does not have any concrete shape in the text of language, yet through secondary or suggestive meaning, it relates to the denotative structure of language. It is said to be the ‘*pratiyamānārtha*’ in *Dhvanyāloka*: “The meaning of poetry which has always fascinated the aesthete and which has been finally stated by the old scholars can be said to have two parts: that which can be stated in words and that which is only *pratiyamāna*... This suggested meaning or *pratiyamāna*, which is felt by the aesthete, is the soul of poetry.”

3.5. ILLUSTRATION OF *DHVANI*

We can understand the concept of *dhvani* by taking an example. Sometimes, the suggestive meaning is totally different from what is explicit. This can be better explained by the following example given by Ānandavardhana in *Dhvanyāloka*:

O religious minded man. You can now roam freely over this place. For the dog, of which you were so afraid, has been killed today by the proud lion, who, as you know very well, lives in the impervious thicket on the bank of Godavari.

These lines are spoken by a woman who has fixed a secret meeting with her lover in a secluded garden on the bank of the river Godavari. She sees a religious-minded man going about here. She is disturbed and wants to drive him away without letting him know about her intentions. A ferocious dog used to be kept here and she knows that the man used to be scared of it. This dog, for some reason, is away from this place. So she tries to explain the absence so as to scare him away. Thus, a seemingly positive statement has a negative meaning. Similarly, an apparently negative statement may have a positive meaning.

We can take another example from Shakespeare’s famous play, Julius Caesar. In Act 3, Scene 2 of the play, Mark Antony, during his funeral speech for Julius Caesar says many times:

“Brutus is an honourable man.”

Brutus is one of the conspirators. Here the primary meaning of the word “honourable” is “respectable.” But the intention of Antonio is not to praise Brutus. On the contrary, he wants to ridicule Brutus as an ungrateful and treacherous man who is responsible for Caesar’s killing. The statement is highly ironic and Antonio succeeds in turning the Roman people against Brutus and the other assassins. Thus we notice how the suggestive meaning differs completely from the explicit one

3.6. *SPHOTA*

The source of *dhvani* theory is the *Sphota* theory of the Grammarians. Ānandavardhana is indebted to Bhartrihari’s *sphota* theory for his concept of *dhvani*. He himself says that the expression “*dhvani*” has been borrowed from the Grammarians who believe in *Sphota*, the universal sound. Hence, it would be beneficial to understand the concept of ‘*Sphota*’

propounded by Bhartrihari in his '*Vākyapadiya*'. The literal meaning of '*sphota*' is 'burst out' or the energy released when something is broken. In simple terms, it is the universal linguistic entity. It is eternal and is manifested by the sound in the word. On articulation, it becomes '*sphuta*', bringing cognition to the mind of the hearer. It can be understood as a meaning-whole beyond individual letters and words.

The revelation of *sphota* is a gradual process. You are well aware that a sentence is made up of words which have their individual meanings. However, the complete sense of the sentence is not grasped till the last word is spoken or written. Similarly, it is from the last sound that we understand the structure of the word and its meaning. Thus '*Sphota*' is '*antimbuddhigrāhya*', (that which is known by the last word), or '*antimvarnagrāhya*', (that which is known by the last syllable). In this context, *sphota* is the permanent element in the sound whereas *dhvani* refers to the transitory elements of speech.

While discussing language and its potentialities, the concepts of '*sphota*' '*śabda*' and *artha* (meaning) must be distinguished. Bhartrihari points out three aspects of language, i.e. *Prakrit Dhvani*, *Vaikrit Dhvani* and *Sphota*

Prakrit Dhvani – It refers to the primary sounds which are produced by the speaker and heard immediately by the hearer. As soon as the hearer hears these sounds, he perceives the *sphota*

Vaikrit Dhvani –It refers to the series of sounds which come out from the initial sounds. These secondary sounds continue to reveal the same *sphota*.

We know that sound is produced by the vibration in the speech-organs. But the production of sound does not stop when the initial sound stops. One sound produces another sound which, in turn, produces still another. Sound comes to the consciousness through a succession of sound waves. Thus a kind of chain of sounds is formed. So the primary sound reveals *sphota* whereas the secondary sound continues its further manifestation. In Bhartrihari's treatise *Vākyapadiya*, the process is explained through the analogy of a flame wherein the mother flame generates other flames and the other flames continue its existence.

Sphota – *Sphota* is a linguistic symbol. It does convey meaning but it can neither be pronounced nor written.

Dhvani, then, is perceived as the articulated sound, which carries the '*tātparya*' (meaning). It is closely related to *sphota*. It is the revealer of *sphota*. So *dhvani* is the manifester whereas *sphota* is the manifested.

As regards '*śabda*', simply translated, it is the word. But it has unlimited potential. It may convey primary meaning, metaphorical meaning as well as suggestive meaning. 'Meaning' too, is not so simple a word as it appears to be. It relates to the word, the speaker or the poet, the readers or the audience and also to the context. The same word may have another meaning put in a different context by a different person. According to the *dhvani* theorists, the concept of *artha* is so vast that it includes not only the literal but also the emotive, cognitive and the socio-cultural aspects of language. It is clear by now that the meaning of a word is not confined to its literal or the primary meaning. The word

has been called the '*Sabda Brahma*'. So the spoken or the written word is related not only to a fact, but to reality itself, the truth which is God. Thus it is related to the consciousness itself, in fact, to the cosmic consciousness.

3.7. PRATIBHĀ (CREATIVE GENIUS)

It would be useful at this stage to understand the quality of mind from which a language with suggestive possibilities is born. Generally '*pratibhā*' or genius or intellectual brilliance is said to be behind the poet's creative powers. Some call it 'intuition' as well. According to Sanskrit theorists, it is the poet's '*pratibhā*' which is the source of the 'poetic': "*kavitvabijam pratibhānām.*"

According to Jagannātha, poetry can spring forth only from a genius whereas Vāmana believes that the germ of poetry is poetic genius. Abhinavagupta views it as a sensibility that can create an absolutely new poetic experience – "*apūrvavastu*", something that never existed before.

The uniqueness of this power lies in the fact that it can always create something new. If the poet is blessed with *pratibhā*, he can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary and the particular into the universal. He can see what others cannot, and feel what was never experienced or even thought by the common man, But this '*pratibhā*' is not limited to the poet alone. The reader too has to be endowed with this power to relish the aesthetic experience. Ānandvardhana, in this context says "likewise that (suggested) sense bursts forth in a flash in the minds of sensitive readers who (wish to) experience the essential meaning (of poetry), and who (are) really indifferent to the explicit meaning; It is the receptivity of the readers and the audience that enables them to appreciate this flash." According to Deshpande, "The poet raises the poetic meaning to the transcendental level on account of *pratibhā* and the reader enters this transcendental world with a view to relishing it by virtue of the power of *pratibhā*."

We have already discussed Bhartrihari's views on *sphota*. He has very significant things to say about '*pratibhā*' as well. He made both semantic and psychological study of '*pratibhā*.' According to him this mental quality embraces all activities, mainly those related to language and consciousness. Ānandvardhana too has developed a theory of '*pratibhā*'. According to him it encompasses the entire gamut of rasa or aesthetic delight. It includes both emotive or evocative language and various conscious and subconscious levels of human mind. So it governs all verbal and non-verbal activities. It is a flash of understanding, a creative faculty which is intuitive in nature, but it is hardly possible to explain the reason behind its manifestation.

The credit of associating *pratibhā* with suggestion goes to the *dhvani* theorists. According to Abhinavagupta it is "the soul of suggestive power." Ānandvardhana equates it with 'poetic imagination.' It communicates something more than the grammatical or denotative meaning of words. As such, it travels beyond the ordinary intellect or imagination. It is this attribute of *pratibhā* which causes "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" as Wordsworth said, and distinguishes the great poets from the ordinary ones. Only a few poets are blessed with it. According to Ānandvardhana, "The speech of first rate poets streaming forth their sweet content reveals clearly their

extraordinary genius which is as unearthly as it is ever bright.” Hence, in ‘*dhvani*’, it is said, “*parispshurantam pratibhāvisesam*,” i.e. the poet’s *pratibhā* is spontaneous like an instantaneous flash. And this is how word becomes pregnant with imaginative suggestiveness. This suggestiveness distinguishes literature from other human activities. This is how Vālmiki was able to create the great work the *Rāmāyana* out of the lament of the *krauncha* bird. Connecting *pratibhā* with *dhvani*, Ānandvardhana says that it is the element of suggestion which makes *pratibhā* eternal and brings variety and charm to poetry.

3.8. EXPONENTS OF *DHVANI*

The word ‘*dhvani*’ has been used by theorists preceding Ānandavardhana. The concept of *dhvani* as Ānandavardhana interpreted it may be traced back to the earlier theorists. Even in the Vedas, there is a reference to the symbolic meaning of a word, “He sees, but sees not.... One hears, but hears not”. So, here is a distinction between the literal meaning and the inner significance of a word. The words are therefore both *vācaka* (expressive) and *bodhaka* (indicative or suggestive).

The concept of *dhvani* was analyzed by the ancient grammarians. However, it was Patanjali who discussed the concept of *dhvani* in a systematic manner. According to Patanjali, language (*śabda*) has two aspects: (i) the *sphota* which refers to the permanent element in sound; and (ii) *dhvani* which refers to the non-permanent elements of speech.

We have explained the concept of *sphota* to you. You are already familiar with the name of Bhartrihari in this context. He discussed *sphota* and *dhvani* extensively in his treatise *Vākyapadiya*.

Abhinavgupta says that even Bharata was aware of suggestive meaning of the poetic expression. According to Bharata, the element of *rasa* is suggested. In his *Nāṭyasāstra*, he has used two terms: ‘*vāganga sattvopatān*’ i.e. “with word, gestures and the *sattva*”, and “*bhāvābhinayavyanjitān*” i.e. “represented by an expression of the various states.” These terms imply that *rasa* is suggested. So it is evident that he was aware of the suggested meaning of word and gestures. However, according to Abhinavgupta, we do not find any direct reference to *dhvani* in earlier works of rhetorics. Bharata propounded the theory of *rasa* as the life and soul of poetry and drama, whereas Ānandavardhana says that it is ‘*rasadhvani*’

Bhāmaha is another important theorist who thinks that poetry is composed of words and meanings (senses) which are adorned by figures of speech. When he speaks of ‘*samāsokti*’ (condensed metaphor), meanings other than the actual context are suggested: ‘*gamyate*.’ Although he does not use the term *dhvani* specifically, he seems to be aware of the suggestive power of language through non-contextual meanings and hyperbole.

As Hota observes, Dandin, another Indian theorist also had the idea of suggestion. His use of the terms, ‘*pratīyate*’ (suggested) in the context of *udārguna*, and *vyanjitam* (suggested) in the context of *udāttālamkāra* refers to the suggested element.

Udbhata and Rudrata too were aware of the suggestive or tertiary meanings of words.

Udbhata, along with Bhāmaha and Dandin finds a different meaning in the figure ‘*paryāyokta*’, which is not the denotative meaning. According to Udbhata, there is some indirect meaning in this figure of speech, which is suggested. We shall discuss this *alamkāra* in the Chapter on *Alamkāra Siddhānta*.

According to Hota, Rudrata is much closer to the *dhvani* theory than his predecessors. In his *Kāvyaalamkāra*, he points out to a kind of suggestive meaning in his discussion of some figures of speech like *bhāva* and *paryāyokta*, though he does not discuss *dhvani* directly. According to him a sentence connotes its actual import after expressing its external meaning. This is ‘*bhāva*’. When the literal meaning implies another meaning which is neither producer nor produced, then it is *paryāyokta*. Thus as Hota says, “The suggestive meaning which occurs in the form of seed in Rudrata, becomes a full grown tree in Ānandavardhana.”

The chief and perhaps the most systematic and thorough exponent of this theory was Ānandavardhana. His work *Dhvanyāloka* is the masterpiece on this theory. Although Bhartrihari too had propounded this theory in *Vākyapadiya*, it was Ānandavardhana, who revolutionized Indian poetics by developing a comprehensive and profound theory of *dhvani*. For the first time in the history of Indian aesthetics, he delved deeper into the inner elements of literature. He believed that the characteristic feature of a literary language is not the ordinary speech. It is not confined to figures of speech or poetic merit. According to him, figures of speech are mere external embellishments, whereas the spirit of poetry or drama is *dhvani* or *rasadhvani*. Most of the figures of speech are followed by a suggested element.

While elaborating the concept of poetic language, he says that it communicates by suggestion, not by statement. It can communicate the sentiments to the readers or the audience through the suggestive potency of language. Explaining ‘*rasadhvani*’ he indicates that aesthetic delight can be communicated by *dhvani* or the suggestive language. Ānandavardhana’s theory had a considerable influence on the succeeding generations of theoreticians in India.

Our discussion on the *dhvani* theorists would be incomplete without mentioning the name of Abhinavagupta. He is the greatest exponent of the philosophy of Monistic *Saivism* of Kashmir. As K.C.Pandey observes, he is the one who, “seems to have given almost the final shape to the philosophy of beauty. He is an “encyclopedic” thinker and has written around forty-five works. Deshpande says, “In the history of theories concerning *rasa*, Abhinavagupta’s view is often considered final. His treatise *Locana* is a famous commentary on *Dhvanyāloka*. It is an in-depth study of *Dhvani-Siddhānta*.”

Self Assessment Questions 1

1. What do you understand by the term *dhvani*? Explain by giving suitable examples.
2. Write a brief note on the concept of *sphota* with reference to Bhartrihari.
3. Discuss the contribution of Ānandavardhana to the *Dhvani-Siddhānta*.
4. What is the role of the poet’s *pratibhā* in creating a great work of art?

3.9. CLASSIFICATION OF *DHVANI*

There are various kinds of *dhvani* and they are classified in several different ways. Ānandvardhana has given a detailed scheme of classification of *dhvani* in *Dhvanyāloka*.

There are two bases for the classification of *dhvani*:

- (i) According to the nature of the suggested sense.
- (ii) According to the relation between the conventional and the suggested meanings.

On the first basis, *dhvani* or the *pratīyamāna* has been classified into: (i) *Laukika* and (ii) *Alaukika*.

3.9.1. *Laukika Vyangya*

The first type of *pratīyamāna* is that in which meaning can be expressed directly. It is further subdivided into two types:

3.9.1.1. *Vastudhvani*

Vastu refers to the content of the poetic composition. When the expressive words offer their direct meaning and, in turn, suggest some other charming matter or idea, it is called *Vastu dhvani*. It can be an event, a situation, an idea an objective fact or anything that can be said in words except a poetic figure.

3.9.1.2. *Alamkāra Dhvani*

When in addition to the expressed meaning, some striking or embellished meaning is suggested, it becomes *Alamkāra dhvani*. Here the suggested sense is transformed into a figure of speech.

3.9.2 *Alaukika Vyangya (rasa dhvani)*

This kind of *dhvani* cannot be expressed in conventional language. It cannot be transformed into a direct sense, nor can it enter the field of *lokavyavahāra* (ordinary experience). Here meaning is comprehended only through suggestion. As Deshpande observes, "It is always suggested. It can never be denoted or signified." This is known as *Rasa dhvani*.

When a poet, by skillfully selecting his words, makes them convey much more than bare meanings and so induces a whole series of emotions, it creates *rasa dhvani*. It is the finest form of poetry which leads to an ideal and impersonalized form of joy. As you already know, the *rasa* manifested is universal. It exists in all kinds of poetry because the suggestive sense is prominent in poetry. Suggestion plays a very important role in the *rasadhvani* type of poetry as for Ānandvardhana, *rasa* itself is suggested meaning, in fact "the highest form of suggested meaning."

Abhinavagupta accepts the general three-fold classification, but adds some other classification to it, According to him, the *pratīyamāna* or implied sense is described as two-fold of which one is *laukika* (belonging to ordinary life) and the other is

kāvyaavyāpara gocara (which is met only in poetry). The *laukika dhvani* in poetry is two-fold- the one that suggests *vastu* (*vastudhvani*) and the other that suggests a figure of speech (*alamkāra dhvani*). In both instances, the *laukikadhvani* is explicit.

On the second basis, that is, the relation of the conventional to the suggested, the classification of *dhvani* is as follows:

3.9.3. Avivaksita Vācya

It is the type where the explicit sense is inconsistent. The literal sense or the conventional meaning is not intended to be conveyed by the speaker or it is relegated to the background. It is further subdivided into two kinds:

3.9.3.1. Arthāntara Samkramita Vācya

In this type, the primary meaning is not incompatible in a certain context, but in itself does not serve the intended purpose. Hence it is given up in favour of the suggested sense. It is set aside and a word is used in an enhanced or diminished sense. Ānandavardhana has explained this by analyzing the following verse:

Good qualities become really so only when they are appreciated by cultured minds; indeed lotuses become lotuses only when they are favoured by the rays of the sun.

In this example, the suggestive meaning is that lotuses bloom when the rays of the sun fall on them and become the seat of Goddess Lakshmi. The primary meaning is not completely rejected but it slowly fades away, giving way to the suggested sense.

3.9.3.2. Atyanta Tiraskrita Vācya

Here the literal sense is completely discarded because it is incompatible. Ānandavardhana explains this by examining the following example:

“The moon whose luster has passed over to the sun and whose orbit is covered with the mist does not shine forth just as a mirror that is rendered blind by long heaving”

In the above example, Rama describes the *Hemanta* season in Panchvati. The context is the appearance of the moon in an early winter morning. Here the primary sense is discarded because the moon and the mirror both cannot be described as being blind. But, if you look for the suggested meaning, you will realize that the mirror covered with vapour is like a blind person who cannot see. It is rendered dull and useless as it has lost its power to reflect. Similarly, the moon has also lost its luster in a misty morning. Thus, the conventional meaning of the word ‘blind’ becomes irrelevant and the suggestive meaning prevails.

3.9.4. Vivaksitānyapara Vācya

Here the literal sense is in fact intended to be conveyed by the speaker, but the implied sense is different from the apparent one, that is, the sole aim of the speaker is the arousal of the suggested sense. It depends on the mode of revelation. There are different stages in

the transition from the conventional to the suggested like *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* etc. These stages may or may not be noticed by the reader. Hence, it is divided into two types depending on the way the suggested sense is revealed. This kind of *dhvani* includes *vastudhvani* and *alamkāradhvani*.

3.9.4.1. *Samlakshyakrama Vyangya*

This kind of *dhvani* comprises those poetic compositions where the intermediate stages in the transition from the conventional to the suggested are clearly noticeable. The reader becomes aware of the sequence (*krama*) in which they appear. Technically, it is also called *Kramadyotita*.

3.9.4.2. *Asamlakshyakrama Vyangya*

This is the most important *dhvani* in poetic composition. You are familiar with Rasa theory of Bharata. In this type of *dhvani*, the rasa theory gets fused with the *dhvani* concept. Here the perception of rasa is continuous and simultaneous. That is to say, here *rasa* is not described or realized by the sequence of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhicāri bhāva*. The intermediate steps between sense and suggestion are not clear. So the transition from the conventional to the suggested is not noticed. In other words, the reader does not become aware of the sequence of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* etc. Instead, *rasa* is suggested to the reader from the situation and the aesthetic delight is produced. All kinds of *Rasādidhvani* arise in this manner.

3.10. FUNCTIONS OF *DHVANI*

Analyzing the function of *Dhvani* at different levels it has been said:

Dhvanatīti dhvaniḥ: “that which suggests” (the sound structure of the word or the signifier)

Dhvanīti dhvaniḥ: “that which is suggested” (the semantic aspect of *śabda*)

Dhvanānām dhvaniḥ: “the evoked or suggested meaning as such and the process of suggestion involved”

The theorist Bhaṭṭanāyaka points out the distinction between ordinary and poetic or literary language. According to him the poetic language has two functions:

(i) *Bhāvakatva*, i.e. universalization, or ‘stripping’ *vibhāva* and *sthāyī bhāva* of individual aspects.

(ii) *Bhojakatva*: ‘tasting’ or the experience within one’s inner being.

Lalita Pandit says,

Dhvani meaning is that which lies beyond spoken words... Through *dhvani*, poetic language reaches the condition of silence. It functions as a meta-language, generating many meanings by deploying collective and individual memory banks, latent impressions, and mental associations.

In this way, this theory is not only a theory of suggested meaning. It is in fact a philosophy of language – the word and the meaning.

3.11. DHVANI AND WESTERN AESTHETICS

It would be interesting, however, to know that some western critics perceive *dhvani* as being synonymous with the 'implied' or 'figurative' meaning. It has been argued that there is something in language, the surplus or the residual which cannot be accounted for by the scientific study of language. Similar is the case with *Dhvani*. As Isaeva points out, "In Western critical literature, *vyanjana* and *dhvani* are sometimes rendered as 'suggestion', the 'implied', figurative meaning, even the 'symbolical' meaning of utterance or a single word." Doing this would amount to confining *dhvani* to a single meaning and limiting its immense potential. Even in the *Vedas* it has been propounded that what reaches our ears or meets our eyes is a miniscule constituent of the vast ocean of language.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. Differentiate between *laukika* and *alaukika vyangya*.
2. Write a note on the functions of *dhvani*.
3. Fill in the blanks:
 - a. *dhvani* is related to the content of the poetic composition.
 - b. When the literal sense is completely discarded on account of being incompatible, it is an example of
 - c. In.....*dhvani*, the suggested sense is converted into a figure of speech.
 - d. *Avivaksita vācya* is divided into..... and.....

3.12. SUMMING UP

Dhvani Siddhānta is a very profound theory of suggestive meanings in literature. In the present unit, we have discussed the salient features of this theory. According to this theory, although suggestion arises from denotation, the suggestive elements (*pratīyamāna*) are more important than the denotative (*vācaka*) ones.

To understand the suggestive sense, you have to start from the literal or conventional meaning of the word. Hence the three levels of meaning as proposed by Ānandavardhana have been explained to you. We have also noted how, in literature, the suggested sense becomes more important than the conventional meaning, so much so that sometimes there is a complete subversion of the literal sense.

The theory of *dhvani* has its roots in the *sphota* theory of the grammarians. *Sphota* is the universal sound, which becomes manifest on articulation. It is closely related to *dhvani*. In this unit, we have also discussed various aspects of language like *Prakrit dhvani*, *Vaikrit dhvani*, and *sphota* as elaborated by Bhartrihari in his treatise *Vākyapadiya*.

While discussing language, it is important to understand and distinguish between the concepts of *śabda* and *artha*. According to the *dhvani* theorists, these concepts are not so simple as they appear to be. They have huge implications; in fact, the word has been equated with God Himself – *ŚabdaBrahma*. It is difficult to trace the evolution of *dhvani* because even in the most ancient Indian scriptures, there are hints about the suggestive

powers of language. However, the most significant among the *dhvani* theorists are Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. In this unit, you have learnt about the contribution of various theorists to the development of *Dhvani Siddhānta*.

Dhvani has numerous kinds and it has been classified in several ways. In the present unit, we discussed the classification of *dhvani* on two broad bases: (i) according to the nature of the suggested sense; and (ii) according to the relation between the conventional and suggested sense. In this context, various functions of *dhvani* have been discussed.

3.13. GLOSSARY

- abhidhā* primary level of meaning, one that expresses a literal meaning
abhidhārtha directly expressed meaning
alamkāra dhvani a kind of *dhvani* in which the suggested sense is a figure of speech
apūrva extraordinary, not existing before
alaukika vyangya a kind of *dhvani* which cannot be transformed into the direct sense
arthāntara samkramita vācya a kind of *dhvani* in which the literal meaning is partially set aside
asamlaksayakrama vyangya non-sequential *dhvani* in which the transition from the primary meaning to the suggested meaning is not perceptible
atyanta tiraskrita vācya a kind of *dhvani* in which the literal meaning is completely discarded
avivaksita vācya a form of suggestion in which the primary sense is transformed either partially or completely
Bhartrihari fifth century A.D. philosopher, the propounder of *sphota* theory
bhāvakatva universalized experience
bhojakatva personalization of literary experience
dhvani sound, suggestion
dhvanyārtha suggested meaning
laksanā secondary, indirect meaning
pratīyamāna suggestive, symbolic
rasa dhvani a kind of *dhvani* in which a sentiment is suggested
samlaksyakrama vyangya a kind of sequential *dhvani* in which the transition from the primary sense to the suggestive sense is clearly noticeable
sphota the universal linguistic sign
tātparya intention/meaning of the speaker
vāk speech
Vāk vedic goddess of speech
vastu content
vastu dhvani a kind of *dhvani* in which a fact is suggested
vivaksitānyapara vācya a kind of *dhvani* in which the conventional meaning is also retained besides the suggested sense
vyanjaka that which suggests
vyanjanā the tertiary level of meaning, the suggested sense

3.14. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to section 3.3.
2. Refer to section 3.6.
3. Refer to section 3.8.
4. Refer to section 3.7.

II

1. Refer to sections 3.9.1 and 3.9.2.
2. Refer to section 3.10.
3. Refer to section 3.9.

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3.16. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Elucidate the concept of *Dhvani*.
2. Discuss the levels of meaning according to Ānandavardhana. Give suitable examples.
3. Trace the evolution of *dhvani* as a feature of poetic language.
4. What are the two important systems of classifying *dhvani*? Describe various kinds of *dhvani* based on these schemes of classification
5. Appreciate any English poem of your choice in the light of *Dhvani Siddhānta*.

UNIT 4 VAKROKTI SIDDHĀNTA -I

- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Objectives
- 4.3. Meaning of *Vakrokti*
- 4.4. Exponents
- 4.5. Kuntaka's *Vakroktijīvita*
- 4.6. Classification of *Vakrokti*
 - 4.6.1. *Varna-vinyāsa vakratā* (Phonetic Obliquity)
 - 4.6.2. *Pada-pūrvārdha vakratā* (Lexical Obliquity)
 - 4.6.2.1. *Rūdhi-vaicitrya vakratā* (Obliquity of Usage)
 - 4.6.2.2. *Paryāya-vakratā* (Obliquity of Synonym)
 - 4.6.2.3. *Upcāra-vakratā* (Obliquity of Transference)
 - 4.6.2.4. *Viśesana-vakratā* (Obliquity of Adjective)
 - 4.6.2.5. *Sanvrti-vakratā* (Obliquity of Concealment)
 - 4.6.2.6. *Linga-vaicitrya vakratā* (Obliquity of Gender)
 - 4.6.2.7. *Kriyā-vaicitrya-vakratā* (Obliquity of Action)
 - 4.6.3. *Pada-parārdha vakratā* (Grammatical Obliquity)
 - 4.6.3.1. *Kāla-vaicitrya-vakratā* (Obliquity of Tense)
 - 4.6.3.2. *Kāraka-vakratā* (Obliquity of Case)
 - 4.6.3.3. *Sankhyā vakratā* (Obliquity of Number)
 - 4.6.3.4. *Purusa vakratā* (Obliquity of Person)
 - 4.6.3.5. *Upgraha-vakratā* (Obliquity of Voice)
 - 4.6.3.6. *Pratyaya-vakratā* (Obliquity of Particle or Affix)
 - 4.6.3.7. *Pada-vakratā* (Obliquity of Prefix)
- 4.7. Summing Up
- 4.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 4.8. References
- 4.9. Terminal and Model Questions

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In literature, one question has always been debated and that question is related to literary or poetic language. This debate took different shapes, twists and turns in different ages. The question of poetic language has been answered by the theorists of every age since ancient times. The thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Longinus, Pope, Wordsworth, Mathew Arnold, T. S. Eliot – the celebrated names of literary criticism – have been seriously engaged with the issue. Aristotle and Longinus considered the sublime language as best-suited for poetic expressions. The Neo-classicists like Pope and Addison too considered the poetic language to be of elevated nature. But Wordsworth changed all that when he advocated the use of everyday common language for poetry. Eliot and other modernist poets sought to use minimum language evoking maximum poetic sensibilities.

The debate on poetic language was not just limited to the western part of the world. In Indian theories of literature also the question of poetic language has been debated in almost every age by serious thinkers.

Vakrokti is a kind of device used by the poets of every age and country, which can be simply defined as deviant language. By deviant language we mean that it is not straight and simple expression. In other words, it means that poetic language deviates from the common language or expression. We can also understand this by saying that the poets do not express their feelings and sensibilities in straight-forward manner because if they express the meanings in such manner, then the poetic message will become flat and the readers will find no interest in such poetry. A poet can be creative only when he uses deviant expressions which do not give literal, transparent meanings. Transparency of meanings a virtue in other kinds of writings, but it can be a vice, a curse for the literary writer. Less transparency – more creativity is the *mantra* of literature.

In this chapter on *vakrokti*, we shall discuss some very significant aspects of the language used in poetry.

4.2. OBJECTIVES

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

- Comprehend the meaning and the tenets of the *vakrokti* theory.
- Identify the specific classifications and categories of *vakrokti*; and
- Interpret the theory in the context of modern aesthetic concepts.

4.3. MEANING OF VAKROKTI

The term '*Vakrokti*' is made up of two components – '*vakra*', which means 'crooked, oblique, or unique' and '*ukti*', which means 'expression' or 'speech'. Thus the literal meaning of *vakrokti* is 'crooked' or 'indirect speech'. In its wider sense, it means striking expression. Some scholars trace the theory of *vakrokti* to *Atharvaveda* and *Agnipurāna* in which it has been used in the sense of crookedness. Bānabhatta, the great Sanskrit writer,

is considered to be one of the earliest writers to use this term. He seems to have used it as a lexical figure of speech: “*Vakroktinipunenākhyāyikākhyānparichaya chaturen.*” However, it was not limited to mere figurativeness in language, as he wrote in *Harshacharitam*, “*Navorartho jātiragrāmyślesoaklistasphuto rasah, Vikatāksarabandhaścākritsnamekatra durlambham.*” (Originality in subject, uncommon use of *jāti* (natural description), un-laboured puns, an explicit sentiment and a striking arrangement of words – it is difficult to combine all these in one composition). According to Bhāmaha, *vakrokti* comprises obliquity of both word and meaning.

According to Vāmana, “*Sādrsyālaksanavakroktih*” (*vakrokti* is figurativeness based on analogy). Kuntaka related *vakrokti* to the poet’s creative process, observing that *vakrokti* is an expression made possible by *vaidagdhya* (skilled style) and elegance of the poet. Defining *vakrokti*, he says that it is “an ingenious utterance peculiar to poetry and is distinct from popular usage. It is a clever turn of speech, witty and startling in effect.” The ultimate objective of *vakrokti* is aesthetic appeal. Hence it is used in the sense of beauty also. Kuntaka frequently uses the terms like *vaicitrya*, *cārutva*, *camatkārasynonymously* with *vakratā*. Hence, *vakrokti* also means beautiful expression.

Abhinavagupta, a near contemporary of Kuntaka, considered *vakrokti* as a generic feature of all figures of speech. Although *vakrokti* literally means crooked or indirect speech, it has much wider connotations. Raghavan defines *vakrokti* as a “striking, deviating expression” whereas S. K. De refers to it as a kind of “heightened expression.” According to Kuppuswami Sastri, “it may be understood as deviation in expression from the commonplace.” Gnoli calls it “the curved or oblique diction, peculiar to poetic language.” Thus, as you must have noticed, different Sanskrit scholars analyzed *vakrokti* in their own ways and gave their own interpretations. However, they agreed on one point: poetry has a linguistic structure but it is not merely a linguistic entity. It uses language more creatively than any other discourse. It is rather a beautiful and striking expression. This strikingness and beauty comes from a special use of language. *Vakrokti* is the essential distinguishing feature of poetry and it consists in the uniqueness of utterance. It is much more charming than the common modes of speech and hence much superior. It imparts a kind of beauty and charm to poetry.

4.4. EXPONENTS

As discussed earlier, Bānabhatta was one of the earliest exponents of *vakrokti*. The theory developed in the works of various Sanskrit scholars like Bhāmaha, Dandin, Vāmana, Kuntaka, Bhoja, Rudrata and Mammata. However, the first theoretician to give a prominent place to *vakrokti* in literary discourse is Bhāmaha. In his treatise *Kāvyaślokaśāstra*, he mentions *vakrokti* in various contexts. To him, *vakrokti* is the distinguishing feature of poetic language. He says that it elevates a linguistic expression to the status of poetry: “*Yuktam vakra svabhāvoklyā sarvam–evai–tad–isyate*”; and it adorns all poetic figures– “*śabdoktiralamkārayavacam vakrārthakalpate.*” It transcends all mundane experience– “*lokātīkrāntagocaram*”. It exists not only in words but in meaning also: “*Vakrābhidheya śabdoktiristavācāmālanakritih*”. According to Bhāmaha, the use of *vakrokti* lends to unique creation of meaning.

Bhāmaha considers *vakrokti* as a collective designation for all poetic figures. He identifies it with *Atiśayokti* (Hyperbole): “It underlies all figures of speech, imparting beauty to them, and needs assiduously to be cultivated by poets, for there can be no figure for want of it.”

In the beginning of the 8th century, Dandin also recognized the significance of *vakrokti*. However, he minimized the scope of Bhāmaha’s conception by distinguishing poetic speech patterns into two: *Vakrokti* and *Svabhāvokti*. According to him *svabhāvokti* is the natural utterance which is used to describe natural things and events: “telling as it is” i.e. a philosophical or scientific treatise. *Vakrokti* is oblique and marked by *vaichitrya* (strangeness). Like Bhāmaha, Dandin also includes all figures of speech in *vakrokti* except for *svabhāvokti* and he identifies *vakrokti* with *atiśayokti*. You can see how his description of *atiśayokti* may be applied to *vakrokti* as well: “The poet’s desire to describe something peculiar transcending the bounds of commonality give rise to *atiśayokti*, which is the best of poetic figures.”

After Dandin, the word “*vakrokti*” was used in the limited sense of a poetic figure. Vāmana, in the middle of the 8th century, limited its scope by defining it as figurativeness based on analogy: “*Sādrśyalaksanā vakroktih.*” He used *vakrokti* as a name of a poetic embellishment, in which a word is used in the secondary sense because of the similarity between the personal and the conventional meanings. The other important Sanskrit theoretician of *vakrokti* is Ānandavardhana. Although Ānandavardhana is better known as a *dhvani*-theorist, he does mention *vakrokti* in *Dhvanyāloka*. Citing Bhāmaha, he says that strikingness in meaning can be discerned in every poetic figure and that *atiśayokti* pervades and beautifies all figures, which, in fact, are various modifications of it. According to him, *vakrokti* leads to suggestiveness, which is *dhvani*.

In the 9th century, Rudrata further limited its scope by making it just a lexical figure of speech or *śabdalamkāra*. He divided it into two kinds i) *Kākuvakrokti* and ii) *Ślesavakrokti* (where obliquity is created with the help of pun).

The successors of Rudrata like Ruyyaka, Vidyādhara and others took the term in the sense in which Rudrata used it. Bhoja saw the whole of literature as broadly divided into three categories: *svabhāvokti* (natural expression), *vakrokti* (oblique expression) and *rasokti* (expressions capable of evoking aesthetic delight). Bhoja defines poetry as an extraordinary, rounded expression (*viśista bhaniti*). He further says: “The non-oblique language used in sciences and common usage is non-poetic expression. The oblique expression, like *arthavāda* etc. is poetry.”

The greatest exponent of *Vakrokti Siddhānta* happens to be Kuntaka, a younger contemporary of Abhinavagupta, who has elaborated this aesthetic concept in his treatise *Vakroktijīvitam*. In the next section, we shall discuss Kuntaka in detail.

4.5. KUNTAKA’S VAKROKTIJĪVITA

As you have learnt earlier, *vakrokti* became the prime aesthetic principle in the hands of Kuntaka, who treated it with rare depth and extensiveness. In fact, he clearly states that his objective in writing a treatise on poetics is “to establish the idea of strikingness which

causes extraordinary charm in poetry.” *Vakrokti*, for Kuntaka is synonymous with the principles of beauty underlying all kinds of poetic language. According to Kuntaka, *vakrokti* is the life and breath of poetry – it is the soul of poetry: “*vakrokti kāvyajīvitam*”. The beautiful and the miraculous in poetry are born due to *vakrokti*. The language of poetry, according to him, is different from ordinary modes of speech and also from the language of scientific discourse. It is a “*vicitra abhidhā*” (striking denotation).

Kuntaka intended to explore an alternative way of appreciating poetry. The aestheticians so far had been concentrating on the aesthetic experience in the realm of the reader / spectator. Kuntaka was more concerned with the poetic genius (*Pratibhā*), which imparts a kind of uniqueness and charm to even the mundane, banal speech. He also sought to find those elements in a literary work that bestow literariness on it. He wanted to show that merely the presence of word (*śabda*) and meaning (*artha*) cannot make a work literary: “*na śabasyaiva ramanīyatā – viśistasya kevalasya kāvyatvam, nāpi arthasyeti*”. Here he elaborates upon and modifies Bhāmaha’s definition of poetry: “*śabāarthau sahītau kāvyam*”. He argues that even the purposeful combination of word and meaning cannot create poetry without the uniqueness of poetic language:

Although many other words are there (to convey the same meaning), the (poetic) word is what ultimately conveys the sole meaning intended by the poet. The meaning is what beautifully vibrates and charms the hearts of the sensitive reader. Both (word and meaning) are ornamented. This ornamentation of both is said to be the obliqueness in speech, masterly way of speaking.

Kuntaka sees poetic language as being markedly different from the common, ordinary language. The ordinary language of people, according to Kuntaka, lacks elegance and grace. It has a kind of rusticity and it is not capable of removing ignorance.

The question that arises is – what is the distinguishing feature of poetic language? Kuntaka finds the answer in *vakrokti*. Poetic language deviates from the hackneyed expressions by its imaginative turns. However, for Kuntaka, mere word, no matter how charming it is, will not convey the idea if it is not in harmony with the poetic content. In the absence of such a striking word, the idea will become either dead (*mṛita*), or diseased (*rugna*). A dead idea is an idea insufficiently expressed and a diseased idea expresses something else than intended. Therefore he stresses the significance of poetic imagination in poetic creation. So, according to Kuntaka, the function of poetry is introducing obliqueness so as to create beauty and please the sensitive readers – poetry consists in beautification – “*tattvamsālankārasya kāvyatā*.” For beautification, poetic dexterity is needed, which is made possible by the poet’s *pratibhā*.

Kuntaka assigns a very important role to the poet’s skill (*kauśala / vaidagdhyā*) and his genius (*pratibhā*) in the poetic creation. He believes that *vakrokti* emanates from the creative faculty of the poet. The poet’s *pratibhā* is an inborn faculty or instinct. Poetry, for him, is “the synthesis of word and meaning, embodied in an oblique expression that constitutes the creative process and is a source of aesthetic delight to a connoisseur.” He compares the poet with a painter and the composition of poetry to that of painting a picture. Just as a painter paints a picture using a charming canvas, different colours and tones of different shades, similarly a poet uses different means like rhetoric, figures of speech and style to create poetry. You must have heard of the philosopher’s stone which

turns iron into gold by its magical touch. For Kuntaka, the poet's *pratibhā* is a kind of philosopher's stone which turns the iron of ordinary language into the gold of poetic expression.

Thus, by recognizing the significance of *vakrokti* as the defining feature of the language of poetry, Kuntaka presents a comprehensive philosophy of poetic expression.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. What is the meaning of *vakrokti*?
2. Explain the basic concept of *Vakrokti Siddhānta* as a literary theory?
3. Differentiate between the language of common conversation and that of poetry?
4. Discuss the contribution of Kuntaka to the development of *Vakrokti Siddhānta*?

4.6. CLASSIFICATION OF VAKROKTI

Kuntaka classified *vakrokti* into six categories. His classification may broadly be divided into:

a) **grammatical** and b) **non-grammatical**. The grammatical variety of *vakrokti* is concerned with the inner structure of language

It includes:

- i. *Varna-vinyāsa vakratā* (Phonetic obliquity)
- ii. *Pada-pūrvārdha vakratā* (Lexical obliquity)
- iii. *Pada-parardha vakratā* (Grammatical obliquity)
- iv. *Vākya-vakratā* (Sentential obliquity)

The non-grammatical variety of *vakrokti* includes extra linguistic features such as context and composition. Kuntaka divided this non-grammatical variety into:

- v. *Prakarana-vakratā* (Episodic obliquity)
- vi. *Prabandha-vakratā* (Compositional obliquity)

It is this six fold *vakratā* that distinguishes poetry from other types of discourses and therefore is considered to be the essence of poetic language.

4.6.1. Varna–Vinyāsa Vakratā (Phonetic Obliquity)

This kind of obliquity includes all the possible arrangements of phonemes in poetry. It encompasses alliteration, rhyme and other subtle sound effects in poetry. Ancient theorists recognize it as *anuprāsa* or alliteration. Consider the following example from the poem “The Windhover” by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn

You can observe how the repetitions of /m/ and /d/ sounds provide a kind of unique charm to the above example.

Kuntaka suggests many kinds of *varna-vinyāsa vakratā*. In the first kind of arrangement, there is a free and irregular repetition of similar or identical *varnas* (phonemes) at regular intervals and it enhances the beauty of the poetic expression. Kuntaka further divides it into three sub-varieties: (i) repetition of one *varna*, (ii) repetition of two *varnas* and (iii) repetition of more than two *varnas*.

The second kind of *varna-vinyāsa vakratā* can also be divided into three kinds: i) when stops are combined with their homorganic nasals; ii) when liquid consonants are doubled and iii) when consonants conjunct with ‘*ra*’ etc. The third kind of phonetic obliquity, according to Kuntaka, consists in the arrangement of *varnas* without any interval employed artistically for a charming poetic effect.

The further sub-variety is the repetition of new *varnas*. Kuntaka says that a discontinuation of earlier repetition of *varnas* and choice of new ones add to the charm of the poetic expression. Kuntaka includes chime also in phonetic obliquity, provided that it is effortless, smooth and adorned with syllables which are not harsh; it should be in consonance with the feelings conveyed and lastly it should be used with propriety (*auchitya*).

Thus these varieties of *varna-vinyāsa vakratā* are used in various ways for various kinds of effects. You can note the following example from Coleridge’s famous poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to observe how phonetic obliquity enhances the charm and beauty of poetry:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew
The furrow followed free

In the above example, the repetition of /f/ sound gives a sense of speed and suggests a quick movement. We have taken another example from T. S. Eliot’s famous poem *The Wasteland*:

London bridge is falling down falling down falling down.

Here the repetition of “falling down”, without any punctuation-mark is suggestive of the continuous fall of the London-bridge. You can also take the example of the famous “Ode to a Nightingale” by John Keats. The use of alliteration in “Beaded-bubbles winking at the brim”; “fever and fret” and “fairy-lands forlorn” may be classified as “*varna-vinyāsa vakratā*”. Thus, according to Kuntaka, the various kinds of phonetic obliquity render poetry miraculous and elegant. However, these should be used carefully. They should not violate propriety and should be used in accordance with both the manner and the matter of poetry. According to Kuntaka, the following conditions should be met for introducing *varna-vinyāsa vakratā*: “When alliteration is effected without extra effort, when it is adorned with syllables which are not harsh, when it becomes appealing by discontinuance of earlier sound repetitions and by new choices for reiteration.”

4.6.2. Pada-Pūrvārdha Vakratā (lexical obliquity)

Lexical obliquity refers to the poet’s choice of words – the vocabulary, metaphors, adjectives and “veiled expressions”. Kuntaka says that when the words of common usage are employed so as to include an attribution of associate meaning other than the primary

ones, it is known as *pada-pūrvārdhavakratā*. As you know, language offers infinite varieties of words – they may be strange or common, evocative or imaginative, fresh or obsolete, exaggerated or underplayed, vigorous or mellifluous. You must have also realized by now that poetic language deviates from the denotative mode of language, and as such, ways of *vakrokti* are also infinite. It depends on the creative power (*pratibhā*) of the poet to achieve such deviation through the selection of the appropriate word. It has also been said that the choice of poetic vocabulary reflects the temperament of the writer, that there is a kind of affinity that exists between certain types of poetic temperament and clusters of poetic vocabulary.

According to Kuntaka, there are several sub-varieties of lexical obliquity:

4.6.2.1. Rūdhi-Vaicitrya vakratā (Obliquity of usage)

When the conventional denotation of a word gives an improbable or exaggerated meaning, it is *rūdhi-vaicitrya-vakratā*. The writer's objective in employing such obliquity is either supreme exaltation or extreme derision of the object. In fact, the obliquity of usage lies in the transformation of conventional meaning. Herein, the improbable connotation is imposed upon the words which are obsolete, dead or of common usage.

In the previous chapters, you have learnt about the denotative and connotative powers of language. According to Kuntaka, the connotative (suggestive) meanings are as important as the denotative (conventional) meaning of the word in poetic language. It is through the suggestive powers of the word that the poet can explore what lies beneath and beyond the surface.

4.6.2.2. Paryāya-Vakratā (Obliquity of Synonym)

As you are aware, synonyms are the words conveying the similar meaning. However, this does not mean that any synonym can be used in place of the other. Each word has different implications and associations; it has its own character – its own beauty. To put it simply, the meanings of two or more words may be similar or even the same, but the shades of meaning are different. A literary writer should be aware of the fine- nuances of the word – his ears and mind must be acutely sensitive to the various dimensions of the word. It is he who knows how to use the words accurately so as to make his depiction clear to the readers and provide them a pleasurable aesthetic experience.

According to Kuntaka, the use of synonyms in *Kāvya* takes place in different ways, some of which are the following:

- i. When the synonym is an integral part of a meaning;
- ii. When it nurtures the literal meaning to its climax;
- iii. When it (or its adjective) beautifies the expression and gives a meaning different from the literal one;
- iv. When the literal meaning achieves excellence by its own splendour;
- v. When it is employed to express some impossible meaning, and
- vi. When it is employed in conjunction with a figure of speech.

4.6.2.3. *Upcāra–Vakratā*(Obliquity of transference)

In this kind of obliquity, the inanimate objects or abstract ideas are invested with human attributes. A word is used in its secondary sense to refer to an object with which it has no direct associations. According to Kuntaka, “When the stated and the implied, though apparently far-removed from each other, have a common attribute, howsoever slight which may be and lends itself to hyperbolic treatment, imparting charm and delight in *kāvya*, it is *upcāra-vakratā*.” In it, the epithet is transferred from the appropriate noun to modify another which it does not really belong to. In this kind of obliquity, the inanimate objects and the abstract phenomena are treated metaphorically i.e. sentient activities are attributed to non-sentient objects, concreteness to abstractness and so on. For example, you may consider the following lines of Emily Dickinson’s poem, “There’s a Certain Slant of Light”:

When it comes, the landscape listens,
Shadows hold their breath.

Here, human qualities are attributed to the landscape and shadows, which are inanimate.

4.6.2.4. *Viśesana–Vakratā* (Obliquity of Adjectives):

According to Kuntaka, the oblique use of adjectives heightens the beauty of a verb or case and contributes to the evocative and imaginative powers of the poetic expression.

Note the following example from Hopkins’ *The Wreck of Deutschland*:

The widow-making, unchilding, unfathering deep.

Here all the adjectives of the deep (the sea) are used in the sense of “take off / away from” i.e.: the deep that takes the father away from the child or vice versa.

4.6.2.5. *Sanvrti–Vakratā* (Obliquity of Concealment)

When the subject of description is concealed by the use of pronoun in order to achieve excellence of expression, we have *sanvrti-vakratā*. Kuntaka explains various kinds of this *vakratā* in poetry like when the direct way of description may remove the infinite specialty of the object; when pronouns are used to conceal the object when its specialty is beyond words; or when a subject is concealed to suggest something which can only be experienced etc.

4.6.2.6. *Linga-Vaicitrya Vakratā* (Obliquity of Gender)

It occurs in poetry when a gender is employed in such a way as to enhance the beauty of expression. According to Kuntaka, it works at three levels:

i. When words belonging to two heterogeneous genders are brought together and used without distinction in a generalized way. This common basis of two genders lends to a unique beauty.

ii. When the feminine gender is used to designate an object ignoring the other possible gender for the sake of excellence. Kuntaka says that it is so because even a name in the feminine gender is pleasing.

iii. Although other genders are possible, a specific gender is preferred by a poet in accordance with the intended meaning. The poetic purpose here is the evocation of charm and beauty.

4.6.2.7. Kriyā–Vaicitrya-Vakratā(Obliquity of Action)

The artistic use of root verbs which is capable of producing a unique beauty is regarded as *kriyā-vaicitrya-vakratā*. According to Kuntaka, it has five varieties:

Extreme capability of the subject, superiority to another subject who could perform the same action, a significant qualification of the action itself, beauty of metaphorical superimposition, concealment of the direct object etc. These five which add charm to the idea described are regarded as the five forms of beauty in action.

4.6.3. Pada-Parārdha Vakratā (Grammatical Obliquity)

When the strikingness appears in the terminal part of the word, it is called *pada-parārdha-vakratā* or *pratyaya-vakratā*. It consists in a specific or peculiar use of tense, case, number, voice, person, particle and indeclinables. Thus, this kind also has many varieties:

4.6.3.1. Kāla-Vaicitrya-Vakratā (Obliquity of Tense)

It consists in the employment of significant tenses appropriate to the subject of description. Kuntaka elaborates that when there is remarkable beauty due to the utmost propriety of time described, we have what is called “beauty in specialty of time.” In this kind of *vakratā*, the writer expresses himself in the tense other than the one ordinarily required. A similar concept in the Western poetics is that of the historical present. Here the past happenings are rendered in the first form of the verb. Often, the depiction of the remote in time and place brings a sense of strangeness and mystery and the expression is invested with charm and beauty. For example the romantic poets like Scott and Keats made copious use of the tales and legends of the middle ages. This led to a revival of the ballad form.

4.6.3.2. Kāraka-Vakratā(Obliquity of Case)

According to Kuntaka, when an ordinary case is employed in *kāvya* by the writer as the main case or vice versa, or the cases are transported, we have *kāraka-vakratā*. Thus this *vakratā* is based on the oblique transposition of the cases. Here animation is attributed to even inanimate objects and the auxiliary cases are made more important than the primary ones. According to Kuntaka, “treatment of one and all auxiliary ‘instruments of action’ as if they were pre-eminent by superimposing primacy on them and reducing the status of the really pre-eminent into that of an auxiliary so that some special shade of charm is

infused into the artful poetic expression is known as *kāraka-vakratā*. It involves “a reversal of status in ‘instruments of action’.”

4.6.3.3. *Sankhyā Vakratā* (Obliquity of Number)

It functions on the basis of the oblique transposition of numbers. In this singular number is changed into plural number and vice-versa. The interchange of two opposite numbers imparts beauty and charm to the poetic expression.

4.6.3.4. *Purusa Vakratā* (Obliquity of Person)

The poetic expression in which the persons are transposed is known as *purusa vakratā*: “When the (grammatical) first person or second person is required logically, instead of using it, the third person is used obliquely in order to gain poetic beauty; it should be regarded as the obliquity of person.” According to Kuntaka, the appropriate use of this obliquity is possible only in epic poetry but at the same time its strikingness is discernible in other forms of *kāvya*.

4.6.3.5. *Upgraha-Vakratā* (Obliquity of Voice)

It works upon the two voices of the verb – Active and Passive. As you all know, in the Active voice the subject performs the action whereas in the Passive voice, the subject undergoes action and the object or person affected by the action is taken as the subject. In Sanskrit, these are known as *Atmane* and *Parasmai-pada* respectively. According to Kuntaka, when both the affixes are possible for a root and the poet is seen preferring the one as against the other because of an aesthetic purpose, that may be designated as arresting beauty of ‘*upagraha*’ or verb-affix.

4.6.3.6. *Pratyaya-Vakratā* (Obliquity of Particle or Affix)

Apart from the usual affix, when a new affix is superadded for the purpose of poetic beauty, it is called *pratyaya-vakratā*.

4.6.3.7. *Pada-Vakratā* (Obliquity of Prefix)

Under *pada-vakrata*, Kuntaka analyses the beauty of *nipāta* (indeclinables) and *upsarga* (prefix). These are underivable words and do not have any grammatical bond with the words. They remain immutable in all genders, numbers and cases, yet they play an important role in poetry. They are used by a gifted writer to denote strong feelings and emotions of joy, melancholy, wonder, grief etc. According to Kuntaka, “in a poem where the prepositions and indeclinables are employed only to suggest *rasas* as the sole essence of a poem as a whole, we have what may be called another type of word-beauty.” For example, you can consider the following lines from Tennyson’s poem, “Break, break, break”:

But O for the touch of a vanish’d hand
And the sound of a voice that is still

In the above example, the indeclinable “O” successfully conveys the poet’s intense grief over the loss of his dead friend.

Thus the *vakratā* occurring in the words and their different parts was analyzed by Kuntaka in a comprehensive manner. According to Kuntaka,

Poetic speech is a veritable creeper, with words as leaves, forming the bases for beauty, striking with artistic turn adding to the wealth of feelings and sentiments in a most striking manner. May the bee-like connoisseurs appreciate it and collect the profusely fragrant and smelt honey from the sentence blossoms, and enjoy it with ever increasing zest.

He further elaborates this by giving the example of a portrait which becomes beautiful with the combination of many pleasing colours. Similarly, different kinds of obliquities, when used in an appropriate manner, bring extraordinary beauty to poetry.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. What are the two major divisions of *vakrokti*?
2. Explain *varna – vinyāsa vakratā*.
3. Define *pada-pūrvārdha vakratā*. Mention its major sub-types.
4. Give some examples of *Pada-vakratā* from English literary texts

4.7. SUMMING UP

In the present unit, you learned about one of the most important Indian theories of literary appreciation. You know that one of the main purposes of poetry is *rasānubhuti* or aesthetic experience. The questions that arise here are: How that experience is accomplished and what are the elements in poetic language that lead to such an experience? The *Vakrokti Siddhānta* provides one of the possible answers to this problem. It is a theory of poetic language which advocates that a striking expression is the essence of poetry. So, in this unit, a brief history of *vakrokti* as a concept was given and views of prominent scholars on various aspects were discussed in this regard.

Although *vakrokti* was taken up for discussion by various scholars like Bhāmaha, Dandin, Vamana, Rudrata etc., it was Kuntaka who elevated it to the status of an “all pervading” poetic concept. Hence, Kuntaka’s *Vakroktijīvita* is considered to be the masterpiece of *vakrokti* theory. In this unit, his concept of *vakrokti* was discussed in detail with a special focus on the meaning of *vakrokti* and its classification into six major and numerous minor types. You also learned about the first three types of grammatical obliquity along with their sub-types. Kuntaka has developed a very elaborate system of classifying *vakrokti*. We shall continue this discussion in the next unit so as to learn more about *vakrokti* and its importance for literary criticism.

4.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

1. Refer to section 4.3.
2. Refer to section 4.4.
3. Refer to sections 4.1 and 4.5.
4. Refer to sections 4.4 and 4.5.

II

1. Refer to section 4.6.
2. Refer to section 4.6.1.
3. Refer to section 4.6.2.
4. Refer to section 4.6.3.7.

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4.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What are the fundamental tenets of the theory of *vakrokti*?
2. How has the theory of *vakrokti* evolved as an aesthetic concept? Mention the significant scholars in this context.
3. Explain *pada-parārdha vakratā* with its major sub-types.
4. Choose a poem from English literature and analyze its lexical obliquity.

5.1. Introduction

5.2. Objectives

5.3. *Vākya-vakratā* (Sentential Obliquity)

5.3.1. *Sahaja-vakratā* (Natural Obliquity)

5.3.2. *Āharya vakratā* (Imposed Obliquity)

5.4. *Vakratā* (Episodic Obliquity)

5.4.1. *Bhāvapūrnasthiti vakratā* (Obliquity of Emotional State)

5.4.2. *Utpādyā lāvanya vakratā* (Obliquity of Modified Source Story)

5.4.3. *Upakārya-upkāraka bhāva vakratā* (Obliquity of Episodic Relationship)

5.4.4. *Angīrasa nisyandanikasa vakratā* (Obliquity of Dominant *Rasa*)

5.4.5. *Apradhāna prasanga vakratā* (Obliquity of Secondary Episode)

5.4.6. *Prakarāntara vakratā* (Obliquity of Play within Play)

5.4.7. *Sandhi viniveśa vakratā* (Obliquity of Juncture)

5.5. *Prabandha-vakratā* (Compositional Obliquity)

5.5.1. *Rasāntara-vakratā* (Obliquity of Changing the *Rasa*)

5.5.2. *Samāpana vakratā* (Obliquity of Winding up the Story)

5.5.3. *Kathā-viccheda vakratā* (Obliquity of Intending End)

5.5.4. *Anusāngika-phala vakratā* (Obliquity of Contingent Objective)

5.5.5. *Nāmkarana-vakratā* (Obliquity of Title)

5.5.6. *Tulya kathā vakratā* (Obliquity of Identical Subject)

5.6. *Vakrokti* and Western Poetics

5.7. Summing Up

5.8. Glossary

5.9. Answers to Self Assessment questions

5.10. References

5.11. Terminal and Model Questions

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall continue with the discussion on the theory of *Vakrokti* or *VakroktiSiddhānta*. In the previous unit, you learned about two broad classifications of *vakrokti*: Grammatical and Non-grammatical. In the Grammatical variety, Kuntaka mentions four kinds of structures of language that can be used to create oblique expression. The first one is phonetic obliquity or *varna-vinyāsa vakratā*. This kind of obliquity creates the possibility of special charm in the sounds of language by deviating from the common patterns in a particular language. If you pay attention to the language of the literary texts, you will find that the literary writers have used, modified, and even twisted the sounds of language to achieve the intended effect. In other words, phonetic obliquity plays a significant role in achieving literariness. In the previous unit, we gave you various examples to illustrate *varna-vinyāsa vakratā*.

In the Grammatical category of *vakrokti*, we also discussed the lexical obliquity, i.e. *pada-pūrvārdha vakratā*. It would not be an exaggeration to say that without lexical obliquity, it would be almost impossible to achieve literariness. You have already learnt about the various types of *pada-pūrvārdha vakratā* in the previous unit which include *rūdhī-vaicitrya vakratā*, *paryāya-vakratā*, *upcāra-vakratā*, *viśesana-vakratā*, *sanvrti-vakratā*, *linga-vaicitrya vakratā* and *kriyā-vaicitrya-vakratā*.

The third type of *vakratā* that we discussed in the previous unit was *pada-parārdha vakratā*. This kind of *vakratā* includes *kāla-vaicitrya-vakratā*, *kāraka-vakratā*, *sankhyā vakratā*, *purusa vakratā*, *upgraha-vakratā*, *pratyaya-vakratā* and *pada-vakratā*. In our discussion of this type of obliquity, we have already taken into consideration its various sub-types. The last type of *vakrokti* under the grammatical category is *vākya-vakratā* or Sentential obliquity. In the present unit, we shall discuss this kind of *vakratā* in detail.

In this unit, we are going to learn the Non-grammatical variety of *vakratā*. As explained in the previous unit, the Non-grammatical variety of *vakratā* means that the extra-linguistic features like context and composition are conceived creatively by the literary writer to achieve the intended effect. The contextual and conceptual deviations in literature are, in fact, of more serious nature as they affect the whole nature of a particular literary writing. In this unit, you will learn about the two major divisions of the Non-grammatical *vakratā*: *prakarana-vakratā* and *prabandha- vakratā*.

5.2. OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify Sentential obliquity in the context of literary creations;
- Comprehend the special nature of *prakarana vakratā* and *prabandha-vakratā*;
- Assess the importance of *Vakrokti siddhānta* vis-à-vis Practical Criticism; and
- Apply the tenets of *Vakrokti* theory to the analysis of literary texts.

5.3. VĀKYA-VAKRATĀ (SENTENTIAL OBLIQUITY)

When strikingness appears in the peculiar use of a sentence, it is regarded as *Vākya-vakratā* or artistic beauty of a sentence. Kuntaka does not provide a classification of *Vākya-vakratā* because its scope is immense. It includes the triple entities of poetry viz., *rasa*, *svabhāva*, and *alamkāras*. It permeates all the other elements. In this variety of obliquity, different constituents of poetry like words, meanings etc. contribute their own beauty to the total poetic effect. This is what Kuntaka says in this regard: “The artistic beauty of a sentence is quite distinct from the wealth of beauty due to qualities and figures of speech in so far as they relate to artistic word and content belonging to one or other of the (three) styles. In fact expressiveness of the sentence-form should be regarded as the essence of this beauty.” But, as we have discussed earlier, the primary role in the creation of poetry is played by the unique skill and brilliance of the poet. Kuntaka compares the effect of this obliquity to a painter’s master stroke that glows out from the beauty of the material used like canvas, lines and colours: “It is an index of the unique skill of the poet even as the unique total appeal of a painting which is something quite distinct from the beauty of the individual elements that go to fashion it such as lovely canvas, lines, and colour-shades.” Here we are reminded of Sir Philip Sydney’s famous statement in *Apologie for Poetry*: “Her (Nature’s) world is brazen, the poets only deliver it golden.”

In the context of the *Vākya-Vakratā*, Kuntaka analyzes the *vastu* (content) of the poetic creation and calls it *vastu-vakratā* or the beauty of the content. The *vastu* of a composition is twofold: *sahaja* (natural) and *āharya* (imposed). Hence, Kuntaka divides *vastu-vakratā* into two varieties: *sahaja-vakratā* and *āharya vakratā*.

5.3.1 Sahaja-Vakratā (Natural Obliquity)

When the *vastu* has its own innate charm and is presented without heavy embellishments in a simple style, it is *sahaja-vakratā*. According to Kuntaka, “when the subject-matter is described in a way conducive to beauty by virtue of its own infinite natural charm and by means of exclusively artistic expressions, we may take it as an instance of creative beauty relating to content.” In such instances there is not much scope for the use of *alamkāras*, as they might spoil the natural beauty of the content or prove to be a hindrance in the relish of *rasa*. So, in cases of *sahaja-vakratā* the poet has to rely on the natural beauty of the content. He has to be careful in the use of words and expressions – he has to select those expressions which are the most appropriate ones to convey the intended idea.

You may find this kind of *vakratā* quite paradoxical. On the one hand, Kuntaka considers the beauty of the *vastu* to be a creation of the gifted poet and, on the other; he says that the charm lies in the content itself. Kuntaka tries to resolve this paradox by establishing a harmonious relationship between the poet and the *vastu*. According to him, the natural grace of the *vastu* is the result of the poet’s function (*vyāpara*). A literary composition reflects the writer’s soul in a simple and natural way.

5.3.2 Aharya Vakratā(Imposed Obliquity)

It consists in the creation of original poetic subjects and its beauty combines both the inborn genius as well as the acquired skills of the poet. The subject-matter is not only an imaginative matter – the poets do not create out of non-existent things in the words, but

they imagine a divine beauty in the things that merely exist. Thus the poets invest the ordinary things with a unique excellence with the help of their genius and skill. Kuntaka further says that this type of *vastu-vakratā* cannot be anything other than figures of speech. Thus he admits a thousand varieties of *vākya vakrata* and includes almost all the *alamkāras* in it. However, according to Kuntaka, the use of *Vākya-vakratā* is relevant so far as they produce grandeur and strikingness. It should not be used indiscriminately by the poet to describe the subject-matter.

It is important for you to know that Kuntaka divides the poetic content into two groups: i) sentient (animate) and ii) non-sentient (inanimate). The sentient group is again divided into i) primary and ii) secondary. Primary sentient includes gods, devils, human beings whereas the secondary sentient covers animals, birds etc. In the non-sentient group, Kuntaka includes the objects of nature viz. trees, flowers, hills, water etc.

Kuntaka maintains hierarchy in the selection of the content by placing the primary subjects first. The primary subjects are made beautiful by a spontaneous presentation of emotions. On the other hand, the secondary sentient and non-sentient act as stimulants in the evocation of *rasas*.

Another kind of poetic content is related to human conduct. According to Kuntaka, the primary sentient-subjects should be described in such a way that their actions serve as models for achieving the four-fold values of life – *dharma, artha, kāma, moksha*. The secondary subjects should be described in a way that leads towards the attainment of that goal.

5.4. PRAKARANA VAKRATĀ (EPISODIC OBLIQUITY)

This kind of obliquity deals with the oblique use of *prakarana* (episode). It includes all integrating strategies in poetry. When the poet devices episodes or incidents in such a way that they contribute to the total effect of poetry, we have *Prakaranavakratā*. It is reflected into the systematic unfolding of the plot, the ingenuity of the plot and the synthesis of all parts into a harmonious whole.

5.4.1. Bhāvapūrnasthiti Vakratā (Obliquity of Emotional State)

According to Kuntaka, “when we find the speakers giving vent to such expression as is replete with the beauty of expressing their ideas properly; when the intended object at the end will remain inscrutable from the beginning (i.e. suspense remains constant till the denouement), the unique and boundless poetic skill understanding it all should be regarded as the poetic beauty of an episode.”

In simple terms, you can understand it thus: in poetry, the heroes are gifted with great and sublime thoughts and emotions. In describing such feelings and ideas, the poet should maintain suspense in such a way that their inner feelings are not revealed in the middle of the story. They should rather remain inscrutable till the end. An abundance of such instances not only enhances the aesthetic appeal, but contributes to the beauty of the work as a whole. As an example, Kuntaka illustrates the episodes of Raghu and Kautsa from Kalidāsa’s treatise, *Raghuvanśa*.

5.4.2. *Utpādyā Lāvanya Vakratā*(Obliquity of Modified Source Story)

Another kind of *Prakarana-vakratā* is the introduction of originality through modification: “When a poet is constructing a plot of his own, though it might be based on a well-known source, if he succeeds in infusing even a small streak of originality, the beauty gained thereby will be singular; even as an episode too can shine forth as the vital essence of the work as a whole, brimful of sentiments reaching their utmost limit.” Here Kuntaka suggests that the poet’s imagination plays an important role in transforming or changing the source material of the composition. He may change the details of the source story, he may invent an episode of his own, or he may re-arrange the source story completely. However, Kuntaka also warns that the poet should select only such themes from the source story which are capable of evoking the desired *rasas* and which provide ample scope to display his inventive powers. As an illustration, Kuntaka refers to the curse of Durvāsa introduced by Kālidāsa in the *Abhijnānśakuntalam* to justify the forgetfulness of king Dusyanta in recognizing his wife Śakuntala. This curse is not mentioned in the original *Mahābhārata*. Through the induction of this episode, Kalidāsa is able to justify the flaw in the character of Dusyanta.

5.4.3. *Upakārya-Upkāraka Bhāva Vakratā*(Obliquity of Episodic Relationship)

This refers to the organic unity among the episodes. Kuntaka defines it thus:

An organic unity which underlies the various incidents described in different parts of the work leading to the ultimate and intended, each bound to the other by a relation of mutual assistance, reveals the essence of creative originality which is most aesthetic only in the case of a very rare poetic genius who is endowed by nature with the gift of an extraordinary inventive imagination.

Here he means that all incidents in the story should be related and complementary to each other and should contribute to the achievement of the desired effect. There should be a sense of artistic unity and balance in narrative, description and characters. This idea may be illustrated with the instance of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. At the outset of the play, three witches are introduced who seem to be making very contradictory statements. One may wonder as to why Shakespeare has chosen to begin his play with this scene. However, they seem to drive his thirst for power, and are able to create suspense through their ambiguous and cryptic remarks. It is only towards the end of the play, when we witness the tragic fall of Macbeth, that the significance of the first scene dawns on us.

Another kind of episodic obliquity occurs “whenever one and the same theme is again and again described in different places with a new touch of creative originality, and is made to radiate the glow of sentiments and figures of speech; it manifests a strikingly new mode of artistic beauty.”

Yet another such obliquity arises “when the conventional themes like water sports are described as an integrated part of a whole pattern supplied by the art by plot-construction, a novel artistic beauty is achieved.”

5.4.4. *Angīrasa Nisyandanikasa Vakratā*(Obliquity of Dominant *Rasa*)“Another type of beauty in respect of Acts etc. is instanced when the beauty is so exclusive to an Act that it cannot be attained by any other Act, either preceding or following, in the play and the Act thus serves as a touchstone in its own way of the ruling sentiments in the play.” In a play, a particular episode may outshine the others because of its artistic brilliance and it may contribute to the consummation of *angīrasa* in a way that has not been manifested by the others. Its artistic excellence cannot be imitated or repeated by the other Acts as it serves as the carrier of the dominant *rasa*. You can take the examples of the Balcony Scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Sleepwalking Scene in *Macbeth* which leave a deep impact on the audience as their artistic brilliance is unparalleled in the entire play.

5.4.5. *Apradhāna Prasanga Vakratā* (Obliquity of Secondary Episode)

According to Kuntaka, a secondary episode also contributes to the meaning of the plot, if it is arranged properly. Even a small incident, though it may be seemingly independent, contributes significantly to the plot: “When the inventiveness of the poet in devising some other incident also ultimately contributes to add significance to the total plot, it should be regarded as another type of beauty of episode.”

5.4.6. *Prakarāntara Vakratā*(Obliquity of Play within Play)

Garbhānka or play-episode is considered to be one of the forms of *Prakarana-vakratā*: “When actors, expert in the art of pleasing the audience, are seen to play the role of an audience themselves on the stage with other actors performing, such a play-episode within a play-episode may be regarded as illustrating a literary art which beautifies the entire drama exquisitely.” A significant example of this kind is *Hamlet* by Shakespeare. In this play, the play within the play, “The Mousetrap” provides Hamlet with the evidence he needs to proceed in his mission to avenge his father’s murder. Thus it plays an important role in the progression of the plot.

5.4.7. *Sandhi Viniveśa Vakratā* (Obliquity of Juncture)

A *sandhi* (juncture) is a combination of different phases of main action with its subsidiaries. The formation of junctures depends upon different stages of action-commencement, effort, prospect of success, certainty of success and attainment of fruit. In Indian aesthetics, they are known as *mukha sandhi*, *prati-mukha sandhi*, *garbha sandhi*, *avamarśa* or *vimarśa sandhi* and *nirvahan sandhi*. Kuntaka says, “The art of the dramatic plot should be pleasing by the construction of delightful junctures (*sandhi*); each of the parts should be organically related to each other, the succeeding one following logically from the preceding one. It should not be vitiated by any excessive craze for observing rules even when they are inopportune. Only in such cases, the episodes will reveal a unique charm of originality.” Thus the preceding and the succeeding episodes must be connected by an intimate, logical and organic relation. The episodes thus arranged bestow the highest kind of charm and beauty to the literary work. Interestingly, Aristotle’s concept of unity of action in the plot seems quite similar to this. It implies that the events depicted in the play should be intimately connected with one another and appears together as one integral whole. For this reason, he considers the episodic plots as the worst because in such plots the events follow one another in mere chronological sequence, “without probable or necessary sequence.”

5.5. PRABANDHA-VAKRATĀ (COMPOSITIONAL OBLIQUITY)

This kind of *vakratā* involves the peculiarity of the whole composition. It comprises “adaptation of a story from a known source with additions resulting in new creative dimensions, a new emotional significance and erasure of unwanted episodes and plausible development of composition.” This kind of *vakratā* depends on the creative capacity and uniqueness of a poet. It has many varieties:

5.5.1. Rasāntara – Vakratā (Obliquity of Changing the Rasa)

“When there is a departure from the enriched “*rasas*’ of the source-book and a new delightful ‘*rasa*’ is delineated by the poet at the conclusion of his work, so that the delight of the readers is ensured, we should regard it as the beauty of a whole work.”

As we have already discussed, *rasa* is considered to be the soul of poetry. It is important for you to note that in long narrative poems, there may be plurality of *rasas*, but the principal emotion or the *angīrasa* is usually single. All the episodes of the plot are arranged in accordance with the dominant emotion and the other *rasas* assist in the smooth flow and relish of the *angīrasa*. Sometimes, this may lead to monotony in the expression. Hence, when the poet adopts a story from a known source, abandons the principal *rasa* and substitutes it with the other, we have this kind of *vakratā*. If the poet is capable enough, this kind of change provides a new kind of beauty and exquisite charm to his poetry.

5.5.2. Samāpana Vakratā (Obliquity of Winding up the Story)

“When a good poet concludes his work with only such a select incident in his original source as promotes the singular prosperity of the hero depicted as an ideal character in all the three worlds, with the idea of avoiding the distasteful culmination of the story in the original, it should be regarded as another appealing form of beauty relating to a whole work.”

In simple terms, it means that the talented writer leaves the insipid part of the source story – he omits those inappropriate incidents which show the protagonist in poor light and picks up the relishable part and expands it for his composition. Kuntaka explains this with the example of Bhāravi’s *Kirātārjuniya* which is based on the *Mahābhārata*. In this, the poet avoids many such inappropriate instances which may show the protagonist Arjuna in poor light, like defeating Bhishma with Shikhandin in his front; and killing Karna when he was lifting up his chariot.

5.5.3. Kathā – Viccheda Vakratā (Obliquity of Intending End)

This kind of *vakratā* is concerned with the suddenness of the intended end. Sometimes a talented writer realizes that an event in the middle of the source-story is capable of producing an unobstructed flow of *rasa* and achieving the intended aim. So he dissects the story in the middle and concludes his narrative with the same event. This kind of *vakratā* helps him in attaining excellence which is the ultimate end of poetry.

Kuntaka explains it thus: “Supposing the even flow of the main story has been broken and its sentiment impaired by the intrusion of some incident whose connection with the main story is almost indiscernible; the poet might give the incident such a turn that it will become inevitable for the conclusion of the main story and thus maintain the unbroken course of ‘*rasa*’ and invest his whole work with a very unique novelty thereby.”

5.5.4. Anusāngika-Phal Vakratā (Obliquity of Contingent Objective)

This kind of *vakratā* deals with the intended and achieved objectives in the story. Sometimes the writer begins his narrative with a particular intention, but towards the end, the protagonist achieves many other results. This adds to the element of surprise and strangeness in the story for the readers. According to Kuntaka, “Again, though the hero is concerned in achieving primarily a single goal, when he is seen to attain incidentally many other equally great fruits, which add up to make his glory shine very brilliantly, such an assemblage of his great achievements will contribute in another way to the beauty of a work as a whole.”

5.5.5. Nāmkarana-Vakratā (Obliquity of Title)

According to Kuntaka, a poet can display his artistic merit even in designing his main plot with a very significant title. The title of play highlights the most important and interesting aspect of the whole plot itself. It is a striking manifestation of the poet’s genius and it attracts the reader with its uniqueness. Literature is replete with such examples. Thomas Hardy’s *Far From the Madding Crowd*; Yeats’ *The Second Coming*, Eliot’s *The Wasteland* and Eugene O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape*, all these titles give a glimpse of the writer’s originality. Similarly the title of such Sanskrit plays as *Mudrārāksasa*, *Pratimānātaka*, *AbhijnānaŚakuntalam* serve as befitting examples of such kind of *vakratā*.

5.5.6 Tulya Kathā Vakratā (Obliquity of Identical Subject)

Kuntaka says that even when great writers compose different works, based on an identical theme, each one of them possesses infinite individual beauty. The fact is that the great works are marked with the genius and individuality of their creators. The uniqueness lies not in the subject chosen, but the treatment that it receives at the hand of the writer. For, example, Vālmiki’s *Rāmāyana* and Tulsidās’ *Rāmcharitmānas* are based on the story of Rāma, but their treatment of the subject is markedly different.

5.6. VAKROKTI AND WESTERN POETICS

Kuntaka’s theory of *Vakrokti* is thus, a theory of poetic language – it analyses and values poetry in terms of the language of its expression. It considers certain obliqueness or indirection as the hallmark of poetic language. It is this obliquity that sets poetry apart from the other discourses and ensures special place for it among them. The theory has special relevance in the field of practical criticism, as it provides us a comprehensive methodology for critically appreciating literary works. In fact, Kuntaka himself has critically analyzed almost all the major poets and playwrights in classical Sanskrit

literature. As Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy says, “Kuntaka may not be as great a philosopher as Ānandvardhana; he may not be as good a logician as Bhāmaha or as fervent a dialectician as Mahimbhatta; but as a literary critic in the true sense of the term, Kuntaka stands unrivalled. He was a very sensitive critic with genuine literary taste. His literary criticism itself often rises to the level of good literature.”

As you are aware, the nature of poetic language has been the prime concern of the scholars in the West also. Beginning from Aristotle to the present times, the critics have been insisting that the language of poetry or literature is different from that of day-to-day, ordinary modes of conversation. There have been exceptions like Wordsworth who insisted that poetic diction should be “a selection of the language really used by men”; but we know how he failed miserably in this as he could not apply his criteria to his own poems. His greatest poems – *Tintern Abbey*, *the Immortality Ode*, *The Solitary Reaper* are not written in such language.

In the twentieth century, with the advent of New Criticism, the whole emphasis of the critics in the West shifted to poetic language. There was a revival of oblique and complex poetry because the simple, charming and romantic poetry was considered inadequate to express the multiple complexities of the modern age. As T. S. Eliot says, “modern poetry must be difficult because of the discontinuities of modern culture.” Eliot himself differentiated between art emotion and personal emotion. Art emotion is a complex one as against the personal emotion which may be “simple, crude and flat.” It may be interesting for you to know that Eliot’s original *The Wasteland* was pruned to one-third by his fellow-poet Ezra Pound to make it more elegant and precise. Thus Eliot and Pound were largely responsible for the revival of the oblique mode of modern poetry.

New critics like Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, William Empson and F. R. Leavis – all agree that the nature of literary language is different from the scientific or everyday language. Literary language is more complex and connotative – it produces multiple and conflicting meanings by devices such as irony, paradox- ambiguity, tension etc. As Tillyard points out, “All poetry is more or less oblique: there is no direct poetry.” Allen Tate’s concept of ‘tension’, Brooks ‘paradox’ and ‘irony’, Empson’s ‘ambiguity’ – all these can be appreciated in relation to the Indian theory of *Vakrokti*.

The tenets of Russian Formalism show a striking similarity to *Vakrokti*. Russian Formalism was a school of critical thinking which flourished in Moscow in 1920s. Its tenets were subsequently assimilated by the Prague Linguistic Circle. Its leading exponents were Victor Shklovsky, Jan Mukarovsky and Roman Jakobson. They laid emphasis on the “literariness of literature.” In the words of Roman Jakobson, “The object of study in literary science is not literature, but ‘literariness’ that is what makes a given work literary.” The ‘literariness’ of a work consists in “the maximum foregrounding of utterance.” The technique used is ‘defamiliarization’ which means ‘making strange’. In simple terms, it means that literature breaks automatic or habitual perception – it invests the familiar with strangeness.

The formalists viewed literature primarily as a specialized mode of language and proposed a fundamental difference between the ordinary “practical use of language and the literary use of language”. Thus we can notice a conspicuous correspondence between

Russian Formalism *and Vakrokti*. In the present times, Geoffrey Leech has analyzed the concept of deviation in his famous book *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. Leech classifies linguistic deviation into eight types: Lexical deviation; Grammatical deviation; Phonological deviation; Graphological deviation; Semantic deviation; Dialectical deviation; Deviation of Register, and Historical deviation.

To conclude, we may say that both Indian and Western scholars unanimously agree that the language of poetry or for that matter of literature has an element of strangeness in it. It is the obliqueness in literary language that imparts a unique charm and beauty to it and renders it a relishable aesthetic experience. However, you must remember that the Western concept of deviation is mainly related to the linguistic aspects of poetry. But Kuntaka's theory of *Vakrokti* is much more comprehensive and profound. It is multi-dimensional as it takes into account the formal and structural aspects of poetic language as well. Hence we cannot find the concepts of *prakaran-vakratā* and *prabandha vakratā* in the West. Kuntaka not only formulated the concept of *vakrokti* but also applied it to the literary texts. Thus the Indian theory of *Vakrokti* is a comprehensive theory of literary appreciation, which has tremendous significance and applicability in the field of literature.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. What do you understand by *vākya-vakratā* ? Elaborate.
2. Discuss the two kinds of poetic content (*vastu*) as expounded by Kuntaka.
3. Write a short note on Russian Formalism.
4. What is the significance of *Vakrokti Siddhānta* in the field of practical literary criticism?

5.7. SUMMING UP

In the present unit, we continued our discussion on Kuntaka's classification of *vakrokti*. *vākya-vakratā* is the last one in the Grammatical variety of *vakrokti*. *vākya-vakratā* or sentential obliquity refers to the artistic beauty of sentence. Its scope is immense and hence Kuntaka does not provide us with a classification of *vākya-vakratā*. In this context, the *vastu* (content) of the poetic creation, along with its two varieties was discussed. In this unit, you also learned about the two Non-grammatical varieties of *vakratā*. These are related to the extra-linguistic features of literary texts like the context and the composition.

Since the uniqueness of poetic language has been a major concern of western theoreticians also, you were provided an insight into some of the concepts related to poetic language in western aesthetics. After going through the contents of this unit, you must have been able to analyze and appreciate the nuances of poetic language in a better way.

5.8. GLOSSARY

bodhakasuggester, indicator

camatkāraa marvel, a quality(of a literary composition) that enchants

citrapictorial

*dhātu*verb-root

garbhānkaa play within a play or play-episode

*hetu*reason, cause

kāku intonation

*kāra*case (in grammar)

Kuntaka eleventh century A.D. Sanskrit literary theorist, author of *Vakroktijīva*

mādhurya sweetness (an attribute of poetic language, according to Kuntaka)

*mahākāvya*epic

*nipāta*indecidable particles, one of the four parts of speech in Sanskrit grammar

pada-parārdha vakratā grammatical obliquity

pada- pūrvārdha vakratā lexical obliquity

prabandha-vakratā compositional obliquity

prakarana-vakratā episodic obliquity

*pratibhā*poetic genius

*pratyaya*affix

*purusārtha*four main objects of human existence (*dharma, artha, kāma, moksa*)

samyoga coming together

*svabhāvokti*normal utterance

*ukti*speech, expression

vakra deviant

*vakratā*deviation

*vakrokti*deviation in poetic language

vakrokti siddhānta the principle of deviation in poetic language

vākya-vakratā sentential obliquity

varna-vinyāsa vakratā phonetic obliquity

*vastu*poetic content

*vicitra*unique, brilliant

*vyāpāra*action, work, process

5.9. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to section 5.3.
2. Refer to section 5.3.2.
3. Refer to section 5.6.
4. Refer to section 5.6.

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5.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. "In the whole range of Sanskrit poetical theory, we do not have anyone who can be termed a practical literary critic in the modern sense of the term, except Kuntaka" Elaborate.
2. Differentiate between *Prakarana-vakratā* and *Prabandha-vakratā*. Illustrate through examples.
3. Write a detailed note on the similarities and differences between *Vakrokti Siddhānta* and Russian Formalism.

UNIT 6 ALAMKĀRA SIDDHĀNTA

6.1. Introduction

6.2. Objectives

6.3. Meaning of *Alamkāra*

6.4. Proponents of *Alamkāra* Theory

6.5. *Alamkāra* as Poetic Theory

6.6. *Alamkāra* and Western Aesthetics

6.7. Classification of *Alamkāra*

6.8. Illustrations of Various *Alamkāras*

6.8.1. *Śabdalamkāra*

6.8.1.1. *Anuprāsa* (Alliteration)

6.8.1.2. *Yamaka* (Pun)

6.8.1.3. *Ślesha* (Paranomasia)

6.8.1.4. *Dhvanyātmakatā* (Onomatopoeia)

6.8.2. *Arthālamkāra*

6.8.2.1. *Upamā* (Simile)

6.8.2.2. *Rūpaka* (Metaphor)

6.8.2.3. *Ananyaya*

6.8.2.4. *Drstanta* (Poetic analogy)

6.8.2.5. *Atiśayokti* (Hyperbole)

6.8.2.6. *Mānavīkarana* (Personification)

6.8.2.7. *Sambodhita Mānavīkarana* (Apostrophe)

6.8.2.8. *Utprekṣā* (Conceit)

6.8.2.9. *Aprastutaprasāmsā* (Indirect Praise)

6.8.2.10. *Samāsokti* (Condensed Metaphor)

6.8.2.11. *Virodha* (Oxymoron)

6.8.2.12. *Viśeshana Viparyaya* (Transferred Epithet)

6.8.2.13. *Paryāyokti* (Periphrasis)

6.8.2.14. *Vyatireka*

6.9. Summing Up

6.10. Answers to Self Assessment Questions

6.11. References

6.12. Terminal and Model Questions

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Alamkāra or figure of speech is a very important component of literature. Without *Alamkāra* it is difficult to imagine that a literary writer can create literary texts. As students of literature, we must have deeper insights into the nature and function of the figures of speech. We are sure that you have some knowledge about the figures of speech, at least about some of the important figures of speech like Simile, Metaphor, and Alliteration etc. In Sanskrit aesthetic theory, the theory of *alamkāra* is a very comprehensive theory of figures of speech. The *AlamkāraSiddhānta* has been used by the aestheticians to explore more complex questions on the nature and functions of literary creations. In this unit we are going to learn about the *Alamkāra* theory and answer some questions like:

- i. What is *alamkāra*?
- ii. What are the different *alamkāras*?
- iii. How and why is *alamkāra* a part of aesthetics or poetic theory?
- iv. Whether *alamkāra* is absolutely external to literature, a mere embellishment which adorns it with glitter and glamour; or is it integral to aesthetic creation and contributes to aesthetic relish or delight? (*rasa*)

In this unit we would try to analyze and answer the above questions.

6.2. OBJECTIVES

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

- Comprehend the various levels of the poetic theory known as *Alamkāra*.
- Divide and classify different figures of speech, so as to understand the distinction between different *Alamkāras*.
- Discuss whether *alamkāras* function merely as embellishment and are of simply ornamental value or they are integral to literary creation.
- Develop an appropriate understanding of the functions and role of *Alamkāra* vis-à-vis other poetic theories.

6.3. MEANING OF ALAMKĀRA

Efforts have been made by different poetic theorists to explain *Alamkāra*, but it is rather difficult to define it. However, to start with, *Alamkāra* literally means “embellishment or ornament.” In a restricted sense, *Alamkāra* means any trope or figure of speech that adorns a literary composition. It is generally assumed that *Alamkāra* (figure of speech) is just a mode of figurative compression which renders beauty to a piece of literature. It is also generally believed that this figurative mode of expression is just a way of using words or phrases which adds to the external glamour of a literary text.

The word *Alamkāra* is derived from the root \sqrt{kr} with the prefix *alam*, which means ‘to decorate’, ‘to adorn’: “*alankaroti iti alankārah.*” According to *Achārya* Dandin, “*Kāvya śobhākarāndharmān alamkāraṇprachakṣate*” i.e. the functions enhancing the beauty of poetry are known as *alamkāras*. For Ruyyaka (*Alamkāra sarvasva*), *alamkāra* is not a

mere embellishment but the *dharma* of poetry. Mammata says that *alamkāra* is strikingness itself: “*Vaichitryamcālamkārah*”. Vāmana believes that *alamkāra* is an essential part of beauty itself. He uses the term *alamkāra* in two different senses:

- i. *Alamkāra* stands for beauty or beautification in general – “*kāvyaalamkāra-sūtra-vritti*” (poetry is understood to be attractive to us because of *alamkāra*) and “*Saundaryam alamkārah*” (*alamkāra* means beauty).
- ii. That which beautifies – “*alankriyate anen.*”

Achārya Kuntaka, in his *Vakroktijivita* states that the word *alamkāra* has several meanings:

- i. In general terms, it refers to ornaments like rings, necklace, etc. worn by women.
- ii. In its secondary sense, it refers to the figures of speech which enhance the beauty of a poetic composition.
- iii. It also refers to the overall beauty of sound and sense achieved through the medium of various poetic devices.
- iv. It can also mean the treatise which discusses the beauty of poetry.

It is also propounded that the figures of speech, especially those relating to the play of words like alliteration, provide certain pleasantness of sound i.e. euphony, and thus lead to poetic experience and pleasure. But we must remember that the appropriateness and significance of meaning should not be ignored altogether merely for the sake of embellishment. In this connection Bhāmaha, the great exponent of the *Alamkāra* theory believes that figures of speech provide pleasure of meaning inherent in certain *alamkāras* such as *arthāntaranyāsa*, *vibhāvana* and *samāsokti*.

6.4. PROPONENTS OF ALAMKĀRA THEORY

It is important for you to note that in early poetics, the focus of the theorists was not on the evocation of *rasa*, but on differentiating poetic language from ordinary language. Poetry is conceived of as a beautiful maiden, having a body that requires adornment to appear beautiful. The object of poetry is beauty which can be best expressed through embellishment – *Alamkāras*. *Alamkāras* figure first in *Nāṭyasāstra*. As you have already learnt, *Nāṭyasāstra* is a treatise on dramaturgy, but Bharata has also discussed some important concerns of poetry and *Alamkāra* is definitely one of them. Bharata considers mainly four *Alamkāras* appropriate for poetry and he has analyzed them in the seventeenth chapter of the *Nāṭyasāstra* – *Upamā* (Simile), *Rūpaka* (Metaphor), *Dīpaka* and *Yamaka* (Pun). There is another category called *Laksanā*, thirty-six of which are discussed in the same chapter. Although most of them are extinct now, some like *Hetu* are incorporated in the figures of speech.

The earliest proponent of *Alamkāra* theory, by common consent, is Bhāmaha. His famous treatise is *Kāvyaalamkāra* wherein he has developed a detailed theory of figures of speech. In Chapters 2 and 3 of *Kāvyaalamkāra* he discusses thirty-five figures of speech. In the hands of Bhāmaha, *Alamkāras* attain great significance and are considered to be the essence of poetry. It is noteworthy that Bhāmaha, unlike Bharata, is primarily concerned with poetic art, not with dramaturgy. He deals with the ‘poetic conception’

(*Kāvyalakshna*) of the theorists. The credit of establishing poetic theory as an independent area of poetics goes to him only.

Since Bhāmaha is not much concerned with the dramatic art, he does not accord any importance to *rasa* in his work. Though he does talk of *rasa* in poetry (*Kāv्यarasa*), yet *rasa*, for him, is not so essential an element of poetry as it was to Bharata or the post-Abhinavagupta theoreticians. In fact, he says that “a poetic composition, though delineating *rasa*, is often as bad as a raw fruit of wood-apple.” So, for Bhāmaha, *rasa* is not the soul of poetry. As such, it has an independent status only in the case of *Mahakāvya* (epic) and in the other cases it is subservient to the poetic figures. According to Bhāmaha, words and meaning together form poetry – “*Sabdārthau Sahitau Kāvyaṃ.*” But this definition is too wide because it may include all the linguistic activities. So, he further says that only such linguistic expression which has an element of crookedness (*vakratā*) in it is fit to be called poetry: “A composition, though written in a good style and so possessed of the qualities such as sweetness and clarity is not poetry. It is like a song which pleases the ears only.”

Bhāmaha is considered to be the chief propounder of *Alāmkāra* theory. His conception of *Alamkāras* is wide and inclusive. He has included even *Rasa* in his concept of *Alamkāra*, which he calls *Rasavat Alamkāra*. He considers *Alamkāra* to be the most important element of poetry. He says that even a beautiful lady would not look so in the absence of ornaments: “*Na kāntamapi nirbhusamvibhāti vanitāmukham.*” Similarly embellishment (*Alamkāra*) is the most essential element of poetry as it imparts beauty to poetry. It consists in “the striking manner of putting a striking idea in equally striking words.”

Another important *Alamkāra* theoretician is Dandin whose famous treatise is *Kāvyaḍarśa*. Dandin’s conception of poetry is different from that of Bhāmaha because he considers *rasa* to be an important element in all forms of poetry. According to him sweetness of style (*mādhurya*), which is a significant attribute of poetry, consists in “the inclusion of such words and ideas in the composition as reveal the *rasa*.”

Dandin is a staunch advocate of *Alamkāra Siddhānta* as he claims that the poetic beauty of a work consists in embellishment: “*Kāvyaśobhakarān dharmānalamkāraṇ pracaksate.*” According to Dandin, poetic embellishments are of two kinds, (a) natural (*svabhāvokti*) and (b) artistic (*vakrokti*). In his treatise he has given a profound and comprehensive analysis of *alamkāras* and he considers them to be infinite in number. His treatise has been quite popular among the *Alamkārikas*.

Vāmana is another important *Alamkāra* theoretician. Chronologically, he comes next after Dandin. He authored the treatise named as *Kāvyaalamkārasūtra* which is the first book written in *sūtra*-style in Indian aesthetics. He is considered to be the propounder of the *Riti* School of thought. In his book, he improves upon and enhances Bhāmaha’s conception of poetry. For him, poetry is not merely a conjunction of words and meanings with certain crookedness, but of words well-refined (*samskrita*) and meanings which is adorned by the *gunas* and embellishment – “*Kāvyaśabdo-ayam gunālamkāra sanskritayoh sabdārthayoh vartate.*”

For Vāmana, *Riti* (style) is the soul of poetry which consists in the possession of ten qualities called the *gunas*. *Alankāra* is beauty – “*Saundaryam, alankārah.*” He has analyzed thirty-three *alānkaras* and considers *upamā* to be the basic embellishment. Vāmana believes that poetry is grasped and perceived through *alamkāras*: “*Kāvyaṅgrāhyamlankārat*”. But *alānkara*, unlike *gunas*, is not the essential ingredient of a poetic text. It is desirable, not compulsory. The analogy that he gives to explain his conception of poetry is quite different from that of Bhāmaha. He says that poetry is like a picture and the qualities and the embellishment may be compared to the lines and paints respectively. Just as the beauty of the picture depends more on the lines than the paints, similarly the beauty of the poetic production depends mainly upon the poetic qualities. The poetic embellishments simply enhance the beauty of the work but the qualities are the basic, essential elements. So according to Vāmana, there can be no poetic beauty in the absence of poetic qualities. Thus, the embellishments are comparatively less important than the poetic qualities in a poetic production – they are the essentials of style and the embellishment simply enhances it.

An important name in the *Alamkāra* school of thought is that of Ācharya Udbhata. He authored three books on poetic-theory, of which the only one available is *Kāvyalankārsāra-sangraha*. In his treatise, Udbhata seems to have accepted the conception of poetry propounded by the *rasa*-theorists. However, his conception of the poetic embellishment (*rasavat*) is quite similar to that of Bhāmaha. Like Bhāmaha he also does not consider *rasa* to be the soul of poetry. It is only an embellishment (*alamkāra*). He also holds that all the constituents of the aesthetic configuration (including the *sthāyibhāvas*) admit of linguistic expression (*svāśabdasthāyī*) through *laksanā*.

Rudrata’s treatise *Kāvyaalamkara* is quite mature work of poetic theory. He has contributed immensely to the analysis of *alānkāras*. He propounded many new *alamkāras* and he was the first one to classify them in a scientific manner, though it was not accepted later on.

In this context, we must mention Ānandavardhana who is primarily a *Dhvani* theorist and considers *Dhvani* as the soul of poetry. As far as *Alāmkāras* are based on expressed sense, he treats them as external devices. He says, “Figures are to be known as those that are associated with its parts even like ornaments such as the bracelet.” It is only when they enter the realm of *Dhvani* (suggestion) that they evoke *rasa* and become integral to poetry. So Ānandavardhana analyzes *Alamkāras* in three ways:

- i. Expressed *Alamkāras*
- ii. *Alamkāras* possessing subordinated suggestion.
- iii. Primarily suggested *Alamkāras* or *Alamkāra-dhvani*.

Of these, the primarily suggested *Alamkāras* are the most important. The expressed *Alamkāras* have been taken as mere *Vāgvikalpas*, and considered as belonging to the lowest class of poetry.

In Ānandavardhana’s theory, *Alamkāra* is integrated with *Dhvani* and *rasa*. He believes that just as the beauty of a lady is more than merely the physical appearance, the beauty of ornaments and the dress, the beauty of the *Alamkāra* is intrinsic and beyond expression. He believes that the figures of speech evoke suggestiveness and thus lead to

Dhvani and even *rasa*: "...the group of expressed figures of speech, when it is accompanied by a suggested element, be it either a figure of speech or a situation as the case may be, endows them with great beauty." However, he is very much against the usage of *Alamkāras* as merely artificial devices, imposed superficially on a composition. Such figures may even mar the beauty of expression. So he formulates some rules for the employment of *Alamkāras* so that they enhance the beauty of the literary composition.

- i. *Alamkāra* shall be intended to suggest *rasa*.
- ii. It shall be born along with the poet's delineation of *rasa*.
- iii. It shall be naturally and easily introduced, and
- iv. The poet shall not make fresh and extra effort to effect it.

You are familiar with Kuntaka as a *Vakrokti* theorist. Since *Alamkāra*, like *Vakrokti*, is a feature of poetic language, he has also dealt with the concept of the figures of speech and has made certain significant observations in this regard: "What is embellished is regarded as poetry. There is nothing like a pre-existing poetry to which ornaments can be superadded." He says that *Alamkāras* contribute to the aesthetic beauty of poetry: "All the figures of speech explained so far share one common feature; and that is their promotion of aesthetic effect in spirit of their secondary function or status." However, as he observes, sometimes they are used so skillfully by a gifted poet that they, "...assume a rare prominence; and though secondary, they begin to appear as if they were very primary; and since their impressiveness is striking in the way they are used by poets, they are interpreted here as possessing primacy of appeal."

6.5. ALAMKĀRA AS POETIC THEORY

Alamkāra is definitely a part of poetic theory and the above mentioned exponents of the theory believe that figurative expression does lead to the beauty of a literary composition and does contribute to aesthetic delight. They realize and agree that poetic language is fundamentally different from everyday speech on the one hand and the language of science on the other. As such, the field of *Alamkāra* becomes theoretically very vast. It includes not only all the meanings in language- literal or informative, metaphorical or emotive, but also leads to the aesthetic delight that is inherent in a literary experience.

As we have already discussed, Ānandavardhana's perception of *Alamkāra* is that figurative expression adds to the suggestiveness of meaning and suggestion is evoked by figures of speech. He believes that it leads to the realization of aesthetic delight. Therefore, *Alamkāra* is an important literary theory.

Generally, it is propounded that *Alamkāras* only provide ornamentation to a literary composition, just as ornaments enhance the external charm of a woman. But a deeper comprehension of the theory would lead us to the conclusion that *Alamkāra* is integral to literature, since it adds to the suggestiveness and beauty of expression of a poetic text. It has been said: "... there is no poetry apart from *Alamkāras* as there can be a damsel's body in life, apart from her ornaments like the ring and the bracelet." Kuntaka, in fact, considers *Alamkārastō* to be *rasavat* (like *rasa*) as they produce the dual effects in poetry : " Just as *rasa* produces delectability in poetry as well as the aesthetic delight of refined readers, so also *Alamkāras* like simile produce both these effects." He further says that

the *alamkāras* are the outcome of *kavi-pratibhā* and they have the capacity to generate the special charm in poetry denoted as *Vicchitti*. But it must be noted that they are to not to be used indiscriminately. They should be employed with a sense of propriety, keeping in view the demands of the theme. In this context, Kuntaka makes a distinction between a poetic figure and a mere speech-figure and considers the former as something internal to poetry.

From the above discussion, we may conclude that *Alamkāras* should not be treated as mere external adornment to poetry. Their relevance in poetry is independent of all other considerations. When used with a sense of propriety, they become intrinsic to poetry and justify their existence completely.

Self Assessment Questions I

1. What do you understand by the term *Alamkāra*? Elaborate.
2. Why do we consider *Alamkāra Siddhānta* a prominent Aesthetic Theory?
3. Discuss the contribution of Bhāmaha to *Alamkāra Siddhānta*.

6.6. ALAMKĀRA AND WESTERN AESTHETICS

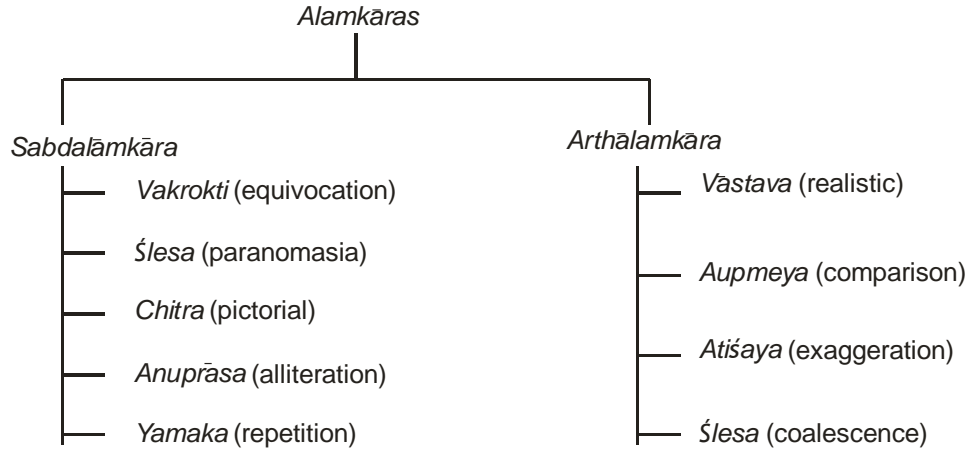
In western aesthetics, figures of speech are analyzed in Rhetoric, which literary means, “the science of the orator” According to Jeremy Taylor “Rhetoric is nothing but reason well-dressed, and argument put in order.” In simple terms, it means the art that helps to make language more forceful, touching and moving, more readily comprehensible. Its function is to make language effective, be it spoken or written.

Rhetoric deals with various figures of speech. A figure of speech has been defined as “a departure from the simplest form of statement with a view to heightening or specializing the effect.” It refers to the use of a word or phrase in a manner which transcends its literal interpretation. In poetic language especially we have to take recourse to figures of speech because simple words used in their literal sense may not have the power to convey the idea clearly and forcefully. So literary writers often make use of rhetorical figures to achieve special effects and convey meanings in fresh, unexpected ways. In literary language, any intentional deviation from literal statement or common usage can be termed as a figure of speech. Figures of speech not only contribute to the embellishment and persuasiveness of style, but they also throw fresh light upon a subject by presenting it in a new and unexpected form.

6.7. CLASSIFICATION OF ALAMKĀRA

Different theorists have classified different categories of *Alamkāra* into different kinds of systems. For example, Bharata identifies only four *Alamkāras* – *upamā* (simile), *rūpaka* (metaphor), *dīpaka* (stringed figures) and *yamaka* (repetition). Rudrata divides all *alamkāras* into two types: (i) *śabdālamkāra* (based on phonetic form) and (ii) *arthālamkāra* (based on meaning) and then further divides each into five and four subtypes respectively. Bhoja added the third category – *ubhayālamkāra* to the two major types of Rudrata. Generally, scholars give more emphasis on the *arthālamkāras* than on

the *śabdālamkāras*. Prof. Kapil Kapoor has discussed the classification of *ālamkāras* in the following manner:



Ruyyaka classified *Alamkāras* into seven classes on the basis of their content (meaning), on the basis of how meaning is constituted:

- i. *Sādrishya* (similarity),
- ii. *Virodha* (opposition),
- iii. *Śrinkhalābadha* (chain-bound),
- iv. *Tarka nyāya* (reasoning, logic),
- v. *Lokanyāya* (popular logic),
- vi. *Kāvyanāya* (logic of poetry), and
- vii. *Gūḍhartha pratīti* (inference of meaning).

Mammata enumerates sixty-one figures and groups them into seven types:

- i. *Upamā* (simile),
- ii. *Rūpaka* (metaphor),
- iii. *Aprastuta prasamsā* (indirect description),
- iv. *Dīpaka* (stringed figures),
- v. *Vyatireka* (dissimilitude),
- vi. *Virodha* (contradiction), and
- vii. *Samucchaya* (concatenation).

Thus the number of *Alamkāras* increased from Bharata's original four to sixty-one identified by Mammata. Accordingly to Kapil Kapoor, the different classificatory systems can be seen to be based on the following parameters:

- i. objects compared (*upameya*),
- ii. objects with which compared (*upamāna*),
- iii. value of figures,
- iv. semantic basis, such as similarity,
- v. grammar (viz. , *samāsokti*),
- vi. coherence with known facts or otherwise (*sangati*,) and
- vii. syntax.

6.8. ILLUSTRATIONS OF VARIOUS ALAMKĀRAS

According to the Sanskrit theoreticians, *śabda* (word) and *artha* (meaning) are the two basic elements of poetry. From this it follows that the basic classification of the embellishments would be:

- i. *Śabdālamkāra* (verbal),
- ii. *Arthālamkāra* (ideational), and
- iii *Ubhayālamkāra* (including both).

6.8.1. Śabdālamkāra

A figure of speech depending for its pleasantness on the phonetic form (sound) of the word, *śabdālamkāra* ornaments the sound of the word. In Sanskrit poetics, following are the *śabdālamkāras*:

6.8.1.1. Anuprāsa (Alliteration)

The repetition of initial consonant sound is called alliteration. You can refer to the following stanza from Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as a characteristic example:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
. Into that silent sea.

Another example of alliteration has been taken from Hopkins' poem, "Pied Beauty"

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change.

You can notice how the repetition of certain sounds like /f/ and /s/ lends a unique charm to the above examples.

6.8.1.2. Yamaka (Pun)

It refers to the repetition in the same stanza of words or syllables similar in sound but different in meaning. The following dialogue from Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* serves as an example of *Yamaka*:

Mercutio: That dreamers often *lie*
Romeo: in bed asleep, while they do dream things true. Dreamers *lie* (are false), and *lie* (down).

6.8.1.3. Slesha (paranomasia)

When a word is used once and has more than one meaning, it is *Ślesha alankāra* :

When I am dead, I hope it may be said
'His sins were scarlet, but his books were read'.
(Hilaire Belloc, "On his Books")

In the above example, the word 'read' has two meanings: (i) the colour red and (ii) the act of reading.

Note: The other example which is from *Romeo and Juliet*: Mercutio, who is stabbed fatally, stops joking to explain that "tomorrow...you shall find me a *grave* man." 'Grave' means 'serious', but here it also alludes to his imminent death.

6.8.1.4. Dhvanyātmakatā (Onomatopoeia)

In its simplest sense, onomatopoeia refers to the formation or use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to:

For example: "The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."
(Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale")

You may also consider the following stanza from Edgar Allen Poe's poem, "The Bells" which serves as a befitting example of onomatopoeia:

How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle
In the icy air of night!
.....
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells;
From the jingles and tinkling of the bells

6.8.2. Arthālamkāra

It refers to the embellishment of sense by poetical figure. Some of the main *arthālamkāras* in Sanskrit rhetoric are:

6.8.2.1. Upamā (Simile)

This is the first *Arthālamkāra* discussed in Indian aesthetics. It represents the oldest phase of growth of *Alamkāras* in Sanskrit Poetics. According to Panditrāja Jagannātha, "the beautiful resemblance which renders the sense of a sentence charming is *upamā*." An *upamā* or simile is a figure of speech that states explicitly the similarity existing between two different things. In this, a comparison is made between two objects of different kinds which have at least one point in common. An example of Simile is taken from T.S.Eliot's famous poem, "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock":

When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon the table;

Here a comparison is made between the evening and a patient on the basis of a property which both have in common, i.e. the state of inertia.

There are four elements in *Upamā*:

- i. *Upameya*: the subject of comparison.
- ii. *Upamāna*: the thing or object which the subject is compared to.
- iii. *Sādharmya*: the quality which is the point of comparison.
- iv. *Vāchaka*: the word indicating the similarity between the *upameya* and *upamāna*.

Take note of another example “Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body.” (Macaulay)

In the above example, poetry is the *upameya*, magic lantern the *upamāna*, the *sādharmya* is the quality of producing an illusion and the *vāchaka* is ‘as’.

6.8.2.2. *Rūpaka* (Metaphor)

A metaphor is a kind of condensed simile. In this figure of speech, a comparison is implied, but not formally expressed. Simile is an overt, and metaphor a covert comparison. In *upamā*, there is a similarity between the *upameya* and the *upamāna*, but in *arūpaka*, both are depicted as one. It means that there is no difference between them. In fact, there is the super-imposition of the *upamāna* upon the *upameya*. Note the following examples:

- i. Yet all experience is an arch wherethro’
Gleams that untravell’d world whose margin fades
For ever and ever when I move.
(Tennyson, “Ulysses”)
- ii. Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
(Shakespeare, *Macbeth* V.V)

In the first example, experience is represented as an arch through which one can have a glimpse of the unexplored world. In the second example, a comparison is made between a) life and walking shadow on the basis of transience and b) life and a tale on the basis of meaninglessness of both.

6.8.2.3. *Ananvaya*

In this type the *upmāna* and the *upameya* are the same. The comparison is among them only. For example, “*Rāmarāvanayor yuddham Rāmarāvanayor iva*” (The battle between Rāma and Rāvana is like Rāma and Rāvana.) Here, the poet is unable to find a suitable

object of comparison for the battle between Rāma and Rāvana and so he treats the *upameya* as the *upmāna*.

6.8.2.4. *Drstānta* (poetic analogy)

According to Kuntaka, “when another idea is pointed to on the basis of its factual similarity (to the idea on hand) without explicit use of expressions like *iva*, we have *drstānta* or poetic analogy.” Here, a direct comparison is made between two events, people, or ideas to draw a particular inference. Consider the following stanza from Amy Lowell’s poem, ‘Night Clouds’:

The white mares of the moon rush along the sky
Beating their golden hoofs upon the glass heavens;
The white mares of the moon are all standing on their hind legs
Pawing at the green porcelain door of the remote Heavens.

In the above example, the analogy between the mares and the clouds creates a vivid and striking image of clouds on a moonlit night.

6.8.2.5. *Atīśayokti* (Hyperbole)

In Hyperbole a statement is made emphatic by overstatement:

Hamlet: I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love
Make up my sum.

(Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V.II)

In this context, you must remember that though this statement may seem an exaggeration to you, or the onlookers, but from the point of view of the speaker, it may be very serious and genuine. Hyperbole is an expression of an excited person’s tendency to exaggerate. So, we must also take into account the speaker’s point of view.

Metaphysical poetry abounds in hyperbolic expressions. Take, for example, the following lines from Donne’s “The Good Morrow” wherein he compares the lovers’ faces to the two hemispheres:

Where can we find two better hemispheres
Without sharp north, without declining west?

6.8.2.6. *Mānavīkarana* (Personification)

By this figure inanimate objects and abstract ideas are invested with the attributes of a living being i.e. they are shown as having life and intelligence.

For example: The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window panes.
(T. S. Eliot – “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”)

Consider another example by Emily Dickinson:

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul

And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all.

In the above example, human qualities are attributed to Hope, which is an abstract emotion.

6.8.2.7. Sambodhita Mānavīkarana (apostrophe)

An apostrophe is a direct address to the dead, to the absent, or to a personified object or idea. This figure is a special form of personification.

For example– Absence, hear thou my protestation
(John Donne: “Present in Absence”)

The opening lines of Wordsworth’s sonnet also exemplify this figure of speech:

Milton !thou should’st be living at this hour.

6.8.2.8. Utprekṣā (Conceit)

According to Kuntaka, “Either by way of fancying or by way of similarity or by way of both, when the poet desires to convey the extraordinary nature of the subject under description,...and which involves thus a coordination of the well-conceived matter on hand with a purport apart from it, we have the figure of speech called *utprekṣā*.” In other words, when the condition or action of an animate or inanimate object is in a particular manner and it is fancied by the poet in a different manner, the figure of speech is called *utprekṣā*. It may be considered a far-fetched or elaborate metaphor or simile. According to Helen Gardner,

A conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness, or, at least is more immediately striking. It is used...to persuade, or it is used to define or to prove a point. The poem has something to say which the conceit explicates or something to urge which the conceit helps forward.

Metaphysical poetry abounds in conceits. In fact, it is sometimes used as the basis for whole poems. Notice the following example from John Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”:

If they be two, they are two so,
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

In this stanza, the comparison between the pair of lovers and the twin foot of a compass is noteworthy for its ingenuity.

6.8.2.9. Aprastutaprasamsā (Indirect Praise)

According to Kuntaka,

When an extraneous word-meaning or sentence-meaning becomes the main theme of a description in so far as it lends charm to the proposed subject on hand;

by virtue of similarity or some other relation between the two, the figure of speech will be designated 'Praise of the inapposite' (*aprastutaprasāmsā*)

In simple terms, when the praise of an object with which one is not concerned is made, it is *aprastutaprasāmsā*. If the praise is in the form of dispraise, it is considered to be *Vyāja-stuti* or concealed praise. In Eliot's *The Wasteland*, the images of drought and infertility bring out the richness and fertility of Chaucer's April in *The Canterbury Tales* by way of contrast:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

6.8.2.10. Samāsokti (Condensed Metaphor)

It is a simile in which the *upamāna* is implicit. It may be defined as the understanding of what was not intended, on the basis of what was. Edwin Gerow illustrates this through an example by Charles Dickens:

There was a lean and haggard woman too- a prisoner's wife- who was watering, with great solicitude, the wretched stump of a dried- up, withered plant, which it was plain to see, could never send forth a green leaf again- too true an emblem, perhaps, of the office she had come there to discharge.

In this example, change and termination is indicated through the metaphor of the withered plant.

6.8.2.11. Virodha (Oxymoron)

It is a figure of speech whereby two contradictory qualities are predicted at once of the same thing i.e. they are placed side by side.

For example: To live a life half-dead, a living-death
(Milton, *Samson Agonistes*)

Or

Parting is such *sweet sorrow* (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II. ii)

6.8.2.12. Viśeshana Viparyaya (Transferred Epithet)

By this figure an epithet or adjective is transferred from the object to which it belongs to another:

The plowman homeward plods his weary way.
(Thomas Gray: "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard")

Here, the adjective 'weary' which should be used for the plowman, is used with "way".

Another example is from Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*: "(Peggotty) rubs everything that can be rubbed, until it shines, like her own *honest forehead*, with perpetual friction."

6.2.8.13. PARYĀYOKTI (PERIPHRAISIS)

It means a piece of writing that is neither plain nor precise. On the contrary, even a plain or simple thing is expressed in a roundabout way:

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tips...
(*Romeo and Juliet*. III. V)

The above example is a beautiful depiction of the arrival of morning

Bhāmaha gives an apt example from the *Mahābhārata* in this context: Śiśupāla requests Lord Krishna to take food in his house, but Krishna refuses. He says that he does not have food unless it is tasted by Brāhmins first. The indirect meaning of this statement is that Śiśupāla will not mix poison in the food for the fear of killing Brāhmins which is considered to be a sin.

Vyatireka

According to Kuntaka, *vyatireka* occurs “When a subject is described without clearly intending the effect of other figures like *upamā* but intending to bring out its distinctive excellence over or superiority to the well known features associated with it in the world.” In simple terms, it means that in *vyatireka*, the intention of the poet is to show the excellence of the *upameya* over the *upamāna*. For example, consider the following lines from Shakespeare’s sonnet, “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?”

Shall I Compare thee to a summer’s day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May
And every fair from fair sometime declines
.....
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession that fair thou ow’st.

In the above example, the superiority of the subject is shown over the *upamāna* i.e. a summer’s day.

Self Assessment Questions II

1. What is the significance of the figures of speech in Western aesthetics?
2. What are the three major divisions of *alamkāras*?
3. Point out the major differences between *upamā*, *rūpaka* and *utprekśā*.

6.9. SUMMING UP

Literature has its genesis in language – it is a verbal discourse. It has certain features which make it different from the other discourses like the language of day-to-day conversation or the language of science. And, *Alamkāra* is an integral part of literary language. In Indian and Western aesthetics, the figures of speech play a very important role in investing language of literature with ‘literariness’. They perform many

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functions – embellishment, emphasis, elucidation, deviation etc. They render literary language unique and interesting. As such their importance for a student of literature cannot be underestimated.

In this unit, some of the significant aspects of the *Alamkāra Siddhānta* were discussed. In the Introduction, some of the pertinent questions related to the figures of speech were raised. The main objective was to provide you a clear understanding of the tenets of this theory. In the section, “Meaning of *Alamkāra*”, there was an analysis of the word ‘*Alamkāra*’ so as to make you understand the literal meaning of the term. In this context, various definitions given by prominent Sanskrit scholars were discussed.

Alamkāra school of thought is one of the earliest and most sustained schools in Indian aesthetics. In the present unit, an attempt was made to trace the historical development of this theory. In this context, the contribution of the significant *Alamkāra* theorists was discussed.

The issue of *Alamkāra* as a distinct poetic theory has been much debated. Generally, *Alamkāras* are treated as mere external embellishment, as the analogy of a lady decked with ornaments would lead us to believe. But, after the discussion on the significant aspects of this theory, you must have realized that *Alamkāras* are integral to literary expression. They not only add to the beauty of the style, but also contribute to the suggestiveness of meaning and lead us towards the experience of aesthetic delight (*rasa*).

The classification of *Alamkāras* is also a complex issue- different theoreticians have classified *Alamkāras* into different kinds of systems. You were informed about various systems of classifying figures of speech. However, to keep things simple, and avoid further complications, only two broad/basic divisions were discussed .

To give you a practical understanding of some significant *Alamkāras* in Sanskrit, illustrations have also been provided with. After going through the contents in this unit, you must have got a clearer and better understanding of the *Alamkāra Siddhānta*, which is an important part of Indian aesthetics.

6.10. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

I

Refer to section 6.3.

Refer to section 6.5.

Refer to section 6.4.

II

Refer to section 6.6.

Refer to section 6.8.

Refer to sections 6.8.2.1, 6.8.2.2 and 6.8.2.8.

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6.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Explain the concept of *alamkāra* with reference to some prominent *Ālamkāra* theorists.
2. Write a detailed note on the classification of *alamkāras*.
3. What is the significance of *alamkāras* in the aesthetic experience? Elaborate with examples.
4. What is the difference between *śabdālankaras* and *arthāalankāras*? Discuss various kinds of *alamkāras* giving suitable examples.

SEMESTER

IV

MODERN LITERARY CRITICISM

- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Objectives
- 1.3. Definition
- 1.4. Background of Feminism
 - 1.4.1. The Concept of the Patriarchal Society
 - 1.4.2. Woman in the Patriarchal Society
 - 1.4.3. Socio- Political Movements for the Rights of Women
- 1.5. Different Forms of Feminism
 - 1.5.1. Liberal Feminism
 - 1.5.2. Marxist and Socialist Feminism
 - 1.5.3. Radical Feminism
- 1.6. Early Feminist Writings
 - 1.6.1. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
 - 1.6.2. *The Subjection of Women*
- 1.7. Summary
- 1.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 1.9. References
- 1.10. Suggested Readings
- 1.11. Terminal and Model Questions

1.1. INTRODUCTION

You must be familiar with the terms, 'female' and 'feminine'. Perhaps you have also come across the term, 'feminism'. Can you differentiate between these terms? Let me help you. The word 'female' refers to a biological category. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines it: 'of the sex that can give birth to children or produce eggs'. 'Male' and 'female' indicate the sex of living things. In the context of human beings 'male' refers to man and 'female' to woman. The word 'feminine', on the other hand, refers to a cultural concept. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* explains it: 'of or like women; having the qualities or appearance considered characteristic of women'. Every society has traditionally attributed certain qualities to its women folk which they are expected to possess. Thus while 'female' is a biological term, 'feminine' is a socio-cultural term. Feminism, with which this as well as the next unit is going to deal, is a revolt against the traditional concept of feminine which has deprived women of their natural rights and has resulted into inequality and injustice against them. It protests against the secondary position that has been given to women in family and society by a male-dominated society. You will be introduced to various aspects of feminism in this and the following unit.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

Feminism is one of the most revolutionary movements that human society has witnessed in recent times. Women after all constitute one half of the human world and any movement that causes a radical shift in their position in society is bound to be momentous. In this unit we will

- discuss the structure of society as it has come down to us;
- analyse the role assigned to women in this society;
- know about the emergence of the awareness that women have been given a secondary status in society;
- describe the socio-political movements across the world for the rights of women and the resultant legislations in favour of women,
- different forms of feminism and finally,
- learn about the early feminist writings.

1.3. DEFINITION

Feminism is a socio-political, economic and literary movement which asserts the rights of woman for liberty, equality and individuality. It is not a monolithic concept but consists of various movements, theories and approaches. A feminist theory is an extension of the basic tenets of feminism into a theoretical field. It covers works in a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, economics, politics, psychology, philosophy, literature and art. But whatever might be the theoretical stand of an approach, the underlying concept of feminism is the recognition of the subjugation of women by men on one pretext or the other. Feminism is the belief that women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex. It is also an attempt to redress the injustice done to them and to advocate their rights. Feminism thus is the perception that there is something

wrong with society's treatment of women. It tries to analyse the factors responsible for the oppression of women and looks for legal, political, social and economic measures to redress this imbalance of man-woman relationship. In its widest application feminism is a woman's awareness of her identity and an assertion of her right to live life as she wishes. Thus feminism during its long course has gone on acquiring new meanings and emphases. The early editions of The Oxford English Dictionary defined feminism as a state of being feminine or womanly. The Dictionary of Philosophy in its 1901 edition defined feminism in a similar manner but in its 1906 edition defined it as a position favourable to the rights of women. In the early decades of the twentieth century, feminism stood for the political movement for the right of women to vote. The Webster Dictionary defined the term 'feminism' as 'the principle that women should have political rights equal to those of men; the movement to win such rights for women'. Feminism went on to include demands of equal wages for equal work and right to property. By 1960s, when feminism became a forceful movement, it became multidimensional. The feminist philosophy stands for loosely related set of approaches in various fields of philosophy that emphasizes the role of gender in the formation of traditional philosophical problems and concepts and the ways in which traditional philosophy reflects and perpetuates bias against women. In social and political philosophy, liberal feminists have advocated making women's political and economic opportunities equal to those of men. The socialist and Marxist feminists argue that women's oppression is inherently economic in character; and radical feminists have criticized liberal political notions such as equality and autonomy as inherently male-centred. Literary feminists have underlined the bias against women in literature. In this way feminism today is an umbrella term which covers philosophies and points of view in favour of women from different perspectives. What came to be known as the 'New feminism' advocates the right of an individual to realize his or her potentiality. Carden notes:

The New feminism is not about the elimination of differences between the sexes; nor even simply the achievement of equal opportunity: it concerns the individual's right to find out the kind of person he or she is and strives to become that person. (2)

In the twenty first century we can say that feminism is a worldwide phenomenon which has different meanings for different societies. If in most of the developed Western countries its task seems to have been accomplished, in Asiatic and African societies it is still fighting its battle on various fronts.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF FEMINISM

Though feminism, as we know it today, is a modern phenomenon, its roots go back to the late 18th and 19th century. The awareness that women are unjustly treated must have existed even earlier, and we do come across such sentiments in scattered writings here and there. In her book, *Women, History and Theory* (1984), Joan Kelly refers to a four hundred year old tradition of women thinking about women. French feminism claims a longer past and identifies Christine de Pisan of the early fifteenth century as the first to have feminist views. Sushila Singh writes, "She was the first feminist thinker to spark off the four- century-long debate on women which came to be known as 'querelles des femmes'." (14) In fact, the imbalance of relationship in favour of man and the resultant

bitterness on the part of woman is born out of the very structure of society which has predominantly been patriarchal all over the world.

1.4.1. The Concept of Patriarchal Society

Patriarchy, as the Oxford Dictionary defines it, is “a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it”. If we go back to the early stages of human civilization when man was coming out of its dependence on hunting and had started growing crops, we find the emergence of family as the basic unit of society. In those early days men and women must have been equal partners in economic activities. But given by the nature the task of giving birth to children, woman was forced to take leave from outdoor activities for a considerable period of time. This left man alone in the task of providing food for the family. Gradually, this vested in him the power of leading the family and taking decisions on its behalf. This was the beginning of the patriarchal society. When the concept of property came into existence, man became its owner; and when property, mainly in the form of land and cattle, began to be passed on from one generation to another, man became its inheritor as well, excluding woman from it. In the patriarchal societies, property continued to be passed on from father to the son and daughter had no claim on it. With the passage of time woman was largely confined to household tasks and was assigned a secondary place in the family.

1.4.2. Women in the Patriarchal Society

Patriarchal society by its very nature has been lopsided in favour of man. Over the centuries man assumed control of every aspect of life and pushed woman to a marginal position. Woman became increasingly dependent on man for her sustenance, security and fulfillment. It is he who decided what she would do and not do, how she should live and how she should behave inside and outside home. Man used all the institutions of society – family, religion, education and marriage etc. – to subjugate woman. Woman, as Simone de Beauvoir puts it, became the ‘other’ of man. She was taught to look upon him as her lord and master and to obey him became her prime duty. In India, the ancient law-giver, Manu held that a woman was to remain under the protection of man all her life – in her childhood under her father, after marriage under her husband and in old age under her son. Thus she was not supposed to be her own master at any time in her life. All the major religions of the world, being preached and propagated primarily by man, also became a tool in his hand to subjugate woman. Moral codes in the name of religion were devised that put restraints of all kinds on woman only. Man kept himself free from these restraints. In most of the societies women were denied access to education and were deliberately kept in ignorance. They had no right to property and were not trained for any profession. So willy-nilly they had to depend on husband or the patriarch of the family for their food, clothes and living. A woman had no say in important matters, not even in matters directly concerned with her, such as her marriage. In social life she had no independent existence apart from that of her father, husband and son at different stages of her life. She had no right to vote till the early twentieth century. In this way she was put in a situation where she was forced to live a life of subjection and dependence. What is more, she came to believe in the correctness of this life of subjugation. She came to imbibe the patriarchal values so thoroughly that the patriarchal codes were perpetuated not only by men but also by women. A woman taught her daughter to behave exactly in

the same manner as she herself had been taught by her own mother. She implicitly believed that the proper role of a woman was to be meek, submissive and sacrificing and that of a man to lord over the woman. So much so that a man who did not treat his wife roughly and inconsiderately was considered weak and effeminate not only by men but also by women. So women became their own enemy. Any deviation from the accepted feminine code or any sign of independent mind was frowned upon and dealt with strictly. In absence of education - the storehouse of reason and knowledge – a woman was led by nose. Feminism tried to make women aware of their secondary position in family and society. It fought for their political, economic and legal rights. Its primary target has been the patriarchal system of society which deprived woman of any opportunity of living life on her own terms.

1.4.3. Socio-Political Movements for the Rights of Women

The feminism of the 19th century in Europe began as an agitation for the political and economic rights of women such as the right to vote, the right of married women to own property and enter into contracts and the right of defendants to have women on juries. However, the credit for an organized movement for women's rights goes to America where the Seneca Falls Declaration, drawn and signed at Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 demanded voting rights for women. It concluded with an appeal for professional equality for women. Though the Declaration never became an official manifesto of the feminist movement, its content proved a landmark resolution for the rights of women. American women got the right to vote in 1920, seventy two years after the Seneca Falls Declaration. During this period the quest for suffrage was found to be a strong bond uniting three generations of women who believed that the right to vote would bring a change in their status. Through this right they would be able to redress their other grievances. Similar movements came up during this period in different countries of Europe. As a result women got voting rights in England in 1918, followed by similar rights in other countries. The period from 1920 to 1960 was a period of lull from the point of view of movements for the rights of women. It was in 1960s that a spurt in feminist movements drew the attention of the world. Feminism grew more strident in its tone and temper. More and more women writers came up and focused on various issues pertaining to women. Civil liberty and human right groups also joined this chorus. Finally the United Nations Organization also started voicing its concerns about women. Woman's Day, Women Empowerment Year, Mother's Day and other similar token gestures began to highlight the importance of women in society. The spread of education played a major role in empowering women. More and more women, particularly in urban areas, began to take up jobs and thus secured financial independence for themselves.

Movement for the improvement in the status of women in India started with the social reformation movements of the 19th century. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Jyotiba Phule raised their voices against the evil systems of sati, child marriage and dowry. They advocated women education, widow remarriage and women's participation in public life. After a prolonged campaign a law banning sati- the practice of burning widow on her husband's funeral pyre – was passed in 1829 by the British Government of India. A new impetus to the movement for the rights of women was given by Mahatma Gandhi who gave a call to Indian women to come out of the confines of their homes and join the freedom

movement. The All India Women's Conference was established in 1924 and it regularly raised issues for the welfare of women. After the independence of the country, the Constitution of India itself included articles safeguarding the rights of women and various laws were passed from time to time to empower women.

1.5. DIFFERENT FORMS OF FEMINISM

In its early stages, feminism, which acquired its name towards the end of the 19th century, consisted of voicing protest against the unequal treatment of women in society. There was no serious exploration of the nature of patriarchy. Men understandably were generally silent on the issue of the ill treatment of women; and women themselves in absence of education and free thinking were incapable of realizing their secondary position in family and society. Gradually, women writers like Mary Wollstonecraft and male writers like J. S. Mill through their writings started a protest against the subjection of women. But such efforts were few and far between. Moreover, they were naturally addressed to men as majority of women were deprived of any education and thus were incapable of reading such works. And men, as you can understand, were unwilling to give up their privileged position. As governments all over the world consisted only of men, there was no effort to make any legislation to safeguard the rights of women.

Feminism came into existence because of this blatant exploitation of women for the benefit of men. Beginning with demands for social equality, it soon encompassed demands for political and economic equality with men. As it marched on, feminism gathered various shades of meaning and approach. Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and radical feminism are some of the main forms of feminism that emerged during its long course of existence. If you search deeply into its genesis, you will realize that it was born in the wake of changes brought by the industrial revolution, first in the now developed countries and later on in what are today developing countries. Women from different social classes, races and religions became a part of feminist upsurge whose common theme was the desire to end an unjust social system that negated any opportunity for women to develop. In the economically advanced countries which claimed to function democratically and provide people, irrespective of sex and creed, an equal opportunity to grow, middle class women found that this was not so and women from marginalized races such as Black Americans continued to suffer double oppression. This led to a great deal of analysis of the forces that resulted in discrimination, inequality and oppression for women. In the developing countries, the process of development created not only serious gaps between men and women but distortions that added new burdens and new oppressions for women. With the passage of time, in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America feminism emerged in different forms. Let us now take into account some of the major forms of feminism.

1.5.1. Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminists are those who believe that in a democratic society which guarantees equal rights and protection of law, social institutions can be reformed to bring women at par with men. They do not question the basic frame work of the established social

institutions such as the family, marriage, property system and production relations etc., but admit that there are drawbacks in them which can be corrected by proper legislation. The liberal feminist does not believe that it is necessary to change the whole social structure in order to bring women's liberation. Nor does he see the possibility of it being achieved simultaneously for all women. Individual women may liberate themselves long before their status is achieved by others. Much of the nineteenth century feminism in the West and the late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminism in India may be called liberal feminism. The liberal feminists belonged to the upper middle and middle class of society, and their agitation was largely theoretical. They looked upon education and legal reforms as the only means of the liberation of women.

1.5.2. Marxist and Socialist Feminism

Feminism that bases its theory on the Marxist interpretation of social structure is known as Marxist feminism. Karl Marx held that society consisted of two classes – the capitalists who had wealth and power and so controlled the means of production, and workers who sold their labour to the capitalists for their livelihood. This entailed a relationship of the dominant and the dominated. It is from the point of view of the class structure that the Marxist feminists view the subjugation of women. Though they do not hold that women's oppression is a product of capitalism, they believe that it is a by-product of it and it intensifies the degradation of women and the continuation of capitalism requires the perpetuation of this degradation. It is with the rise of private property and class relations that the subjugation of women began. In a classless society this will disappear. Reicha Tanwar writes:

Given the need to pass on property to one's own progeny, a man has to be sure that the child is his own; this can only be achieved through controlling women by stringent demands of chastity; to ensure chastity women's movement has to be restricted; subjugation is ensured through dependence and to ensure compliance, ideological justifications are provided. Women of the upper classes suffer social restriction while women of the lower classes face in addition economic exploitation. (11)

All this will go away only when the system of private ownership is abolished. Thus the Marxist feminists regard feminism as a part of a general struggle for a classless society. The domestic confinement of women that capitalism brought can be eliminated only when women are drawn into social production

Socialist feminists are different from Marxist feminists in their emphasis on the cultural phenomenon of male dominance in society. They have tried to show that patriarchy as a system of male dominance is intricately connected to the economic system of society. In the patriarchal society there is a division of work where men are the creators of wealth and women merely the managers of home. They are generally not involved in any activity leading to the creation of wealth. This has naturally given men a privileged position. So political power is not shared equally, nor is the reward of works. Thus the socialist feminists question the basic social structure of society and hold that both on the social and economic front women need an equal participation in work.

1.5.3. Radical Feminism

The word 'radical' refers to an extreme position with respect to the relations between the sexes. It is, however, oversimplifying to say that radical feminists are against men. Radical feminists deny the liberal claim that the basis of women's oppression is their lack of political or civil rights. Similarly, they reject the Marxist belief that women are oppressed because they live in a society divided in classes. Rather they consider the reason of discrimination against women to be biological. Sushila Singh, explaining the radical stand, writes:

The origin of women's subjection lies in the fact that as a result of the weakness caused by childbearing, women become dependent on men for physical survival. The origin of family thus is a primarily biological factor. The radical feminists believe that the physical subjection of women by men was historically the basic form of oppression, prior to the institution of private property and its corollary, class oppression. Consequently, the power relationships that develop within the biological family provide a model for understanding all other types of oppression such as racism and class society. Thus, the battle against capitalism and against racism is subsidiary to the more fundamental struggle against sexism. (30)

So the radical feminists advocate a kind of biological freedom. They hold that through technology such as artificial reproduction a woman can get rid of physical confinement and become psychologically independent.

1.6. EARLY FEMINIST WRITINGS

The awareness that women are deprived of their natural rights and are being treated unjustly by men through a social structure that is completely tilted in favour of men came through the writings of those writers who were by then not even aware of any concept called feminism. In English, the first important feminist document is Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* which came in 1792. The next major feminist work is not by a woman but by a man. This is J. S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women* which was published in 1869.

1.6.1. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) belonged to a circle of intellectuals in London. They were active supporters of revolutionary ideals and fervor. They upheld the secession of American colonies from British rule in 1775 and also supported the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789. Mary Wollstonecraft was influenced by the ideas of John Locke who held that human beings were born free and were subject to reason and law of moral behaviour. In 1787, Wollstonecraft wrote a book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. In this book she envisaged the kind of education that would put a woman on the path of individual growth and liberty. Her third book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is also primarily concerned with the education of women. It was written partly in

response to Rousseau's *Emile* which deals with the education and training of mind of young men. Wollstonecraft's book became a landmark in the history of feminism.

Wollstonecraft realizes that the perpetuation of the subjugation of women has been possible only because of the patriarchal values imposed upon women for centuries. She writes:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the examples of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives. (40)

For ages men have believed and made women believe that intellect is the preserve of man only. Nature has made women physically soft and mentally weak and so their whole endeavour should be to acquire charms that would make them attractive in the eyes of men. The very thought of it makes Wollstonecraft bitter. She attacks Milton for propagating this idea:

Thus Milton describes our first frail mother; though when he tells us that women are formed for softness and sweet attractive grace, I cannot comprehend his meaning, unless, in the true Mahometan strain, he meant to deprive us of souls and insinuate that we were beings only designed by sweet attractive grace, and docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wings of contemplation. (40-41)

Wollstonecraft regards faulty education responsible for such a demeaning conception of themselves women have. She argues that if the two sexes have the same soul, then both are entitled to happiness or virtue. Again, if women are not 'a swarm of ephemeron trifles' then they should not be kept in ignorance under the name of innocence. Wollstonecraft writes, "In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. This was Rousseau's opinion respecting men; I extend it to women." (43) She asserts that till society is differently constituted much cannot be expected from education. According to her, the most perfect education is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to "strengthen the body and form the heart". A strong capacity to reason out things should be the ultimate test of education.

Mary Wollstonecraft urged her contemporaries that the twin values of reason and revolution which they cherished should be applied to the cause of women's education. She held literature of her time and earlier generations responsible for fostering false impressions about women. In place of leading women to enlightenment it pushed them to ignorance and false image. On account of false gender stereotyping both men and women looked out for the wrong things in each other.

Mary Wollstonecraft's insistence on the right kind of education for women and a change in the mindset of men, as you can see, were revolutionary ideas for her age. She did not

have many supporters of her views in her own life time, but today we can understand the far-reaching impact of them. Without proper education it was and still is impossible to take women out of their subordinate status in society.

1.6.2. The Subjection of Women

John Stuart Mill was a noted political economist and social reformer of the nineteenth century. He was an ardent supporter of liberal causes ranging from universal education to population control and Negro emancipation. He wrote a number of books that influenced the contemporary thought. His book, *The Subjection of Women*, which is one of the earliest feminist texts, raised quite a controversy in his time. His advocacy of the emancipation of women was the outcome of his belief that for a balanced growth of society it was necessary that not only men but also women should be given a chance to grow. He writes:

. . . the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other. (3)

Mill held the view that women's subordinate position was the product of man's manipulation of the power structure of family and society in his favour. As a result we have a society where boys are selfish and girls abject.

When elected to parliament, Mill introduced a motion to get women's suffrage included in the second Reform Bill of 1867. Although the motion was defeated, it won increasing support later on. With his stepdaughter, Helen Taylor, he formed the Women's Suffrage Society in England and persuaded many prominent women to join it. At his death he left more than half his property for women's education.

1.7. SUMMARY

Female and feminine are the terms used for women. While female refers to a biological category, feminine is a cultural concept which a society traditionally associates with a woman. Feminism is a protest against the exploitation and subjugation of women by men. The subordinate position of women in family and society is a product of the patriarchal society, a society controlled by men. Since ages men have dominated women for their power, position and pleasure. They denied women for very long any access to education, property, profession and power. Feminism started in European countries and America in the nineteenth century primarily as an agitation for women's right to vote. Soon it came to include demands of right to property and other economic rights. A voice for the proper education of women and their entry into various professions was also raised. After a long and sustained agitation, women in America, England, Australia and some other countries of Europe got the right to vote in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Women's right to property was also legalized. After 1960s feminism became a world wide phenomenon and came to include women of different cultures, social strata and political set ups. What is known as feminism to day is a combination of various

approaches and agenda concerning the uplift of women in society. Of the various forms of feminism the most prominent are liberal feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism and radical feminism. Feminism is basically a twentieth century movement but its origin goes back to late eighteenth century or even earlier. Two of the most remarkable books containing principles of feminism have been Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published in 1792 and J. S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women* which was published in 1869.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Find out the difference between the terms, 'female', 'feminine' and feminist.
2. Would you say that our society gives more opportunities to men than to women? Give your own examples.
3. What is a patriarchal society?
4. How did the movement for the voting rights of women start?
5. Which form of feminism seems to you to be the most effective? Give reasons for your choice.
6. What was the main thrust of the early feminist writings?

1.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to section 1.1.
3. Refer to sub sections 1.4.1 and 1.4.2.
4. Refer to section 1.4.3.
5. Refer to section 1.6.

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1.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is Feminism? What is its importance in today's society?
2. What is a patriarchal society? How does it subjugate women?
3. Describe the beginning of feminism? How did it come to compass a variety of demands for the rights of women?
4. Describe the major forms of feminism
5. Write a critical note on the early feminist writings.

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Objectives
- 2.3. Feminism and Literature
- 2.4. Women's Literature in English till 19th Century
- 2.5. Feminist Writings in the 20th Century
 - 2.5.1. *A Room of One's Own*
 - 2.5.2. *The Second Sex*
 - 2.5.3. *Sexual Politics*
- 2.6. Feminist Criticism
- 2.7. Indian Feminism
- 2.8. Indian Women Writers of the 20th Century
- 2.9. Summary
- 2.10. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 2.11. References
- 2.12. Suggested Readings
- 2.13. Terminal and Model Questions

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you were introduced to the concept of feminism. You have known about the patriarchal society and the place of women in the patriarchal society. A male-dominated society has been treating women unequally since ages. In the past, she was deprived of all opportunities to grow. She was neither given any education nor was she allowed to take part in public life. Her life was confined to home and her work consisted of household chores. She had no right to property; nor was she given any training to participate in economic activities. Giving birth to children, rearing them up and looking after the comforts of her husband and other members of the family was the sum total of a woman's life almost everywhere in the world. At every stage of her life – since childhood to old age – she was subordinate to man. She was considered to be incapable of looking after herself. Finally, she began to protest against her subjugation. The movement for the equal social, economic, political, legal and individual rights of women came to be known as feminism. The last unit made you familiar with the various stages and forms of feminism. You have also learnt about the early feminist writings.

The nineteenth century English fiction saw the emergence of many women novelists who occupy today a permanent place in the history of English fiction. They brought a new sensibility to it. Novelists like Jane Austen created a domestic picture of the middle and upper middle class families of 19th century England in her novels, and focused on issues like marriage and man-woman relationship. On the other hand, a novelist like Charlotte Bronte evoked feminist concerns like financial security and working condition for women as well as woman's dependence on man in her novels. These novelists also show the difficulties they had to face in a male-dominated literary world. The twentieth century was the period of consolidation of the feminist movement. We come across a prominent novelist, Virginia Woolf writing a landmark feminist text. The twentieth century also saw the publication of remarkable feminist works by writers like Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, Kate Millet and Toril Moi. More and more women took to literary writing. In India also we saw a number of women novelists in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first century. This unit will focus primarily on the interaction between feminism and literature.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

The present unit will give you a description of

- the interface of feminism and literature
- the feminist criticism
- the important feminist texts in the twentieth century
- Indian feminism and
- Indian English women novelists

2.3. FEMINISM AND LITERATURE

Feminism, as you know by now, has been a multi-faceted movement. If it fought a battle for suffrage for women, it also made a persistent demand for the woman's right to property. No less than on political, economic, social and legal fronts, feminism made an important impact on the literary front. For ages literature had been a male bastion. It had been an important medium of propagating and perpetuating patriarchal values. It fostered an image of woman either as a weak, emotional, tender-hearted, silly, romantic creature or as a patient, suffering, sacrificing and self-negating person who laid down her life willingly for the sake of others, particularly the men she loved. Both these images denied women intellect and reason, capacity for thought and enterprise and passion to excel in life. She was divested of any independent individuality and was presented only in relation to man. Thus literature had presented only a man's perspective of woman, what he wanted her to be. If she was presented as a person with lust, desires and ambitions, she was generally cast in a negative role, a vamp to be disliked. Literature from one generation to another and from one country to another perpetuated a stereotype of woman which suited the structure of the patriarchal society. Such was the pervasive influence of this female stereotype in literature that even female readers came to accept it without questioning its veracity. When women novelists came on the scene, they continued to project the same image of woman for quite a long time. It was the feminist movement that made women writers aware of the falsity of the male perspective of woman. Under the influence of feminist thoughts, the women novelists began to question the literary stereotype of woman.

Gradually, as the feminist thoughts began to take roots, there emerged, what has been called, a 'female literature'. A distinction has been made between books that happen to have been written by women and female literature that purposefully and collectively concerns itself with the articulation of woman's experience and thought. Elaine Showalter writes:

The advent of female literature promises woman's view of life, woman's experience: in other words, a new element. Make what distinctions you please in the social world, it still remains true that men and women have different organizations, consequently different experiences. . . . But hitherto . . . the literature of women has fallen short of its functioning owing to a very natural and very explicable weakness – it has been too much a literature of imitation. To write as men write is the aim and besetting sin of women; to write as women is the real task they have to perform.(3)

If women writers now do not feel shy of expressing their emotions this is largely due to the influence of feminism on literature. An important development in the field of literary theory and criticism has been the emergence of feminist criticism. It has given literary criticism new tools to evaluate literary works written by both men and women writers. You will learn about it in detail in another section of this unit.

2.4. WOMEN'S LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TILL 19TH CENTURY

If you look at English literature till 18th century, you find a conspicuous absence of important woman writers in it. You do not come across a single major woman dramatist in English till today. The woman English poet of any consequence does not appear till we come to Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti in the nineteenth century, and even they were accorded a minor status by the critics who happened to be till then exclusively male. A prose writer like Mary Wollstonecraft who wrote at the end of the 18th century acquired importance only in the context of feminism and that too only in the second half of the twentieth century. It is in the field of fiction that English saw a number of major women novelists in the 19th century. Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte and Emily Bronte have come to occupy a permanent place in the canon of English fiction. Some other 18th and 19th century women novelists, though now considered important only historically, had become quite popular in their life time. Mrs. Radcliff, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Shelley and Mrs. Gaskell are some such novelists. These women novelists brought a fresh perspective of life, a fresh set of experiences and a fresh approach towards looking at man-woman relationship. I am giving you two extracts – one from the 18th century novelist, Laurence Sterne, and the other from Jane Austen – which will show you the change of perspective that women novelists brought. In Sterne's novel, *Tristram Shandy*, Shandy is describing the relationship between his father and mother:

It was a consuming vexation to my father that my mother never asked the meaning of a thing she did not understand. That she is not a woman of science, my father would say, is her misfortune; but she might ask a question.

My mother never did. In short, she went out of the world at last without knowing whether it turned round or stood still – my father had officiously told her above a thousand times which way it was, but she always forgot. (quoted in Allen 79)

The extract is a good example of Sterne's humour – for which Walter Allen has quoted it - but it also reveals how eighteenth century men looked at women. Jane Austen, without waving the flag of feminism, brought to English literature a woman's perspective of looking at life. In the following extract from her novel, *Persuasion*, Captain Harville and Anne Elliot are discussing the issue of constancy in love:

'Well, Miss Elliot . . . we shall never agree, I suppose upon this point. No man and woman would, probably. But let me observe that all histories are against you – all stories, prose and verse. . . . I do not think I ever opened a book in my life which had not something to say upon woman's inconstancy. Songs and proverbs all talk of women's fickleness. But perhaps, you will say, these were all written by men.'

'Perhaps I shall. Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have always the advantage of us in telling their own story. Education had been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything.' (quoted in Davidawson 7)

The extract, as Davidawson points out, shows how literature and books have not only been written by men but have also been male-biased. They have been exploited by men to

serve their own ends. Such ideas were quite revolutionary in the first half of the 19th century. Jane Austen in particular brought a fresh sensibility to English fiction. You must have read the famous opening lines of her novel, *Pride and Prejudice* in your course of fiction:

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or the other of their daughters. (1)

Look at the way Jane Austen is presenting marriage as a social institution. In her novel, *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte created in the person of her heroine a young woman not of passion alone but also of genuine intellectual quality. Jane Eyre is quite conscious of her moral and mental superiority. Though we come across a number of women novelists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, English society at large did not take kindly to women writers. This is reflected in the fact that Bronte sisters had to write under pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; and Marian Evans became famous not by her own name but as George Eliot.

2.5. FEMINIST WRITINGS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

In the 20th century, feminism as a movement gained momentum as well as success in achieving many rights for women including right to voting in elections and right to property. By the end of the nineteenth century, women had got access to education and consequently to jobs. Initially, only a limited area was open to them as profession. They could be school teachers, nurses, typists and later on college teachers. As the twentieth century progressed, women entered many professions that required mental involvement but not much physical exertion. By the end of the century even this barrier was broken. Professions that were considered to be exclusively male such as army and police were also thrown open to women. The greatest change that came, though not everywhere and not in the same degree, was in the mindset of the patriarchal society. It was the result of a hard-fought battle by feminists all over the world. The century also saw the publication of several landmark feminist books. The first important work of this kind was Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.

2.5.1. A Room of One's Own

Virginia Woolf, better known as a novelist, authored two remarkable feminist books – *A Room of One's Own* which came out in 1929 and *Three Guineas* which was published in 1938. The former is considered to be one of the most important feminist texts in English. *A Room of One's Own*, a small book consisting of five chapters, originated as a set of lectures that she had delivered to the students of two women's colleges of Cambridge. Virginia Woolf was asked to deliver lectures on 'Women and Fiction' and this set her thinking about the basic hindrances that a woman writer faced. The greatest hindrance that a woman novelist or for that matter any woman faced was the wounded ego of a man who felt threatened by a woman of intelligence. In the patriarchal society, he is the one

who occupies all important positions; he creates wealth and exudes power. "Hence the enormous importance to a patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule, of feeling that great numbers of people, half the human race indeed, are by nature inferior to himself".(32) This feeling, in fact, is a source of power to him. So when a woman stands up to prove him wrong, he feels outraged.

Virginia Woolf refers to Trevelyan's *History of England* to show how women have been treated inhumanly by men in England. Wife beating, for example, was practised without shame by men of all social strata – high and low. Similarly, the daughter who refused to marry the man of his father's choice was confined in a room and beaten to bring her to her senses. Thus history is a testimony to the suffering and humiliation of women at the hands of men. What pains Virginia Woolf is the false representation of women in literature. She writes:

Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater. But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room.

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (40-41)

The growth and fulfilment in a woman's life, as Virginia Woolf argues, can come only when she gains financial self reliance in her life. Like Mary Wollstonecraft before her, Virginia Woolf lays emphasis on a proper education for women. While talking about a successful novelist, she puts two conditions for it. She should have an income of five hundred pounds a year and a room of her own. These two things symbolise financial independence and personal space. Taking her statement literally, many, including her contemporary novelist, Arnold Bennet, criticized her on the ground that some great novelists in the world had neither. Such criticism misses the spirit of her statement. What Virginia Woolf is emphasizing is not so much a particular amount or a personal property but a sense of security that a personal income gives to any person, all the more so to woman who had never known financial independence in human history. The room symbolizes a place free from prying eyes of society that has traditionally kept an eye on women.

To counter the argument that women are incapable of writing great literary works, Virginia Woolf first cites the handicaps under which a woman suffers and then refers to the works of some of her predecessors who produced remarkable works. Aphra Behn, a dramatist of the Restoration period, was the first English woman to become a professional dramatist. She wrote a remarkable play, *Oroonoko*. Anne Finch, an early 18th century poet was one of the first to explore nature through the feelings and imagination of a solitary individual. In this way she was among the earliest of the precursors of the

Romantic Revival. Margaret, another 18th century writer, was one of the first to underline the inequitable division of labour between men and women and thus expose the exploitation of women. Woolf then goes on to list Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte and George Eliot as some of the greatest novelists in English.

The greatness of *A Room of One's Own* lies not only in a brilliant analysis of the condition of women from the days of Chaucer to Virginia Woolf's own times but also in the prediction of future that she so accurately makes:

Moreover, in a hundred years, I thought, reaching my own doorstep, women will have ceased to be the protected sex. Logically they will take part in all activities and exertions that were once denied them. The nursemaid will heave coal. The shopwoman will drive an engine. (37-38)

As foreseen by Virginia Woolf, we find in the 21st century that the gender based classification of jobs has vanished, and women have occupations today that were closed to them earlier.

2.5.2. *The Second Sex*

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, written in French in 1949 and translated into English in 1953, is one of the most influential feminist texts. Beauvoir was an existentialist and it was Sartre's rejection of an essential human nature and of the dualism of mind and body that made her think about the condition of woman in society. Sartre maintains that existence precedes essence and that the condition of our life is not something predetermined. It is we who give meaning to our lives and as such life is not governed by biology or history or an innate nature. So Beauvoir argues that if there is no fixed nature then there is no Eternal Woman. The myths about the inferiority of women and about their predetermined roles have all been created by a patriarchal society. She writes:

. . .humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being . . .is simply what man decrees: thus she is called 'the sex' by which is meant that she appeals essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is . . .the Absolute – she is the Other. (16)

It is neither Nature nor Destiny that has made woman the second sex. She has been relegated to a subordinate position by man. This led Beauvoir to her famous statement – 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman'. Though Beauvoir rejects woman's passivity on the biological level, she admits that biologically woman is disadvantaged. Reproduction of life has traditionally excluded women from participating in culture and production of values. For a woman her body has become a source of embarrassment and made her conscious of it all the time. But this not something she cannot overcome. To live her life as she wishes she will have to come out of the confinement of her body.

In Chapter Four of the second part of her book, Beauvoir traces woman's situation through the Middle Ages to the 18th century. In her opinion, Christian theology has

contributed to the oppression of women and she quotes extensively from St. Paul, St. Thomas and others to prove her point. In Part VII, entitled “Towards Liberation”, Beauvoir talks of the independent woman. It is to prevent the sinking of the inner life into nothingness, and to assert herself rebelliously against her condition that woman resorts to self-expression.

2.5.3. Sexual Politics

An important feminist text which came out in the second half of the 20th century was Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1970). It analysed the system of sex-role stereotyping and the oppression of women under patriarchal system of society. Millet holds that ideological indoctrination as much as economic inequality is the cause of women’s oppression. She borrows from social science the important distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. While sex is a biological distinction dividing human beings into a male-female category, gender refers to culturally acquired sexual identity. Millet attacks the social scientists who treat the culturally-learned female characteristics as natural. She recognizes that women as much as men perpetuate these attitudes in women’s magazines and family ideology. The acting out of these sex-roles in the unequal and repressive relations of domination and subordination is what Millet calls sexual politics. She holds that male authors are compelled by their gender to reproduce the oppressive sexual politics of the real world in their fiction.

2.6. FEMINIST CRITICISM

Feminist criticism, an offshoot of feminism, has revolutionized literary criticism today. By questioning the representation of woman in literature and by highlighting the way women writers look at the world around them and express their experiences in fictional and nonfictional terms, feminist criticism has opened up a new vista of literary interpretation. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines feminist criticism as:

A development and movement in critical theory and in the evaluation of literature which was well under way by the late 1960s and which has burgeoned steadily since. It is an attempt to describe and interpret (and reinterpret) women’s experience as depicted in various kinds of literature – especially the novel; and, to a lesser extent, poetry and drama. (315)

Feminist criticism is eclectic in approach and freely uses theories from different fields such as psychology, linguistics and sociology. It has two basic focuses: one, woman presented in literature by male writers in the perspective of a male-centred society, and two, woman presented in the writings of female writers from their point of view. In its early endeavours feminist criticism concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literary practice. The feminist critics attacked the stereotyped images of woman in classical and popular literatures. They also highlighted the neglect of women writers in literary histories. Since early period it had been taken for granted that the reader, writer and the critic of literature is male. Feminist criticism has shown that this is not so and that women readers, writers and critics bring a perception of experiences and emotions different from that of their male counterparts.

Feminist criticism analyses how the typical male attitude towards woman has been perpetuated for centuries through literature. It has become so much a part of popular belief that even women have come to imbibe it. It is to expose the male-defined concept of woman that feminist critics have come out so strongly. By defining the ideal woman as tender, meek, devoted, loving, caring, undemanding and sacrificing, the patriarchal society has relegated woman to a weak and subservient position. Not only that, it has conditioned the woman to think in a similar way. Feminism as an ideology seeks not only to understand the world but also to change it so as to create an equitable and egalitarian society. Feminist criticism tries to expose the typical male values in literature. The feminist critics make a distinction between literature written by women but containing male values and literature written by women from the point of view of women. In her essay, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" Rosalind Coward argues that Mills and Boon romantic novels are written as well as read by a large number of women, yet they present women exactly as they have traditionally been viewed by men.

In its later phase feminist criticism came to focus more on the woman's expression of herself than on challenging the male perspective of woman. It has been concerned with reconstituting all the ways we deal with literature so as to do justice to women's point of view, concerns and values. It tries to alter the way a woman reads the literature of the past so as to enable her to evaluate the image of woman in it afresh and not merely accept the male version of it unquestioningly. It challenges the covert sexual biases in a literary work. Thus feminist criticism tries to set the balance right. From this point of view there are two groups of feminist critics. The more strident critics reject outright the male depiction of woman in literature and hold that it is not possible for a male to understand the female emotions and thoughts. The moderate ones, on the other hand, accept that writers like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Richardson, Ibsen and Shaw have generally risen above the typical male view of woman and tried to present an unbiased view.

Though earlier feminist works, such as Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, form a part of it, feminist criticism as an approach to literature came into existence in 1960s. In America Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women* appeared in 1968 which made a scathing analysis of the ways women are represented in literature by men. In *Sexual Politics* which came out in 1969, Kate Millet examined the works of Norman Mailer, Henry Miller and D. H. Lawrence to expose the male bias in literature. In 1970s feminist criticism came to focus more on the woman's voice in literature than on the male view of woman. As Peter Barry aptly remarks, "it switched its focus from attacking male versions of the world to exploring the nature of the female world and outlook and reconstructing the lost or suppressed records of female experience." (122) Elaine Showalter published her remarkable book, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* in 1977 to focus on the literature produced by women novelists. She coined a term, 'gynocriticism' to denote criticism concerned with writings by women and all aspects of their production and interpretation. One concern of the gynocritics is to identify what are taken to be the distinctly feminine subject matters in literature written by women such as the world of domesticity, mother-daughter relationship and woman-woman relationship. They try to show that there is a distinctive feminine mode of experience. Another concern is to establish a literary tradition of female writers. In 1979 Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century*

Imagination, a monumental book about the motifs and patterns in the works of 19th century women writers.

The Anglo-American and the French feminist critics establish two schools of feminist literary criticism. While the former have been primarily concerned with thematic studies of writings by and about women, the latter have been concerned with the theory of the role of gender in writing. The French critics have been influenced in their approach by theories of post-structuralism, deconstruction and semiotics. They use the theories of Lacan, Foucault and Derrida among others to make feminist readings of literature. The literary text for them is not primarily a representation of reality or expression of personal experiences, as is the case with Anglo-American feminist critics. Rather they are interested in the use of language and symbols. Among the French feminist critics Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helen Cixous are the most prominent.

2.7. INDIAN FEMINISM

Feminism, as you know by now, started as a movement in Europe and America. However, today in the second decade of the twenty first century no part of the world is practically untouched by it. In the world of television, internet and other means of communication it is not possible to keep women of one part of the world unaffected by what is happening in the other part of the world. Nor is it possible now to keep the female world in the kind of subjugation that they were put under fifty years or a hundred years ago. Education and financial independence are the two most important factors that gave women their liberation. Nonetheless, it remains a fact that in the developing and undeveloped parts of the world women have not yet gained the same equality with their men as women of the developed nations have got. Even within a country the status of women is not the same everywhere. This is true of India also. Educated Indian women in cities are living quite a different life from women in rural areas. In your last unit you have read about the social reformation movements of the nineteenth century that aimed at freeing Indian women from evil social practices like sati, illiteracy and child marriage. You also know about the role of Mahatma Gandhi in bringing women in the mainstream of the struggle for freedom of the country. You who are living in the modern India cannot realise the plight of women in the male dominated Indian society sixty or seventy years ago. After the independence of the country successive governments have passed several acts in the parliament and state legislatures to safeguard the interest of women. To spread education among women has been the prime task of the government. Several NGOs have also done commendable work in this regard. The Commission for Women acts as a watchdog to save women from atrocities. Women have been given reservation in the elections to local bodies in several states. Print and visual media is also playing a role in exposing exploitation of women. Thus the feminist movement in India got support from various quarters. Despite all these measures we regularly read and hear news of rape, exploitation and physical abuse of women. And despite all hue and cry our parliament has not been able to pass the bill for the reservation of seats for women in the parliament. So the task of a feminist movement in India is far from over.

2.8. INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

In the first six decades of the 20th century we do not have many women writers writing in English or in regional languages. Among the notable women poets of this period we have Sarojini Naidu in English and Mahadevi Verma in Hindi. It is 1960s that women writers have emerged strongly on the literary scene. Like European countries or America, India also

witnessed the emergence of feminist consciousness in literature. Kamala Das's poem, "An Introduction", written in 1962, is a striking example of this consciousness:

I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
My womanliness. Dress in saris, be girl,
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers.

Kamala Das's autobiography, *My Story*, in which she made public her passions, fears, aspirations and sexuality, shocked the orthodox Indian society. Amrita Pritam, a Punjabi poet, also wrote a frank autobiography which was translated into English as *The Revenue Stamp*, and in many other Indian languages. It was, however, in the field of fiction that women writers came to excel. In Bengali, Ashapura Devi and Mahashweta Devi wrote novels that have become classics of Indian literature. In Hindi, the novels of Shivani and Mridula Garg caught the attention of the reading public. But it is in English that we have a number of truly remarkable novelists. It was Anita Desai who explored the inner consciousness of a woman in her novels. Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Praver Jhabvala came out with their brilliant depiction of Indian society with a woman's minuteness. Nayantara Sahgal, the only Indian English novelist to write political novels, has also presented man-woman relationship with a typical feminist slant in her novels. From 1980s onwards novelists like Shobha De, Shashi Deshpande and Namita Gokhale have been writing novels with a marked feminist strain.

2.9. SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt about the interaction between literature and feminism. The patriarchal society has been using literature as a means of propagating its male perspective for a very long time. Such deep-rooted were its thoughts that even women who were the victims of it had come to accept it as something natural. They had imbibed the typical male values to such an extent that even women writers presented the picture of women in the same light as did their male counterparts. So feminists chose to attack this misogyny of literature. They exposed the sexual politics in literature. This gave birth to what has come to be known as the feminist criticism. The feminist critics in the beginning aimed to expose the male bias in literature. Later on they focused more on presenting the female perspective in literature. Elaine Showalter gave a term gynocriticism to refer to the discussion of literature written by women writers. Today more and more women writers are giving expression to the thoughts, emotions, desires and passions of women without any inhibition. Indian women writers are also not behind women writers elsewhere in the world.

Self Assessment Questions

1. How does literature propagate the male point of view?
2. What do feminists find wrong with literature?
3. What is feminist criticism?
4. What is gynocriticism?
5. What form of literature do you think suits the women writers more?

2.10. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the section 2.3.
2. Refer to the section 2.3.
3. Refer to the section 2.6.
4. Refer to the section 2.6.
5. Refer to all the sections 2.3., 2.4., 2.5. and 2.8.

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2.12. SUGGESTED READINGS

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2.13. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss how feminism has changed the way of looking at literature.
2. Write an essay on feminist criticism.
3. Trace the development of feminist criticism.

- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. Objectives
- 3.3. Colonialism
 - 3.3.1. Definition
 - 3.3.2. History
 - 3.3.3. Features
 - 3.3.4. Ideologies
- 3.4. Colonialism and Literature
- 3.5. Postcolonialism
- 3.6. Postcolonial Theory
 - 3.6.1. Postcolonial Theory and Humanism
 - 3.6.2. Multiculturalism
- 3.7. Summary
- 3.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 3.9. References
- 3.10. Suggested Readings
- 3.11. Terminal and Model Questions

3.1. INTRODUCTION

An important trend in English literature in the second half of the 20th century and the first two decades of the twenty first has been the prominence of creative writings that emerged from the former British colonies. Today literatures in English from the Indian subcontinent, African nations and the Caribbean have drawn the attention of the readers and critics more than the writings from England and America. A large number of literary awards, including the Nobel and the Booker (now Man Booker), won by writers from these countries are a testimony to it. All these countries have been erstwhile colonies of England, and an important impact on the writers from these parts of the world, even though some of them chose to settle in England and America, has been that of the colonial encounter. A new critical approach aims to take into account the various features and after-effects of these colonial encounters. This has been named as postcolonial critical theory. It focuses on a wide range of issues that are of vital interest to day – history, identity, race, language, migration, gender and cultural exchange. In this and the succeeding unit you will learn in detail about most of these issues from the postcolonial perspective.

3.2. OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will learn about

- Colonialism, its history, features and ideologies;
- Impact of colonialism on literature, and
- Postcolonialism
- Features of postcolonialism

3.3. COLONIALISM

Colonialism has been the most important and far-reaching event of modern human history, after Industrial Revolution. In a way this was an offshoot of the Industrial Revolution. Such widespread was its reach that by the beginning of the twentieth century European states governed more than 80 percent of the world's territories and people. The British Empire alone claimed nearly 25 percent of the world's population as its subject and controlled more than ninety territories in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, the Caribbean, Australasia and the Pacific. But before we go on to discuss the various features of colonialism let us first know what colonialism is.

3.3.1. Definition

The word, 'colonialism', according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), comes from the Roman word, 'colonia' which meant 'farm' or 'settlement', and referred to Romans who settled in other lands but still retained their citizenship. Accordingly, the Oxford English Dictionary describes colony as

A settlement in a new country . . . a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, so long as the connection with the parent state is kept up.

Colonization or acquiring colonies was not a peaceful process as it involved conflict between the people originally living in an area and those who came to occupy it. Ania Loomba remarks in this regard:

This definition, quite remarkably, avoids any reference to people other than colonisers, people who might already have been living in those places where colonies were established. Hence it evacuates the word ‘colonialism’ of any implication of an encounter between peoples, or of conquest and domination. There is no hint that the ‘new locality’ may not be so ‘new’ and that the process of ‘forming a community’ might be somewhat unfair. Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history. (7-8)

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary has put the word in its proper perspective and defined ‘colony’ as “country or area settled or conquered by people from another country and controlled by that country”. It puts ‘colonialism’ as “policy of acquiring colonies and keeping them dependent”. Other related words – ‘colonize’, ‘colonial’ and ‘anti-colonial’ have been derived from the word, ‘colony’

3.3.2. History

Colonialism was an offshoot of the Industrial revolution in Europe. The newly industrialised nations, led by England, searched for markets for their surplus goods and sources of raw material for their industries. It was this that had led to their sea voyages and search for alternative routes to other parts of the world, particularly India. Thus colonialism which started with trade was basically economic in character. But as these countries realized that controlling a country militarily, and thereby its economy, was more profitable than trading with it, it turned into a conquering mission. Though colonialism in this sense dates back to the sixteenth century, the military occupation of other countries for political and economic gains by powerful countries has been a recurring feature of human history. At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from Armenia to the Atlantic in the 2nd century A.D. Under Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century, the Mongols conquered the Middle East as well as China. The Aztec Empire spread over a large area in the Mexican valley. Thus history has many examples where rulers of one country occupied forcibly the people of another country for their own military and financial gains. However, the modern colonialism altered the face of the world in a way which had no precedence in human history. A few nations of Europe, such as England, France, Holland, Portugal and Spain colonised a large part of the remaining world. Their sailors explored the sea routes then unknown to Europe. In many of the sea voyages the destination was India, the land of fabled wealth, but the sailors landed at other parts of the world and subduing the natives settled there. When they finally succeeded in reaching India (the Portuguese were the first to do so) they came here as traders, buying spices, precious stones, fine fabrics and other items which they sold in Europe at a great profit. Their thrust in Africa was mainly for diamonds and minerals. But over the years they turned from traders into rulers. In India they exploited the rivalry of the local rulers and began to control different areas. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and finally, the British came to occupy the country. Till 1857 it was

the indirect rule of Britain over India through The East India Company, the trading company which was granted licence to trade in India by the British Crown. Its highest official, the Governor General, ruled over most of India. After the Revolt of 1857, the British Government took over the direct control of the country in 1858, and the highest English official in India was the Viceroy. This continued till 1947 when India became independent.

3.3.3. Features

Commenting on the features of modern colonialism, Ania Loomba writes:

Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered – it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonised and colonial countries. This flow worked in both directions – slaves and indentured labour as well as raw material were transported to manufacture goods in the metropolis, or in other locations for metropolitan consumption, but the colonies also provided captive markets for European goods. Thus slaves were moved from Africa to the Americas, and the West Indian plantations they produced sugar for consumption in Europe, and raw cotton was moved from India to be manufactured into cloth in England and then sold back to India whose own cloth production suffered as a result. In whichever direction human beings and materials travelled, the profits always flowed back into the so-called ‘mother country’. (9)

Thus an important feature of colonialism was a huge global shift of population, and the ultimate result of colonialism was a ruthless exploitation of both human and material resources of the colonised country. The slave trade in which the natives of Africa were bought and sold and forcibly transported to the Americas for working in the fields, factories and homes as slaves was the ugliest feature of colonialism. A large number of workers were transported from India to Central America as indentured labourers. Colonization completely ruined the native industries of India, particularly its textile industry which flourished at one time. Indian soldiers recruited in the British Indian Army were sent to Europe to fight on the side of the Allied forces in the World War. Thus colonisation brought enormous wealth and power to the colonisers and impoverished both materially and intellectually the colonised countries.

3.3.4. Ideologies

The irony of the whole situation was that the colonists did all this in the name of civilizing the colonised. They called the process of colonialism ‘the White Man’s burden’. Though the real purpose of colonisation was economic exploitation, the colonisers masked it under pompous ideologies. They held that the nations of Asia, Africa and Central America were far behind the European nations in the march of civilization and so it was the duty of the European nations to civilize them. Such deep-rooted was this belief that even Karl Marx, who was against economic hegemony and exploitation, looks upon the colonization of India as a march towards modernization: “Whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history which raised India, in this instance from its semi-barbaric state into the improved

condition of modernity. “ (Quoted in Said 153) The well-known Minute of Macaulay claimed in 1835 that one good shelf of European books was better than the whole libraries of Oriental books. It advocated the teaching of European knowledge in India through the medium of English. The colonized nations of Asia and Africa were not only pronounced to be barbarous but also persuaded to look upon themselves as such. They were often reminded that had the Europeans not come to their countries they would have remained ignorant and backward and would have continued to live in the Dark Ages. Thus mental subjugation of the subject races was accomplished to perpetuate their political subjugation. The people of the colonised countries were encouraged to look upon the colonial rule as beneficial for them. The Western education system played a big role in spreading this myth. The newly educated youth of colonised countries like India who got petty government jobs became supporters of the foreign rule. Thus colonisation as an ideology propagated the superiority of the Eurocentric White civilization, values and systems and the inferiority of culture, thoughts and values of those that the Europeans had colonised. Even race, colour, language and religion were classified on this basis. In this way military subjugation led to cultural subjugation. In the name advancement and civilization the colonizers imposed upon the colonized nations the norms and values of the Eurocentric, White, Capitalistic ideologies backed by Christian doctrines.

3.4. COLONIALISM AND LITERATURE

The ideological subjugation of the colonized people had a deep impact on literature. This impact is visible in the writings of both the colonists and the colonized. While the colonists consciously or unconsciously supported the ideology of colonization, the colonized protested against this ideology and often used literature as a weapon in their fight against colonization of their country. The colonial text consisted of a wide variety of writing. Elleke Boehmer writes:

Yet empire was itself, at least in part, a textual exercise. The colonial officer filing a report on affairs in his district, British readers of newspapers and advertisements of the day, administrators who consulted Islamic and Hindu sacred texts to establish a legal system for British India: they too understood colonization by way of text. The Empire in its heyday was conceived and maintained in an array of writings – political treatises, diaries, acts and edicts, administrative records and gazetteers, missionaries’ reports, notebooks, memoirs, popular verse, government briefs, letters ‘home’ and letters back to settlers. The triple-decker novel and the best-selling adventure tale, both definitive Victorian genres, were infused with imperial ideas of race pride and national prowess. (14)

The colonizers tried to record in various forms of writing their experiences, their ideologies, their mission and also their bewilderment when they encountered an altogether different culture, climate and people. These writings are both literary and non-literary. In writings as various as fiction, memoirs, adventure tales and poetry we come across assertions of colonial hegemony. Later on, the resistance to this hegemony also came through writings. The epic recreations of the past, the veiled attack on the colonial rule through stories and plays and the assertion of the national identity in poems and prose works took the struggle against subjugation to a different plane. These writings

proved to be as effective a medium of political resistance as any open defiance of the foreign rule. Travel writing became an important means of producing Europe's differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to what it called the rest of the world. Commenting on the interaction between colonialism and literature, Loomba writes:

However, literary texts do not simply reflect dominant ideologies, but encode the tensions, complexities and nuances within colonial cultures. Literature is place where 'transculturation' takes place in all its complexity. Literature written on both sides of the colonial divide often absorbs, appropriates and inscribes aspects of the other culture, creating new genres, ideas and identities in the process. Finally, literature is also an important means of appropriating, inverting or challenging dominant means of representation and colonial ideologies. (63)

Writings of both literary and non-literary types are a significant means of recording social change. Colonization brought a radical change in the structure and character of both the colonized and the colonizing nation. This change was not merely political or economic but also idealistic and cultural. One of the important features of postcolonial theory is to enable the reader of literature to understand the changes brought about by colonization as reflected in the writings during the period of colonization and after that.

3.5. POSTCOLONIALISM

During the period following the Second World War the colonial rule of the different European countries over the countries of Asia, Africa, Central America and the Pacific islands came to an end. In the last quarter of the twentieth century a process of evaluation of the nature and impact of colonization began. This gave birth to the literary theory known as postcolonial theory. In the beginning the term that became popular was 'post-colonial' in which the hyphenation served a chronological purpose referring to the period after the end of colonial rule. Thus it referred to writings which emerged in the post-colonial period. But the term raised its own problems. Dennis Walder writes:

Yet that is not as straightforward a matter as it seems: at what point, for example, can one reasonably say South Africa became 'post-colonial'? the Union of 1910 marked the country's formal release by Britain into self-governing status; but the white Afrikaner Nationalists thought of the country's departure from the Commonwealth in 1961 as a more final marker of its independence, which they identified as their own independence from British influence; while most South Africans nowadays think of the achievement of multiracial, democratic elections in 1994 as the turning point at which the colonial structures of the past – reinforced during the post-war period with unique ferocity by the apartheid system – were at last being dismantled. (2)

Similarly, Bangla Desh, once a part of India, became free from the British rule in 1947 when India became free and was partitioned. But Bangla Desh was then East Pakistan and it gained its independent status in 1971 when it ceased to be a part of Pakistan. So for Bangla Desh the post-colonial period may not have started in 1947 but in 1971. However, generally independence of a country from the foreign rule is a historical event and as such has a definite time reference. So chronologically, post-independence denotes the period after a country became independent. The Oxford English Dictionary records the

first use of the term 'post-colonial' in a British newspaper article in 1959, referring to India which achieved independence in 1947.

The term 'postcolonial' –without hyphenation- came in use when it was realised that colonialism as a historical event was too complex to be divided into two historical periods – the colonial era and the period after colonial rule. Leela Gandhi writes:

Whereas some critics invoke the hyphenated form 'post-colonialism' as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonising process, others fiercely query the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath – on the grounds that the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of the colonial occupation. Accordingly, it is argued that the unbroken term 'postcolonialism' is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences. (3)

Postcolonialism as an academic exercise is an attempt to go back in the colonial past of a colonized nation and explore the historical phenomenon involving shifting power relationships between different parts of the world as well as between people within particular territories. It also seeks to probe into the colonial inheritance that continues to operate even after the end of the colonial rule in that nation.

3.6. POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Postcolonial critical theory is a literary approach that analyses the complex phenomenon of colonial encounter as reflected in literary texts. It involves, as Rai has put it, one or more of the following:

- Reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism.
- Reading texts produced by those who have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descendent from migrant families, which deal in the main with diaspora experience and its many consequences.
- In the light of theories of colonial discourses, re-reading texts produced during colonialism, both those that directly address the experiences of Empire and those that seem not to.

Postcolonial theory returns to the colonial scene and finds two narratives: the narrative of power and the counter narrative of the colonised. It derives its origin from both these narratives. It also analyses the traces of colonial impact on writers and works of the post-colonial period, i.e. the period after the country became independent.

Postcolonial criticism enables us to see how the writers of the colonised nations adopted the Western modes of writing and created literatures in those very forms both during the colonial period and after independence. Drama written in India in the late nineteenth and twentieth century is a typical example of this Western influence. India had a rich dramatic tradition in ancient times. The plays of Kalidas is even today rated to be one of the best in the world, not only by Indian scholars but also by those Western, particularly German and English scholars, who learnt Sanskrit and read his plays in the original form. But when we look at the plays written in India in modern times, we find that the dramatists did not go back to their own dramatic traditions but adopted the form and

spirit of the English drama that they had come to read and watch during their school and college days or had become familiar with in the theatres. Peter Barry has perceptively analysed the various stages of this influence. Writers in India as well as in other Asian and African countries began with an unquestioning acceptance of the authority of European models and tried to write novels or plays or poems that would be accepted as masterpieces in the Western tradition. Barry has called it 'Adopt' phase of colonial literature, since the ambition of the writers is to adopt the Western model, considering it to be the universal model. The next stage that followed has been named "Adapt" phase by Barry. In it the 'native' writers made improvisations to suit their own subject matter which related to their own society. Thus they assumed partial rights of intervention in the genre they had inherited from their European masters. You might remember how Mulk Raj Anand in his English novels written during the 1930s such as *Untouchable* and *Coolie* uses Indian swear words and translates Indian expressions directly into English. His subject matter is the depiction of the exploitation and inhuman treatment of the downtrodden people of Indian society, but the values that he applies to make judgments are essentially Western. In *Untouchable* the final solution to his problem that the hero of the novel, a sweeper boy, hears about and accepts is the introduction of the Western style toilets in houses. In the final phase of the colonial inheritance there is a declaration of cultural independence whereby the native writers remake the literary form to their own specification without reference to European norms. Barry describes it as the "Adept" phase. The writer now uses English or other European languages for his literary work but the work he creates is truly native in spirit and style. We remember in this context the remarkable novel of Raja Rao, *Kanthapur* which describes the impact of the Gandhian freedom movement on a small South Indian village. In the 'Foreword' of the novel Rao writes:

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up – like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.

After language the next problem is that of style. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of theirs. We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move, we move quickly. . . . we have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us – we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our story telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story. (v-vi)

Postcolonial literary criticism makes us aware of the adherence to and deviation from the English form and style that the literary works of the postcolonial writers show. The three phases that Barry refers to are not necessarily chronological. They may and often do run simultaneously. Indian English fiction is an example of it. 1930s which saw the efflorescence of Indian fiction witnessed all the three stages simultaneously. However the 'adept' phase is a more dominant phase in the post-colonial writing. There has been a visible shift in the attitude of the postcolonial writers since 1980s. They now see themselves as using primarily African or Asian forms, supplemented with influences derived from Europe, rather than as working primarily within European genres like the novel and merely adding to them elements of orientalism or Africanizing them. This is the most remarkable feature of the postcolonial literature. When Chinua Achebe published in 1958 his path breaking novel, *Things Fall Apart* which records Nigeria's first encounter with the colonist forces, he set out to represent the African experience in a narrative that sought self-consciously to be different from the colonial novel.

3.6.1. Postcolonial Theory and Humanism

Because of its very nature the postcolonial theory combines a variety of other literary approaches and theories. Some of the prominent literary theories that it interacts with are feminism, modernism, postmodernism and poststructuralism. It supplements and is supplemented by these theories. But the most important theory that it confronts and aims to modify is humanism. Both literary humanism of the Renaissance and the scientific humanism of the eighteenth century put man at the centre of the universe. Man now had immense faith in himself and his abilities to control the visible world. The remarkable developments in the field of science and technology that the European nations made seemed to justify this faith. But the claim of centrality was not made for all the human beings of the world. It was Eurocentric in nature and applied basically to the White men. They considered themselves superior to the black or brown people of Africa and Asia. It was in this very belief that the concept of 'the White man's burden' was rooted. In the eyes of the Europeans the people of Africa and Asia were ignorant and backward, and needed to be led from darkness to light by the Europeans. The anti-colonial protest that ultimately gave birth to the postcolonial theory challenges this belief. During their freedom struggle the people of the colonised nations went back to their traditions of knowledge, philosophy, art and literature and showed to their colonial masters that they had a different tradition which was by no means inferior to the cultural tradition of the colonising nations.

3.6.2. Multiculturalism

With the rejection of the Eurocentric White humanism the postcolonial criticism also undermined the Universalist claims once made on behalf of literature by liberal humanist critics. If we claim that great literature has a timeless and universal significance we thereby disregard cultural, social, regional, and national differences in experience and outlook, preferring instead to judge all literature by a single, supposedly 'universal' standard. Postcolonial criticism asserts the multiculturalism inherent in literature. Literature is the expression of man's emotions, thoughts and experiences. Though there are basic human passions which are universal, they are conditioned by the 'moment' and

‘milieu’, as put by Taine, that is, by the age and society in which the man lived. Literature captures this very difference while recording the basic human passions. Postcolonial theory asserts the validity of this variety. The Western writers looked upon the East as a land of the exotic, mystical and mysterious masses. They presented the people from these parts of the world – whether it is Conrad describing Africa in his *The Heart of Darkness* or Somerset Maugham describing the people of the far-East in his short stories or novels – as anonymous masses rather than individuals. Their actions are shown to be determined by instinctive emotions such as lust, terror and fury etc. rather than by conscious choices or decisions. The postcolonial critics exposed the fallacy of such an attitude. Postcolonial criticism tries to show the limitations of the Western outlook, especially its general inability to empathise with representations of life of a different cultural and ethnic identity. It focuses on the depiction of cultural difference and diversity in literary texts.

3.7. CONCLUSION

In this unit you have been introduced to the major concepts of colonialism and postcolonialism. Colonization of the non-European countries by the European nations in the past few centuries was an event that changed the shape of the world as well as the lives of an enormous number of people across the globe. What started as international trade ended with the conquest of a large number of countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and other parts of the world by a handful of European nations. Different from the settler colonies such as America, Australia and New Zealand, these colonies of England, France, Portugal, Spain and Holland were governed from the colonizing metropolis and exploited ruthlessly for its gain. The political rule over these colonies was used to advance the economy of the colonizing countries. What differentiated this phase of colonization from all other phases of conquest and colonization in human history in the past was the claim put forward by the colonizers that they had done so for the sake of the colonized countries. They held that the people of these countries were backward and still lived in the dark ages. So they needed to be civilized. The colonizers called the process of colonization ‘White man’s burden’. Literature became a major tool of the mental subjugation of these colonized people. They were led to believe that their own culture and literature had no worth. So they should adopt the Western culture and values. The resistance against the colonial rule tried to refute these charges. Postcolonial critical theory aims to look at the writings of both the colonizers and the colonized to examine the impact of the colonial encounter on these writings. It attacks the Eurocentric White man’s claim of universalism and aims to encourage multiculturalism.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Shed light on the history of colonialism.
2. Write a note on Post Colonial Theory and Humanism.
3. What is Multiculturalism?
4. Express your views on Colonialism.

3.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to section 3.3.2
2. Refer to section 3.6.1.
3. Refer to section 3.6.2
4. Refer to section 3.5.

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3.10. SUGGESTED READINGS

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3.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is Colonialism? How did it affect the modern world?
2. How did Colonialism affect literature?
3. What is Postcolonialism? How did it counter Colonialism?
4. Discuss the features of Postcolonial literature.

- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Objectives
- 4.3. The Beginning of Postcolonial Theory
- 4.4. Major Postcolonial Theorists
 - 4.4.1. Frantz Fanon
 - 4.4.2. Edward Said
 - 4.4.3. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak
 - 4.4.4. Homi K. Bhabha
- 4.5. Postcolonial Theory and Literary Text
- 4.6. Postcolonial Reading of a Text
- 4.7. Summary
- 4.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 4.9. References
- 4.10. Suggested Readings
- 4.11. Terminal and Model Questions

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you read about colonialism and you know how it changed the face of the world. For a very long time a handful of European countries ruled over a large part of the world. What began as trading ventures ended as acquisition of vast empires. The colonizing countries not only controlled the political set up of the colonized countries but also moulded their economic, social and cultural life to suit their own interests. The political subjugation was consolidated by cultural subjugation. As you have known, the colonial masters claimed that the subject nations were far behind the European nations in the march of civilization and so needed to be led by them. Thus in their eyes colonialism was in fact the ‘White Man’s burden’. By introducing the Western education system and imposing European languages on the natives of the colonized nations they created a class of natives who were deeply influenced by the European thoughts and indeed came to believe that the colonial rule was for their good. Language and literature played a very important role in the process of colonization. In India English became not only the official language of administration but also the medium of our thought and creativity. Ironically enough, it became a medium of our protest against the colonial rule as well. Our political leaders expressed their opposition to the British rule through writings in English. Our authors also chose English to assert their rich cultural and intellectual heritage through their poems, novels, plays and prose writings. In the middle of the twentieth century, when colonialism as a political process came to an end in nearly all the colonies, a conscious effort was made to analyse the literary and cultural implications of the colonial encounter. This gave birth to the critical theory known as the postcolonial theory. It tries to re-read the literature of the colonial period in a fresh light and also examines literary writings of the period following independence from the perspective of the colonial encounter. In the last you unit you became familiar with the relationship between colonialism and literature. You have also been introduced to the concept of postcolonial literary criticism. In this unit you will know about it in detail.

4.2. OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will learn about

- the beginning of the postcolonial theory and
- major postcolonial theorists; you will see how
- postcolonial theories look at a literary text, and finally,
- you will be given a postcolonial reading of a literary work.

4.3. BEGINNING OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Postcolonial critical theory emerged as a critical approach to literature quite recently. In fact, it was only in the 1990s that it began to be recognized as a critical theory. Peter Barry points out that in the first edition of Seldon’s *A Reader’s Guide to Literary Theory*, published in 1985, it was not even mentioned. Nor does Jeremy Hawthorn’s *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Theory* (1992) contain any reference to it. However, it was quite for some time that such theories were trickling down in ones and twos, and towards

the end of the 1980s came several influential books that consolidated such theories into a body of criticism. Anti-colonial sentiments and protests against cultural domination had begun to be voiced soon after the colonial rule. But looking at literature from this point of view came only after the end of colonization. The ancestry of postcolonial theory may be traced to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in French in 1961 and translated into English in 1963. By underlining the cultural subjugation aspect of colonialism Fanon gave a foundation to postcolonial theory. The greatest shaping influence, however, was Edward Said's, *Orientalism*, published in 1978. In it Said argued how by creating an image of the Orient, the West has created 'a sort of surrogate and even underground self'. 'Orientalism' as created by the West identifies the East as the 'Other' of the West and inferior to it. Postcolonial theory finally took shape in such influential books as Gayatri Spivak's *In Other Worlds* that came out in 1987, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), *Nation and Narration* (1990) by Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* which was published in 1993. Postcolonialism now is a major critical approach towards literature. It is an important critical tool to analyse the Commonwealth literature and what is now known as New Literatures in English.

4.4. MAJOR POSTCOLONIAL THEORISTS

4.4.1. Frantz Fanon

As you have read above, the first major theorist who gave a foundation to postcolonial theory was Frantz Fanon. He was a psychiatrist from Martinique. Based in Algeria during its independence struggle of the 1950s, Fanon wrote from the perspective of the colonial subject addressing other colonial subjects. He placed the cultural, including literary aspect of colonial and post-colonial history at the centre of his discussion. During the late 1950s and 1960s, he produced an influential account of the consequences of colonization, which developed both Marxist and psychoanalytic strands of Western thought, primarily in two books - *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952 tr. 1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961 tr. 1963). Dennis Walder writes:

Various anti-colonial critical theories have been influential among the oppressed peoples of the world; but *The Wretched of the Earth* has spoken more directly, profoundly and lastingly than any other single anti-colonial work on behalf of and to the colonized, with the result that many writers and critics, whether or not they agree with Fanon's assumptions or conclusions, consider that his work deserves repeated reading. (73)

Fanon drew on the earlier theorization of modern Black writings of the 'Negritude' movement. This movement was conceived in Paris during the 1930s by a group of Francophone writers, including Aime Cesaire of Martinique, Leopold Senghor of Senegal and Leon Damas of French Guiana. These writers attempted to identify and affirm Black cultural and literary attitudes, ranging from protest and anger at White brutality to a celebration of the 'primitive' instinctual Black 'soul'. As a psychiatrist at a hospital, Fanon had observed at close quarters the psychological effects of the colonial situation which was on the brink of decolonization. He became convinced that the atrocities of the colonial rule could only be explained as a symptom of sadistic, racist anger, basic to

colonial system and which the European intellectuals at home refused to acknowledge. In 1956 Fanon resigned his post from the hospital and devoted himself full time to the revolutionary movement. In 1960 he was sent to the newly independent Ghana as Ambassador for the Algerian Provisional Government. He was soon diagnosed to be suffering from blood cancer. He died in the USA at the age of thirty six shortly after the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon analyses the mental subjugation of the subject race through its desire to imitate the language and culture of the colonial masters. Adoption of the ways of the European masters by the natives was supposed to bring status, career and even sharing of power at a lower level. Fanon writes:

Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (150)

Fanon refers to the Negro who returns home after spending a few months or years in France, the mother country of colonized Algeria. The newly returned now speaks only French and not the dialect that he used earlier. As Fanon asserts, every dialect is an expression of culture, a way of thinking. And the fact that the newly returned Negro adopts a language different from that of the community into which he was born is an evidence of dislocation. Fanon believes that to a greater or lesser extent the Black people had internalised the racism of those who ran the society, and either accepted an inferior status or felt the necessity of proving themselves equal, but in White man's terms.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon presents a more detailed analysis of the alienation of the colonized. He uses the Marxist notions of the economic and historical forces which have brought about that alienation. In this book Fanon discusses the psychology not only of the colonized but also of the colonizers. He holds that in order to justify their rule and occupation of the natives' territory, settlers and administrators create and define a 'Manichean Society'; that is, they classify the world of the 'native' as the opposite of everything the European society supposedly represents: civilization, morality, cleanliness, law and order, and wholesome masculinity. So the native is by definition uncivilized, childlike, feminine, superstitious and unable to rule himself. He is deemed to have no art or literature and hence no history. It was argued that Europeans brought civilization and progress to Africa or India or other colonized nations for the first time. The colonized people were seen as mentally and physically adapted only for menial labour or routine clerical works. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon maintained that European interests in retaining their hold on the land and resources of the colonies made it almost impossible for them to change their attitude.

Frantz Fanon also outlines the three stages of the cultural response of the natives, educated in the European education system and through a European language, towards the dominant colonial culture. He writes:

In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country. His inspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country. This is the period of unqualified assimilation. . . .

In the second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is. This period of creative work approximately corresponds to that immersion which we have just described. But since the native is not a part of his people, he is content to recall their life only. Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of this memory: old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of the borrowed aestheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies. . . .

Finally, in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people . . . hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature and a national literature. During this phase a great many men and women who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work, now that they find themselves in exceptional circumstances – in prison, with the Maquis or on the eve of their execution – feel the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action. (Quoted in Walder 76-77)

Frantz Fanon thus provided the postcolonial theory a base on which the later theorists were to build their theories, whether as an extension or a deviation.

4.4.2. Edward Said

The most remarkable theorist who might be said to have kick-started the postcolonial theory is Edward Said. His book, *Orientalism* is still considered to be the most influential book in this field. Said was a Palestinian American scholar, theorist and activist. He was born in Jerusalem in 1935. His early education was in Jerusalem and Cairo, before his moving to the USA in 1951. He studied at Princeton University and gained his Ph. D. from Harvard University for his doctoral thesis on Joseph Conrad. From 1963 until his death in 2003, he taught at Columbia University, New York, where he served as professor of English and Comparative Literature. While Fanon focused mainly on the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in Africa and the Caribbean, Said concentrated more on the portrayals of Asia, including India and the Middle East. His *Orientalism* is concerned with the ways in which knowledge is governed and owned by Europeans to reinforce power, and to exclude or dismiss the knowledge which natives might claim to have. Said draws on Foucault's work and his notion of systems of discourses controlled by those in power which define the 'truths' by which we live and judge others. He refers to anthropology, history, linguistics and literary criticism as well as European literary works as a network of discourses which establish a particular view of 'Orientals' as a people to be governed rather than as equals who are capable of self-government. Defining his concept of 'Orientalism', Said writes:

Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (873)

In this book Said documents and decries the European portrayals of all peoples and cultures in the Middle East, India, and other parts of Asia. He holds that the Western image of the Orient has been constructed by generations of writers and scholars who thereby legitimized the imperial penetration and control.

Orientalism is a study of the late 19th and early twentieth century literary discourse through which Said holds that the English and French scholars have created an image of the Eastern countries which suits their own hegemonic designs. The central idea of the book is that Western knowledge about the East is not generated from facts and reality, but from preconceived archetypes that presents all Eastern societies as fundamentally similar to one another and basically dissimilar to Western societies. The discourse establishes the East as antithetical to the West. Such Eastern knowledge is constructed with literary texts without much exposure to reality. Said writes:

Without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post- Enlightenment period . . . European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.

The book is divided into three chapters – ‘The Scope of Orientalism’, ‘Orientalist Structures and Restructures’ and ‘Orientalism now’.

Culture and Imperialism, which Said published fifteen years after *Orientalism*, responded in part to another criticism of his earlier work for its non-inclusion of ways in which native writers had responded to Orientalist attitudes, and so implicitly represented the Orient and Orientals as silent or silenced subjects. In this work he not only analysed the presence of empire in texts such as Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, he also referred to writers such as Achebe, Fanon, Salman Rushdie and W. B. Yeats. Said shows how new perceptions can be gained from well-known texts by adopting postcolonial perspective.

4.4.3. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak is a U.S. based Indian critic, theorist and translator. She was born in Calcutta in 1942. She graduated from the University of Calcutta in 1959. Gayatri Spivak became a prominent academic in the United States after gaining her doctorate at Cornell University and publishing a translation of Jacques Derrida’s seminal work in English as *On Grammatology* in 1976. Her influential essays including “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” and “Can the Subaltern Speak?” explore the ignored or distorted presence of colonized women in texts such as Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*

and in official records maintained by British officials in India regarding 'sati'. Spivak also insists that scholars should be self-conscious about the ways in which their own positions as academics in institutions, most often in the 'First World' relate to the ways in which their work is produced and received. Her other important works include *In Other Worlds* and a book she edited with Ranajit Guha, *Selected Subaltern Studies*.

4.4.4. Homi K. Bhabha

Apart from the above mentioned theorists, the critic and theorist whose name frequently recurs in discussions of postcolonial literary and cultural studies is Homi Bhabha. He was born to Parsi parents in Mumbai. He studied as an undergraduate at the University of Bombay, and as a postgraduate at Oxford University. He has taught at many universities in U.K. and U.S.A., and is currently teaching at Harvard University. His book, *The Location of Culture* contains several of his best known essays. Drawing on psychoanalytical theory with particular reference to Sigmund Freud and Lacan, Bhabha has elaborated the key concepts of mimicry and hybridity. Whereas Fanon and Said have analysed the oppositions set up in colonist and anti-colonialist societies, Bhabha has sought to demonstrate that their discourses contain ambivalences and ambiguities. He argues that 'mimicry' of colonizers by the colonized subjects can be a form of subversion since it makes unstable the insistence on difference which forms the basis of colonialist and nationalist ideologies. Like Said and Spivak, Bhabha celebrates the hybridity of postcolonial cultures, seeing their embrace of European as well as indigenous traditions as a positive advantage which allows their writers and critics to understand and critique the West as both insiders and outsiders.

4.5. POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND LITERARY TEXT

Postcolonial literary criticism has deeply affected the interpretation of a large number of literary works. For example, it has given a new insight into Shakespeare's famous play, *The Tempest*. Most of you must have read this play and know that Prospero, the Duke of Milan, became a victim of his brother's conspiracy and escaping from his dukedom with his daughter, Miranda, reached an island. This island was uninhabited except a subhuman creature, Caliban. The island belonged to his mother, Sycorax who was a witch and was now dead. Prospero becomes the master of the island and with the power of his magic controls not only the spirits of the island but also Caliban who becomes his slave. Now before the postcolonial theory became a tool of literary criticism, this story was read as an engrossing tale of dramatic romance with humanistic values of forgiveness and reconciliation. If we look at the story in the perspective of the postcolonial theory, the relationship between Caliban and Prospero appears in a new light. Caliban was the native of the island which was occupied by Prospero forcefully. He was put in the position of a slave by an outsider and was forced to serve him. Prospero's claim of his efforts to civilize him does not sound so generous and humanistic now. It sounds more like other stories of colonization where the natives are exploited and used by the outsiders who occupy the native's home territory. Bhabha's theory of 'mimicry' as a means of subverting the colonialist authority makes us look afresh at the famous lines of Caliban when he retorts at Prospero's claim that he civilized him and taught him language – "You gave me language, and my profit on't/ Is I know how to curse." Thus you see how postcolonial theory makes us look afresh at this play. Peter Barry gives another example:

Reading literature with the perspective of ‘Orientalism’ in mind would make us, for instance, critically aware of how Yeats in his two ‘Byzantium’ poems (‘Sailing to Byzantium’, 1927, and ‘Byzantium’, 1932) provides an image of Istanbul, the Eastern capital of the former Roman Empire, which is identified with torpor, sensuality and exotic mysticism. At such moments Yeats adopts an ethnocentric or Eurocentric perspective, seeing the East as an exotic ‘Other’.
(187)

However, in other context Said looks at Yeats as a postcolonial writer. Yeats’s desire to regain contact with an earlier, mythical, nationalistic Ireland reminds us of Fanon’s idea of the need to reclaim the past.

Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is another text which gives a more rewarding interpretation when analysed from the postcolonial perspective. The lone shipwrecked settler Crusoe wards off starvation and the anxiety of the unknown by building himself a small estate. He lays claim to land and develops it by his labour. He works according to the rules and conventions produced by his memory, using tools retrieved from the ship. In the absence of society, writing a journal becomes his way of objectifying and confirming the surrounding reality. He also trains his parrot to speak his name. Thus the signifiers of his past life are sought to be preserved by him. Yet all his attempts to recreate home in an alien land, if probed deeply, seem merely desperate attempts at preserving his identity. As colonial writing confirmed time and again, significations transferred from the homeland were doomed to take on a different cast in a new context. No matter how much Crusoe, like the archetypal colonist he is, tries to assert his own reality and establish his right to the island, the unknown remains a constant anxiety, represented by his horror of cannibalism.

4.6. POSTCOLONIAL READING OF A TEXT

By now you have a fairly clear idea of the postcolonial theory. You have also seen how this theory has thrown a fresh light on some of the well-known literary texts. We shall now make a postcolonial reading of a literary text. For this I have chosen a novel with which you are already familiar as it was a part of your syllabus in your previous year. This is E. M. Forster’s novel, *A Passage to India*. Published in 1924, this novel was the outcome of Forster’s two visits to India which was then a British colony, the ‘Jewel in the British Crown’, as it was called. Forster was a liberal humanist who did not approve of the theory of racial superiority and the treatment of Indians by the colonial officials in India. At the very beginning of the novel he raises the question whether it is possible for an Indian to be “friends with an Englishman”. The answer given by the Muslim characters of the novel is, ‘no’. Hamidullah, who had been to Cambridge for higher studies and had received a cordial welcome there, holds that it may be possible in England but not in colonial India where the Englishmen and women are the ruling class and Indians members of the subject race. No sooner do they spend some months or years in India than they begin to consider themselves superior to Indians, as Mrs Turton, the wife of the Collector in Chandrapore, says: “You’re superior to them, anyway. Don’t forget that. You’re superior to everyone in India except one or two of the Ranis, and they’re on an equality.” (42) There is a scene in the novel where Mrs. Moore, the mother of the City Magistrate, Ronny, who has come to India recently is expressing her

disapproval of the behaviour of her son and other officials towards the Indians they had invited to the club. Ronny says in response:

‘We’re not out here for the pur’se of behaving pleasantly!’
‘What do you mean?’
‘What I say. We’re out here to do justice and keep the peace. Them’s my sentiments. India isn’t a drawing room’.
‘Your sentiments are those of a god’, she said quietly, but it was his manner rather than his sentiments that annoyed her.
Trying to recover his temper, he said, ‘India likes gods’.
‘And Englishmen like posing as gods.’
‘There’s no point in all this. Here we are, and we’re going to stop, and the country’s got to put up with us, gods or no gods.’ (51)

Though Forster criticizes the behaviour of the colonialists towards the colonized, nowhere in the novel does he criticize colonialism as a political and economic system. What he seems to be saying is that everything would have been fine only if the British in India would have been more humane towards Indians, as Mrs. Moore observes about her son – “One touch of regret from the heart – not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart - would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution.” (53) Thus Forster is deliberately glossing over the reality of colonialism.

As Edward Said says, Orient is only a generalized and romanticised concept in the minds of the English writers. Despite his considerable stay in India and close contact with Indians, Forster also is not able to rise above this. The Orientalists look upon Orient as an antithesis of the Occident. Whereas Occident is considered to be rational, organized and efficient, Orient is looked upon as emotional, chaotic and inefficient. Forster carries this impression in *A Passage to India* as well. In the beginning of the novel when Aziz and Mrs. Moore meet in the mosque, Aziz expresses his grievances against Major Calendar and his wife, and is happy to find that Mrs. Moore also shares his impressions about them. He says:

‘You understand me, you know what others feel. Oh, if others resembled you!’
Rather surprised, she replied: ‘I don’t think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them.’
‘Then you are an Oriental.’ (21)

Forster presents his two major characters, Aziz and Fielding, in this very light. Fielding, the man with a humanistic philosophy of life and the only Englishman in the novel who is capable of forming a friendship with Indians, is nonetheless presented as efficient, rational and strong. In comparison, Aziz is presented as impulsive, weak and disorganized, though good at heart and professionally capable. Thus basically the two characters embody the concept of the antithesis between the East and the West, as outlined by Said in *Orientalism*. This contrast becomes all the more evident in the scenes after the Marabar Cave incident. Recording Fielding’s impressions, Forster writes:

At the moment when he was throwing in his lot with Indians, he realized the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them. They always do something disappointing. Aziz had tried to run away from the police, Mohammed Latif had

not checked the pilfering. And now Hamidullah! – instead of raging and denouncing, he temporized. Are Indians cowards? No, but they are bad starters and occasionally jib. Fear is everywhere; the British Raj rests on it; the respect and courtesy Fielding himself enjoyed were unconscious acts of propitiation. (192)

The bungling ineptitude of the Indians has been repeatedly presented by Forster in the novel. In the bridge party scene an Indian doctor rams his coach into the boundary wall of the club and damages it. A Bengali family invites Miss Quested and Mrs. Moore to tea but fails to take them home, though they keep waiting. Fielding is unable to catch his train on the Marabar trip because Godbole's puja detains him. Thus one gets the impression that India is a country of bungling people.

The postcolonial theorists argue that the Eastern countries are generally seen in terms of masses. The overwhelming impression that a reader has is that of being faced with a community rather than individuals. This is true of *A Passage to India* also. Except Aziz and to some extent Godbole, no other Indian character in the novel is individualized. The two scenes that leave a strong impression on us – the celebration of victory by the Indians after the verdict acquitting Aziz in the Marabar Cave incident and the festival at Mau celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna – are scenes of emotional, chaotic, even hysterical masses.

The Orient has traditionally been depicted in English fiction till the first half of the twentieth century as mysterious, a place which cannot be apprehended by intellect. *A Passage to India*, in spite of Forster's understanding of India and Indians, does not escape this stereotype of the Orient. The Marabar Caves in the novel represent this mystery. The mystery often turns into muddle. A scene in the novel expresses this idea:

'I do so hate mysteries', Adela announced.

'We English do.'

'I dislike them not because I'm English, but from own personal point of view', she corrected.

'I like mysteries but I rather dislike muddles', said Mrs. Moore.

'A mystery is a muddle.'

'Oh, do you think so Mr. Fielding?'

'A mystery is only a high sounding term for muddle. No advantage in stirring it up in either case. Aziz and I know well that India's a muddle.' (73)

Thus despite its apparent understanding of the problems of India and Indians, Forster's *A Passage to India* remains at the core a colonial text. Now that you have known how you can apply postcolonial criticism to analyse a literary work, particularly the one that was written in a colonized country during or after the period of colonization, you can try it yourself.

4.7. SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt in detail about the postcolonial literary criticism. Colonization left a lasting impact on both the colonizers and the colonized. This impact is reflected in literature also. In the second half of the twentieth century theorists, mainly those belonging to once colonized countries, began to analyse the cultural features of colonization. They explained how political subjugation of colonies was consolidated by cultural subjugation. Theorists like Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha examined the cultural and literary aspects of colonization from various angles and came up with theories that throw a new light on literary works. Even long established texts like Shakespeare's *The Tempest* yielded fresh interpretations when analysed from the postcolonial perspective. Edward Said through his influential book, *Orientalism*, showed how the West has created an Image of the East through its imaginary concept of Orientalism. Orient thus has served as an antithesis of Occident. It has been created as the negative self of the West. The postcolonial theories have thus exposed the bias of the Western writers, particularly the English and French writers, when dealing with non-Western people and culture.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Shed light on the beginning of Post Colonial Theory.
2. Write short notes on the following Post Colonial Theorists:
 - (a) Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak
 - (b) Edward Said
 - (c) Homi K. Bhabha

4.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to section 4.3
2. Refer to the following sections:
 - (a) 4.4.3
 - (b) 4.4.2.
 - (c) 4.4.4.

4.9. REFERENCES

- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2013. (reprint)
- Walder, Dennis. *Post-colonial Literatures in English*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1998.
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4.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Innes, C. L. *Postcolonial Literatures in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 2004.

4.11. MODEL AND TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Write a critical note on Postcolonial Theory.
2. Discuss Frantz Fanon as a Postcolonial Theorist.
3. Describe the views of Edward Said as contained in his *Orientalism*.
4. Describe the basic tenets of some of the Postcolonial critics.
5. How has Postcolonial Theory changed our way of reading a literary work? Explain with reference to some literary works.

5.1. Introduction

5.2. Objectives

5.3. Modernism

5.3.1. Features of Modernism

5.4. Postmodernism

5.4.1. Features of Postmodernism

5.4.2. Postmodern Theorists and Authors

5.4.3. Postmodern Criticism

5.5. Summary

5.6. Answers to Self Assessment Question

5.7. References

5.8. Selected Reading

5.9. Terminal and Model Questions

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this and the succeeding unit you are going to read about a literary and cultural movement which has been termed as 'Postmodernism'. The prefix, 'post' in this term suggests that postmodernism is something which happened after modernism was over. This, in fact, is not so. In culture, art and literature one phase does not completely end before another begins. It is the nature of man that he does not persist with the same taste for ever in these matters. Changes keep occurring at regular intervals. Often the changes discard the trends that are prevalent and introduce new trends. Sometimes the new trends are a revival of some earlier trends with new features added to them. If you look at the history of English literature you will realize the truth of this phenomenon. The Elizabethan age has been described as romantic age in which imagination dominated creativity. The Augustan age which replaced it was an age of reason and intellect. A reaction against the trends of this age took place when Romantic Revival of the early nineteenth century occurred. It took some features from the earlier romantic age but added a whole lot of new features to them. Thus it was both a revival and a new beginning. The Victorian age also continued some features of the preceding age but changed some and added new features. The early decades of the twentieth century saw a reaction against the tastes of the previous century and created new trends in art, architecture, music and literature. The age came to be known as the modern age. Nevertheless, the emphasis, mainly in literature, on intellect rather than on imagination reminds us of the Classical age of the eighteenth century. After the World War II, changes once again began to take place. The new features that emerged now came to be described under a new name 'postmodernism'. Postmodernism is in many regards a continuation or extension of modernism while in several others it reveals new features. In this unit you will know about both the continuation and the changes that took place in literature and some other arts during the twentieth century.

5.2. OBJECTIVES

In this unit you are going to learn first about modernism, its features and the changes it brought in the fields of literature, art, architecture, painting and music etc. In the latter part of the unit you will know about the changes that began to take place in these areas and the new features that emerged. In many regards there was a continuation while in others there were significant changes. The continuation as well as the changes constitute together what is termed as postmodernism. After going through the unit you will have a basic idea of both modernism and postmodernism.

5.3. MODERNISM

The term 'modern' in its common application refers to something which is contemporary. It is often used as an antonym of 'old', 'ancient' or 'old-fashioned'. Thus you say that somebody's ideas are old or somebody else's are quite modern, referring in the first case to something which existed in an earlier generation and is continuing without change, and in the second case to something which is different from what existed earlier and is in vogue in current times. So when the term 'modern' was used in the twentieth century it

generally referred to something belonging to the twentieth century which was the current century then. We cannot call the 20th century 'modern' in that sense now as ours is the twenty first century. In history, the word 'modern' does not stand for contemporary period in the strict sense. There the terms 'ancient', 'medieval' and 'modern' refer to long periods of time and they vary from one continent or country to another. Thus the modern European history begins with the Renaissance that took place more than four hundred years ago. The modern Indian history begins with the advent of Europeans in India which also took place more than three hundred years ago. However, modernism as the feature of literature, art, architecture, painting and music is something which describes a bunch of traits that emerged by the turn of the twentieth century and dominated these areas till the Second World War. In most cases they present a sharp break from the practices of the 19th century. They, as is natural, do not represent clearly demarcated and sharply defined features, but an amorphous heap of practices. A. S. Collins remarks:

Rarely can any half century have held such complexity and contradiction, such progress and such retrogression, such marvels and such futility, as the first half of the twentieth century holds for the student of life and letters. The tide of human fortune have swept along with incomparable force, its passage often unpredictable, now forwards, now backwards, breaking up old boundaries, obliterating ancient landmarks, opening up new campaigns, sometimes only to destroy them again. New ideas and new inventions, both for good and for ill, have transformed mankind. In fifty years a whole new world, intellectual and physical, moral and aesthetic, political, social, and economic has emerged. (1)

Tendencies of change had already appeared by the turn of the century, but the First World War changed Europe and to a lesser or greater degree other parts of the world for ever. J. A. Cuddon points out the places and periods where and when modernist tendencies were at their most active and fruitful. For example, in France they were active from the 1890s to the 1940s; in Russia during the pre-revolutionary years and the 1920s, and in England they can be seen from early in the 20th century and during the 1920s and 1930s. In America modernism is the most dominant feature of literature and life from shortly before the First World War and during the inter-War period. However, despite a little variation of periods from one country to another, the period of modernist influences is the first half of the twentieth century. Peter Barry remarks about modernism:

'Modernism' is the name given to the movement which dominated the arts and culture of the first half of the twentieth century. Modernism was that earthquake in the arts which brought down much of the structure of pre-twentieth century practice in music, painting, literature and architecture. One of the major epicenters of this earthquake seems to have been Vienna, during the period of 1890-1910, but the effects were felt in France, Germany, Italy, and eventually even in Britain, in art movements like Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Futurism. Its after-shocks are still being felt today, and many of the structures it toppled have never been rebuilt. Without an understanding of modernism, then, it is impossible to understand twentieth-century culture. (78)

Thus modernism created a sharp break from the traditions and practices of earlier centuries in the fields of different arts, literature and culture.

5.3.1 Features of Modernism

Modernism rejected the fundamental premises of nearly all the arts and started new practices in them. Thus melody and harmony were put aside in music, and perspective and direct pictorial representation were abandoned in painting, in favour of degrees of abstraction. In architecture traditional forms and materials such as pitched roofs, domes and columns, wood, stone and bricks were rejected in favour of plain geometrical forms often executed in new materials like plate glass and concrete. In literature there was a rejection of traditional narration in favour of experimental forms of various kinds. Thus chronological plots, continuous narratives presented by omniscient narrators, flat and round characters, and social and moral messages were dropped. New images, stream of consciousness technique, broken narratives and frequent time shifts became the new features of literature.

As is the case with any movement, there are different phases of modernism. The early years of the 20th century show only a slight departure from the values and practices of the Victorian age. The first decade of the twentieth century does not show any radical change in literary practices in English. The intellectual and spiritual climate, however, was changing. The early modernism was marked by a deep nostalgia for the earlier period that was full of faith, and by a tone of lament for the loss of an undisputed authority. During this period the authority of science and reason replaced the authority of faith and religion. This resulted in an enormous progress in the field of science and technology. However, European society was moving towards spiritual desolation. The leading English poets of the early 20th century lamented it. W. B. Yeats writes in 1919:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world . . .
The best lack all convictions, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* that came in 1922 told the story of the post- First World War Europe. A spiritually decadent society was experiencing death-in-life where April, the season of rejuvenation, seemed 'the cruelest month'. The new poetry looked not to the countryside but to the city. It was written by and for a metropolitan intelligentsia.

In literature romanticism gave way to realism. Bernard Shaw had already exposed the hollowness of the romantic approach towards war and love in his play, *Arms and the Man* before the turn of the century. The war poetry written during and after the First World War brought before the world the cruelty and inhumanity of war. Many of these poets like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon had been soldiers and had experienced the savagery of war themselves. Several even died during the War. Another event that shook the foundation of the Western world was the economic depression of the 1930s. It got reflected in literature also. With poets like W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice poetry became the expression of social and political commitment.

Thus because of developments in religious, political, economic, military, and other fields, men lost faith in traditional ways of seeing the world. The twentieth century saw the break-down of the old familiar authoritarian pattern in private and social life. The two

basic themes of modern literature have been those of isolation and relationship. M. K. Bhatnagar notes in this regard:

‘There is one word – let me impress upon you – which you must inscribe upon your banner, and that word is “Loneliness”.’ Thus Henry James advised Logan Pearsall Smith when the latter sought to know how he could succeed in doing the best he could with his pen. It is this word ‘loneliness’ – together with another word intrinsically related thereto, *viz.*, ‘relationship’ which encompasses veritably the whole range of twentieth century literature in English. (1)

From a technical perspective, modernism involves the rejection of traditional forms as well as the aesthetic perceptions associated with these forms. Persistently experimental by nature, modernism often involves a highly conscious manipulation of form. At the back of this technical finesse lie a number of pioneering studies in other disciplines, not necessarily related to literature but which nevertheless left an indelible mark on the way writer grasped the reality around them. Among such significant studies can be cited William James’s *Principles of Psychology*, Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Albert Einstein’s *General Principles of Relativity* and James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*.

Modernism involves a critical shuffling of perspectives as well as priorities. It can be viewed not so much as a revolution implying a turning over or a turning back but rather as a break up, a dissolution, an opening up, a sort of devolution. Modern literature often poses a technical challenge before the reader to interpret it. When T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* appeared for the first time, it puzzled most readers because of its numerous allusions and quotations as well as its disjointed structure. The ‘Notes’ that Eliot provided with his poem did not provide much help to the reader. The stream of consciousness technique that novelists like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf adopted in their novels defied the concept of a well-made plot. Thus modernism in literature stood for technical experiments. The complex sensibility of the age required complex methods to express it.

Tim Woods has listed some of the features of modernism:

1. A commitment to finding new forms to explore *how* we see the world rather than what we see in it (e.g. the break with realist modes of narrative in favour of a stream of consciousness; in visual art, the emergence of Cubism, which represents objects as a series of discontinuous, fractured planes, all equidistant from the viewer, rather than using light and perspective to suggest pictorial depth containing solid, three-dimensional objects; in music, the abandonment of harmony in favour of tone).
2. A new faith in quasi-scientific modes of conceptualization and organization, for instance using basic geometric shapes like cubes and cylinders in the tower blocks of modernist architecture, as the expression of a rationalist, progressive society.
3. An ideologically inspired use of fragmented forms, like collage structures in art, and deliberately discontinuous narratives in literature to suggest the fragmentation and break-up of formerly accepted systems of thought and belief.

4. Aesthetic self-reflexivity, in which artifacts explore their own constitution, construction and shape (e.g. novels in which narrators comment on narrative forms, or paintings in which an image is left unfinished, with ‘roughed – in’ or blank sections on the canvas).
5. A clear demarcation between popular and elite forms of culture (e.g. intellectual distinctions made between atonal electronic music like Karlheinz Stockhausen’s and modern jazz and rock, or between rock and pop, etc.).
6. A gradual growth of interest in non-Western forms of culture, albeit as a way to reinvigorate tired traditional aesthetics (e.g. the interest that avant-garde photographers at the turn of the century took in Japanese prints; or the widespread interest of artists such as Picasso and Georges Braque in ‘primitive’ African masks). (7-8)

5.4. POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism, which came into vogue roughly since 1960s, was not so much a reaction against modernism as an extension in some cases and a divergence from it in others. By mid-fifties the Modernist tendency in literature had run its course. The post-War artist had reasons to be dissatisfied with modernist attitude to life and art. As we have discussed above literature in the hands of writers like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf had become elitist. Only readers with high education and intellectual perception could appreciate it. As a result literature became something especially meant for academic consumption and it lost its appeal for the common reader. What is more important, it lost its capacity to entertain. The emergence of any new art form is usually preceded by a number of factors. One major factor is the artist’s dissatisfaction with the dominant art form of his time, and another, the inaccessibility of the art form to the common man. This inaccessibility is often due to a gap between art and entertainment. The new art strives to bridge this gap by assimilating features of the popular form of art. Postmodernism reflects this feature.

The prefix ‘post’ in the term ‘postmodernism’ suggests that it is inextricably bound up with modernism, either as a replacement of modernism or as chronologically after modernism. In fact, as Tim Woods puts it, it is ‘a critical engagement with modernism’. It does not replace or overturn modernism. Despite the prefix ‘post’ suggesting that postmodernism emerges after modernism, as a chronologically later period in social and cultural history, there are many theorists who argue that postmodernism is not a chronological period, but more of a way of thinking and doing. Tim Woods remarks:

Postmodernism is a *knowing* modernism, a self-reflexive modernism, a modernism that does not agonize about itself. Postmodernism does what modernism does, only in a celebratory rather than repentant way. Thus, instead of lamenting the loss of the past, the fragmentation of existence and the collapse of selfhood, postmodernism embraces these characteristics as a new form of social existence and behavior. The difference between modernism and postmodernism is therefore best seen as a difference in *mood* or *attitude*, rather than a chronological difference or a different set of aesthetic practices. (8-9)

5.4.1 Features of Postmodernism

In many respects postmodernism follows many of the tendencies of modernism, often practicing the same aesthetic characteristics. So the relationship between the two is more complex than a simple linear historical development. For example, both modernism and postmodernism give great prominence to fragmentation as a feature of twentieth century art and culture, but they do so in very different moods. The modernist features it in such way as to register a deep nostalgia for an earlier age when faith was full and authority intact. He looks upon the contemporary world as inadequate and fragmented. In *The Waste Land* the narrator observes – ‘These fragments I have shored against my ruins.’ For the postmodernist, by contrast, fragmentation is an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief. Thus while the modernist laments fragmentation, postmodernist celebrates it.

Another important aspect in which postmodernism differs from modernism is the attitude towards art and literature. For the modernists, art was a matter of ‘fierce asceticism’ in which over-elaborate art forms of the nineteenth century had no place. This is reflected in modern architecture which repudiated the domes, carvings and other elaborate designs and adopted plain structures. In literature it resulted in the minimalism which, for instance, shrinks poems to narrow columns of two-word lines containing condensed observations or feelings. The most remarkable feature of modern literature is its intellectualism. Postmodernism, on the other hand, rejects the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ arts. Modern literature, like literature in every age, did incorporate elements of popular culture in its body. *Ulysses*, for example, has assimilated in its texture contemporary popular songs, newspaper headlines and other such elements. In *The Waste Land* the use of words like ‘jug jug’ and the call of the bar attendant- ‘Hurry up please! It’s time!’- represent popular features. This, however, does not change the basic intellectual character of these works. Writers like T. S. Eliot considered literature to be the preserve of the intellectuals. The proportion of the elements of popular culture was very limited and peripheral in modern literature. It was the use of symbols and myths that characterized it. Postmodernism tries to liberate literature from the restrictions of intellectualism.

It is useful to distinguish between ‘postmodernity’ and ‘postmodernism’. The first is a concept which describes our socio-economic, political and cultural condition. For example, we are living in increasingly post-industrial, service-oriented economies. In urban societies our day-to-day life is dominated by modern gadgets. We communicate with each other through mobile phones, e-mails, faxes, video-conferences and other such postmodern means. We access the wider world through internet. Our banking has become e-banking. We talk of global economy. Our modes of transport have become faster than they have ever been. We live in skyscrapers. Such conditions of living are often referred to as ‘postmodernity’. Postmodernism, on the other hand, describes the broad aesthetic and intellectual projects in our society, on the plane of theory. Thus we refer to art which combats notions of art as self-expressions of the inner self, or to literary works which take pleasure in ‘playing’ with language for its own sake rather than with a moralistic or realistic purpose. We also refer to poststructuralist philosophy’s claim that ideas which maintain that there are centres of truth which stand outside the logic of language are

merely convenient or ideologically motivated illusions. All these might be referred to as postmodernism.

A striking feature of postmodernism is a decline of faith in the key-stones of Enlightenment – belief in the infinite progress of knowledge and infinite moral and social advancement. Postmodernists look upon this world as absurd, and so for the artist traditional mode of mimesis or realistic emulation no longer stands valid. The theatre of the Absurd that took European drama by storm is a product of this very postmodernist point of view. The postmodern novelist holds that there is no point in creating fiction that gives an illusion of life when life itself seems so illusory. This has given birth to non-fiction novels. The modern age grew into postmodern because of the changes in society and its structure of a basic nature. In the contemporary culture, where mass media reigns supreme, art is receding into the background because of the presence of different modes of representation of life and world. The recent deconstructive – also referred to as deconstructive postmodernism – and Lacanian theories have argued that the author as traditionally conceived never existed. Barthes published his well known essay, “The Death of the Author” in 1968. He holds that “the text is read without the father’s signature” and that in writing the personality of the author dissolves and disappears. Barthes ascribes the concept of authorship to the capitalist ideology. It is because of this that in literary histories, biographies, interviews and articles the author is given the place of paramount importance. The author also tries to bring himself to the central position through memoirs and diaries etc.

5.4.2. Postmodern Theorists and Authors

Postmodernism as a theoretical shift in the fields of art, literature and culture emerged during the 1960s. Postmodern literature began to be written during the second half of the twentieth century in America, Latin America, England and other European countries. Some of the prominent postmodern authors are Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges, Russian novelist Vladimir Nabokov, French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet, and British novelists Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing, B. S. Johnson and John Fowles. Some prominent American postmodern writers are Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., John Barth, Ken Kesey and Norman Mailer.

The term ‘postmodernism’, as Peter Barry says, was used for the first time in 1930s, but its current sense and vogue can be said to have begun with Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1979. In 1980 German theorist Jurgen Habermas published his influential paper, “Modernity – an Incomplete Project”. Habermas regards the progress of human civilization as the outcome of the period of Enlightenment which lasted from mid-seventeenth century to mid-eighteenth century, a period which he regards as the beginning of modern era. He holds that the faith in reason and possibility of progress that characterized Enlightenment had survived into the twentieth century despite the catastrophe of world wars. For Habermas, the French post-structuralist thinkers of 1970s, such as Derrida and Foucault, represented a specific repudiation of this kind of Enlightenment modernity. They attacked, in his view, the ideals of reason, clarity, truth, and progress. Lyotard’s essay, “Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism” first published in 1982 takes up this debate about Enlightenment and attacks Habermas. For Lyotard the Enlightenment whose project Habermas wishes to

continue is simply, as Barry puts it, “one of the would-be authoritative ‘overarching’, ‘totalising’ explanation of things like Christianity, Marxism, or the myth of scientific progress”. These ‘metanarratives’ which purport to explain and reassure, are really illusions, fostered in order to smother difference, opposition and plurality. Lyotard defines postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives”. Grand narratives of progress and human perfectibility are no longer tenable. The best we can hope for is a series of ‘mininarratives’, which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative and which provide a basis for the actions of specific groups in particular local circumstances. Postmodernity thus deconstructs the basic aim of Enlightenment that is the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject.

Another major theorist of postmodernism is the French writer Jean Baudrillard whose book *Simulations* (1981, translated 1983) is a remarkable work in this area. Baudrillard is associated with what is usually known as ‘the loss of the real’, which is the view that in contemporary life the pervasive influence of images from film, TV., and advertising has led to a loss of distinction between real and imagined, reality and illusion, surface and depth. The result is a culture of ‘hyperreality’, in which distinctions between these are eroded.

5.4.3. Postmodern Criticism

Peter Barry in his book, *Beginning Theory* enumerates what postmodern critics aim to do:

1. They discover postmodernist themes, tendencies, and attitudes within literary works of the twentieth century and explore their implications.
2. They foreground fiction which might be said to exemplify the notion of the ‘disappearance of the real’, in which shifting postmodern identities are seen, for example, in the mixing of literary genres (the thriller, the detective story, the myth saga, and the realist psychological novel, etc.).
3. They foreground what might be called ‘inter-textual elements’ in literature such as parody, pastiche, and illusion, in all of which there is a major degree of reference between one text and another, rather than between the text and a safely external reality.
4. They foreground irony, in the sense described by Umberto Eco, that whereas the modernist tries to destroy the past, the postmodernist realizes that the past must be revisited, but ‘with irony’.
5. They foreground the element of ‘narcissism’ in narrative technique, that is, where novels focus on and debate their own ends and processes, and thereby ‘de-naturalize’ their content.
6. They challenge the distinction between high and low culture, and highlight texts which work as hybrid blends of the two.

5.5. SUMMARY

Postmodernism is the movement in the field of art, literature, philosophy and culture that replaced modernism in the second half of the twentieth century. Unlike modernism, which presented in most aspects a sharp reaction against the beliefs and practices of the nineteenth century, postmodernism is not a reaction against modernism. The term ‘post’

in postmodernism does not denote the end of modernism. Like postcolonialism, it denotes a fresh approach towards art and literature. Postmodernism, however, does deviate from several beliefs and practices of modernism. In literature it shows its profoundest difference in its attitude towards the basic nature of literature.

In many respects postmodernism follows many of the tendencies of modernism, often practicing the same aesthetic characteristics. So the relationship between the two is more complex than a simple linear historical development. For example, both modernism and postmodernism give great prominence to fragmentation as a feature of twentieth century art and culture, but they do so in very different moods. The modernist features it in such way as to register a deep nostalgia for an earlier age when faith was full and authority intact. He looks upon the contemporary world as inadequate and fragmented. In *The Waste Land* the narrator observes – ‘These fragments I have shored against my ruins.’ For the postmodernist, by contrast, fragmentation is an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief. Thus while the modernist laments fragmentation, postmodernist celebrates it.

Another important aspect in which postmodernism differs from modernism is the attitude towards art and literature. For the modernists, art was a matter of ‘fierce asceticism’ in which over-elaborate art forms of the nineteenth century had no place. This is reflected in modern architecture which repudiated the domes, carvings and other elaborate designs and adopted plain structures. In literature it resulted in the minimalism which, for instance, shrinks poems to narrow columns of two-word lines containing condensed observations or feelings. The most remarkable feature of modern literature is its intellectualism. Postmodernism, on the other hand, rejects the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ arts. Modern literature, like literature in every age, did incorporate elements of popular culture in its body. *Ulysses*, for example, has assimilated in its texture contemporary popular songs, newspaper headlines and other such elements. In *The Waste Land* the use of words like ‘jug jug’ and the call of the bar attendant- ‘Hurry up please! It’s time!’- represent popular features. This, however, does not change the basic intellectual character of these works. Writers like T. S. Eliot considered literature to be the preserve of the intellectuals. The proportion of the elements of popular culture was very limited and peripheral in modern literature. It was the use of symbols and myths that characterized it. Postmodernism tries to liberate literature from the restrictions of intellectualism.

Self Assessment Questions

1. What do you understand by the term Modernism?
2. Discuss the important features of Post Modernism.
3. What are the thrust areas of Post Modern critics?

11.6. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the section 5.3
2. Refer to the section 5.4.1.
3. Refer to the section 5.4.3.

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5.8. SUGGESTED READING

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5.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is modernism? What are its features?
2. What is postmodernism? What are its features?
3. What is the difference between postmodernity and postmodernism?
4. Give a description of major postmodern theoreticians and writers.
5. What does postmodernism aim to do?

- 6.1. Introduction
- 6.2. Objectives
- 6.3. Early Antecedents of Stylistics
- 6.4. Modern Antecedents of Stylistics
 - 6.4.1. New Criticism
 - 6.4.2. Russian Formalism
 - 6.4.3. Structuralism
- 6.5. Stylistics as a Critical Approach
- 6.6. Summary
- 6.7. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 6.8. References
- 6.9. Suggested Readings
- 6.10. Terminal and Model Questions

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Stylistics is a recent branch of literary criticism. In fact, it is a combination of linguistics and criticism. You, I hope, are familiar with linguistics which is a scientific study of language. It studies the structure of language at the levels of sound, word and sentence, and examines how this structure creates meaning for the purpose of human communication. Literature, as you know, uses the medium of language. So in the second half of the twentieth century, linguists as well as a section of critics realized that linguistics could be put to the service of literary criticism by examining through the tools of linguistics the composition of a work of a poet or a dramatist or a novelist. In the beginning there was a vehement opposition to it by a large section of literary critics who held that the charm of literature would be ruined by such a dissection. They argued that the beauty and appeal of literature was not amenable to dry scientific analysis. The linguists, on the other hand, argued that most of the literary criticism was wayward and fanciful and did not have a firmer foundation than the intuitive response of the critic to a piece of literary work. So it needed to be disciplined. Gradually, stylistics came to be accepted as a kind of literary criticism. You are already aware that literary criticism consists of a variety of activities. Some critics look at the relationship between literary texts and their cultural and historical background. Others examine what it was in the life and experience of an author that prompted him to write in the way that he did and on the subject that he chose. But since in the end the object of criticism is to enable a reader to enjoy and appreciate a literary work better, it has to focus on the work - the poem or the play or the novel or the prose work it is discussing. No proper evaluation of a literary work in terms of its merits and demerits as well as where it stands in relation to other works of its kind can be made without a proper understanding of that work. In this task a study of the linguistic devices that the writer has used to compose his work is definitely helpful since it is through language that a writer expresses himself. That is why stylistics has come to occupy an important place in literary criticism today.

6.2. OBJECTIVES

This and the succeeding unit will give you a detailed idea of what stylistics is and how it employs the tools of linguistics for literary criticism. In this unit you will learn about

- the antecedents of stylistics
- its similarities and dissimilarities with other types of criticism that focus on literary texts
- the beginning of stylistics

6.3. EARLY ANTECEDENTS OF STYLISTICS

A systematic study of literary style goes back to ancient times in Europe, in fact to the early Greek critics. In India, the earliest study of literature focused largely on a detailed study of linguistic devices. About the Indian concepts you will learn in the next unit. In this unit we will discuss the early Western antecedents of stylistics. The study of style in the sense of the use of language for a particular effect was known as rhetoric in the ancient period. Basically, it was concerned with the art of oratory which was highly

regarded during those days, but they applied equally to writing, both literary and non-literary. In fact, it is in Aristotle that we first come across observations on style in his book, *Rhetoric*. Making a distinction between the language of poetry and language of prose, he remarks that whereas poetry largely draws upon unfamiliar words to attain dignity and charm, prose, dealing with everyday subjects, can use only familiar or current words. However, one source of charm is common to both – the use of metaphors. By employing it judiciously prose can also create an element of novelty in an otherwise plain statement. Aristotle holds that in the arrangement of words into sentences multiplicity of clauses, parenthesis and ambiguous punctuation should be avoided. Words can be arranged in two kinds of style – loose or periodic. The loose style is made up of a series of sentences, held together by connective words. In the periodic style each sentence is a complete whole, with a beginning, and end, and a length that can be comprehended at a glance. Each such sentence may form a part of a bigger whole if the sense so required. Thus Aristotle gives us an insight into the structure of sentences as well as choice of words in a composition.

Among the Roman critics, it was Quintilian who gave an elaborate description of style. Like others, he was also focusing on the art of oratory as the title of his book, *Institutio Oratoria* (The Institute of Oratory) denotes. However, in books VIII- X of this treatise he formulates a theory of prose style which applies as much to the written as to the spoken language. Like Horace and Longinus, Quintilian also holds that style is the product of both nature and art. Art raises the natural felicity to an impressive height. Disagreeing with those who advocated the use of unfamiliar and quaint words and structure for a graceful style, Quintilian stresses that unfamiliar words, besides being less intelligible and sometimes even obscure, sound insincere and artificial. He maintains that the language of prose is the language of daily life, but this language should not be the common language of the masses which suffers from many irregularities. It should be a language with perfect choice of words, providing a combination of clarity and ornamentation, and woven into a rhythmical structure. The Greek critic, Longinus in his treatise, *On the Sublime*, deals with the use of language to attain sublimity in oratory. His detailed description of the figures of speech to be used as well as to be avoided applies both to the spoken and written form of language. About Longinus you have already read in your earlier course.

This approach towards literary style got itself firmly established in the European literary tradition until relatively modern times. Even as late as the 18th century, Comte de Buffon, in his “Discourse on Style” viewed style as a means to a rhetorical end. According to him, style involves an ordering of one’s thought before writing, and consequently a split between content and expression. It is in this context that he gives his famous definition of style as the expression of man:

Whereas the subject matter of a scientific treatise, say, is external to a man, and would exist whether the man existed or not, the style, or the order in which the man arranges his thoughts on the subject matter springs from the man himself: the style is so much the man as exists in the ordering of his thought. (quoted in Sastri 7)

Thus before twentieth century style was viewed as the dressing of thought.

6.4. MODERN ANTECEDENTS OF STYLISTICS

In the twentieth century, a major preoccupation of literary criticism became the close textual analysis of a literary work. In England T. S. Eliot attacked the biographical and historical criticism as they focused on extraneous factors not present in the text itself. In his famous essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" he insisted that poetry was not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. So for him true criticism consisted in an objective analysis of the text of a literary work I. A. Richards made an experiment in the classroom when he gave poems to his students from which the title and the name of the poet had been removed and asked them to write a critical appreciation of the poem before them. Thus the students had no access to any information about the poet or his period or the circumstances of the composition of that poem. They responded to the poem purely on the basis of the text before them. This culminated in Richard's book, *Practical Criticism*. In America a new school of criticism emerged which also focused on the explication of the text and advocated the exclusion of other factors in the study of literature. This was New Criticism.

6.4.1. New Criticism

The name of this school of criticism was derived from John Crowe Ransom's book, *The New Criticism* published in 1941. The major critics of this school, apart from Ransom, were Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren and W. K. Wimsatt. The New Critics believed in the inseparability of form and content in a literary work. So they differed radically from the early rhetoricians who considered style or form to be the dressing of thought or content. They held that unity of form and content, language and experience, medium and message is unique to literature and it is this which makes a literary work different from a discourse in science or history or economics. It is possible to summarise the thoughts of the writer in other discourses without taking away substantially from the merit of it but in literature such an exercise mutilates it. The New Critics advocated a close analysis of the 'words on the page' to evaluate a literary work. The focus of literary criticism should not be on the author but on the work, a poem for example. They used the term, 'intentional fallacy' to describe the attempt of the critic to guess the intention of a poet in a poem. The object or the intention of the poet is neither available nor desirable for judging the merit of the poem. If the focus should not be on the author, it should not be on the reader as well. A focus on the reader would result in what the New Critics called 'affective fallacy'. The affective fallacy results in an interpretation which is based on the feelings roused in the reader by the poem rather than on a description of textual detail. So it is the text which should be the focus of analysis for a critic. Lois Tyson comments:

For New Criticism, a literary work is timeless, autonomous verbal object. Readers and readings may change, but the literary text stays the same. Its meaning is as objective as its physical existence on the page, for it is constructed of words placed in specific relationship to one another – specific words placed in specific order – and this one-of-a-kind relationship creates a complex meaning that cannot be reproduced by any other combination of words. (119-120)

Thus the New Criticism came close to stylistics in its emphasis on the textual analysis of a literary work, particularly a poem. But it did not advocate the use of the tools of linguistics for it.

6.4.2. Russian Formalism

The critical approach that developed in Russia in the early 1920s came to be called Russian Formalism. It was a critical approach of literature which took help from linguistic principles. In 1915 Moscow Linguistic Circle was formed and a year later The Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ) was founded in Petersburg. The main figure of the Moscow Linguistic Circle was Roman Jakobson who had to leave Russia after a few years and who later became one of the founders of the Prague School that came into existence in 1926. The Russian Formalism analysed the way literary texts achieved their effects and tried to establish a scientific basis for the study of literature. It did not attach any importance to those elements of a literary work which could be termed as ‘human elements’ such as ideas, emotions and sense of evil and virtue etc. The Formalists did not admit any distinction between form and content. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theories notes:

Indeed, the Formalists collapse the distinction between form and content. And they regard the writer as a kind of cipher merely reworking available literary devices and conventions. The writer is of negligible importance. All the emphasis is on the ‘literariness’ of the formal devices of a text. OPOJAZ went so far as to suggest that there are not poets or literary figures: there is just poetry and literature. Viktor Shklovsky summarizes the attitude in his definition of literature as ‘the sum total of all the stylistic devices employed in it.’ (328)

The early phases of Formalism were dominated by Shklovsky’s ideas. One of his important contributions was the concept of ‘making strange’ which was later termed ‘defamiliarization’. The Formalists also developed a theory of narrative, making a distinction between plot and story. The plot refers to the particular arrangement of the events in the narrative while the story consists of the chronological sequence of the events in it. Apart from Roman Jakobson and Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum and Jan Mukarovsky became the prominent figures of Russian Formalism. The Formalist critics consider literature as the product of inter-determining elements which acquire meaning when seen in totality of all the works of the same author as well as other works, whether of the same period or preceding periods, which present a similarity with or contrast to that work. Jakobson pointed out that a literary work stood in complex relation to other uses of language which are to be taken into consideration in the study of literature.

6.4.3. Structuralism

Structuralism as a form of criticism seeks to understand a work of art in the large structures that contain them – genre, culture and language. Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics*, written originally in French and later translated by others into English and other languages, had laid the foundation for the study of language during the first half of the twentieth century. It also provided basic concepts for Structuralism and Structuralist literary theory. Saussure used two terms in his description of language –

‘langue’ and ‘parole’. Langue refers to system or structure of language, the corpus of rules which the speakers must obey in order to communicate. Parole is the actual utterance in the social context. Saussure’s distinction between langue and parole is relevant for literature. A literary work consists of parole but can be analysed only in the context of langue. This is what the structural thinkers like Levi Strauss, Michel Foucault, Ronald Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida upheld. Language, Saussure holds, is a system of signs, and the linguistic sign is a ‘two-sided psychological entity composed of a concept and a sound image’. He called the ‘sound image’ ‘signifier’ and the concept it expresses as ‘signified’. Although Structuralism is basically a linguistic theory, it came to be applied to a large number of areas such as anthropology, philosophy, history, psycho-analysis and myth studies. It also exerted a profound influence on literary criticism in the second half of the 20th century.

Jonathan Culler in the preface to his book, *Structuralist Poetics* (1975) describes three characteristic features of structuralist literary theory. First, it is not primarily interpretive. It does not offer a method which, when applied to literary works, produces meanings – “Rather than a criticism which discovers and assigns meanings, it would be a poetics which strives to define the conditions of meaning.” (quoted in Krishnaswamy et al) Secondly, structuralist literary theory does not focus on individual works, but attempts to understand the conventions which make literature possible, the langue of literature. Thirdly, it attempts to specify how we go about making sense of texts and what the bases of interpretation of literary texts are. The structuralists hold that no unit can be understood in isolation and that units are to be understood only in the context of larger structures. In this sense Structuralism is different from those critical approaches which are strictly text based and exclude wider aspects of a text. However, it is close to them in the fact that it opposes all forms of literary criticism in which the writer or the reader is the source and origin of literary meaning. Roland Barthes in his essay, “The Death of the Author” (1968) rejects the traditional view that the author is the origin of the text, the source of its meaning and the only authority for interpretation. He argues that the writer can only draw upon the existing literary codes contained in the language and the meaning and significance of a text lies in the use of larger cultural and linguistic codes.

Noam Chomsky added a new dimension to the theories of Structuralism by giving the concept of ‘surface structures’ and ‘deep structures’. A surface structure consists of the collection of words and sounds that we articulate and hear in a sentence; a deep structure is the abstract and underlying structure in language. A single sentence may have different surface forms and features and yet have the same meaning. The underlying or deep structure regulates the meaning. Based on this concept, a structuralist approach to literature subordinates the study of surface structure of a text to an examination of some deeper and more abstract patterns which govern the inner form of the work. This form is then related to that of other works and a universal pattern of discourse is ultimately sought. Structuralism in literature works through generalization and abstraction, a process in which particular works lose their individuality and are transformed into a more schematic version. Krishnaswamy et al remark:

Structuralism thus constructed an elaborate metasytem/ a way of thinking on the basis that literature is like language, or language becomes ‘literature’s being’. Torodov’s *Introduction to Poetics* (1981) speaks of the grammar of literature. In

Structuralism, any individual work (like parole) can only reveal a part of a system (like langue); in other words, it is the interest in the system or grammar of literature rather than the individual work that became the forte of Structuralism, and, paradoxically, the source of its decline. (126)

Some of the best contributions of Structuralist critics are in the area of prose narratives, pointing out a network of inter-textual connections or an underlying universal narrative structure.

6.5. STYLISTICS AS A CRITICAL APPROACH

The growing emphasis on the need to analyse a literary work through its language and structure led to the emergence of stylistics as a mode of literary criticism. It uses the tools of linguistics for the critical appreciation of a literary work. So, like linguistics, it is objective in its approach. It does not take into consideration subjective factors like the life and views of the writer. Nor does it build up critical evaluation of a particular literary work on the subjective response of a critic to that work. Stylistics as critical approach developed in the second half of the twentieth century, though there are instances of some early attempts on similar lines. Towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, a German linguist, Wilhelm Von Humboldt differentiated between the styles of prose and poetry on the basis of using distinctive lexical items, syntactic structures, graphological variations etc. But his theory was not supported by linguistic analysis of text samples. So it failed to find followers.

The beginning of modern stylistics is commonly traced to the “Conference on Style” held at Indiana University in 1958. Its proceedings were published under the title, *Style in Language* by Thomas Sebeok in 1960. Jakobson’s “Closing Statement” laid the claim that linguistics offered a more objective way of studying literature. If there were supporters of this view there was a large section of critics opposed to it. In 1966, Roger Fowler edited a collection of essays entitled, *Essays on Style and Language: Linguistic and Critical Approaches to Literary Studies*. Its object was to bridge ‘an unnecessary schism between language and literature’. Soon Helen Vendler published her *Essays in Criticism* where she argued that though linguistic study had great potential it was at a nascent stage and the linguists were ‘simply under-educated in the reading of poetry’.

The early stylistic studies tried to analyse literary works by analysing them at the levels of sounds, words and sentences. But such an analysis often failed to present a unified exposition that could account for the complex level of communication that a literary work generally presents. By 1980, stylistics developed a form of ‘discourse analysis’ which would enable linguistics to analyse the whole structure of a literary work rather than the isolated phrases and sentences to which it had previously been restricted. Peter Barry remarks:

This meant that non-linguists began to take some interest in the findings of linguistic essays, while, at the same time, linguists writing such material realised the need to consult and incorporate non-linguistic material. Allegedly, this resulted, during the 1980s, in what came to be called ‘new stylistics’, which had a limited degree of eclecticism (in that it drew on the findings of other new kinds

of criticism – feminism, structuralist, post-structuralist, and so on) and was less likely to claim that it alone studied literature in an objective way. (199-200)

Thus stylistics got a wider acceptability but still there remained a large area of conflict between the humanistic criticism of different kinds and linguistic criticism under the heading of stylistics. Fowler tried to clarify the situation in 1986 by saying that those opposing linguistic criticism generally speak as if linguistics were a single entity, whereas in fact there are many different techniques in use within it which may or may not be useful for critical analysis of a literary text. Moreover, as Fowler puts it, “although literature is language, and therefore open to ordinary formal linguistic investigation . . . it has, like other formally distinctive texts, essentially distinctive contexts which the linguist no less than the critic must study.” (quoted in Barry, 200)

Stylistics differs from the structuralist analysis of a text in the sense that it views the text as constituting a multiplicity of discourses – complementary and contradictory. The structuralists, on the other hand, hold a signifier-signified relationship as fixed and predetermined system of signification. If the main aim of structuralist stylistics was to arrive at systematic inventories for items that would account for form and meaning of literary works, poststructuralist stylistics investigates the way in which this project is subverted by the workings of the texts themselves. Stylistics does not subscribe to the idea of a fixed semantic structure in a text. Rather its object is to discover how multiple discourses can be determined from a piece of work and how a careful look at the language can reveal the otherwise marginalised textual meanings.

Peter Barry describes how stylistics differs from standard close reading. Close reading emphasizes differences between literary language and the language used for general communication. It follows the assumption that literary language operates according to rule of its own. Stylistics, on the other hand, emphasizes connections between literary language and everyday language. Secondly, stylistics makes greater claims to scientific objectivity than does close reading, stressing that its methods and procedures can be learned and applied by all. Hence its aim is partly the ‘demystification’ of both literature and criticism. In relation to literature it aims to show the continuity between literary language and other forms of written communication. In relation to criticism it aims to provide a set of procedures which are openly accessible to all. Thus unlike close reading it does not stress the need for the critic to develop ‘tact’ and ‘sensitivity’ towards the literary text and avoids spelling out a method or procedure to be followed.

Stylistics is interested not just the individual; literary work, but also in much more general questions about how literature works. Peter Barry writes:

In Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, Tess’s subjection to the social and physical superiority of Alec is expressed both in terms of what is said, and in terms of the grammatical structure of the ‘seduction’ (or rape scene), for his having power is reinforced subliminally by Alec (or some attribute of him) frequently being the subject of sentences, while Tess’s lack of power is reinforced by her frequently being the grammatical object: thus sentences have patterns like: *he* (subject) *touched her* (object); *his fingers* (subject) *sank into her* (object), and so on. This kind of argument, if accepted, has implications about how literary effects are created and how they operate. The implication is that the powerful literary effect

is ‘overdetermined’, that is, it comes from different factors combining, so that the content is subtly reinforced by grammatical structure, overall ‘discourse structure’, word choice, imagery and so on. Literary meaning, this suggests, goes down to the very roots of language and is reflected at the levels of grammar and sentence structure. Hence no aspect of language is neutral; the patterns of grammar and syntax, morphemes, and phonemes are all implicated in literary meaning. (205)

Barry concedes that such a theory “seems to make authors into intuitive genius figures who instinctively ‘know’ the content of modern linguistics’. However, as he adds, stylistics tries to establish things which are generally true about the way literature works. It brings a special expertise to bear on the linguistic features of a text, and therefore sees a dimension of the material which the ordinary reader would be unaware of. This dimension may well contain material which could alter our interpretation of the work.

6.6. SUMMARY

In this unit you have been introduced to stylistics, a form of literary criticism that appeared on the literary scene in the second half of the 20th century. Stylistics is a combination of two disciplines – literature and linguistics. Linguistics, as you know, is a scientific study of language. It examines the constituent units of language – sound, word, sentence and meaning. It is scientific because it studies language objectively, systematically and empirically. Literary criticism as you have known in the previous blocks on criticism is the interpretation and evaluation of literary works. You have also known that there are various approaches to the study of literature. Some try to understand a particular work in the light of the life, experiences and professed vision of life of its author. Others seek the impact of the period in which it was created on it and analyse it in the light of its historical background. There are also critics who describe the impact of a particular work on them. Literature has been discussed from the point of view of psychology, philosophy and anthropology as well. Thus there has been a multiplicity of critical theories. They all have their merits and they all help us understand, enjoy and evaluate a piece of literature better than we would have done by ourselves. Stylistics has added another dimension to the study of literature by focusing on its basic component – its language and linguistic structure. It has also tried to bestow a kind of objectivity on literary criticism.

The earliest antecedent of stylistics was rhetoric. It was a discipline of study in ancient Europe which taught men to use language as a tool of persuasion. It studied the components of language and analysed the use they could be put to in the process of making effective speech or writing. During the medieval period style came to be known as the dressing of thought. It came to stand for the particular way an author tended to write. Buffon’s famous statement, “Style is the man” reflects this very concept. In the twentieth century literary criticism moved away from the subjective approach of the nineteenth century. Critics like T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards advocated objectivity in criticism. They shifted the focus of criticism from writer to the text and argued that what mattered for the reader was the text and not what inspired the writer to write it. The New Criticism which began in America was also influenced by the critical approaches of Eliot and Richards. It advocated a close reading of the text, to the exclusion of biographical,

historical and similar considerations. However, it did not provide an elaborate methodology to do so. It is here that linguistic theories became helpful. Formalism, both Russian and French, relied on the tools derived from linguistics. The most remarkable step in this direction came from the structuralists who adopted the concepts of Saussure in the field of criticism. Mere analysis of the linguistic features of a literary text, however, did not do full justice to a literary work as it tended to become a surface cataloguing of its linguistic features. Stylistics, which has its foundation on similar concepts, went a step further by including discourse analysis to its tools. It thus enlarged its scope of study. Stylistic criticism describes the technical aspects of the language of a text. The purpose is to interpret the text, support its existing meaning, challenge or counter existing reading and also to establish new readings.

Self Assessment Questions

1. What do you know about the early antecedents of Stylistics?
2. Discuss Stylistics as a critical approach.
3. Write short notes on the following:
 - (a) New Criticism
 - (b) Russian Formalism

6.7. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the section 6.3.
2. Refer to the section 6.5.
3. Refer to the following sections:
 - (a) 6.4.1.
 - (b) 6.4.2

6.8. REFERENCES

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6.9. SUGGESTED READINGS

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6.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Define Stylistics. How is it different from other forms of literary criticism?
2. Describe the antecedents of Stylistics.
3. Point out the difference between Stylistics and other types of Linguistic Criticism.

UNIT 7 STYLISTICS-II

- 7.1. Introduction
- 7.2. Objectives
- 7.3. Linguistic Tools of Stylistics
 - 7.3.1. Lexis
 - 7.3.2. Syntax
 - 7.3.3. Dialect and Register
 - 7.3.4. Semantics
- 7.4. Stylistic Devices
 - 7.4.1. Foregrounding
 - 7.4.2. Parallelism
- 7.5. Style as Conceptual Deviance
- 7.6. Stylistic Analysis of a Poem
- 7.7. Summary
- 7.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 7.9. References
- 7.10. Suggested Readings
- 7.11. Terminal and Model Questions

7.1. INTRODUCTION

Stylistics, as you know by now, is that form of literary criticism which uses the tools of linguistics for the explication of a literary work. After all, the medium of literature is language. So without understanding the choice of words that a writer has made or without analysing the structure into which those words have been woven we cannot appreciate a work properly. Linguistics, which is a scientific study of language, is naturally of great help to us in this regard. Unlike other forms of literary criticism, it does not rely on an intuitive understanding of a poem or novel or play or any other literary work. It also does not take recourse to such disciplines as history or psychology or sociology or philosophy to analyse that work. It analyses the use of language in that work to get at the various levels of meaning it contains, and makes a close study of the stylistic devices in that work that the writer has used to convey effectively what he wants to convey. Stylistics tries to back up impressionistic response to literature with linguistic data. Thus it brings a sort of objectivity to subjective literary criticism. It does not aim to replace all other modes of literary criticism. Rather, it seeks to verify the claims made for a literary work by closely examining the linguistic and literary devices used in that work, and presents its own interpretation.

In the previous unit you learnt about the antecedents of stylistics. You know that the earliest form of stylistics in Europe was rhetoric. You have also read how criticism in the 20th century shifted its focus from author to the text. Critics like T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards tried to depersonalise response to literature. The New Criticism of America was a step forward in that direction. But the greatest help came from the linguistic theories of Saussure and others. Stylistics, which became popular in the second half of the 20th century, particularly in its last two decades, is the latest critical approach in that direction. In this unit you will know in detail about the methods of stylistic interpretation of literature.

7.2. OBJECTIVES

In this unit

- you will learn about the tools of linguistics that stylistics uses;
- you will know about the stylistic devices that a writer uses in his work,
- and you will see through examples how stylistics works.

7.3. LINGUISTIC TOOLS OF STYLISTICS

A language is an organised sequence of speech sounds or its graphic representation into words which are further combined into sentences to make human communication. Every language follows certain conventions which are codified as the grammar of that language. To make an utterance meaningful for the users of that language, a speaker or writer broadly follows those conventions. For the purpose of communication, lexis or words form the basic unit of a language, followed by syntax or the combination of words into sentences. So stylistics looks closely at the choice of words made by a writer in his

composition. It analyses the syntactical structures adopted by the writer to create his meaning.

7.3.1. Lexis

A word is a patterned combination of speech sounds, or their graphical presentation – letters- in writing, which represents an idea, emotion, feeling or object etc. in human communication. It is through words that we communicate with others, and it is the particular choice of words that characterizes our communication. The importance of this choice grows with the increasing subtlety and deepening impact of communication. Whereas the poets are supposed to make the most evocative use of language, the dramatists make the most effective communicative use of it. The novelists use words to describe people, thoughts and emotions, places and events; prose writers use them to convey ideas. Thus literature makes the most varied use of lexis or vocabulary to represent human life in its various facets. Ullmann observes:

The true meaning of a text begins with the words with which it is made up. Even when we look at them independently of such basic elements as syntax, they may well provide a tangible indication of text's main preoccupation. We can group them according to their recurrent areas of meaning; we can look at their literal or evocative, original or stereotype values; we can examine their degrees of abstraction or concreteness; we can classify them historically or according to the level of style and registers to which they belong. (84)

Critics of all kinds have been analysing the use of words, particularly figures of speech, made by a writer. Stylistics, however, uses the expertise of linguistics to show why the writer has chosen to use a particular set of words and not others to create his effect. Writers are continually making, albeit intuitively, a series of linguistic choices. In fact, without choice neither style nor meaning could exist. If we get an access to the manuscript of the writer, we realize how he or she has made a choice of words. For example, in writing *The Eve of St. Agnes* Keats first wrote the line:

“As though a rose should close and be a bud again.”

But in his final draft he changed it to:

“As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.” (XXVII)

Making a stylistic study of it, Michael H. Short notes that at first glance one may wonder why Keats bothered merely to replace one word with its synonym. But on closer examination it becomes evident that his second choice is in fact preferable. The first attempt makes a phonetic connection via internal rhyme between ‘rose’ and ‘close’. The second version instead connects ‘shut’ and ‘bud’. The second pair of connection is more appropriate in terms of the shape of the flower. So now the phonetic connection helps underline the semantic connection instead of going against it.

7.3.2.Syntax

A vital tool of stylistic study is syntax or the arrangement of words in a sentence. It is through sentences that a writer expresses his meaning. A change in the order of words in a sentence may yield a different, sometimes even opposite meanings. For example, in sentences ‘Ram beats Shyam’ and ‘Shyam beats Ram’ we have the same words – ‘Ram’, ‘Shyam’ and ‘beats’, but the two sentences give two opposite meanings because of the arrangement of these words. In the first sentence the person being beaten is Shyam while in the second it is Ram. In a literary composition syntax is of great importance. It is through the length, rhythm and structure of sentences that a writer varies his tone and conveys the subtle nuances of meaning. An author can use long or short sentences either in active or passive voice, composed as simple or complex or compound unit. He can adopt the technique of inversion or use structures with a string of subordinate clauses. A stylistic study examines the inter-relationship between the various elements of a sentence structure and rules that govern the sequence in a sentence. It shows how by adopting a particular structure or by deviating from a common grammatical rule the writer has made an effective communication or created a beautiful sentence that gives us pleasure. For example, it is by adopting an antithetical sentence structure that Bacon has drawn the attention of the reader immediately and created an indelible impact on his mind. The famous lines from his essay, “Of Studies” are an example:

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And, therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not.

A stylistic study that uses the rules of syntactical structure in that language is best equipped to analyse the literary style of a writer.

7.3.3.Dialect and Register

A dialect is a variety of a language used by a subgroup of the users of that language living in a particular geographical area or belonging to a particular social section. Register, on the other hand, is the particular use of language appropriate for an occasion or profession or strata of users. J. C. Catford remarks:

By register we mean a variety correlated with the performer’s social role on a given occasion. Every normal adult plays a series of different social roles, one man, for example, may function as at different times as head of family, motorist, cricketer, member of a religious group, professor of bio-chemistry and so on and within his idiolect he has varieties (shared by other persons and other idiolects) appropriate for these roles. When the professor’s wife tells him ‘stop talking like a professor’, she is preventing him from a misuse of register. (135)

Authors have made a very creative use of both dialect and register in their works, particularly for characterization. Bernard Shaw’s Burgess in *Candida* would not have been as interesting as he is had not Shaw used Cockney, the dialect of East End of London, for his dialogues. Hardy also made very effective use of dialect in his novels.

Othello's dialogues, particularly in the early part of the play, show a brilliant use of the register of a soldier by Shakespeare.

7.3.4. Semantics

Semantics, as F. R. Palmer puts it, "is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning, and, since, meaning is a part of language, semantics is a part of linguistics." (1) It studies the connection between language and meaning. Generally, we use language to create referential meaning, i. e. to refer to objects around us and to convey to others our wants, emotions, ideas in our day to day life. But we also use language to create meaning on a higher and complex level. In literature the writer often does so. He creates symbolic meanings beyond the referential meanings of words. You must be familiar with the chilling statement of Othello in Shakespeare's famous tragedy: "Put out the light, and then put out the light." (Act V, Sc.II) While the first clause of this sentence is merely referential, the second clause is symbolic. Othello wants darkness in his bedchamber before murdering Desdemona. So he talks about putting the light in that chamber out. In the second clause of the sentence 'light' does not refer to ordinary light, it refers to the life of Desdemona. Life is often equated with light and death with darkness. So Shakespeare is using the symbolic meaning of light in the second clause of the sentence. In stylistic study, the implied meaning is deciphered in literary works through the field of semantics. Implied meaning can be created in literature with the use of figures of speech, symbols, allusions, irony, satire and many other features. The job of a critic is to reveal such meanings.

7.4 STYLISTIC DEVICES

In his attempt to communicate his vision of life and to capture the attention of the reader an author uses several stylistic devices in his work. The most striking of it is foregrounding.

7.4.1. Foregrounding

'Foregrounding' is a term translated from the Czech language by the Prague linguists. It is an attention calling device in a literary passage through the use of repetition, emphasis, unexpected lexical collocations, syntactic inversion etc. Though foregrounding is used by writers in every genre, it is in poetry that it is most commonly found. The most obvious example of this is the situation where the poet breaks the grammatical rules to create new meanings and effects. A well-known example is the expression, "a grief ago" used by Dylan Thomas in his poem of the same title. The expression breaks two rules of English. The determiner 'a' is an indefinite article which is used before a countable noun. 'Grief', an abstract noun is not countable. So 'a' should not be used before 'grief'. The modifying 'ago' used after 'grief' is commonly used with nouns denoting time such as 'day' or 'month' or 'year etc., for example, 'a month ago'. The use of 'ago' for 'grief' is thus highly unusual. As Michael Short observes, the fact that 'a grief ago' is linguistically deviant has a very important psychological consequence for the reader, namely that it stands out. It is highly noticeable or foregrounded. It follows, then, that our interpretation of a poem will have to take especially into account those parts of the text which are

heavily foregrounded. Analysing the phrase ‘a grief ago’ linguistically, we can reach the conclusion that in this poem Thomas appears to be measuring time in terms of emotion.

Foregrounding is achieved not only by breaking linguistic rules, it can also be produced within the rule system of the language concerned by selecting a particular linguistic feature more often than we might normally expect. One obvious example of this is the repetition of lexical items or grouping of words from the same area of association but for a different effect. Samuel Beckett has made a very effective use of it in his *Waiting for Godot*. The word, ‘waiting’ has been used throughout the play. Even in a single speech of Vladimir it comes four times:

VLADIMIR: We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for . . . waiting. All evening we have struggled unassisted. Now it’s over. It’s already tomorrow. (Act II, 107)

Another great dramatist who has used this device for dramatic effect is Harold Pinter. In his play, *The Birthday Party* through repetition of the word ‘game’ he vests it with a dramatic significance:

MEG. I want to play a game.
GOLDBERG. A game?
LULU. What game?
MEG. Any game.
LULU. Yes, let’s play a game.
GOLDBERG. What game?
MACCANN. Hide and seek.
LULU. Blind man’s buff. (Act II)

7.4.2. Parallelism

Another stylistic device that authors use for effect is parallelism. In it parallel clauses are used in which some linguistic features vary while others are held constant. Michael Short has used two examples to illustrate it. The first is from Shakespeare’s *Othello*:

I kissed thee ere I killed thee (V, II, 357)

The line consists of two clauses linked by ‘ere’. The words ‘I’ and ‘thee’ are repeated. That leaves ‘kissed’ and ‘killed’. Although these two words are different, they are parallel to one another in a number of ways:

- (i) **Phonetic:** /kist/ and /kild/. There is a phonetic parallelism via alliteration. In both, the word initial is /k/, and the word final /t/ and /d/ also have similarities – they are both alveolar stops, and they have similar assonance. The two words consist of one syllable each, with the same structure – CVCC.
- (ii) **Spelling:** The two words are similar in spelling, the only difference being that one word has double ‘s’ while the other has double ‘l’.
- (iii) **Morphological:** both words consist of two morphemes, the second of which is a past tense marker.

The line “I kissed thee ere I killed thee” has been spoken by Othello in the play before he kills Desdemona. The two words – ‘kissed’ and ‘killed’ show Othello’s attitude towards his wife, Desdemona. He loves her intensely and so kisses her even though he is going to kill her. He kills her despite loving her because he thinks that she has been unfaithful to him. The two words denote the two themes of the play – love and hatred or jealousy. ‘Kissed’ denotes the first theme while ‘killed’ stands for the second theme. Thus through parallelism Shakespeare creates an effect on the minds of the spectators/ readers.

Sometimes, the writer uses parallelism for satiric effects. The famous line of Alexander Pope in *Rape of the Lock* is an example:

Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux (Canto I, 137)

The obvious formal features of parallelism here are: there is alliteration on word initial /p/, /b/ and /d/ (phonetic), all these words are nouns (grammatical), and each of these nouns is plural (morphological). These features make us want to interpret the items in the list as similar. They are all items lying on the dressing table of Lady Belinda. The fact that some of the items are to do with make-up and some are written texts is not important at this level. But this gives us part of the significance of this line. Pope’s description is also heavily ironical because of the fact that ‘bibles’ here is the incongruous item in the list. The Bible, being a holy book is not supposed to be lumped with the articles of make-up or love letters on a dressing table. Thus just by introducing one word, the poet has created an ironical effect.

7.5. STYLE AS CONCEPTUAL DEVIANCE

Mukarovsky characterizes poetic language as an aesthetically purposeful distortion of standard language. In his effort to make the normal structure and vocabulary of his language yield the meaning that he wants to communicate, the poet creates his own structures. Poems, even prose passages at times, thus create their own style in the form of deviance from the conventional usage of language. Every poem constitutes a register of its own, deviating from all other poems and demanding its own unique description. But the driving force behind this linguistic deviance is the conceptual deviance. M. I. Sastri remarks in this regard:

The most important part of the genesis of the poem is the selection, permutation and combination of the images and ideas – a process that is based on the unique world view of the individual poet. Language, which is the visible corpus that is analyzed, reflects this conceptual novelty. This fact is usually lost sight of in superficial textual analysis where collocative clashes are treated as an end in themselves, without linking them to the poet’s conceptual deviance. All great literature is a product of conceptual deviance, and a triggering of a spontaneous chemical reaction between thought and word. If we accept this view, we can easily see style as the message that is conveyed to the reader and the effect that the poem produces on him. (20)

The poet seized by the creative urge, conceives of ideas, images or thoughts simultaneously putting them in appropriate but deliberately chosen words. He is satisfied only when the language perfectly fits the images he has in mind in all respects. Since the

critic has no means of knowing the poet's vision but through the words he has used in his composition, the stylistic analysis by looking at the words and structures of a particular work enables him to get at that vision, not merely intuitively but by an objective study, by the linguistic analysis of the text.

7.6. STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF A POEM

You have by now known about the different tools that are used in the stylistic analysis of a literary work. What I have given you is not an exhaustive list of all the tools through which literature can be appreciated stylistically, but a broad description of the major tools and ways of such an analysis. Now I will give a stylistic analysis of a poem so as to show to you how such an analysis is made. It is Short's analysis of a poem by Philip Larkin, "Wants". I will first quote the lines of the poem and then proceed with the analysis.

Wants

Beyond all this, the wish to be alone;
However the sky grows with invitation-cards
However we follow the printed directions of sex
However the family is photographed under the flagstaff –
Beyond all this, the wish to be alone.
Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs:
Despite the artful tensions of the calendar,
The life insurance, the tabled fertility rites,
The costly aversion of the eyes from death –
Beneath it all, the desire of oblivion runs.

In the first stanza of the poem, Larkin sets us in the middle of the mundane middle class English social life. He notes that we involve ourselves in all sorts of socializing. But even though we fill up our time with such social activities, Larkin suggests that such a life is empty and that although we disguise it from ourselves, underneath we really want to be alone. In the second stanza he extends the wish to be alone to its logical terminus – death. He suggests then that in spite of our social involvement we all have a death wish within us, and that immersing ourselves in the social round is a mechanism we use to prevent ourselves from coming to terms with death and our desire for it. Unlike many modern poems, this poem is not vague or ambiguous and in a way is fairly easy to understand. However, a stylistic analysis of it shows to us how its meaning comes about. It reveals the way in which it satisfies Larkin's meaning requirements while at the same time obeying the dictates of the poetic form he chooses for it.

Lexis:

Repetition: The last line of each stanza is a repetition of its first line. As a result of this, the following lexically full items are repeated: 'wish', 'alone', 'desire', 'oblivion', and 'run'. So also are the prepositions – 'beyond' and 'beneath' which also happen to be fuller lexically than most English prepositions.

The foregrounding through repetition helps us to notice that almost all of them belong to a series of conceptual groups in the poem:

- a) 'Wish', 'desire', 'wants': Of these 'wish' and 'desire' are synonyms, and hence 'desire' indicating a felt lack (in this case a lack of being alone or nothingness). 'Wants' is also a near synonym of 'wish', and hence 'desire'. All the three words are nouns in this poem, nouns derived from verbs.
- b) 'Alone', 'oblivion', 'death': These three words all have to do with loneliness, 'death' and 'oblivion' (which are sometimes used synonymously, particularly in poetry) being the extreme form.
- c) 'Beyond', 'beneath': The two prepositions express remoteness, either horizontally or vertically from the position of the speaker.
- d) 'Invitation cards', 'printed direction of sex', 'photographed', 'calendar', 'life insurance', 'fertility rites': All of these lexical items are capable of interpretation as having to do with printed matter. If the object of 'photographed', 'family' is added to the list it also becomes apparent that the words and phrases all have to do with social life on a scale from the most general - social groups - to the most personal - relations between two individuals, in this case, couples.

Semantic- syntactic deviations

The sky grows dark with invitation cards: The sky growing dark is a common expression in English. But the normal association is 'the sky growing dark with clouds' or, though rarely, with a large number of flying objects. The sky growing dark with invitation cards is a deviant expression which immediately attracts our attention. It underlines the undesirability of a social situation – an overwhelming number of social invitations that leaves an individual not happy but unhappy.

The printed directions of sex: Sex cannot literally have printed directions as it is an abstract noun. The easiest way to normalise the phrase would appear to be to interpret it as elliptical – 'the printed directions (manuals, leaflets etc.) of . . .'. The ellipsis allows a number of possible interpretations, but in any case the expression, 'printed' turns sex into something mechanical.

The tabled fertility rites: Fertility rites, which obviously have to do with sex, are usually associated with primitive tribes. Here, however, they are modified by the expression, 'tabled', which indicates that whatever is referred to is written down in tabular form, and is hence mechanical.

Desire of oblivion runs: As desire of oblivion is abstract, it cannot literally run. However, 'run' turns up in many metaphorical expressions in English and as such does not appear deviant. Presumably, desire of oblivion is being likened to a river or stream, and because it appears as the subject and agent of the verb, 'runs', it appears that the individual's desire is one which is not consciously motivated, which would have been the case in a sentence like 'I desire oblivion'.

The artful tensions of the calendar: Calendars do not literally have tensions. So it is referring to the tensions in the life of an individual caused by the 'artful' style of living, contrasted with the natural way of life.

The costly aversion of the eyes from death: The first thing to notice here is that Larkin has blended two expressions together. To have an aversion to something means that you

have a strong dislike for it. And there is also an idiomatic expression in English, 'to avert one's eyes' which means to turn one's eyes away from something you do not want to see. 'Aversion of the eyes', then at first sight looks like a nominalization 'avert the eyes' expresses nearly the idea of turning away from something which is viewed as distasteful, namely death. In addition, 'aversion' is here modified by 'costly'. The term costly is also used in the sense of disadvantageous to the individual concerned. It is in this very sense that the poet has used it here.

Grammar

Tense: The whole poem is in the present tense. This aids the specific but at the same time general interpretation, as the present tense can be used to refer to the specific present situation and also to universal, timeless matters.

Pronouns: There are four pronouns in the poem, which in effect are two pairs of repetitions in the first and last line of each stanza. 'All this' in the first line is demonstrative pronoun, referring to the situation around the poet. Other pronouns reinforce this impression.

Based on the stylistic features, we can make a critical appreciation of the poem. The main unifying feature of "Wants" is parallelism. In the first stanza lines 2 and 4 are parallel and Larkin thus invites us to see them as being in some sense the same, despite the different things which they refer to. This condition can be satisfied by noticing that all the three lines describe aspects of social life, which is then contrasted with the wish to be alone, a contrast pointed up by a further parallelism, the assonance between 'this' and 'wish'.

When we come to the second stanza we can first notice that because lines 6 and 10 are parallel in various ways to lines 1 and 5, the two sets of repeated lines can be interpreted in parallel ways. Hence the wish to be alone is equivalent to the wish for oblivion or death. Once the similarities between the first and last lines of the two stanzas have been noticed it is easier for us to see that the middle three lines in stanza 2, like those in stanza 1, consist of a series of parallel structures, which, again, like those in stanza 1 have to do with social life. The parallelisms all point then to a disjunction between the reality, man as a social animal in all his guises, and the wish for loneliness and death. The reason for the wish to be removed from one's fellow-men comes in lines 7-9, which indicate the unreal, mechanical nature of social reality, especially, paradoxically, at the most personal end of the scale.

7.7. SUMMARY

By going through this and the earlier unit, you must have understood the basic features of stylistics. You now know that stylistics combines two disciplines – literary criticism and linguistics. By bringing the tools of linguistics to the aid of literary criticism this mode of criticism tries to eliminate the elements of personal prejudices from the interpretation and evaluation of a literary work. It brings objectivity to criticism. Linguistics, you know, analyses the basic components of a language – phonemes or speech sounds, morphemes or words and syntax or sentence structures. It also studies the various linguistic devices used in effective communication. And the medium of literature as you know is language.

So an analysis of the linguistic devices used by an author, whether he is a poet or novelist or dramatist or essayist, enables us to see how he creates his meaning and gives his creation an artistic shape. Sometimes an author wilfully violates the rules of grammar to draw the attention of the readers towards certain facts. He would make unusual collocations of words, that is, he would put those words together which usually do not go together. This is known as foregrounding. You saw how in his poem Dylan Thomas has used the expression, “a grief ago”. The expression violates two rules of English grammar. He has used an indefinite article with an abstract noun and he has used the adverb ‘ago’, which is used to denote past time, with an emotion – grief. By doing so the poet has equated emotion with time. The unusual collocation used by the poet immediately draws our attention towards the expression. The other well-known means the writer adopts to make an effective communication are inversion and parallelism. Stylistics, by pointing out these linguistic devices used by the writer explains the style of a literary work and enables us to enjoy and appreciate that work better. Stylistics does not aim at replacing the other kinds of literary criticism. It simply asserts that by going to the root of a literary creation – its language and structure – we can be in a position to understand and evaluate that work better.

Self Assessment Questions

1. What are the linguistic tools that stylistics generally uses?
2. Shed light on two stylistic devices discussed in this unit.

7.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the section 7.3.
2. Refer to the section 7.4.

7.9. REFERENCES

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7.11. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is foregrounding? How does the writer use this to create literary effect? Explain with examples.
2. What is parallelism? How does a writer use this in a literary work? Explain with examples.
3. Write a stylistic analysis of a short poem of your choice.