SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR
CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Understanding Novel
(Special English)

B. A. Part-III

(Semester-V Paper-X)

(Academic Year 2015-16 onwards)
1.1 Realistic Novel

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1.1.1 Objectives:

- To understand the concept of Realistic Novel in English
- To know the emergence and development of Realistic Novel
- To define the Realistic Novel
- To discuss the features of Realistic Novel
- To take the survey of prominent writers in the tradition of Realistic Novel

1.1.2 Introduction:

Realism in literature is associated with the realist art movement that emerged during mid-19th century France and Russia as a reaction against the classical demands of creative writings that attempted to show life as it should be as well as
against the idealistic conceptions of Romantic writings. It was firstly used by Friedrich Schiller in his letter to Goethe where he writes, “realism cannot make a poet.” Further, in the work entitled *Ideen*, Schlegel pointed out that “all philosophy is idealism and there is no true realism except that of poetry.” Since then, the term is applied to the works of literature that deal with the new approach to character and subject matter, where stories reflect real life and fictional characters demonstrate as if they are real characters. There is no fantasy, and supernatural elements never play any kind of role; instead, it represents common people and their different day to day activities, along with all its joys, sorrows, successes, and failures.

Generally, Honoré de Balzac is considered to be the precursor of literary realism. His novels and stories entitled *La Comédiehumaine*, translated as *The Human Comedy* is a realistic portrait of all aspects of the France of his time and characters from the lowest thief or prostitute to the highest aristocrat or political leader. However, the first work that can be called truly realistic is the work of Gustave Flaubert in France, Anton Chekhov in Russia, George Eliot in England, and Mark Twain and William Dean Howells in the USA. Their novels deal with the complex characters with mixed motives that are rooted in social class and operate according to a highly developed social structure. The characters in a realistic novel interact with other characters and undergo plausible and everyday experiences. A lot of attention is given to details and an effort is made to replicate the true nature of reality in a way that novelists had never attempted before. There is the belief that the novel’s function is simply to report what happens, without comment or judgment. Seemingly inconsequential elements gain the attention of the novel functioning in the realist mode.

**1.1.3 Definitions of Realistic Novel:**

So far, various critics have tried to define the term realism. Some of the definitions are as follows:

1. A type of novel characterized as the fictional attempt to give the effect of realism by representing complex characters with mixed motives who are rooted in a social class, operate in a highly developed social structure, interact with many other characters, and undergo plausible and everyday modes of experience.

   - Abrams’ Glossary of Literary Terms
2. A type of novel that places a strong emphasis on the truthful representation of the actual in fiction.

   - Holman’s Handbook to Literature

3. There is a kind of novel which in fact creates and judges the quality of a whole way of living in terms of the qualities of persons. . . . it offers a valuing creation of a whole way of life, a society, that is larger than any of the individuals composing it, and at the same time valuing creations of individual human beings . . . Neither element, neither the society nor the individual, is there as a priority. The society is not a background against which the personal relationships are studied, nor are the individuals merely illustrations of aspects of the way of life. I call this the realistic tradition . . .

   - Raymond Williams

1.1.4 Features of the Realistic Novel:

1. Objectivity and fidelity:

The most significant feature of the realistic novel is its objectivity and fidelity to facts. Many writers of the period had concurrent occupations in the publishing industry and as a result, they used their journalistic technique to represent the everyday reality with detailed descriptions of the surrounding world they had witnessed.

2. Docudrama:

Another fair comparison would be to think of the realist novel as an early form of docudrama, in which characters and events are intended to seamlessly reproduce the real world. The Victorian Period saw a growing concern with the plight of the less fortunate in society, and the realistic novel likewise turned its attention to subjects that beforehand would not have warranted notice. The balancing act that the upwardly mobile middle class had to perform in order to retain their position in the world was a typical subject for realistic novels. They arose a subgenre of Realism called Social Realism, which in hindsight can be interpreted as Marxist and socialist ideas set forth in literature.
3. **Portrayal of human psychology:**

Advances in the field of human psychology also fed into the preoccupation with representing the inner workings of the mind, and the delicate play of emotions. The novelists like Henry James believed that human consciousness was far more complicated and varied than had previously been considered. He thinks that in the human mind there are very few absolutes which help in shaping a new sensibility of the human world. As a result, the realistic novel embraces the concept that people were neither completely good nor completely bad, but somewhere on the spectrum.

4. **Complex Characters:**

The overriding concern of all realistic fiction is with Characterization. So, the realistic novelists struggle to create intricate, and layered characters who, feel as though they could be flesh and blood creatures. Much of this effect was achieved through internal monologues and a keen understanding of human psychology. The novelists realized that an individual is composed of a network of motivations, interests, desires, and fears. How these forces interact and sometimes battle with each other plays a large part in the development of the character’s personality. Realism, at its highest, attempts to lay these internal struggles bare for all to see. In other words, most of the “action” of the realistic novel is internalized. Changes in mood, perceptions, opinions and ideas constitute the turning points or climaxes.

5. **Plot Structure:**

The realistic novelists not only revolted against the idealists established traditions, but they also destroyed the established form of plot structure which presents the notion of a systematic outline that follows a definite arc of events, with an identifiable climax and resolution. The realistic novelists observe that life does not follow such patterns, so for them, neither should the novel. Instead of grand happenings, tragedies and epic turns of events, the realistic novel plods steadily over a track not greatly disturbed by external circumstances.

6. **Narrative Style:**

Narrative style is also changed with realistic fiction. Instead of an omniscient narrator calmly describing the persons and events, readers often confront unreliable narrators who do not have all the information. Often, the narrators’ perceptions are coloured by their own prejudices and beliefs. A popular device for many realistic
novelists was the frame narrative, or the story inside a story. This device compounds
the unreliable narrator by placing the reader at a further remove from the events of
the novel. The purpose of all these innovations, as with Realism on the whole, was to
more accurately simulate the nature of reality – unknowable, uncertain, and ever-
shifting.

1.1.5 Prominent Writers in the Tradition:

1. Honoré de Balzac:

   Honoré de Balzac is a prominent figure in the realist tradition of literature who
has presented all aspects of the France of his time from the lowest thief or prostitute
to the highest aristocrat or political leader. His attention to detail is obsessive, with
long passages of descriptions of settings being a characteristic feature of his work.
His portraits of ordinary French life were remarkable in their careful attention to
detail. He expressed the idea that characters come to life through the painstaking
accumulation of environmental details. His methodology was a departure from the
Romantic tradition which was near its zenith when he was crafting his stories. He
also puts an enormous emphasis on the settings of his stories. Whether urban or
provincial, the locale almost becomes a character of its own. His most famous work,
which was left unfinished, was The Human Comedy, an assortment of interwoven
tales and novels which depict life in early nineteenth century France.

2. Gustave Flaubert:

   Gustave Flaubert is another important writer who turned his journalism in
pointing out the details of ordinary life realistically. He engaged in systematic
research, modelling the village in his novel on an actual town. His novels like
Madame Bovary and The Temptation of Saint Anthony represent the ground reality
that shocked the readers of the time. In Madame Bovary, he depicted the story of an
adulterous woman married to an unimaginative country physician with its tragic
consequences. His next novel Sentimental Education is perhaps at the highest stage in
the development of French realism.

3. Mark Twain:

   Mark Twain is the pen name of the American writer Samuel Clemens who is
noteworthy for his faithful reproduction of vernacular speech patterns and
vocabulary. Replicating natural speech requires not just great listening skills, but a
sense of how the written version sounds to the imagination. In addition to the use of vernacular, Twain is an innovator in focusing on middle and lower class characters. In a development that continues to bewilder, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is one of the most frequently banned books in the public school system. One imagines that certain language usages are indeed offensive; however Twain was doing nothing other than representing honest speech.

4. **William Dean Howells:**

William Dean Howells is an eminent American realist who has exercised a lot of authority over the currents of taste on his side of the ocean. He has promoted so many literary rising stars, such as Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, and Sarah Orne Jewett. At a time, he was widely considered to be the most accomplished of all American Realists. That reputation has faded somewhat and today Howells’s work as an editor is held up as his most important contribution. However, the several of his novels are among the finest of American Realism. Published in 1885, the ironically titled *The Rise of Silas Lapham* tells the story of an ambitious businessman who tumbles out of fortune through his own mistakes and poor judgment. It is an anti-success story, and illustrates one of the central ideas of Realism, that of crafting honest narratives rather than feel-good sentimental fantasies. His work entitled *A Modern Instance* highlights the same principle in detailing the steady disintegration of a seemingly happy marriage.

5. **Henry James:**

American expatriate Henry James is the most skilled and accomplished practitioner of Realism in fiction. He was fascinated by the encounters between representatives of the New World America, with members of the Old World or Europe. He observed a distinct set of traits that permeated each of these groups. With Americans, he witnessed vigour, innocence, and strict moral righteousness. Europeans, on the other hand, represented decadence, lax morality, and deviousness. With such seeming prejudices built into his aesthetics, one is surprised to learn that James renounced his American citizenship and became a British subject. Arguably his most famous work is the novella *Daisy Miller*, which relates how a young and rich American girl touring Europe is victimized by sophisticated schemers, with no compunctions about right or wrong. At the height of his powers, Henry James crafted intricate novels that featured completely realized characters. He was remarkable for
his ability to dispense with commentary or subjectivity within his narratives. In terms
of prose style, he is admired for the simplicity and directness of his language, a
quality not generally noted during the Victorian Period. His most successful novel is
*The Portrait of a Lady*, published as one volume in 1881. With *Portrait* he expands
upon many of the themes such as greed, power, and the exploitation of the New
World by the Old.

**1.1.6 Attacks on the Realistic Novel:**

Realism came under attack largely because it represented such a bold departure
from the structure, style, technique and form of the earlier literary tradition. The
fascination with things falling apart was unpleasant to many and critics sometimes
accused the practitioners of Realism for focusing only on the negative aspects of life.
Additionally, the intense focus on the minutiae of character was seen as
unwillingness to actually tell a story. Readers complained that very little happened in
realistic fiction, that there was all talk and little payoff. By the end of the nineteenth
century, Realism in the pure sense had given a way to another form called
Naturalism. With Naturalism, authors looked to heredity and history to define
character. Ironically, many of the qualities that people found distasteful in realism –
the obsession with character, the superficially mundane plots – were all intensified in
Naturalism.

**1.1.7 Glossary and Notes:**

- **precursor**: pioneer
- **plausible**: reasonable
- **replicate**: duplicate
- **inconsequential**: unimportant
- **beforehand**: earlier
- **preoccupation**: obsession
- **intricate**: complicated
- **perception**: observation
- **prejudice**: bigotry
1.1.8 Check Your Progress:
1. The realist art movement emerged during _______ century France and Russia.
2. _______ is considered as the precursor of literary realism.
3. _______ is a feature where fictional persons and events are intended to seamlessly reproduce the real world.
4. Realism is an attack on _________.
5. _______ has written a novella *Daisy Miller*.

1.1.9 Exercises

(A) Answer the following questions in 250 words.
1. Discuss in detail the features of Realism.
2. Write a detailed note on the origin of Realism and define it.

(B) Write short notes on the following in 150 words, with reference to realistic novel.
1. Objectivity and fidelity
2. Treatment to human psychology
3. Narrative Style and Plot Structure
4. Prominent writers in Realist tradition

1.1.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
1. mid 19\textsuperscript{th} cent.
2. Honore de Balzac
3. Docudrama
4. idealist establishment of tradition
5. Henry James

1.1.11 References for Further Reading
1. Realism and the Contemporary Novel : Raymond Williams
3. Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism: Coyle et al. Cardiff: University of Wales
1.2 Science Fiction

Content:

1.2.1 Objectives
1.2.2 Introduction
1.2.3 Definitions of Science Fiction
1.2.4 Features of Science Fiction
1.2.5 Prominent Writers in the Tradition
1.2.6 Glossary and Notes
1.2.7 Check Your Progress
1.2.8 Exercises
1.2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
1.2.10 References for Further Reading

1.2.1 Objectives:

- To understand the concept of Science Fiction
- To know the emergence and development of Science Fiction
- To define the Science Fiction
- To generalise the features of Science Fiction
- To take the survey of prominent writers in the tradition of Science Fiction

1.2.2 Introduction:

The genre of science fiction deals with the imaginative content such as futuristic settings, future developments in science and technology, space travel, time travel, travel faster than light, parallel universes and extra terrestrial life. It usually eschews the supernatural and its imaginary elements are largely plausible within the scientifically established context of the story. It often explores the potential consequences of scientific and other innovations.
Critics place the emergence and development of science fiction at least two thousand years ago. But it was William Wilson who used the term science fiction firstly in 1851 in Chapter 10 of *A Little Earnest Book upon a Great Old Subject*. He writes that “Science-Fiction, in which the revealed truths of Science may be given interwoven with a pleasing story which may itself be poetical and true.” However, the term did not come into common usage until the 1920s. Since then, the term is used as an expression of only modern technological, scientific, industrial society, appearing when pre-industrial societies are transformed by an industrial revolution.

Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is considered the progenitor of modern science fiction. A decade later Shelley published *The Last Man* (1826) which became one of the first science fiction visions of the end of the world. Set in the year 2100, the main character of the novel wanders alone over a dead planet, sampling the useless achievements of all human society. Later, Edgar Allan Poe wrote a story about a flight to the moon that initiated vast writings of scientific novels throughout the 19th century. With the dawn of new technologies such as electricity, the telegraph, and new forms of powered transportation, writers such as H. G. Wells and Jules Verne created a body of work that became popular across broad cross-sections of society.

### 1.2.3 Definitions of Science Fiction

1. Science fiction is an ‘imaginative fiction based on postulated scientific discoveries or spectacular environmental changes, frequently set in the future or on other planets and involving space or time travel’.
   
   - *The Oxford English Dictionary*

2. Science fiction is ‘a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment.
   
   - Darko Suvin

3. ‘Science’ in Science Fiction has always had a tacit meaning other than that commonly accepted. It had nothing in particular to say about the subject matter, which may be just about anything so long as the formal conventions of future dress are observed.

   - Gwyneth Jones
4. Sf is that species of storytelling native to a culture undergoing the epistemic changes implicated in the rise and supersession of technical-industrial modes of production, distribution, consumption and disposal. It is marked by (i) metaphoric strategies and metonymic tactics, (ii) the foregrounding of icons and interpretative schemata from a collectively constituted generic ‘mega-text’ and the concomitant de-emphasis of ‘fine writing’ and characterisation, and (iii) certain priorities more often found in scientific and postmodern texts than in literary models: specifically, attention to the object in preference to the subject.

- Damien Broderick

1.2.4 Features of Science Fiction:

1. A time set in the future, in alternate universes or in a historical past that contradicts known facts of history or the archaeological record.

2. A spatial setting or scenes in outer space (e.g. spaceflight), on other worlds or on subterranean earth.

3. Characters that include aliens, mutants, androids, or humanoid robots and other types of characters arising from a future human evolution.

4. Futuristic or plausible technology such as ray guns, teleportation machines and humanoid computers.

5. Scientific principles that are new or that contradict accepted physical laws, such as time travel, wormholes or travel that is faster-than-light or futuristic communication.

6. New and different political or social systems, e.g. dystopian, post-scarcity, or post-apocalyptic.

7. Paranormal abilities such as mind control, telepathy, telekinesis and teleportation.

8. Other universes or dimensions and travel between them.
1.2.5 Prominent Writers in the Tradition:

1. **H.G. Wells:**

H. G. Wells is the most influential science fiction novelist in the literary history. He is also called the father of science fiction. His notable science fiction works include *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Over a century after they were written, these books are still fresh and strong enough to be made into Hollywood films. Wells set the bar for everyone else and laid the foundations to ensure that science fiction would be very alive and well into the 20th century and beyond.

2. **Jules Verne:**

Jules Verne is also supposed to be the pioneer of science fiction and one of its finest writers. He is a prophet of scientific progress and many of his novels involve elements of technology that were fantastic for his day but later became commonplace. His works like *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, and *Around the World in 80 Days* are classics that changed fictional literature and gave birth to what would become the science fiction genre. He wrote incredibly detailed stories about space travel and submarines before any such travel on a large scale was practical, and he laid the foundations for being arguably the greatest science fiction writer ever.

3. **Isaac Asimov:**

Another prominent writer in the history of science fiction writing is Isaac Asimov. His *Robot series* and *Foundation series* laid the groundwork for most modern science fiction and are still widely read today. His novels like *The Gods Themselves* deal with alien life and its impact on human beings. The novel *The Naked Sun* (1957) deals with social issues as the core of its central setting and motivation. It depicts genetic engineering in the guise of eugenics as a fundamental part of that society. As Asimov is an atheist, a humanist and a rationalist, he did not follow any religious convictions.

4. **Arthur C. Clarke:**

Arthur C. Clarke is known for his *Space Odyssey* series, particularly the novel *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which has become one of the most influential science fiction
novels ever written. His works are marked by an optimistic view of science empowering mankind’s exploration of the Solar System, and the world’s oceans. His images of the future often feature a Utopian setting with highly developed technology, ecology, and society, based on the author’s ideals. His earlier stories would usually feature the extrapolation of a technological innovation or scientific breakthrough into the underlying decadence of his own society.

5. Frank Herbert:

Frank Herbert used his science novels to explore complex ideas involving philosophy, religion, psychology, politics and ecology, which have caused many of his readers to take an interest in these areas. The underlying thrust of his work is a fascination with the question of human survival and evolution. He keenly explored the human tendency to slavishly follow charismatic leaders and delved deeply into both the flaws and potentials of bureaucracy and government. He writes of the Fremen, the Sardaukar, and the Dosadi, who are molded by their terrible living conditions into dangerous super races. His Dune series has had a huge and devout following that rivalled that of The Lord of the Rings. This series is amazingly wide ranging, often dealing with themes like human survival, evolution, ecology, and the intersection of religion, politics, and power. “Dune” is thought to be the single best-selling sci-fi novel of all time.

1.2.6 Glossary and Notes:
extraterrestrial : alien
eschew : avoid
supernatural : ghostly
interweave : mingle
progenitor : pioneer
amazing : amazing - wonderful
postulate : hypothesize
estrangement : separation
empirical : experimental
concomitant : attendant
scarcity : insufficiency
decadence : dissipation
charismatic : magnetic
1.2.7 Check Your Progress:

- Fill in the blanks:
  1. _______ used the term science fiction firstly.
  2. _______ is considered as the progenitor of modern science fiction.
  3. The feature dealing with mind control, telepathy, telekinesis, and teleportation is called as ________.
  4. _______ has written the novel *2001: A Space Odyssey*.
  5. Science fiction is an ‘imaginative fiction based on _______ scientific discoveries.

1.2.8 Exercises

(A) Answer the following questions in 250 words.
  1. Write a note on origin of Science fiction and define it.
  2. Discuss in detail the features of Science fiction.

(B) Write short notes on the following in 150 words.
  1. Development of Science fiction
  2. H. G. Well's contribution to science fiction
  3. Plot and structure of science fiction
  4. Time settings

1.2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

  1. William Wilson
  2. Mary Shelley
  3. Paranormal abilities
  4. Arthur C. Clarke
  5. Postulated scientific discoveries

1.2.10 References for Further Reading

2.1 Campus Novel

Contents:
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2.1.3 Answers to Check Your Progress - I  
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2.1.5 Reference Books

2.1.0 Objectives:

After reading this unit you will be able:

- to understand the term Campus Novel  
- to identify the difference between Campus Novel and other types of novels  
- to know the writers, Indian as well as foreign, who tried to write in the type of Campus Novel

2.1.1 Introduction:

Campus Novel is one of the significant types of novel. It basically includes the structure and setting related to a college or university. The academicians are the characters in it and their activities are action of such novels. It has become the popular form in recent days.

2.1.2 Subject Matter:

A campus is the geographical place or land on which a college, university or any related educational building is situated. Such buildings, which belong to mainly academic sector, include lecture halls, libraries, hostels, students’ study centers and so on.
A campus novel is a literary genre whose main action is set in or around the campus of a college or university. Such novels depict the world of students, teachers, administrators, and owners of the academic institutions. There are novels written from the students’ point of view and some novels focus the perspective of teachers or faculty. As these novels emphasis on the academy, the campus novels are also called as Academic Novels. Normally, many people get attracted to the academy which is place of idealistic imagination. It is this place where faculty get raw material in the form of students. However, many campus novels depict contrast of reality of the campus and intellectual pretentions. These novels depict the tension between reality and idealism of the academic world. Therefore, there is always gap between ‘is’ and ‘ought to’.

According to Lodge, the word 'campus' is of Latin origin which means field, and it indicates the physical space occupied by a college or university. Many Americans use the campus synonymously for university from the beginning of 19th century and same is followed by Britishers afterwards. Today, the term 'campus' is commonly applied to any college, university or any educational institution. The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Literature in English (1996) explains on Campus Fiction as, "Campus Fiction is a term describing a particular genre of novels, usually comic or satirical, which has a university setting and academics as principal characters." Kramer, in his definition of campus novel, says that campus fiction incorporates an institution of higher learning as a crucial part of its total setting and it includes its principal characters as graduates or undergraduate students, faculty members, administrators and/or other academic personnel. Whereas Janice Rossen in her book The University in Modern Fiction (1993) considers campus novel as ‘social document’ which consists of a complicated web of several desperate but related threads. She opines that campus novels are interesting to both writers and readers since these novels celebrate the happiness of knowledge of the insiders.

The nature of campus novel is either comic or satiric and the action is set within the enclosed world of college, university or any other similar place of learning. It highlights the ideologies and follies of the academic life. Most of the campus novels are critical of one or the other aspects of life which are usually comical or satirical in their tone. They portray the occurrence that takes place in the small world of the campus. As the academic world is reflected, the follies and foibles of the academic life are highlighted.
Even though the campus novels are written by academicians who are teachers or any one related to the academic world, it is not the case with all campus novelists. But one cannot deny the fact that David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and Vladimir Nabokov who were teachers flourished the form of campus novels. As they were teachers, they succeeded to depict the world of university. Indian campus novelists like Anuradha Marwah Roy, Prema Nandakumar, Meena Alexander, Rani Dharker, Shakuntala Bharvani, Panjangam and Raj Gauthaman were teacher-novelists who excelled in this genre of novel writing.

The campus novelist depicts the struggles of the academic characters that caught between practicality and idealism. The pretension is borne out of practicality and that becomes the cause of satire and irony. The campus novelists satirize the glorified image of academicians. The teachers are portrayed as comic, ridiculous figures who are less interested in matters relating to scholarliness and academy. The academicians who are men and women are depicted as normal human beings are like other ordinary men and women. They love to be power masters. They have their own desires, ambitions and very keen to individual development with sometimes selfish attitude. The hypocritical nature of these academicians is reflected in the novels of campus novelists. Their mask of intellectuality is torn and they are put to sheer shame.

Many campus novels are comic, satirical and often discuss the struggle of intellectual pretensions and human weakness. Some depict the serious aspect of university life. The illegal practices in university become one of the interests of campus novelists. One would doubt whether the universities are the most unliterary places and the most purely barbarous in spirit. Elaine Showalter, a well-known critic of Campus Fiction, says that University is as a place of cloistered intrigue. Some academicians are interested in unintellectual activities and get involved in politics and intrigue. The high intellectual ideals set against the actual behavior and motivation of persons who work in university. Through ironic and satiric kinds of portrayals, the writers try to show that there is little hope for education. Education has become more and more business-like and materialistic desires have engulfed the minds of the academics.


David Lodge’s Changing Places is a tale of faculty exchange program. One English professor moves to America, Berkley campus and one American professor moves to England, Birmingham campus. The English professor, Philip Swallow is a uninteresting individual. He is a family man. The American professor, Morris Zapp is funny and lustful. Lodge depicts his characters showing us world of sexual exploits, marriages and lots of foolishness. Lodge has a distinct nature of laughing at cheating husbands and life-enjoying students. The English professor undergoes complete metamorphoses and becomes a raging lover, and his beloved is none other than the American professor’s daughter by his first marriage. The American professor, on his part has dutifully fallen in love with wife of the English professor. The field has been leveled. One with another’s daughter and the other with one’s wife- it’s a lovable world. In the last chapter, they all discuss different possible combinations and permutations of their relationships. The novel is simply good.

‘Nice Work’ by Lodge is about an adhoc lady teacher, Robyn who has to experience a project at an industrial unit because she is a specialist in industrial novel, apart from her interest in feminism. She watches life from a new perspective. Here again, it’s about changing places. She watches forty five year old Vic Wilcox. The two fall in love. Despite, Vic’s wife and Robyn’s boyfriend, the contradictory forcers of English Department and industry attract each other and the miracle works.

When ‘Small World’ came in 1984, many professors complained that their wives didn’t allow them to go to seminars, conferences and workshops. Everybody came to know as to what happens at seminar- love affairs bloom; new relationships
are born; old ones die and so it goes on. Lodge’s last campus novel *Thinks...* is a bit serious in tone. This is also a witty novel where the director of the institute, Ralph who is attracted towards the visiting novelist, Helen. There’s mutual attraction. But the devastating turn of events prove what Ralph always used to say, ‘we can never know for certain what another person is thinking.’

No one can miss J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* while discussing campus novel. It’s a must read for every professor. It really shakes your conscience. David Lurie is a divorced college professor. He’s out and out chauvinistic. He forces his student to have sex with him. Once the scandal breaks out, he’s thrown out of the college. He is remorseless. He feels no sympathy for the students. He rather thinks that he has a right to do what he did. His world-view is extremely ego-centric. He goes on to live with his daughter.

In India, the most famous campus novel is undoubtedly Chetan Bhagat’s *Five Point Someone*. It describes the heavy, rigorous schedule of IIT students. It also brings out the unchanging, archaic attitudes of the faculty. In India, even great institutions have this problem of not saying good things about others. Students are hardly encouraged to do new things. Mugging is encouraged. In between we have hilarious moments when the protagonist has an affair with the daughter of the professor. Life and psychology of students, their pranks, adventures are wonderfully described. Bhagat seems to be a natural story-teller. He communicates effortlessly. He gets across smoothly. The very fact that this book, loved by so many students, proves that Bhagat has touched the aching spot somewhere.

If we look at recent history, *The Long, Long Days*, by P. M. Nityanandan shows how values of students have changed over the decades. Although all buoyancy of students’ days is well depicted, nevertheless, regard for teachers and name of the institutions concern students. We can see that those were the days of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’. Another novel, *The Truth (Almost) about Bharat* is about an accident or we may say misadventure of a medical student named Bharat. During a strike, when little remains in individual hands and mob fury takes over, this student Bharat throws a stone and it hits a watchman Shaffaruddin and injures him critically. Bharat runs away and roams around India. The novel is about those experiences.

‘*The Awakening*’ by Rita Joshi is written in verse. A Cambridge returned Lecturer finds herself in midst of Indian corruption, chauvinism and she decides to
deal with it. The novel is positive in approach. *Corridors of Knowledge* is a chronology of the educational journey of Madhav Rao. It also throws light on corruption in institutions of learning. *The Farewell Party* by M.V. Rama Sarma describes the pain of an honest teacher. Superseding is always a matter of grave tension to faculty in India. The protagonist goes to a rural university, finds peace there and goes on to spiritual ways. ‘*Campus*’ by K.L. Kamal is about an ambitious Vice-Chancellor, Chandrakant who wants to raise the standard of his university. He faces tough opposition by local politicians who do not let the VC do anything outstanding. He faces strikes and subterfuge. He somehow manages things and makes people see his point of view.

*Atom and the Serpent* by Prema Nandakumar is a tribute to Machiavellian Vice-Chancellors. The Vc D.K. Adhyaksha knows every secret of the varsity. He uses them carefully. He finally goes to where he belongs- politics. *Miracles Happen* by D.R. Sharma is a story of a weak Vice-Chancellor who turns even a good university into a sick one. These novels are an attempt to highlight the malfunctioning of the campuses. *The Drunken Tantra* by Ranga Rao shows how cheats rise in the academic profession in our country and how good people are surpassed. Many Indian campus novels like *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta*, *The Narrator*, and *Goodbye to Elsa* describe the journey of the protagonist from a student to a teacher. The circle comes full. A student becomes a professor.

### 2.1.3 Check Your Progress:

**Answer the following questions in a word/phrase/sentence each:**

1. What is a campus?
2. Where does the action of a campus novel take place?
3. Who are characters in it?
4. What is the nature of campus novel?
5. Who does consider campus novel as a social document?
6. Who did write the novel *Changing Places*?
7. Mention the popular campus novel written by Chetan Bhagat.
8. Where from the word campus is derived?
9. Mention two names of Indian Campus Novelists.

10. Which of Rita Joshi’s novel is written in verse?

2.1.4 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. Land on which college or university is built
2. In the campus of college or university
3. Academicians, teachers
4. Comic and satirical
5. Janice Rossen
6. David Lodge
7. Five Point Some One
8. Latin
9. Kavery Nambisan, Ranga Rao,
10. *The Awakening*

2.1.5 Reference Books:


2.2 Transfiction:

Contents:

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2.2.0 Objectives:

• To define the term ‘translation’.
• To understand concept, meaning and features of translation.
• To know the historical perspectives of translation
• To know the role and qualities of translator
• To understand the problems and challenges before Translation

2.2.1 Introduction:

The word, ‘Transfiction’, here, refers to ‘the translated fiction’ or ‘fiction in translation’. This unit throws light on basics of translation e.g. definition, features, types, and the role of the translator and its qualities, the problems and challenges while translating etc. Translation of literary works (novels, short stories, plays poems
etc.) is considered a literary pursuit in its own right. It is a tool to introduce literature of an alien language into one’s own.

### 2.2.2 Translation and its Meanings:

Etymologically, ‘translation’ is ‘carrying across’ or ‘bringing across’. The word translation is derived from a Latin word *translatio*. Additionally, the Greek term ‘metapharsis’ (‘a speaking across’), has supplied English with ‘metaphrase’ (a ‘literal translation,’ or ‘word-for-word’ translation) as contrasted with ‘paraphrase’. The generic term ‘translation’ has several implied meanings such as conversion, alternation, change, paraphrasing, interpretation, rendering, rewording, transcription, decoding, recreation, reinvention, transformation and transliteration. Greek philosopher Aristotle in his significant work *treatise on Poetry* stated that poetry is not mere copying or imitation but a recreation. It is also true about the act of translation. Translation, according to Dante, is reinvention, verse making, or a project of recreation. For J. H. Miller, translation is the wandering existence of a text in a perpetual exile. An American writer Octavio Paz says, translation is the ‘principal means of understanding this world’. To him, “each text is unique yet it is translation of another text. No text can be completely original because language itself in its very essence is already a translation – first from nonverbal world, and then, another phase, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign”. For Medinokova, translation is a way of commenting.

Translation is an art, a science, a craft, a creation. It is a linguistic and cultural activity. It is concerned with the business of meaning. Translation can be defined as the process of delivering text message from one language into another. It is an expression of senses of words, sentences and passages etc. from one language into another. The Oxford English Dictionary defines translation as “an act of turning from one language to another”. New Standard Encyclopedia says “Translation is rendering of meaning, especially in writing from one language into another”. Translation has been defined as a linguistic process involving the transfer of a message from a S[OURCE] L[ANGUAGE] to a T[ARGET] L[ANGUAGE] or R[ECEP TOR] L[ANGUAGE]. In translation, there are two languages which come into focus. One, the language from which a text is translated into another language, this language is known as Source Language (SL). Such a text translated is called Source Text (ST). Likewise, the language in which the source language text is
translated is called Target Language (TL). Such text rendered into other language is called Target Text (TT). The difference between the source text and target text is a ‘shift of expression’. This shift of expression makes the translation ‘new writing’ or ‘creative writing’. The basic aim of translation is to express properly the meaning of the original text into another language. Translation should not require only a correct rendering of the words of the original text, but it should be a fair representation of ideas of the original. In translation, the spirit of the original text should remain as it is. Translation is a skill, and it has its own techniques. Therefore, for the good translation and to enter into the field of translation, translator requires training, constant practice and hard work.

2.2.3 A Historical Perspective:

The history of translation practice is quite old both in the West and the East. Cicero and Horace have been regarded as the first theorists. Cicero was sensitive to alter anything in the order of wording if compelled by necessity and Horace too was aware of the dilemma and advised not to be a slave to the original text (Bassnanet, 1991). The Bible translations in the early period were used as a weapon against the dogmatic beliefs prevalent in the Church. John Wycliffe, who was first to translate Bible into English (1580-84), compared the previous versions to establish the original text. George Chapman states in the preface to his translation of *Iliad* that a translator must reach the ‘spirit’ of the original and avoid ‘word for word’ translation.

Rationalism rules of aesthetic production and notions of ‘imitation’ and ‘decorum’ gained ground around the mid-seventeenth century. John Dryden outlined a rough theory of translation in his preface to *Ovid’s Epistles* (1680). He distinguished between paraphrase, imitation and paraphrase. It was a prescriptive programme. ‘Metaphrase’ referred to a word by word and line by line translation of a text whereas ‘imitation’ referred to free translation. Cowley’s *Renderings of Pindar* (1656) was a sort of imitation in terms of Dryden who viewed it as transgression. Alexander Pope too favoured Dryden’s views on translation and wanted the spirit of the original text to be captured with emphasis on stylistic details of the text. Dr. Johnson also held the view in his *Life of Pope* (1779-80) that a translator has the right to read in his own terms. Large-scale translations came out in
the eighteenth century and they have played a pivotal role in shaping the contemporary taste and language of the period.

The first study of its kind on translation, Alexander Fraser Tytler’s *The Principles of Translation* (1791) mentions three basic principles (a) the translation must retain the complete idea of the original (b) the style and manner of writing should be the same type as the original (c) the translation should have the ease of the source language text. Dryden’s concept of paraphrase was not favoured by Tytler; he conceived it as loose translation. He, however, favoured ‘omission’ and ‘additions’ in the translation to clarify ambiguities.

New concepts on the art of translation during the early nineteenth century were given by the Romantics; rejecting rationalism of the 18th century, they dumped these as junk theories and emphasized the crucial role of ‘fancy’ and ‘imagination’ (S. T. Coleridge), the latter leading to powers of creativity. The Romantics, thus, viewed translation in terms of imagination, i.e. as a higher creative activity. T. Webb (1976) shows Shelley’s writings that Shelley appreciated translations for their ideas and other literary features.

The expression of the remoteness of time and place of the original text in translation was the main concern of the Victorian translators which added a new dimension to literary translation. In a series of lectures that Mathew Arnold delivered *On Translating Homer* (1862), he appears to be closer to the neo-classical perspectives; he held the view that a translator must serve the original text, and the target text reader be brought to the source language text through the translation. As translation is a global literary phenomenon, it is widely seen in Indian literary world too. In fact, the translation practices have long tradition in India: Omar Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat* is also translated in Hindi. Hariwanshrai Bachchan’s *Madhushala* is also translated into English as *The House of Wine*.

### 2.2.4 Review of Translated Fiction:

For a long time, the scholars were busy debating the issues that surround the translation of poetry. Comparatively, far less attention was given to the specific problems of translating fiction. Of course, poetry has a much longer tradition than fiction. The ancient Latin poets were influenced by Greek poetry and made attempts to translate it into Latin to enrich their language. Both Cicero and Horace, Roman translators, were against clinging closely to the SL word order in the TL. Horace
opposes the slavish adherence to each word in its SL sequence. The ancient translators, therefore, defended the practice of rendering a SL text more freely into the TL. Later, Jerome, a chief preparer of the Vulgate version of the Bible, found the freer Roman approach narrow and introduced the three-term taxonomy: word-for-word, sense-for-sense, and free. For him, sense-for-sense translation became a faithful middle ground between the faithful translation Cicero and Horace censured and the free imitations they defended. Renaissance translators favoured this mode which proceeds sententially, taking whole sentences rather than individual words. They made numerous sense-for-sense translations of classical texts.

Translators go on producing ‘new’ versions of a given text, not so much to reach an ideal ‘perfect translation’ but because each previous version, being context bound, represents a reading accessible to the time in which it is produced, and moreover, is individualistic. The ST is fixed in time and place, the TT is variable. There is only one King Lear but there are innumerable readings and in theory innumerable translations. All the translations reflect the individual translators’ readings, interpretations and selection of criteria determined by the concept of the function both of the translation and of the original text. There is no single right way of translating a literary work just as there is no single right way of writing one either.

The modern novel began under the influence of verse epics such as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey (9th or 8th century BC), Virgil's Aeneid (29–19 BC) and The Bible. It was also influenced by such Spanish novels as Lazarillo de Tormes (1554) and Cervantes' Don Quixote (1606/1615). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774) presented the difficulty of the titular hero to integrate into the new conformist society. The German novels taught the novelists the concept of character development. The German Bildungsroman offered quasi-biographical explorations and autobiographical self examinations of the individual and its personal development. Some novels started focusing on the creation of an artist. This influence produced novels exploring how modern times form the modern individual.

Translations of French novels introduced the trend of Naturalism in English literature. Émile Zola's novels depicted the world of which Marx and Engels wrote in a non-fictional mode. Translated Russian novels changed the ideas about war and crime. War changed with Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace (1868/69) from historical fact to a world of personal fate. Crime became a personal reality with Fyodor
Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1873–77) brought female protagonists into the role of outstanding observers. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) added a drop-out student who became a murderer to the spectrum of special observers whose views would promise reinterpretations of modern life. Latin American self awareness in the wake of the (failing) left revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s resulted in a "Latin American Boom", connected today with the names of Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa and Gabriel García Márquez. The translations of these Spanish novels have led to the introduction of a special brand of postmodern magic realism in English and other languages.

A large number of Marathi works of fiction has been translated into English. Ian Raeside, Lecturer in Marathi at the University of London, has translated a collection of modern Marathi short stories written by Gangadhar Gadgil, Arvind Gokhale, P. B. Bhave, Vyankatech Madgulkar, D. B. Mokashi, D. M. Mirasdar, Malatibai Bedekar and others as *The Rough and the Smooth*. He has also translated *Garambicha Bapu* by S. N. Pendse as the *Wild Bapu of Garambi*. Shuba Slee's translation *Seven Sixes are Forty-three* of Kiran Nagarkar's novel *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* enjoyed the rare fortune of getting published in Australia by University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland in 1980. Jim Marselos, History Department, University of Sydney, has written a very insightful foreword to this Australian edition on the place and significance of this novel in the history of the Marathi novel. Kumud Mehta has translated P. S. Rege's *Avalokita*. Vilas Sarang's short stories, published in American, Canadian and English as well as Indian journals, have been published under the title *The Fair Tree of Void*. Such English language periodicals as *Bombay Literary Review, The New Quest, Indian Literature, The Little Magazine* from New Delhi and a host of others have rendered Marathi fiction, especially short stories, into English. Recently, Sudhakar Marathe has translated Bhalchandra Nemade's epoch-making novel *Kosla* as *Cacoon* for MacMillan India Limited. Showing his awareness of the formidable challenges in translating this novel, Marathe asserts: "The following translation must be read for what it is. And it cannot be read without either some knowledge or some sense of the novel." Marathe has supplied chapter-wise footnotes at the end of the book to explain certain Maharashtrian dishes such as 'bhakri', 'bhaji', 'amti', 'shrikhand', 'shira', 'bhel', 'batatawada', 'basundi', 'laddu', 'shev-chivda', 'khichdi', etc.; relations such as 'Maushi', 'Aaee', 'Dada', 'bhai', etc.; musical
instruments such as 'tabla', 'sanai'; religious practices and figures such as 'namaskars', 'shloka', 'samadhi', 'varkaris', 'kirtanas', 'aarti', 'bhagat', 'shraddha', 'shaligram', etc.; articles such as 'pat', 'lungi', 'rangoli', 'gulal', 'kumkum', etc.; festivals such as 'pola', 'yatra'; institutions such as 'math', 'balutedars', 'tamasha', etc.

Besides, many Marathi Dalit autobiographies have been translated into English. Laxman Mane’s *Upara* has been translated into English as *An Outsider*. Laxman Gaikwad’s *Uchalya* has been translated in English as *The Branded*. Kishore Shantabai Kale’s *Kolhatyaache Por* is entitled *Against All Odds* in the English translation. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale’s *Akkarmashi* is translated as *The Outcaste* and Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s *Aamacha Baap ani Amhi* is well known as *Outcaste: A Memoir*. Vasant Moon’s *Vasti* has been translated as *Growing up Untouchable in India*. Urmila Pawar’s *Aaydan* has been translated into English as *The Weave of My Life – A Dalit Woman’s Memoir*. Though they are autobiographies, they are written almost like novels. You are going to study Dr. Vilas Salunkhe’s translation of Sadanand Deshmukh’s Marathi novel *Baromaas* published by Popular Prakashan, Mumbai in 2013.

### 2.2.5 Types of Translation:

There are many types of translations. Machine or manual translation is rather artificial. More familiar translations include literal (metaphrasing) translation, free translation and transcreation. Adaptation is another one.

1. **Literal translation** has word for word rendering. Here exactness is important.

2. **Free translation** involves the liberty of translator. This is meant for information and exuberance. Here fidelity to the original is less important. The aim of translator is less to make an accurate rendering than to make the substance of foreign work thoroughly intelligible to the spirit to Target Language. That is to say ‘the character of the translation precedes as much from the mind of the original writer’. Free translation was done in medieval times. King Alfred and poet Chaucer translated Latin works into English freely. Malory’s *Morte d’ Arthur* is partly a free translation. Here is a tendency to make a foreign work express essentially Target Language spirit.

3. **Transcreation** is another mode where a translator makes use of the original for creating something of his own. He adds his own and deletes certain thing which
is not necessary, or relevant. He takes liberty with the work. For example, Tagore made use of transcreation when he translated his *Geetanjali* into English. This is more a creative activity.

4. Adaptation is an adjustment of a text according to one’s tastes. It is called bowdlerization. This is done when the original text is cumbersome. For example, Romesh Chunder Dutt bowdlerized the *Ramayana* from 48,000 lines to 4000 and the *Mahabharata* from 2,00,000 lines to 8000 lines. Dryden’s *All for Love* is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Besides, Roman Jakobson has distinguished three types of translation:

1. Intralingual translation, or **rewording** (translating in the same language, e.g. modern Marathi translation of *Dnyaneshwari*)
2. Interlingual translation or **translation proper** (translating across languages, e.g. *King Lear*’s translation as *Raja Lear*)
3. Intersemiotic translation or **transmutation** (translating across sign systems, e.g. the movie *Garambicha Bapu* based on the novel)

**2.2.6 Translator and its Qualities:**

Translation has served as a writing school for many prominent writers. Every translation activity has one or more specific purposes but the main aim of translation is to serve as a cross-cultural bilingual communication vehicle among people. In the past few decades, this activity has developed because of rising international trade, increased migration, globalization, the recognition of linguistic minorities and the expansion of mass media and technology. For this reason, the translator plays an important role as a bilingual or multilingual cross-culture transmitter of culture and truths by attempting to interpret concepts and speech in a variety of texts as faithfully and accurately as possible. Today, a translator has been acting as bridges for conveying knowledge and ideas between cultures and civilizations. The job of the translator is not just to provide a rendering of the original into another language but also to reflect the cultural excellence of the source text by mirroring it into another language. For a translator, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of two languages: Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL). The quality of translation will depend on the quality of the translator i.e. on her or his knowledge, skills, training, cultural background and even mood. One who translates should have
a greater command of the language into which the text is to be translated. He should be well versed with diction, idioms, terms and synonyms of the both languages. One requirement of translation is to have knowledge of the subject. The translator should be aware of the details and the background of the text which he has to render into another language. He should be able to grasp the spirit of the original and then he should be able to give it a new garb. Newmark (1995) has given some essential characteristics that any good translator should have:

- Reading comprehension ability in a foreign language.
- Knowledge of the subject.
- Sensitivity to language.
- An excellent command of the language into which the translation is being carried out.
- Competence to write the target language dexterously, clearly, economically, and resourcefully.

The ancient translator held the view that Translation should be done either ‘word-for word’ or ‘sense for sense’. Cicero (46BC) said that a translator must care for the meaning of the text. A French writer Etienne Dole devised some principles for the translator for his healthy translation:

- The translator should clearly know the author and his work while translating.
- He should have known his language and the language of the work to be translated by him.
- He must conform to the meaning of a sentence instead of the series of words in the translation.
- His aim should be translating in a simple language, and
- He should achieve a rhythm that smoothes the ear and heart of his reader.
- He should avoid word-for-word rendering.
- He should use forms of speech in common use.
- He should choose and order words appropriately to produce the correct tone.
For Lawerence Humphrey, a translator must combine the elements of simplicity, scholarship, beauty, dedication, sensitivity and boldness. Hillarie Belloc says that the translator must render unit to unit, idiom by idiom and intention by intention. He says “the essence of translating is resurrections of an alien thing in a native body”. He gives moral responsibility to the translator but at the same time the liberty to change the text to suit the needs of the TL text is curtailed.

2.2.7 Problems and Challenges of translation:

Translation is not an easy art because the translator is consciously or unconsciously always within the confines of the original. The whole process of translating from Source language to Target language is an unusually complex one. He faces many difficulties and problems when he tries to translate the original text. The act of translation has several problems. First, language problem, then cultural problems and the difficulty in understanding the text and its meta meanings. The problem of maintaining fidelity, avoiding repetitions, using stylistic devices etc worries anybody or creates confusion. Basically, the problem of translation can be categorized under two titles: Supra textual and Intra textual. The Supra textual problems deal with the problems arising outside the text, and Intra textual, the problems within the text. Generally, Supra textual is concerned with the choice of the text and non-availability of the translations of the same text. The problems of translation start with the choice of the text. If the work has already undergone translations then the translator has to first act as a translation-critic, and if the translator finds the translation unsatisfactory, then he decides to retranslate the text avoiding the mistakes of the earlier translators.

Intra textual problems, problems within the text, concerned with linguistic and non-linguistic problems. There are two kinds of linguistic problems. They are problems of meaning and problems of style. The problem of meaning involves the problems of suggestive, emotive meanings, and the problems of socio-cultural meanings. The problem of style in translation is a complicated one. It deals with the style of language and the style of the author. The style of language means the peculiar stylistic structure of each language, and the style of the author means the selection of individual from the general stylistic structure of a language. Style, in the context of translation, can be defined as a structure of phonology, morphology and syntax of Source language (SL), which is contrastive to those of Target Language
Stylistic problems in translation occur mainly because of the difference in the stylistic structure of source and target languages. It means that stylistic problems in translation should be studied with the help of contrastive stylistic analysis of source and target language. For Nida, the stylistic problems of translation are concerned with four factors, phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactical. Non-linguistic problems of translation involve the tone and technique. It is very difficult job for translator to capture the tone of the original text. For example, for a translator proverbs, idiomatic expressions and figures of speech rendering is very difficult because these are repositories of the cumulative inherited wisdom of the speech community, they cannot be translated easily. The most frequent difficulties are of a semantic and cultural nature. A translator has to face many problems and challenges while rendering Hindi, Marathi or any Indian language text into English. Translation is beset with not only linguistic problems but also cultural ones. Translation involves two different languages and two different cultures, so it is translation of language as well as of culture. The cultural problems are difficult to handle. The Hindi expressions like nach na jene aangan tedha, kis khet ki muli hai, Sau Sunarki ki ek lohar ki, sone pe suhaga, Bandar kya jene adarak ka swad etc. Its literal translation would only produce ridiculous results. In Marathi, culture expression ‘dohale lagne’ cannot be translated in English as it is not in English culture. Besides, the words like dharma and karma which is not so easy for the translator to translate with exact equivalent words in English. They can be understood by the Indians only. It is because all the words mean different meaning in different context. For example, dharma in ordinary discourse is used in the sense of ‘duty’. But this duty is different from person to person, according to his profession and context to context and place to place. The same word in spiritual field gives a different meaning with reference to soul. There are different kinds of dharma like individual dharma, human dharma, atma dharma, prana dharma and so on and so forth. The word karma means action or work. But the Indian shades of meaning of these words cannot be understood so easily by the readers of English language. According to the Indian cultural shades of meanings, karma does not mean just the physical activity but also the mental activity like thinking. In Indian culture, the mental activity of thinking is given as much and equal importance as the physical activity. So, if these words are translated in a casual way, they lead to misunderstanding of the text. Means, translator faces a serious problem in finding equivalents for Marathi and Hindi or English words, idioms and expression which cannot be translated easily in target language.
Translation is a challenging activity. Translations are different according to the need, and according to the target reader which the translator has in mind. For example, translations may be intended to be used for learning a language and cultivating literary appreciation in the target language. This demands extensive notes not only in lexical, semantic, and syntactic items but also in expressive literally devices. If the translator does not know for certain the perspective use of his work, he would not be able to give what the reader may deem essential. Pedagogic translations ought to be different from translations for the general reader.

If we are concerned with literary translation, it should be our aim to take the beauty and significance of the source text into the target text. One of the main challenges in translating one text into another is its cultural linguistic layering. How can one transfer one linguistic code into another? Can the dynamics present in the original text be carried into another? As the idea of a translation, by and large, is to present the original work to a reader from another language known to him, it is obvious that every item of beauty in the text of the original language is to be incorporated in the target language. These questions bring us to the question of fidelity to, or betrayal of, the original? In fact, fidelity can be obtained when some affinity of historical situations, underlines the translator’s ability to confront the theme which his author confronted and wrote, as if for the first time. A great deal depends on what the translator regards as the main strand of the original, and what he is willing to modify or abandon.

However, what may be problems and challenges before the translator, translation has a second place after creation in society. When we observe all the above problems faced by a translator, his effort is more than the creator’s. It is because the creator, when gets mood, creates easily, whereas the translator has to get mood as well as industrious nature to give keen attention to minute and negligible things of the original text. So, a translator has to be understood with a right perspective. Translator must undergo permanent training like all ‘professionals’. His productive capacity should not always be measured in terms of pages, words or hours done, but rather taking into account the quality of the finished work. In order to solve translation problems, human translator must use of his or her cleverness, creativity, curiosity, intuition and reflection etc.
2.2.8 Why Translation?

Translation is a global literary phenomenon. As the world is changing with highest speed, the transmission of knowledge also speeded up. Knowledge is being shared all over the world and translation is the vehicle of the process. Translation has become a universal force with an aim to bring out a complete interaction between languages of various ethnic families of global level. Translation is used as a transferring agent to seek national integration. It brings different kinds of people of different societies, religions and languages nearer. It played a crucial role in developing literature. No poem, drama, novel, short story or essay would ever be read, without translation, in countries whose language is different from authors. Translation became inspiration for many writers to think differently, and to present new perspectives. It is knowledge promoting power. It gives light to ignorance, voice to silence in its evolutionary move. Translation tries to generate ideas and alternatives which may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others. Literary work is like a mirror which reflects the cultural, political, religious and social background of a society and only literary work can provide a wide scope of information. Therefore, translation should be done as it helps to understand new ideas and culture of others. In spite of the facts about translation, it is necessary to accept that translation is the creation of different territory, new awareness, wider readership, creation of appreciation and creating accessibility.

2.2.9 Check Your Progress:

1. Tagore made use of transcreation when he translated -------- into English.
2. Free translation involves the --------.
3. Raja Lear is an example of -------- translation.
4. Cicero and Horace are ------ translators.
5. The Romantics viewed translation in terms of--------.
6. -------- have been regarded as the first theorists.
7. A text rendered into other language is called ------.
2.2.10 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. Geetanjali
2. liberty of translator
3. interlingual
4. Roman
5. imagination
6. Cicero and Horace
7. Target Text.

2.2.11 Exercises:

(A) Answer the following questions in 250 words.

1. What is meant by translation? What are the types of translation?
2. Write a detailed note on the translation and its meaning.
3. What are the qualities of a translator?
4. Write a note on a historical perspective of translation.
5. What are the problems and challenges before translation and a translator?

2.2.12 References for Further Reading


(Part-I)

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3.9 Further Readings

3.0 Objectives:

After reading this unit you will be able to:

• Know about Anita Desai, her life and works and the influences that shaped her career as a novelist.

• Know the plot of the novel.

• Explain important thematic issues in the novel critically.

• Learn about the Use of Symbolism and Imagery in the novel.

• Have an overview of both the cultural and religious codes of our land.

• Know that the meaning of God and the purpose of life rest ultimately in the mission of universal love.
3.1 Introduction:

In this unit initially the life and works of Anita Desai, and the influences that shaped her literary career are discussed. The plot of the novel Journey to Ithaca is discussed in the earlier part of the unit. Then the thematic concerns of the novel are briefly attempted. Further, the use of symbols and imagery convey us the vision of life of Anita Desai. In Journey to Ithaca, Anita Desai, a philosophically inclined novelist, attempts to explore the meaning and nature of reality and also of illusion as two contrasted worlds of ideas and beliefs. Through the spiritual journey of Matteo and Laila (the Mother) a whole range of the philosophy and thought of the East is subtly explored as a way of life, as a breath of existence. In the novel Matteo and Laila are presented as intellectual pilgrims in the quest for reality, the quest for truth, the search for the eternal verities implicit in India’s great spiritual heritage. They, thus, dramatically and symbolically re-enact the spiritual adventures of the ancients in their quests for truth.

3.2 Anita Desai: Life, Works and Influences:

Anita Desai was born on June 24, 1937 in India to a German mother and an Indian father. She grew up during World War II and could see the anxiety her German mother was experiencing about the situation and her family in Germany. After the war her mother never returned to Germany, nor she had any desire to return. Anita herself did not visit until she was an adult. She has taught at Mt. Holyoke and Smiths College. Presently, she is a member of the Advisory Board for English in New Delhi. She is married and has four children, including Kiran Desai. M. K.Naik says “Anita Desai, youngest of the major Indian women novelists, is more interested in the interior landscape of the mind than in political and social realities”. Her Journey to Ithaca is the best example of it.

Anita Desai’s chief concern is the individual’s quest for meaning and value, freedom and truth that provide spiritual nourishment to the estranged self in a seemingly chaotic and meaningless world. Desai adds a new dimension to the genre of Indian fiction in English by probing the unquestionable existentialist concerns of her protagonists. Hence A. K. Bachchan says, “Anita Desai occupies a distinct and distinctive place in the realm of contemporary Indian English fiction”. She tries to focus on the predicament of women in the society. Each novel of her is a search of the self for a heightened female awareness. The major themes in Cry, the Peacock
(1980) are marital disharmony, loss of identity, escapism and a sense of the meaninglessness of life. It was what Anita Desai had attempted in her novels as she once said “Writing is to me the process of discovering the truth – the truth that is, nine-tenth of the iceberg that lies submerged beneath the one-tenth visible portion we call Reality. Writing is my way of plunging to the depths and exploring this underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things”.

Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971) depicts the love-hate relationship of the expatriates with England. It also depicts circular journey of a soul searching for a perfect life. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Desai explores the turbulent emotional world of the neurotic protagonist, Maya. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), Anita Desai presents an intense identity crisis of the central character Sita, a sensitive woman in her early forties. Her next novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) is exclusively devoted to the study of old age and the trauma that accompanies physical disorders and sickness. *Clear Light of Day* (1980) breaks new ground in the sense that it dwells on an existentialist theme of time in relation to eternity. In *Village By the Sea* (1983) Desai captures the existential predicament of the ruralities undergoing the pangs of a society in transition, through the life of a young village boy, Hari. In *In Custody* (1984) Desai’s concentration is on the internal consciousness of the individual. The novel depicts a world beyond the individual. This novel has a male protagonist who comes from a lower middle-class family and who seeks to reach out into a wider world in the hope of self-fulfillment. Her *Voices in the City* was published in 1985. *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (1988) belongs to the genre of the novel of the ‘absurd’. Baumgartner is a wandering Jew in quest of roots. The novel focuses on the absurdity of his existence both in Germany and India. Desai’s *Journey to Ithaca* (1996) is a compassionate portrait of people struggling to find a spiritual home. Anita Desai’s latest novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) makes a return to her earlier subject ‘the family’. Apart from these novels Anita Desai has written a collection of short stories: *Games at Twilight* (1978).

“Anita Desai is undoubtedly one of the most powerful Indian novelists in English” says Pathak. The exploration of human psyche, the problem of human relationships, the protagonists quest for identity, the racial problems, the question of feminism are her main concerns as evident in all her novels from *Cry, the Peacock* to *Fasting, Feasting*.
3.3 Plot Construction of *Journey to Ithaca*:

*Journey to Ithaca* is a saga of multiple journeys undertaken by three different characters, at different planes of existence. Anita Desai transports us from India to Italy, Egypt and America accompanying three foreigners – Matteo, Sophie and the Mother. While the journey of Matteo and the Mother culminates in India that of Sophie commences from India. Desai has interlinked each of these journeys to the other.

The movements of the major characters in the novel indicate significant interactions between the East and the West. The East is represented by India and the West is represented by U.S.A., Italy and Egypt and France.

Now let us see the elements of the plot:

Matteo, born in a luxuriant European family, grows up with his parents in Italy. Right from his childhood he is a peculiar child for he defies the decency and decorum of his home. Reticent and withdrawn, he finds his house with its velvet hangings and tapestries suffocating. His entire present at home and school seems to be made up of silence. At school he remains incommunicative and incompatible. He refuses to eat meat, gravy and pastries. It makes his mother to take him away from the school and engage an English tutor. Matteo’s introduction to Hermann Hesse’s books by his private tutor transforms him completely. It instills in him a desire for the mystical East. The dismissal of Fabian as tutor further alienates him from his family and he starts running, escaping from the family. After his marriage with Sophie, a journalist, Matteo undertakes the great journey to the East with Sophie. In Matteo’s pocket was the copy of Hesse’s *The Journey to the East*.

The newly married couple from Italy moves towards India “as did so many of their generation in Europe” (31). At Bombay from hotel Monaco begins their designed journey. Matteo makes his journey “to find India, to understand India, and the mystery that is at the heart of India” (57), and also in search of a Sage, a guide who will probably reveal him the mystery. In his pursuit of a 'guru', Matteo encounters many fake sages like – a babaji sitting in the lotus posture, on the water, a woman who wore a string of wooden beads and lectured to a reverential crowd, a meditating yogi completely nonchalant of prowling tigers, a woman meditating day and night in a cave sitting amid snakes and scorpions to rouse her psychic powers. In his pursuit, Matteo gives up wearing Western dress and wears wide pyjamas and a
cotton vest. He joins a group on a pilgrimage to a shrine outside the city. They could not find any sign of transcendental power during the trip. Sophie finds foolishness in all this and asks if he needs her and he promises to take her to Goa after the rains are over. At Goa Sophie joins the drug tribe on the beach. She prefers the comfort of ignorance and she starts enjoying the smoke of marijuana and the drinks. But, this life, too, upsets her dreadfully. At Goa Matteo is on his search for Truth. He feels that if he could not have a vision of spiritual truth then he could not continue to live. He wanders away to be alone and to be further away from everyone. From Goa Matteo, along with Sophie, starts another journey to another ashram in Bihar in search of a Guru.

The ashram at Bihar resembles nothing but a dungeon. There Matteo is asked to go to the guru with an offering. At ashram he takes a class in Sanskrit with a Swami. There Sophie finds that the Swamis discriminate between castes and religions. They believe that Sophie’s touch can spoil the purity of water. Matteo and Sophie face religious pretence and fake face of truth in such ashrams. Meanwhile Sophie discovers her pregnancy and faces enormous hostility, overhearing women disciples condemning her sexuality. Her pregnancy reflects also on guru’s liking Matteo, as he is pushed down from a respectable place he had created for himself in the ashram. Further, he is horrified with some revelations. Thus, they encounter the fake mask of the truth, and decide to quit the place.

Then, they proceed to an ashram in the hill run by a woman addressed as the Mother. The families were allowed to stay there. Sophie becomes violently ill on the long journey across the country from Bihar to the north and is taken to the hospital. She pleads Matteo again and again to send her home. Leaving her in the hospital in doctor’s care, Matteo reaches an ashram in the foothills of the Himalayas, run by the Mother. The Mother has an overwhelming influence on Matteo because she follows no religion in particular but only preaches love. Now he learns that the mystery he has long been searching for is neither in bookish knowledge nor even blind faith, but is essentially ‘an experience of bliss’. Matteo finds solace to his deeply disturbed soul in the Mother. Sophie, unwillingly submitting to her husband’s whims, follows Matteo to the ashram for fulfilling his dream of spiritual quest. At the ashram, Matteo is deeply immersed in his role first as the letter writer for the Mother, then as washer man in the kitchen sink, and finally in charge of the new publication unit set by Mother for the printing and publishing Master Prem-
Krishnaji’s messages. In the ashram Sophie is left to amuse herself and her uneasiness grows and she decides to break the spell of the Mother.

Sophie considers the Mother only a woman and regards her “a monster spider that had spun this web to catch these silly flies” (127). It makes her enquire all about the past of the Mother and ultimately Sophie gathers information that the Mother was a Muslian, an Egyptian and was a dancer. Meanwhile the distance between Matteo and Sophie widens and she becomes rebellious against Matteo and leaves him and returns back to Italy with her children. Strangely enough, out of the ashram she feels alienated her from the mundane world outside. She finds herself misfit with the so-called normal people whom she had longed for. The thought of Matteo living in the ashram in India torments her, and so when a telegram comes to her informing that Matteo has been taken to the hospital, she at once returns to India by leaving the two children with Matteo’s parents. Though physically away, her mind had been with Matteo all the time during her stay at Italy.

After some time Sophie decides to destroy Matteo’s spiritual obsession by exploring the Mother’s past. In order to get the full and realistic information about the Mother she undertakes the journey from India to New York and again returns back to India. She journeys through Mediterranean, Alexandria, Cairo, Paris, Venice and New York to India. Her search reveals another peculiar journey of a young and determined girl Laila, the daughter of Hamid and Alma. Like Matteo, Laila is a misfit, odd, headstrong, independent child – causing headache to her parents and teachers. She, too, considers home an inadequate shelter; it is like a prison trapping her freedom. Longing for something different she cannot conform to the conventions of her society. So she is sent to Paris to her French aunt, Francoise. At Paris, from college she does not return home but roams around the city. Her desire for some sublime experience leads her astray, even to a revolutionary camp. She refuses to go to church. She joins the oriental dance troupe for spiritual enlightenment. She joins a dance troupe, because for Laila dance is a divine experience. Her encounter with the hadgah propells her disturbed soul to a new direction. Later, it is a poster announcing “Krishna Lila” transfigures her life. It is significant to note that the characters of Matteo and Laila are strikingly identical in many respects. Both are restless at home in Italy and in Egypt respectively. Both have a strong desire to go to the East i.e. to India.
The dance troupe moves from place to place particularly for money. She finds that this dance troupe has nothing to do with religious belief or spiritual exercise. She leaves the dance troupe at New York and travels far into the East. For Laila, the truth lies in India, and it is in India, through the means of dance, would she arrive at her enlightenment. On her journey to the Himalayas, with a desire to free of this world, to escape into a better and brighter one, she happens to see a holy man, although, no different from a beggar in appearance: “It was clear he saw neither the station, nor the train nor the passengers; he cared not for the commerce and the hubbub of the world, he dwelt in another realm” (296). She stands gazing at the holy man’s serene visage. She narrates that experience in the following way:

I believed I cried out to him, in appeal for his help, and before my eyes the great banyan tree burst into light, and I saw light traveling, pouring through the veins in its leaves, its twigs and branches and the very trunk itself so that it was transformed into an earthly sun and fire revolved through it as blood revolved – once more! – through my body. I was on fire, the tree was on fire light blazed and the whole sky was illuminated (296).

Thus, for the first time in her life Laila experiences a scene, a vision that brings out a significant transformation in her outlook. It is this kind of experience for which she has been craving since her childhood. At this juncture she has been travelling by train; she goes ahead by the train leaving behind the sight of the holy man. After a couple of days or so, she continues her journey to the mountain peak. In her diary she describes her experience at the mountain peak in the following way:

“I had reached the mountain peak at that magic hour between day and night [ - - - ] and I asked myself: What will I meet here? Will Day come to meet my Night? [ - - - ] all the while my heart beat so I knew it was the hour of my fate.”

The wind blew about me, and there was music in it as it played upon the harps and lyres of the trees around me. Other than that, there was silence. Out of that silence, a cry, A long, piercing cry that went through my breast like a sword [ - - - ].

At that moment the evening star appeared in the heavens and shone out from the deep blue of infinity. Was that not a promise? An augury? I knew it was, and rising to my feet, I began to dance in ecstacy, the ecstacy of knowing my time had come” (298).
At this crucial time of the most significant experience in her life, she sees the Master appearing before her on the dark hill-top. He says:

“Thou are Shaki, he pronounced,
Supreme Power.
Thou art Durga,
Mother of us all.
Thou are Kali,
The Divine Force,
And Parvati,
Sweet Goddess of the Mountain” (299).

That night she returns back to her crowded room. Next morning she comes back to the temple by the river. She then takes a bath in the river. She describes it in the following ways:

“I too bathe today in he waters of divine love! The river flows and carries my past away and leaves me pure and joyous as the new-born; fit to meet with the divine” (300).

Then she continues on her way and sees the Great Sage seated upon a carpet. “He was speaking [- - -] and his voice was sweeter than the ringing of balls, sweeter than the song of birds; it had the power and the force of the river itself. He spoke of Divine Love and love filled my every limb with its nectar and I was Radha who beheld, at last, the true Krishna” (300).

The mountain peak continues to beacon her and she increasingly longs to go to that mountain peak which she thinks a true home for her. At the mountain peak her Master appears before her in the form of the holy Sage having a lantern in his hand in the darkness of the night. Seeing Him, she cries: “O, you have come to save me!” (302). She further narrates the culmination of her spiritual experience:

He said no word but placed his arm about my shoulders and, drawing me to him, led me out. The lantern waved in the storm, the waters rose to engulf us, but as we stepped into the deluge the rains ceased, the clouds parted, the moon appeared and the storm was stilled. Peace reigned, complete and utter peace. He spoke “you will
come and live with me within my ashram”, and by the light of the washed and silver moon, we crossed the courtyard and entered his Abode.

Here I dwell now where I was always meant to dwell and where I resolve to live, never leaving His Side, His true Devotee and Lover (302).

This is a crucial point of the plot of the novel. It demonstrates how her spiritual quest is fulfilled.

The last part of the novel is called ‘epilogue’. Sophie finally comes back from her journey to the Mother’s ashram to see Matteo, to tell and reveal him the Mother’s past. At the ashram she learns about the Mother’s death and also that Matteo has left in search of peace to the mountain where the Mother ‘received enlightenment’. Now Sophie also realizes the meaning of pilgrimage and she, too, decides to go on the same pilgrimage – to the mountain hill.

At the end of the novel, Giacomo (The son of Matteo and Sophie) comes home (in Italy) quite frightened and tells his grandfather “I saw my father, [- - -] he was wearing just a white cloth [- - -]. He smiled at me. He said Giacomo, Giacomo [- - -]. Then he said – but I don’t know what he said [- - -]. He talks – like a foreigner. [- - -]. He looked like the painting of Jesus in church” (P.P. 306-307, 309). Everybody disagrees and the child is made quite.

3.4 Thematic analysis of Journey to Ithaca

_Journey to Ithaca_ deals with the theme of spiritual quest. In the novel Desai evokes spiritual India in all its endless complexity, and examines the nature of pilgrimage to India through the journeys of three foreigners. Several of Desai’s novels explore tensions between family members and the alienation of middle-class women; however, _Journey to Ithaca_ dramatizes the dilemma of the characters who strive to find a higher meaning in a strange world. Desai has depicted in the novel the duality of spirit and nature and the individual’s spiritual search that transcends the restrictions of the society.

The inclusion of C.P. Cavafy’s _Ithaca_ and a line from _Immortality_ by Milan Kundera indicate the novels thematic thrust, while the title _Journey to Ithaca_ encapsulates the gist of the novel. These things determine the spiritual character of the novel. In the novel Desai is obsessively occupied with the three character’s spiritual quest. In this sense Swain opines, “Desai’s _Journey to Ithaca_ is a
compassionate portrait of people struggling to find a spiritual home. It delineates Matteo’s alienation and the concomitant quest for spirituality”.

A comprehensive study of the novel brings forth two themes – the theme of journey and the theme of spiritual quest. However, the theme of journey is complementary to the theme of spiritual quest as “Journey has been used right from the days of Homer to symbolize man’s spiritual quest”. Obviously enough, the theme of the spiritual quest is always superior to and more significant than the theme of journey. It is the theme of spiritual quest that provides the novel its essential significance and the spiritual height.

The indication of the spiritual quest is inherent in the term ‘Ithaca’. Thus, the title of the novel *Journey to Ithaca* reveals the relationship between the two themes – the theme of journey and the theme of spiritual quest.

The journey undertaken by all the three major characters in the novel ultimately aims at the spiritual enlightenment. The Mother achieves it (302), Matteo imitates it (304) and Sophie follows it (305). At the end of their lives all the three major characters in the novel travel the path from the ashram to the mountain peak of Himalaya. Their journey to India has meaning only in the context of spiritual quest.

According to the chronology of the events in the novel and according to the seniority of the characters also it is Laila (i.e. Mother) who undertakes the first journey with the spirit of the spiritual quest right from the beginning till she achieves “the enlightenment” (304). It is significant to note that Laila is interested in dancing that is combined with music. Anita Desai being an Indian knows the significance of dance and music as the medium through which one can achieve the enlightenment – which according to ancient Indian Philosophy is called *Nadbrahma*. Dancing and music create a rhythm that is used to establish communion with the sound of the universal spirit. It is represented by *Omkar*. Laila has a strong faith and belief in the spiritual journey she undertakes right from the beginning to the end of the novel. She never budges. She starts her journey from Italy to France and after joining the dancing group she travels from France to America and from America to Bombay. During this journey, Laila realizes the commercial motives of Master Krishna, the dance master. As she is not interested in such mundane things, she undertakes another significant journey from Bombay to the ashram and the spiritual significance of this journey is clearly revealed by the two names – Master Krishna (dance master)
and Prem Krishna. The difference between the two Krishna’s is the difference between the mundane world and the spiritual world. The last journey undertaken by the Mother is completely full of spiritual elements. Her experiences in the journey are essentially elemental – storm, rain, lightening, river and the mountain peak. The culmination of her spiritual journey takes place when she becomes one with the elemental forces i.e. Prem Krishna. Significantly enough, the Prem Krishna who was formerly in the ashram has traveled the same path earlier and has become one with the universal spirit. A special attention should be paid to the description of her experience on the mountain peak. Here Anita Desai writes: “I had reached the mountain peak at that magic hour between day and night [- - -] and I asked myself: What will I meet here? Will Day come to meet my Night? [- - -]. At that moment the evening star appeared in the heavens and shone out from the deep blue of infinity” (298). The typical moment described here is the moment between ‘Day’ and ‘Night’ – life and death. At this typical and significant moment the wind blows about her and there is music in the wind as it plays upon the harps and lyres of the trees around her. It is this elemental music that is the real ‘Ithaca’ for the Mother. Again it is significant to note that the Mother is basically a dancer and the present moment of culmination of her spiritual experience is also full of elemental music. The blowing of the wind, the dancing of the wind, the dancing of the trees and the elemental music constitutes the oriental concept (ancient Indian) of Nadbrahma. The last part of the description is also very significant. The phrases ‘deep blew infinity’ and the ‘evening star’ have been the objects of Mother’s spiritual journey. The fulfillment of these objects is expressed by Anita Desai in the following way:

   By the light of the evening star,
   At the sight of the rising moon,
   My Master appeared,
   On the dark hilltop
   [- - -]
   And when my dance was done
   [- - -]
   My Master’s voice rang out:
   [- - -]
Thou art Shakti, he pronounced,
Supreme Power
Thou art Durga,
Mother of us all.
Thou art Kali.
The Divine Force,
And Parvati,
Sweet Goddess of the Mountain.
And all at once
The Heavens burst into light and music of joyous celebration
The master stepped forth and
[- - -] said He,
Come follow me,
And henceforth my home
Thy Haven shall be (299).

Thus the spiritual significance of the title of the novel is fully realized in the
description of Mother’s spiritual experience at the peak of the mountain. That is the
place where she “always meant to dwell” (302).

It would not be out of place to raise a question about the remaining part of the
plot. Prem Krishna calls her ‘Shakti, Durga, Goddess of mountain”. That is the real
culmination of Laila’s (Mother’s) spiritual experience. One may feel that the novel
should end here. However, it does not. Again the Mother comes back to her room,
and then goes to the temple, at the bank of the river. From the temple she again
climbs the hill and comes to the mountain peak and meets Prem Krishna at the
second time. This additional part from her coming down from the mountain peak to
the river and temple, after having the complete union with the elements and again
going back to the mountain peak, baffles the readers. This additional exercise, it
seems, of coming down to the river and going back to the mountain peak does not
add anything significant either to the plot or to the thematic significance of the novel. Perhaps this might be another area of inquiry for the critics and scholars to pursue.

The plot demands some significant treatment to the characters of Matteo and Sophie and this demand is essentially in the light of spiritual quest. In order to fulfill it, Matteo also undertakes the same journey from the ashram to the mountain peak. Matteo’s spiritual enlightenment is explained in the epilogue. His son Giacomo in Italy sees Matteo in the garden of his house in the form of Christ. Thus, the fulfillment of Matteo’s spiritual quest is achieved by the novelist with the help of epilogue. Thus, the short epilogue essentially becomes an integral part of the theme of the spiritual quest of the novel.

The third significant character in the novel, Sophie, has acquired a lot of experience of human life including her stay at Goa, when she returns to the ashram with the details of the life accounts of the Mother, when she finds that Matteo has also gone by the same way followed by the Mother. She experiences a crucial moment in her life. Now there are only two alternatives before her – one, to go back to her motherland Italy and to lead the same common life in which she has lost her interest, and second, to follow the path of the Mother and of Matteo. She chooses the second. This is the indication that all her experience of life has made her ‘disinterested’ in the mundane life and this has made her qualified to have the transcendental experience of spiritual enlightenment. Thus thematically her choice of following the path of the Mother and Matteo strengthens the theme of the spiritual quest.

The theme of spiritual quest has thus, dominated the lives of the four major characters of the novel – Prem Krishna, the Mother, Matteo and Sophie. All other things in the novel fulfill the necessary subordinate roles in order to fulfill the theme of the spiritual quest through the four major characters of the novel.

Human life is always compared to a journey and to a ‘Day’. Allegorically, the morning represents the birth and the darkness of the night represents the death. Human beings travel in between. The journey of the Mother, Matteo and Sophie constitutes their lives, but at the end the Mother’s life ends with the elemental music and she becomes one with the evening star of the “deep blew infinity”. As in human life the journey of the ‘Day’ is full of difficulties, hardships and sufferings, all the
characters experience the inherent suffering in their life. However, ultimately they come to their ‘Ithaca’.

Thus, the theme of journey ultimately dissolves itself in the theme of spiritual quest.

3.5 Use of Symbolism and Imagery in Journey to Ithaca:

In Journey to Ithaca Anita Desai, a philosophically inclined novelist, attempts to explore the meaning and nature of reality and also of illusion as two contrasted worlds of ideas and beliefs. Through the spiritual journey of Matteo and Laila (the Mother) a whole range of the philosophy and thought of the East is subtly explored as a way of life, as a breath of existence. In the novel, Matteo and Laila are presented as intellectual pilgrims in the quest for reality, the quest for truth, the search for the eternal verities implicit in India’s great spiritual heritage. They, thus, dramatically and symbolically re-enact the spiritual adventures of the ancients in their quests for truth.

The symbolic title suggests this search for the fundamental truth of life, the Reality embedded in the complex fabric of existence. In the context of ‘Journey’ Gangeshwar Rai’s observation is significant. He observes, “Journey has been used right from the days of Homer to symbolize man’s spiritual quest”. The major characters in the novel try to seek something, and therefore they are in search of the spirit. It is their quest that matters much. The title of the novel itself is indicative of this quest. Further, ‘Ithaca’, too, is defined in the same sense. Rai defines ‘Ithaca’ as “Ithaca is back home or the celestial city”. The present welfare system cannot give spiritual peace to man, so Anita Desai, like Greene and Conrad pleads for a return to the bareness simplicity (back home/Ithaca), instinctive friendliness, feeling rather than thought and start again. In this context A.K. Bachchan observes, “Journey to Ithaca is a journey where Ithaca ceases to be a specific place. Ithaca is the symbol of that unfailing beacon which eternally calls man to wander to be in quest of spiritual truth, heart’s truth, a quest for reaching one’s home land, his inner self”.

Thus, the major characters in the novel – Matteo, Laila and Sophie – are on pilgrimage to Ithaca i.e. to the celestial city, to the lighthouse, to a beacon, which eternally calls man to wander to be in quest of spiritual truth. In the novel, India emerges to be ‘Ithaca’ or a religious ‘space’, capable of offering some positive messages in spite of all its ambiguities. It has been an old tradition in Europe to
regard India as a trope around which the motif of journey comes to operate. The present novel is the best example of this belief.

Desai has used the image of journey to present the higher vision of human life. Ithaca has emerged through time as an archetypal image of homecoming, and has been widely used (from Tennyson’s *Ulysses*) by European writers as such. In the present novel, too, Ithaca emerges as a image of homecoming as the journey undertaken by the Mother and Matteo culminates in their returning to the spiritual home, that is their spiritual fulfillment.

The journey undertaken by three different characters at different planes of existence with an intention in search of the root of spirituality is highly symbolic. It is symbolic because while depicting the conflict-ridden existence of these characters, Anita Desai is dealing with the predicament of the modern man caught in the contrived dialectical opposition between ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’. The disintegrated and fragmented beings, Matteo as well as Laila’s endeavour all through has been to attain integration of being and wholeness of personality. Thus, in the novel Desai symbolically occupies with the individual’s pursuit for freedom and Truth that provide spiritual sustenance to the split self.

After *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (1988) Desai offers *Journey to Ithaca* as another intriguing novel of India in all its endless complexity, and examines the nature of pilgrimage to India, where she symbolically and brilliantly evokes spiritual India in all its endless complexity, and examines the nature of pilgrimage to India through the adventures of three characters – Matteo and Sophie, young Europeans, and the Mother, a charismatic and mysterious woman. The novel synthesizes Eastern and Western spiritual traditions.

The seeds for ‘higher values of life’ had already been sown by Desai in her *Baumgartner’s Bombay*, but they sprout to full swing in *Journey to Ithaca*. The incomplete journey of Hugo (in *Baumgartner’s Bombay*) for his spiritual enlightenment comes to its completion in *Journey to Ithaca* transforming the novel symbolically into a meaningful ‘Journey to the East’ once again.

*Journey to Ithaca* begins with two quotations – a poem *Ithaca* by C.P. Cavafy and a line by Milan Kundera – both of which are indicative of its thematic trust, while the title encapsulates the gist of the novel. These two quotations determine the character of the novel. Let us begin with Milan Kundera’s line “- - - things exist in
their essence even before they are materially realized and named” (Desai, 1995: IX). This is true with Matteo and the Mother, as the novel dramatizes the dilemma of these two characters who strive to find a higher meaning in a strange world.

What Milan Kundera says is absolutely true with Matteo, for Matteo, the only child of well – to – do Italian parents, exhibits signs of worldly failure from the beginning. Even as a boy he fails to conform to the domestic or social norms of the world around. The life at the school baffles him like, the geometry and algebra. He refuses to eat meat, gravy and pastries, his mother try to force on him. After reading Hermann Hesse’s *Journey to the East* and *Siddhartha*, all Matteo wants is to place a distance between his parents and himself. Further, he no longer sleeps in his bed but stretches himself on a worn rug on the floor, “Just like a tomcat who wants to escape from the house and go on the tiles” (28). His behaviour at school and home symbolically exhibits that the seeds for higher values of life had already been there in their essence “even before they were materially realized and named.”

Like Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha* (1922), in *Journey to Ithaca* Desai gives poetic expression to Indian philosophy and therein lies the symbolic significance of the novel.

Matteo’s fateful encounter with his tutor, Fabian, and his reading of Hesse instills in him a curiosity towards the Enlightenment of the East and towards the philosophy of Vedanta and he leaves his Italian home in search of spiritual enlightenment and ultimate truth in the ashrams of India. Here, the role of Fabian is highly symbolic for Fabian pushes Matteo towards the “things” which had already been there “in their essence” in Matteo’s mind.

Matteo, a spiritual pilgrim, passes through many temptations and trials on his way for the attainment of enlightenment. In India, he encounters many ‘fake sages’ in his pursuit of ultimate truth. Obsessed with Truth and spiritual quest, Matteo passes through a series of failures. He pursues his goal single-mindedly, facing trials and tribulations, hardships of an extreme kind, until he reaches it surely. The series of failures, trials and tribulations and hardships of an extreme kind suggest the spiritual state of the pain and agony through which the soul must pass for its purification before it attains illumination, which is followed by a spiritual bliss. Matteo passes through the pain and agony and at last the illuminated Matteo realizes that the ‘mystery’ he has long been searching for is neither in bookish knowledge nor
even in blind faith, but it is essentially “an experience of bliss” (105). Truth comes to him in the form of an experience of bliss. Matteo finds in the Mother his ‘Guru’ who shows him “the way into His Divine Presence” (105). Matteo, who had once read in the *Katha Upanishad* about ‘the path of joy and the path of pleasure’, now determines to follow the path of joy as against the path of pleasure. All this symbolically reflects his quest for spirituality.

Matteo first works as a letter-writer for the Mother then as a washer-man at sink and lastly as an in-charge of a new publication unit at the Mother’s ‘Abode of bliss’. Even he is asked to fetch a tumbler of warm milk from the kitchen for the Mother before she retires. All this is highly symbolic from the spiritual point of view. What Anita Desai suggests is that every step on the spiritual path has to be taken with utmost care and concentration and for that the soul has to cultivate a state of self-surrender and then only it can seek a highest joy or *Parmandanda*. His work for the Mother is nothing but his initiation into spiritual world. The spiritually transformed Matteo now rejects the Westernized view of his wife. For Sophie, “Work is work and should bear fruit” (125), but Matteo believes in, “a higher way of life [---] work without desiring the fruit from that work” (125). It is a spiritual gospel of *Gita*. Thus, it is the fateful encounter with the Mother that brings Matteo at last to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment.

In the novel, the Mother symbolically emerges as an image of ‘Guru’, as it is she who brings about Matteo’s redemption. Through the story of the Mother and Matteo’s redemption Desai has just symbolically represented the Oriental philosophy, for the dynamic and inspiring teachings of *Upanishadic Vedanta*, *Bhagvat Gita* and Buddhism are of the view that faith in or surrender to an incarnation or a prophet will bring about one’s redemption.

At the early stage of his life in India, the absence of a proper ‘Guru’ leads Matteo astray. After running from one ashram to another in search of a ‘Guru’, Matteo reaches an ashram on the mountain in the North and at last experiences *Paramananda* (bliss) at the feet of the Mother, the head of the ashram. Thus, his journey ends in total surrender to the Mother with the conviction that she is the “one who can reveal the unknown” (141) to him. Matteo is so obsessed with his pursuit that he simply does not care for or even remember his responsibility towards wife or children. This a very common attitude found among many Indian monks. In his pursuit of *jnana* (enlightenment), Matteo works for the Mother without desiring the
fruit from that work. Thus, in Matteo one finds the three well-known ways of approach to Reality – *Karma, Bhakti* and *Jnana*. These ways of approach to reality are the essence of the *Gita*, which is characteristically a theistic Hindu scripture.

Thus, Matteo symbolically re-enacts the spiritual adventure of ancients in his quest for truth.

Further, we have the symbol of ‘a lotus’. The symbol of ‘lotus’ is always found in the sacred Hindu, Buddhist and Christian literatures. The symbol of lotus suggests purity and perfection, for though it blooms in the mud, remains perfectly ‘defiled’. Like the ‘lotus’ the spiritually awakened being remains detached with the filthy materialistic world. That’s why the Mother advises Matteo “to be like a lotus flower, which is not wetted by water or stained by mud” (138). Thus, the Mother indicates to Matteo through her spiritual gospel of love, irrespective of any religion, caste and creed, the spiritual experience to which he is subjected.

The belief in the possibility of man’s attainment of ‘highest bliss’ or ‘enlightenment’ through a humble return to nature is very common in Indian literature and Anita Desai, too, believes in this possibility. So she employs the symbol of ‘mountain’ in her novel. The mountain symbolizes moral and spiritual superiority. The Mother attains the absolute peace and the ‘miraculous spiritual power’ at the mountain peak. Like Matteo, it is her strong conviction that there must be a Master somewhere to show her the Eternal Truth.

In this sense Laila, too, symbolically re-enacts the spiritual adventure of ancients in her quest for truth.

In the final pages of the novel, the symbols such as fire, rain, river and mountain are employed by Desai. On her journey to the Himalayas, with the desire to be free of this world, to escape into a better and brighter one, Laila visualizes an ‘Eternal light’ setting her on fire. The ‘fire’ signifies the pain and penance the mortal must undergo to achieve ‘deification’. The symbol of ‘fire’ has a purgative value. The ‘fire’ purges the mind of the aspirant of unwanted emotions that alone makes him or her worthy recipient of the intimations of immortality. At the mountain, the evening star appears in the heavens and shines out from the deep blue of infinity. Seeing it Laila begins to dance in ecstasy and her dance in prayer and joy brings the Master to her pronouncing her “Shakti”, “Durga – Mother of us all”, “The Divine Force”, and “Sweet Goddess of the Mountain” (299).
Laila’s dance becomes a medium to express her joy over perfect communion of soul into the supreme soul. Obviously, her lyrical utterance conveys the state of spiritual ecstasy Laila must have experienced at the glimpse of the eternal. Here, ends the most turbulent phase of her search providing her bliss, wisdom, enlightenment and her great transformation from Laila to the Mother.

Thus, transformed, Laila could see the world itself, including all living and non-living things, radiant with beauty. She realizes the oneness of Man and God, of Mind and Nature. It is this transformation that makes her to smile at every old man, at dogs in the dust, and, “even the crows that morning seemed to sing and scream” (300).

Desai has presented symbolically the physical ailments of Laila and Matteo. Laila and Matteo almost die when they fail seriously ill. Desai seems to suggest that through physical ailment comes liberty from bodily consciousness and confinement. In Bombay at the dance master’s dingy flat, Laila falls terribly ill and is admitted in a hospital for treatment and cure of hepatitis. Matteo too was infected by the same disease. Matteo also becomes the holy man after recovery. It is from the hospital that Laila finds her way to her enlightenment. All this is of course very symbolic.

The image of ‘crow’ is of crucial significance in the novel. It appears for several times in the novel. Sophie finds Hotel Manaco a threatening menace – “all the crows in Bombay seemed to have gathered to huddle [- - -] letting out caws of complaint at the season and their fate” (44). During the monsoon season, the crows maddened her with their cries “giving extra loud caws of indignation and outrage” (45). Earlier, when Laila comes over to India and is trapped in the cage-like flat in Bombay, under the threat of extinction and the spell of the fake Krishna, she too finds the cawing harsh and it maddens her:

“Outside black crows are fighting and screaming. [- - -] They swoop upon it (a bucket of refuse) [- - -] They frighten me so” (285).

The above incident exhibits that the image of crow is used by Desai to indicate the turmoil and restlessness within the minds of Laila and Sophie.

It is interesting to note here that these frightening crows are silenced once their ‘journey’ is complete. Thus, the image of ‘crow’, in the novel, signifies the discordant cawing within man. Once the enlightenment is attained, the crows can be silenced or even they appear ‘radiant with beauty’. The enlightened Laila, at last,
smiles at every old man, at dogs in the dust, and, “even the crows that morning seemed to sing and scream” (300). Thus, the image of crow dominates the pages of *Journey to Ithaca* and contributes to the development of the theme of spiritual quest in the novel.

Thus, the theme of the spiritual quest is depicted in the novel with the symbols of the crow, the peacock, the fake guru’s, the fake Krishna, the disease – hepatitis, the ashrams, the holy sage, journey, the river, temple, the mountain peak, the evening star, the lantern, the storm and rain, engulfing waters, bathing in the river and the dance of ecstasy and lastly the master Krishna.

Further, Desai refers to river and rain as symbols those provide purity to mind. Before entering the ‘Abode of bliss’ i.e. the temple on mountain Laila takes bath in the river and cries out in joy as she feels that she has taken the bathe in the waters of divine love. The river flows and carries her past away and leaves her pure and joyous as the new-born, fit to meet the divine. In such spirits she finds the Master, the incarnation of the God of love and the mountain peak becomes her “true home” (300).

Laila receives her spiritual enlightenment at Prem-Krishna’s (the Master) feet on a night tossed by torrential rains and storms. This is highly symbolic. Unless the storms of life are conquered, sorrows flooded away, and purity gained, the entry into the serene enlightenment cannot occur. Desai significantly suggests this by the use of symbols of ‘storm’ and ‘rain’. Laila enters the ‘Abode’ to become one with Prem-Krishna after conquering the tempests of life and gaining the purity of mind.

In *Journey to Ithaca*, Desai presents a very profound Vedantic philosophy of the unfathomable knowledge of Nature. For her, God is present in every particle of Nature. While the Mother attains her spiritual enlightenment at the mountain, after the Mother’s death, Matteo also selects a departure in the nature (mountain) for the absolute peace and attains identify in illumination and miraculous spiritual power. This is evident in the symbolic meeting between Matteo and his son Giacomo. To Giacomo, his father looks like “the painting of Jesus in Church” (309). This is nothing but Matteo’s salvation here in this world.

Matteo attains this ‘miraculous spiritual power’ after the death of his guru, the Mother. The Mother is but the ‘spiritual leader’ who guides her disciple towards truth and God. This is also symbolic. According to Hinduism, the ‘Guru’ is the one,
who shows the path of liberation (*Moksha*) to the disciple but *Moksha* is to be achieved by oneself by trial and error. Once the ‘Guru’ puts his disciple on the proper path, his work is over. This is what exactly happens in the case of Matteo and the Mother. After the death of the Mother, it is the Nature that provides Matteo the spiritual enlightenment and he attains the *Moksha* here in this world. Thus, as Desai turns to *Vedanta* and *Upanishads Journey to Ithaca* encapsulates the wisdom of Oriental philosophy.

The use of symbols and images in *Journey to Ithaca* is essentially a matter of Desai’s technique. Desai has used certain symbols and images to convey her vision of spirituality. Significantly enough, through the spiritual journey of the three Europeans a whole range of the Philosophy and thought of the East is subtly explored as a way of life, as a breath of existence by Desai. Through these journeys, Desai makes us to have an overview of both the cultural and religious codes of our land.

Anita Desai may be justifiably described as a philosophical novelist deeply involved in the knowledge and wisdom of the East and the West. She is also a novelist of sharp sensitivity and perception of the fundamentals of living, of a philosophical mode and a social and moral order. In *Journey to Ithaca* she is deeply involved in ‘spirituality’ as a way of life, as a recorded world of values.

Desai’s perception of oriental philosophy, her preoccupations with religious India, her perceptions of the gospel of *Gita, Vedanta* and *Upanishads* are presented in *Journey to Ithaca* symbolically. She has followed a definite method and definite discipline by which she has developed her characters in the novel. The development of the characters itself presents her perception of spiritual quest.

*Journey to Ithaca*, in a sense, is a novel of pilgrimage, of people’s quest for some sustained power or peace in nature which stretches back to pre-history. This pilgrimage involves an alienation from mundane society, since the purpose of the journey is to attain a new relationship with nature as the springhead of energy that takes the human being to the realization of spiritual enlightenment. The conscious act of getting cut off from society helps the Mother and Matteo to get related to the cosmic power of nature and get regenerated through it with reinforced life.
Desai seems to convey here that ‘bliss’ can be achieved by those who discard the physical attainments of the world, and enter into the cosmic world of the natural elements.

The novel is an artistic embodiment of the affirmative vision of life. In the novel, she expresses, a positive philosophy of life that guides and controls the thematic and technical aspects. The central philosophy of the novel is an affirmation of transcendental principles like Truth, Beauty and Goodness through a delineation of pursuit and practice of higher values like love, compassion and the concurrent negation of lower material values. Thus, the acceptance of higher values and the concurrent negation or rejection of lower values naturally pave the way for the attainment of the highest ‘joy’ or ‘bliss’.

The Mother experiences a ‘bliss’ when she is reunited with the cosmic elements. In *Journey to Ithaca*, there is an experience of ultimate joy of life (bliss) preached by all the saints; prophets, philosophers and mystics of the world. Here, Desai suggests that the meaning of God and the purpose of life rest ultimately in the mission of universal love.

The spiritually enlightened Laila (the Mother) smiles at every old man, at dogs in the dust, and at even the crows because she realizes that love is the most important thing to have in the world. She realizes the oneness of Man and God, Mind and Nature.

But even here the basic spiritual perception of Desai is the process of loosing the self or ego in order to qualify oneself and then experience the ‘spiritual bliss’ by merging the ego with the spirit. Desai indicates that the blissful spiritual experience is to be acquired by the individual concern with special efforts and for that the individual has to qualify himself or herself for that spiritual fulfillment.

The end of the novel is symbolic in this sense. The child Giacomo has a long way to go for that experience like his father. That is the reason why he does not understand Matteo’s language.

Man cannot reach his “Ithaca” unless his self is ‘awakened’. At the end of the novel Sophie’s ‘inner self’ is awakened and so she follows that path of her husband in search of higher way of life. Sophie sets out to experience the eternal knowledge, truth, beauty, joy and bliss realizing that “life itself is a pilgrimage”.

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In the process of self-discovery, the ‘journey’ is more important than the destination. This is the message of Cavafy’s poem that is quoted at the beginning of the novel. The passage from Rig-Veda of persistent journey, (Therefore wander!) the novel deals with, is the concept of anantayatra. It is indeed an apotheosis of the real oriental vision of life. This is the essence of Indian spirituality that the Mother upholds and Matteo and Sophie realize, and the novel ends with this apotheosis of the Indian vision of life.

Through the novel (Journey to Ithaca) Anita Desai tries to convey the ancient Indian doctrine of surrendering one’s own ego to the elements of nature and becoming one with the cosmic elements i.e. the spirit of the god.

3.6 Check your progress

A. Choose the correct alternative.

1. Sophie was ….. by profession.
   a) journalist   b) a teacher   c) a writer   d) a novelist

2. ….. alienates Matteo from his family
   a) The dismissal of Fabian   c) His father’s scolding
   b) His mother’s death   d) His wife’s divorce

3. The newly married couple moves from …..towards India.
   a) Hotel Monaco   c) Italy
   b) Germany   d) America

4. At Goa Sophie joins …. On the beach.
   a) A guru   c) a group on a pilgrimage
   b) fake sages   d) the drug tribe

5. From Goa Matteo starts anathor journey to ………
   a) Maharashtra   c) Bihar
   b) Karnataka   d) Gujrat

6. ….. was the original name of the Mother
   a) Leela   c) Alma
b) Laila  

d) Lila

7. At the ashram at Bihar Matteo takes a class in ……
   a) yoga  
   c) religious rituals  
   b) Sanskrit  
   d) pooja

8. The Mother was …… by birth.
   a) Indian  
   c) Egyptian  
   b) Italian  
   d) American

9. …… calls the Mother ‘shaki, durga, Goddess of Mountain’.
   a) Matteo  
   c) Prem Krishna  
   b) Sophie  
   d) Laila

10. …….. is the son of Matteo and Sophe.
    a) John  
    c) Prem  
    b) Giacomo  
    d) Krishna

B. Answer the following questions in one word/ phrase/ sentence.

1. What does instill in Matteo a desire for the mystical East?
2. Who introduces Matteo to the books of Hesse?
3. What makes Matteo’s mother take him away from the school?
4. With whom does Matteo undertake journey to the East?
5. What was there in Matteo’s pocket during his journey to the East?
6. Why does Matteo feel influenced by The Mother?
7. Why does Sophie face enormous hostility at Bihar ashram?
8. Why does Laila join a dance troupe?
9. Which ancient Indian doctrine does Desai try to convey through the novel?
10. What does ‘Ithaca’ stand for in the novel?
3.7 Keys to check your progress

A. Choose the correct alternative.

1. a) a journalist
2. a) The dismissal of Fabian
3. c) Italy
4. d) the drug tribe
5. c) Bihar
6. b) Laila
7. b) Sanskrit
8. c) Egyptian
9. c) Prem Krishna
10. b) Giacomo

B. Answer in one word/ phrase/ sentence:

1. Hermann Hesse’s books
2. Fabian, his private tutor
3. His refusal to eat meat, gravy and pastries
4. With Sophie, his wife
5. Hesse’s novel The Journey to the East
6. Because she follows no religion in particular but only preaches love.
7. Due to her pregnancy
8. Because for Laila dance is a divine experience
9. Surrendering one’s own ego to the elements of nature and becoming one with the cosmic elements
10. An image of Homecoming
3.8 Exercises

1. Discuss the plot of Journey to Ithaca.
2. Journey to Ithaca is a novel of pilgrimage. Discuss and illustrate.
3. Write a detailed note on the symbolism and imagery employed by Anita Desai in Journey to Ithaca.
5. Attempt an appreciation and critique of Anita Desai’s Journey to Ithaca.

Write short notes on:

1. Theme of the novel, Journey to Ithaca.
2. Symbolism and imagery in Journey to Ithaca.
3. Journey as an archetypal motif in Journey to Ithaca.

3.9 Further reading


(Part-II)

Contents

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4.7 Check your progress
4.8 Keys to check your progress
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4.0 Objectives:

*After reading this unit, you will be able to:*

- know the major characters in the novel.
- know the minor characters in the novel.
- answer the questions asked on the unit.

4.1 Introduction:

In the previous unit, we have discussed the life and works of Anita Desai and the plot of the novel *Journey to Ithaca* along with the thematic concerns of the novel. This unit discusses the major characters such as Matteo, The Mother and Sophie. In
addition to this, the present unit also helps to know about the minor characters in the novel. Both the major and minor characters contribute to the development of the plot of the novel.

4.2 Major Characters:

4.2.1 Matteo:

Matteo is the protagonist of the novel. He is born in a luxuriant European family and grows up with his parents in Italy. In his childhood days, he challenges the decency and decorum of his home. His entire present at home and school seems to be made up of silence. At school he remains incommunicative and incompatible. He refuses to eat meat, and gravy and pastries. It makes his mother to take him away from the school and engage an English tutor. Matteo’s introduction to Hermann Hesse’s books by his private tutor transforms him completely. It instills in him a desire for the mystical East. The dismissal of Fabian as tutor further alienates him from his family and he starts running, escaping from the family. After his marriage with Sophie, a journalist, Matteo undertakes the great journey to the East with Sophie. Matteo carries in his pocket the copy of Hesse’s *The Journey to the East*.

Along with his wife, Matteo moves from Italy towards India. He gets inspired to find and understand the mystery of India. He starts his journey in search of a Sage, a guide who will reveal him the mystery. In his pursuit of ‘a guru’, Matteo encounters many fake sages like – a babaji sitting in the lotus posture, on the water, a woman who wore a string of wooden beads and lectured to a reverential crowd, a meditating yogi completely nonchalant of prowling tigers, a woman meditating day and night in a cave sitting amid snakes and scorpions to rouse her psychic powers. In his pursuit, Matteo gives up wearing Western dress and wears wide pyjamas and a cotton vest. He joins a group on a pilgrimage to a shrine outside the city. At Goa, Matteo is on his search for Truth. He feels that if he could not have a vision of spiritual truth then he could not continue to live. He wanders away to be alone and to be further away from everyone. From Goa Matteo, along with Sophie, starts another journey to another ashram in Bihar in search of a Guru.

In an ashram like a dungeon at Bihar, Matteo is asked to go to the guru with an offering. At ashram he takes a class in Sanskrit with a Swami. Matteo and Sophie face religious pretence and fake face of truth in such ashrams and decide to quit the place.
Then, along with his wife, Matteo proceeds to an ashram in the hill run by a woman addressed as the Mother. In the ashram, he is allowed to stay with his wife. He was very much fascinated by the Mother’s ashram. When Sophie becomes violently ill, leaving his wife in the hospital in doctor’s care, he reaches an ashram in the foothills of the Himalayas, run by the Mother. The Mother has an overwhelming influence on Matteo because she follows no religion in particular but only preaches love. Now he learns that the mystery he has long been searching for is neither in bookish knowledge nor even blind faith, but is essentially ‘an experience of bliss’. Matteo finds solace to his deeply disturbed soul in the Mother. Sophie, unwillingly submitting to her husband’s whims, follows Matteo to the ashram for fulfilling his dream of spiritual quest. At the ashram, Matteo is deeply immersed in his role first as the letter writer for the Mother, then as washer man in the kitchen sink, and finally in charge of the new publication unit set by Mother for the printing and publishing Master Prem-Krishnaji’s messages.

Meanwhile, the distance between Matteo and Sophie widens and she becomes rebellious against Matteo and leaves him and returns back to Italy with her children. The thought of Matteo living in the ashram in India torments her, and so when a telegram comes to her informing that Matteo has been taken to the hospital, she at once returns to India by leaving the two children with Matteo’s parents. In order to get the full and realistic information about the Mother she undertakes the journey from India to New York and again returns back to India. Matteo also undertakes the same journey from the ashram to the mountain peak.

Matteo’s spiritual enlightenment is explained in the epilogue. His son Giacomo in Italy sees Matteo in the garden of his house in the form of Christ. Thus the fulfillment of Matteo’s spiritual quest is achieved by the novelist with the help of epilogue.

4.2.2 Sophie:

Sophie is another significant character of Journey to Ithaca. She is self-reliant, a journalist by profession, frank and believes in logical explanation of things. She is a big, strong woman with square-shouldered having hair cut short. She is Matteo’s wife and mother of Giacomo and Isabel, her son and daughter. After her marriage with Matteo, she provides a companionship to her husband in his great journey to the East. At Bombay from hotel Monaco begins their designed journey. In the pursuit of
‘a guru’, her husband encounters many fake sages like – a babaji, and a woman meditating day and night in a cave to rouse her spiritual powers. Her husband, in his pursuit, gives up wearing Western dress and wears wide pyjamas and a cotton vest. He joins a group on a pilgrimage to a shrine outside the city. They could not find any sign of transcendental power during the trip. Sophie finds foolishness in all this and asks if he needs her and he promises to take her to Goa after the rains are over. At Goa Sophie joins the drug tribe on the beach. She prefers the comfort of ignorance and she starts enjoying the smoke of marijuana and the drinks. But, this life, too, upsets her dreadfully. When her husband remains unsuccessful in his pursuit, they start another journey to another ashram in Bihar in search of a Guru.

In the ashram at Bihar, Sophie finds that the Swamis discriminate between castes and religions. They believe that Sophie’s touch can spoil the purity of water. Both Sophie and Matteo face religious pretence and fake face of truth in such ashrams. Meanwhile Sophie discovers her pregnancy and faces enormous hostility, overhearing women disciples condemning her sexuality. Thus, they encounter the fake mask of the truth, and decide to quit the place. Then, they proceed to an ashram in the hill run by a woman addressed as the Mother. The families were allowed to stay there. Sophie becomes violently ill on the long journey across the country from Bihar to the north and is taken to the hospital. She pleads Matteo again and again to send her home. But her husband keeps her in the hospital in doctor’s care, and moves to an ashram in the foothills of the Himalayas, run by the Mother. Sophie, unwillingly submitting to her husband’s whims, follows Matteo to the ashram for fulfilling his dream of spiritual quest. In the ashram, Sophie is left to amuse herself and her uneasiness grows and she decides to break the spell of the Mother. Sophie considers the Mother only a woman and regards her “a monster spider that had spun this web to catch these silly flies” (127). It makes her enquire all about the past of the Mother and ultimately Sophie gathers information that the Mother was a Muslian, an Egyptian and was a dancer. Meanwhile the distance between Matteo and Sophie widens and she becomes rebellious against Matteo and leaves him and returns back to Italy with her children. The thought of Matteo living in the ashram in India torments her, and so when a telegram comes to her informing that Matteo has been taken to the hospital, she at once returns to India by leaving the two children with Matteo’s parents. Though physically away, her mind had been with Matteo all the time during her stay at Italy. In order to get the full and realistic information about
the Mother, she undertakes the journey from India to New York and again returns back to India. She journeys through Mediterranean, Alexandria, Cairo, Paris, Venice and New York to India. Her search reveals another peculiar journey of a young and determined girl Laila, the daughter of Hamid and Alma.

Sophie finally comes back from her journey to the Mother’s ashram to see Matteo, to tell and reveal him the Mother’s past. At the ashram she learns about the Mother’s death and also that Matteo has left in search of peace to the mountain where the Mother ‘received enlightenment’. Now Sophie also realizes the meaning of pilgrimage and she, too, decides to go on the same pilgrimage – to the mountain hill. She experiences a crucial moment in her life. Now there are only two alternatives before her – one, to go back to her motherland Italy and to lead the same common life in which she has lost her interest, and second, to follow the path of the Mother and of Matteo. She chooses the second. This is the indication that all her experience of life has made her ‘disinterested’ in the mundane life and this has made her qualified to have the transcendental experience of spiritual enlightenment. Thus thematically her choice of following the path of the Mother and Matteo strengthens the theme of the spiritual quest.

4.2.3 The Mother alias Laila:

Very early in life, Laila (the Mother) is a young and determined girl and the daughter of Hamid and Alma. Like Matteo, Laila is a misfit, odd, headstrong, independent child – causing headache to her parents and teachers. She, too, considers home an inadequate shelter; it is like a prison trapping her freedom. Longing for something different she cannot conform to the conventions of her society. So she is sent to Paris to her French aunt, Francoise. At Paris, from college she does not return home but roams around the city. Her desire for some sublime experience leads her astray, even to a revolutionary camp. She refuses to go to church. She joins the oriental dance troupe for spiritual enlightenment. She joins a dance troupe, because for Laila dance is a divine experience. Her encounter with the hadgah propells her disturbed soul to a new direction. Later, it is a poster announcing “Krishna Lila” transfigures her life. It is significant to note that the characters of Matteo and Laila are strikingly identical in many respects. Both are restless at home in Italy and in Egypt respectively. Both have a strong desire to go to the East i.e. to India.
The dance troupe moves from place to place particularly for money. She finds that this dance troupe has nothing to do with religious belief or spiritual exercise. She leaves the dance troupe at New York and travels far into the East. For Laila, the truth lies in India, and it is in India, through the means of dance, would she arrive at her enlightenment. On her journey to the Himalayas, with a desire to free of this world, to escape into a better and brighter one, she happens to see a holy man, although, no different from a beggar in appearance. She stands gazing at the holy man’s serene visage. She also happens to see the great banyan tree that burst into light.

Thus, for the first time in her life Laila experiences a scene, a vision that brings out a significant transformation in her outlook. It is the experience for which she has been craving since her childhood. At this juncture she has been travelling by train; she goes ahead by the train leaving behind the sight of the holy man. After a couple of days or so, she continues her journey to the mountain peak. At this crucial time of the most significant experience in her life, she sees the Master appearing before her on the dark hill-top. That night she returns back to her crowded room. Next morning she comes back to the temple by the river. She then takes a bath in the river. Then she continues on her way and sees the Great Sage seated upon a carpet. “He was speaking [- - -] and his voice was sweeter than the ringing of bells, sweeter than the song of birds; it had the power and the force of the river itself. He spoke of Divine Love and love filled my every limb with its nectar and I was Radha who beheld, at last, the true Krishna” (300).

The mountain peak continues to beacon her and she increasingly longs to go to that mountain peak which she thinks a true home for her. At the mountain peak, her Master appears before her in the form of the holy Sage having a lantern in his hand in the darkness of the night. Here is a crucial point of the plot of the novel. It demonstrates how her spiritual quest is fulfilled. Thus, Laila becomes the Mother of devotees. She finds sanctuary in India, a land of mystery and mysticism, of cultural, religious and ethnic ambiguities as well as possibilities. In such a contested space, she establishes her ashram, a microcosm within the plural world. The Mother realizes that the foreigners who found emptiness in material pleasures migrated to India where they sought in India the meaning of their existence. In her ashram, the Indian devotees are mostly aged and the foreigners are young, and many have their families living with them. So, they were given back-breaking work to keep them from further
distractions. In her evening discourse addressed to her disciples, the Mother claims that the purpose of their lives is the attainment of Bliss and Joy in the presence of the Master. She establishes that hard work is the *sadhna* of a devotee; in other words, it is beneficial to their own lives. Apart from work, she incorporates into her philosophy the ideals of self reliance, cleanliness and personal hygiene. She teaches by example as she also toils along with her disciples. The evening discourses of the Mother have such hypnotic effect on her devotees that the Mother could easily be identified as one possessing ‘charismatic authority’

The Mother has an overwhelming influence on Matteo because she follows no religion in particular but only preaches love. Now he learns that the mystery he has long been searching for is neither in bookish knowledge nor even blind faith, but is essentially ‘an experience of bliss’. Matteo finds solace to his deeply disturbed soul in the Mother. Such a leadership like the Mother is based on her personality that after her death everything is likely to fall to pieces, if a new charismatic leader does not appear in her place. The same happens in the Mother’s ashram also. When Sophie returns to the ashram, she learns about the Mother’s death and also that Matteo has left in search of peace to the mountain where the Mother ‘received enlightenment’. Now Sophie realizes the meaning of pilgrimage and she, too, decides to go on the same pilgrimage – to the mountain hill. Thus the spiritual significance of the title of the novel is fully realized in the description of Mother’s spiritual journey.

4.3 Check your progress

A. Choose the correct alternative.

1. The native place of Matteo is ……
   a) India   b) Egypt   c) Italy   d) France

2. The author of *The Journey to the East* is ……..
   a) Sophie   c) Hermann Hesse
   b) Anita Desai   d) Kiran Desai

3. Fabian is a name of Matteo’s ……..
   a) friend   b) private tutor   c) sister   d) aunt

4. ……. in Italy sees Matteo in the garden of his house in the form of Christ.
a) Isabel  b) Fabian  c) Sophie  d) Gaicomo  

5. The designed journey of Matteo and Sophie begins from hotel …….
   a) Ashoka  c) Monaco
   b) Krishna  d) Taj

6. At ……… Sophie learns about the Mother’s death.
   a) Bombay  c) Paris
   b) the ashram  d) Venice

7. Francoise is ……. aunt.
   a) Laila’s  c) Sophie’s
   b) Gaicomo’s  d) Matteo’s

8. In the Mother’s ashram, the Indian devotees are mostly …..
   a) young  c) women
   b) aged  d) men

9. ……. and Laila are strikingly identical in many respects.
   a) Matteo  c) Prem Krishna
   b) Sophie  d) Master Krishna

10. Sophie decides to go to ………
    a) the home  c) the ashram
    b) the mountain hill  d) Egypt

B. Answer the following questions in one word/ phrase/ sentence.

1. What type of dress does Matteo give up wearing?
2. Where does Matteo move from Italy?
3. Who made an overwhelming influence on Matteo? Why?
4. Why does Sophie undertake the journey from India to New York and returns back to India?
5. Where does Sophie finally come back from her journey?
6. What does Laila find about dance troupe?
7. What type of devotees are in the Mother’s ashram?
8. Where does Sophie learn about the Mother’s death?
9. What kind of tree does Laila see during her journey to the Himalayas?
10. What does Sophie decide after realizing the meaning of a pilgrimage?

4.4 Keys to check your progress

A. Choose the correct alternative.
   1. c) Italy
   2. c) Hermann Hesse
   3. b) private tutor
   4. d) Gaicomo
   5. c) Monaco
   6. b) the ashram
   7. a) Laila’s
   8. b) aged
   9. a) Matteo
   10. b) the mountain hill

B. Answer in one word/phrase/sentence:
   1. Western dress
   2. India
   3. The Mother, because she follows no religion
   4. In order to get the full and realistic information about the Mother
   5. to the ashram
   6. the dance troupe has nothing to do with religious belief or spiritual exercise
   7. the Indians mostly aged and the young foreigners having their families with them.
8. At the ashram
9. the banyan tree
10. decides to go to the mountain hill

4.5 Exercises
A) Write short notes:
1. Matteo
2. Sophie
3. The Mother

4.6 Minor Characters:

4.6.1 Giacomo:
   Giacomo is a son of Matteo and Sophie. He lives with his grandfather and grandmother in Italy along with his younger sister Isabel. Giacomo’s mother, Sophie by leaving both Giacomo and his sister Isabel with Matteo’s parents returns India to look after her husband. Matteo, Giacomo’s father lives in India in search of spiritual truth. Giacomo is very much alienated from his parents. It is grandmother who tells Isabel about Giacomo that he is not rebellious like her father and he is different one. Away from his parents, Giacomo is again sent to his aunt’s home in Milan. His sister Isabel becomes lonely when he was sent to Milan. At the end of the novel, it is Giacomo who tells his grandfather, ‘I saw my father’. ‘He said Giacomo, Giacomo’ [- - -]. ‘Then he said – but I don’t know what he said [- - -]. He talks – like a foreigner. [- - -]. He looked like the painting of Jesus in church” (P.P. 306-307, 309). Everybody disagrees and Giacomo is made quite. But Giacomo remains fortunate to see his father, Matteo in the form of Christ.

4.6.2 Master Krishna:
   Master Krishna is the dance master of the dancing troupe performing the Indian spiritual dance in Western countries. Laila, fascinated by her spiritual quest, meets master Krishna to learn the Indian dance. But Laila realizes the commercial motives of Master Krishna. His dancing troupe performs the dance programmes in different European cities and even visits New York for further programmes. His dance troupe moves from place to place particularly for money. Krishna himself and his dance
troupe have nothing to do with religious belief or spiritual exercise. However, it is Master Krishna with whose help Laila reaches India from America. Master Krishna is not able to help Laila in her search for Eternal Knowledge and the Supreme Light. In India also master Krishna expects Laila to perform dance to earn money.

4.6.3 Francoise:

Francoise is Laila’s maternal aunt at Paris. She lives there with her husband and four daughters. When Laila’s parents send her to the house of Francoise, it becomes another imprisonment to Laila. The atmosphere of the home is sickening. Everything is covered with silken covers and windows are always shut. Curtains are always drawn. Francoise tries to keep restrictions to Laila. Francoise doesn’t like an unresponsive behavior of Laila.

4.6.4 Madame Lacan:

Madame Lacan is the owner of bookshop where she usually keeps books of Oriental countries. It is the bookshop that opens vistas of knowledge to Laila. Madame Lacan’s shop includes the books of travel, art, philosophy and religion such as *Rig Veda, Samhita, Rathavali, La Kama Sutra, Brhadanayaka Upnishad, La Bhagwad Gita, The sacred book of the East*. Laila becomes the regular visitor to Madame Lacan’s shop where she borrowed books, read them voraciously. The books from Madame Lacan’s shop decide Laila’s destination more clearly. It is Madame Lacan’s shop where Laila saw the poster of Krishna Lila. Madame Lacan gives Laila the tickets to the dance show known as *Krishna Lila*. Thus, though Madame Lacan is minor character in the novel, she introduces the Indian religious books and dance troupe to Laila.

4.7 Check your progress

A. Choose the correct alternative.

1. Isabel is Giacomo’s ………
   a) cousin  b) teacher  c) sister  d) mother

2. ……… tells Isabel that Giacomo is not rebellious like her father.
   a) Grandmother  c) Grandfather
   b) Sophie  d) Laila
3. ……. is the dance master of the dancing troupe performing the Indian spiritual dance in Western countries.
   a) Madame Lacan   c) Giacomo
   b) Master Krishna   d) Laila

4. Laila realizes the commercial motives of …………
   a) Madame Lacan   c) Matteo
   b) Francoise   d) Master Krishna

5. Laila reaches India from America with the help of ………
   a) Sophie   c) Matteo
   b) Master Krishna   d) Madame Lacan

6. ………. is Laila’s maternal aunt at Paris.
   a) Madame Lacan   c) Francoise
   b) Sophie   d) The Mother

7. Francoise had ……. daughters.
   a) two   c) three
   b) four   d) five

8. The house of ………. becomes another imprisonment to Laila.
   a) Madame Lacan   c) Sophie
   b) Master Krishna   d) Francoise

9. Madame Lacan is the owner of ………
   a) hotel   c) bookshop
   b) theatre   d) dance troupe

10. Madame Lacan gives Laila the ……. to the dance show.
    a) entry pass   c) invitation
    b) tickets   d) permission
B. Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.
1. Why does Giacomo’s father live in India?
2. What does Giacomo tell his grandfather?
3. Whom does Laila meet to learn the Indian dance?
4. Who is Laila’s maternal aunt?
5. What type of books does Madame Lacan’s shop include?
6. Where did Laila see the poster of Krishna Lila?
7. With whom does Sophie leave her children? Where does she return?
8. Whose commercial motives does Laila realize?
9. Who is Isabel in the novel?
10. For whom does Giacomo refer the phrase ‘the painting of Jesus in church’?

4.8 Keys to check your progress
A. Choose the correct alternative.
   1. c) sister
   2. a) Grandmother
   3. b) Master Krishna
   4. d) Master Krishna
   5. b) Master Krishna
   6. c) Francoise
   7. b) four
   8. d) Francoise
   9. c) bookshop
   10. b) tickets

B. Answer in one word/phrase/sentence:
   1. in search of spiritual truth
2. that he saw his father
3. master Krishna
4. Francoise
5. of travel, art, philosophy and religion
6. at Madame Lacan’s shop
7. with Matteo’s parents, returns India to look after her husband.
8. Master Krishna
9. daughter of Sophie and Matteo and sister of Giacomo
10. Matteo

4.9 Exercises

Write short notes on :

1. Giacomo
2. Master Krishna
3. Madame Lacan