

## BACKGROUND TOPICS-I

### Unit Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Literature and Protest
- 1.2 Politics and Language of Protest
- 1.3 Translation and Literature of Protest
- 1.4 Summing up
- 1.5 Important Questions
- 1.6 References

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### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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Dear learner, this chapter will familiarise you with concepts such as Literature and Protest, Politics and Language of Protest and Translation and Literature of Protest. You will develop a basic understanding of the literature of protest and its origin and development. The chapter will also acquaint you with the Indian Bhakti Movements and their contributions to their role in the history of the literature of protest. Besides, you will develop an understanding of politics and its relation to the language of protest and the importance of translation in the literature of protest.

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### 1.1 LITERATURE AND PROTEST

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*“Knowledge forbidden?”*

*Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord*

*Envy them that? Can it be a sin to know?*

*Can it be death?” (John Milton, Paradise Lost)*

According to Abrahamic religions, Satan was banished because he disobeyed God's command. The query of what precisely the devil wants receives little to no attention. There is no doubt that he desired something, but it was beyond his reach. What exactly was that? Power? Skill? Influence? He allegedly desired answers, but the answers were more complicated. From the above quote, the question arises, “What is knowledge and why is it forbidden?” Is it something precious that everyone can not possess or have a right to know? Is it something that only a particular group of people or gods can have? If the answer is yes to these questions, then why is the ‘right to know’ is with selected people or gods only? And what about others? And what will happen if they (others) will try to know the truth? Will they be allowed? Or will they be banished from heaven like Satan?

Let me give you one more example, I consider you all have read Mahabharata. There is one scene where Acharya Drona tests the archery skills of his students. All of them are from royal family backgrounds, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Arjuna was his best pupil among all his other students, and Drona wanted him to be the best archer. But there is one more interesting character, who was also the best archer. If I ask you to guess, you will certainly say the name of Karna. No doubt he too was a great archer, but here I am talking about Eklavya, the Adivasi boy. Like Adam and Eve were asked not to eat the "fruit of knowledge", Shudras were not allowed to take education in ancient times. Despite all these barriers, Eklavya managed to learn archery with the help of the statue of Dronacharya. When the Guru got to know about Eklavya's skills, he asked him to cut and offer his thumb. Shashikant Hingnekar wrote a poem about 'Ekalavya', and his sacrifice. But that act was not just a sacrifice, but to keep the domination of a higher class over a lower class so that they could prove Arjuna the best archer in history. According to the Manusmriti, a Shudra should not pursue education. A Shudra should not receive instruction from or advice from the upper varnas. The Shudras do **not** need to be taught the rules and codes because it is not required of them to know them. Infringers will experience eternal punishment. (Manu IV-78 to 81) So, it was not just Guru Drona who opposed teaching the Shudra, but the entire system was against the education of Shudras. Here, in the below poem, we can see that the poet is raising his voice against this discrimination. He asks Eklavya:

***“If you had kept your thumb  
history would have happened  
somehow differently.  
But ... you gave your thumb  
and history also  
became theirs...”*** -(Hingonekar 1989)

This is the best example of the literature of protest. When there is injustice, oppression, and suppression, there is a revolt, and when there is a revolt, there is protest. Sometimes the protest is with weapons and sometimes with words. Because words play an important role to educate people about the problems. That is why many people choose the pen as a weapon for their protest. Through literature, they try to achieve their goals. In this unit, we are going to discuss the literature of protest.

Now let us take a look at the literature of protest in America. In American protest literature, moral ideals are a recurrent issue in the early to mid-19th century American protest literature. William Apess and Henry David Thoreau discuss a moral code that people must maintain. Each poses the same query: Is America really the magnificent land of principles that it professes to be, despite the fact that they approached it differently and offered different solutions. That government is best that governs least, according to Thoreau's opening line in Civil Disobedience (p. 843)—and he

supports a government that respects the rights of its citizens. He held that the only reason that a government existed was that the people decided to use it to carry out their desires. However, the government was prone to abuse, fraud, and injustice. Individuals had the right and obligation to revolt against the state using a variety of tactics, such as refusing to pay taxes, when injustice reached an extreme level, such as when slavery was permitted. Henry David Thoreau was imprisoned in Concord in July 1846 for avoiding a poll tax. Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of his friends, paid him a visit and gazed through the bars. "What are you doing in there?" Emerson asked. Thoreau replied: "What are you doing out there?" (The Harvard Gazette, 2006). That tale, in which civic disobedience and civil manners collide, does a decent job of summarising a sometimes-subtle division in American literature. There is art, to start with. A noble question continuously suggests itself, as Emerson hints in his brilliant poem "Nature." On the other side, there is art that has a clear objective, such as literature that is written to inspire action, express shock and fury, or evoke empathy in response to dissatisfaction with the status quo. That is writing on protest.

Literature that is written to express our suffering and anguish is nothing but the literature of protest. Thomas Paine's irate, simple speech and Thomas Jefferson's ordered rejection of his Declaration of Independence are credited with starting the tradition of American protest in print. The reader is thus provided with a different perspective on such events as slavery, the forced migration of American Indians, women's suffrage, labour unrest, lynching, the Great Depression, civil rights, "second-wave" feminism, Vietnam, and LGBT rights in American history through protest literature. The collection of literary voices from 11 different American reform movements known as "American Protest Literature," was inspired by a series of Harvard undergraduate courses. Numerous authors are still well known (Thoreau, Upton Sinclair, Allen Ginsberg). Others, like humourist and American Revolutionary War poet Philip Freneau and actor Ralph Chaplin, contributed "Solidarity Forever" to the strike songbooks of the early labour movement in 1915.

Like Thoreau's writings, those of William Apess is protest literature and are best understood in the context of their time. The Indian Removal Act, passed by the government in 1830, gave permission for the relocation of Indians from the regions east of the Mississippi to the Indian Territory and other locations deemed acceptable. This measure effectively put an end to Indians' ability to reside in those states under their own customary rules. They were offered the option to leave their home countries or assimilate and submit to US law. The Gesture was founded on white-written accounts of contacts between Native Americans and European settlers; these accounts are full of horrifying tales and just the occasional act of goodwill. Apess pleaded with the American people to use their own judgement and uphold their moral principles. He was able to use verses from the Bible to bolster his arguments because he was a clergyman. He presented the moral inconsistencies in American policy with as much specificity as he could, and he based his argument against them on the intellectual foundations of the United States. He continued by launching a scathing attack on racism at

his audience: "You might discover how deeply your principles run from what you read. I should remark that they were superficial" (p. 504), but he never lost faith because of the people who spoke out against abuse.

Despite being published in 1826, James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, subtitled *A Narrative of 1757*, refers to a previous phase of American development. When it was written, it was widely believed that humans were separated into several races and that certain races were superior to others. There was no reversing destiny; Indians (savages) were destined to perish in the presence of superior (civilised) white men. In so doing, Cooper aimed to advance a genuine understanding of ethnological issues in a rapidly changing America. His writing was permeated with a conviction that our shared humanity could be expressed across cultural and linguistic barriers and might remove the notion of the unfathomable "otherness" that encouraged fear and justified exploitation.

Early to mid-19th century Native Americans had a range of issues to deal with. They had to deal with the destruction of their cultural heritage, the loss of their homeland, and the very real repercussions of institutionalised discrimination. The intricacy of the cultural influences at play in the period can be seen in the speech through the writings of James Fenimore Cooper and William Apess. As much as the civilised, Christianized Indian was formed in the image of the white man, so was the portrayal of the savage or detestable Indian. Native Americans were distinctive, complex people who shared the same needs and aspirations as other people.

The term "protest" is changing with time and age. The idea of showing displeasure or opposing any idea is called "protest." They did express their resentment against unjust economic, social, and religious situations. It might be because protesting is something that men naturally tend to do. Individual protest frequently manifests as social protest. Protest is the consciousness that develops when a man encounters an unfair and inhumane circumstance and decides to end it by speaking out against it and taking action to do so.

In India, the Bhakti traditions and their literature have had a deep impact on Indian society for centuries. On the one side, they have provided a medium for the gendered expression of existential and social suffering. Class and caste inequalities are common subjects of concern. Since the ninth century AD, metrical compositions, poetry, songs, vachanas, bhajans, keertanas, and padams have been produced by vernacular poets from various castes, regions, and religions. They are a diverse group that stands out for their non-sectarian viewpoint, vernacular vocabulary, belief in gods, disdain for caste and rituals, and ties to the poor sectors.

Numerous small religious communities and groups with a revolutionary mindset have emerged, which is what defines this democratising movement. The Muslim invasion introduced Islam, a more equitable religion, and this new spirit was a result of awareness and exposure to it. Manus separates Hindus according to caste into four varnas. Hindus are not only divided into four varnas; he also assigns them grades. Manus prescribes rank and

occupation in addition to giving privileges to Swarnas and punishing Shudras. The Shudras' standing in Hindu society was established by Manu, the Creator of Law and the Architect of Hindu Civilization. There are numerous Manu Smriti Codes that are directed against Shudras. According to God, a Shudra's responsibility is to serve the upper varnas with dedication and without complaint. (Manu 1-91) This does not satisfy Manu. He desires that the names and surnames of those who are a part of that community reflect the submissive nature of the Shudras.

The Bhakti movement, which was just beginning, mainly questioned the Brahminical interpretation of Hindu scriptures as a matter of religion and dogma. And this is the very beginning of the literature of protest in India. It has made the lower caste people and women a part of the new movement. They offered irrational ideals, stressing devotion and love rather than understanding as a path to redemption. Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva, Vallabhacharya, Ramananda, Chaitanya, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Dadu Dayal, Mira Bai, Tulsidas, Sur Das, Maluk Das, Sundardas, and Narsinh Mehta, among others, are well-known figures in the Bhakti Movement literature. It also moved the Bhakti-Marg. Up until the great socialist Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule made an effort, women were also not permitted to pursue education because they were treated like Shudras. To effect this revolutionary transformation in society, they both had to put in a lot of effort. As a result of their efforts, women are now successfully in charge of many positions in government, industry, and education.

The *Gulamgiri* by Mahatma Jotiba Phule is regarded as one of the earliest tracts opposing the caste system. The 16-part essay and four lyrical pieces, which were published in 1885, criticise the concept of caste and are written in the style of a conversation between Jotiba and a figure he refers to only as Dhondiba. Even till Independence, social, economic, political, and spiritual inequality were present in India. It was Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar who brought a drastic change in society with his writing and finally poured life into the lives of all the Dalits and outcast or oppressed people in India through the Indian Constitution.

Dalit literature, for that matter, is the best example of the literature of protest. Let us take a glance at Dalit Literature and the Politics and the Language of Protest in the next section of this unit.

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## 1.2 POLITICS AND LANGUAGE OF PROTEST

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Language plays a very important role in the formation of knowledge. And when the same knowledge is used against something or someone to oppress them, that becomes the superpower of the dominant culture. When knowledge is constructed through language, that can be considered as language politics. Because language is used to create/manifest the knowledge/discourse and that knowledge/discourse is acknowledged by the dominant culture, but not always the knowledge/discourse is in the favour of all the people in the society, most of the time the language is used to manipulate the so-called truth or fact, this kind of practice can be called the language politics. Religion, for that matter, is one of the best institutions to

spread favourable discourses in society, and thus it becomes the unquestionable truth, the holy truth, or the words of the almighty, where everyone is supposed to follow whatever is said. Then whether it is about religion, politics, society, gender or any other thing. Let me give you an example from Manusmriti; “A Shudra who wants to just fill his stomach may serve a Vaishya. If he wants a permanent means of living, he can serve a Kshatriya. But if he wants to go to heaven or wants a higher or superior birth in the next generation, he must serve a Brahmin.” (Manu IX 334 & 335) Here we can see how the entire lives of Shudras were determined by the dominant culture. The very discourse of superior or inferior birth was decided by the Brahmins, and the same was in practice. “If a Shudra arrogantly presumes to preach religion to Brahmins, the king shall have poured burning oil in his mouth and ears.” (Manu VIII. 272.) They were not allowed to chant or sing religious songs or mantras, and it was almost impossible for them to rebel against it directly or indirectly.

Let me introduce you to one of the first low-caste poets in India, Sant Chokhamela. He was a saint in Maharashtra in the 14th century. He belonged to the Mahar caste. According to local legend, he was forbidden by the upper classes to enter the temple or to stand at its entrance, so he erected a cottage on the other side of the Chandrabhaga River. In Mangalvedha, close to Pandharpur, labourers were building a wall when it collapsed, crushing some of them. Among them was Chokha. His tombstone is still visible today; it is located in front of the Vitthal temple in Pandharpur. The slain Chokhamela's bones, according to a legend, were still singing Vitthal, Vitthal, as though they still desired to go to the Vitthal temple. At the footsteps of the Vitthal temple, the bones were buried. It was he who lived in the 14th century, but let me show you a picture of the 20th century. The same place, the same temple, but the man was different. He was the Dalit activist B. R. Ambedkar, who tried to visit the temple in the early 20th century but was stopped at Chokhamela's grave and barred from entering further since he was a Mahar. This was the condition of Indian society back then. In the 14th century, Chokhamela wrote:

***“Umbartyaasi Kaise Shivu Aamhi Jaati Heen***

***Roop Tujhe Kaise Paahu Tyaat Aamhi Deen***

***Paayarishi Hovu Dang Gaavuni Abhang***

***Natha Ghari Naache Maajha Sakha Pandurang” (Chokhamela)***

In the above lines, Chokhamela says, “How am I supposed to even consider touching your threshold? I am from a very low caste. How can I dare to look at you if I want to? I am a poor and downtrodden person. I will do my best to stand fascinated by your doorway while chanting abhangs.” The above lines are not just expressing his desires to meet/see God, but they are actually mildly rebelling against the dominant culture and registering their resistance to the Brahminic monopoly over religion, God, and temple. Where the outcasts were not allowed to enter the temple, the saint said that the lord comes and plays in their own place. Though here, the poet is not directly opposing the dominant cultural norms, but he is changing the very



discourse of God and God's availability that is in the temple, according to the dominant culture, and that is why the outcasts were not allowed to enter temples so that they would not have access to God.

In recent times, Sant Gadge Baba, one of the known saints in Vidarbha, proposed the very idea that God is not in the temple or in the statue, but is in the human being and humanity. The very language he used to criticise the existing religion and its religious practices was very subtle. He used the same language to manipulate earlier religious discourses. When the same language is used to deconstruct the earlier manifested knowledge, this practice can be called politics and the language of protest. Protesting is a kind of political communication. It's a method of political persuasion in which those who lack influence or power discover strategies for making their voices heard in order to convey a message of opposition. Another interesting fact about the language is that the language also has a relation with power, and the knowledge created through the same language is acknowledged by the power/dominant culture. That is why the other languages are considered inferior to the ones that have a relation with power. Let me give you one example. When Britishers came to India and made their colonies and when they ruled over India, they made English the language of administration and offered jobs to those who could read, write, and speak English. Because Britishers were in power, English became the powerful language. And even so, it was convenient for the people from various states of India to communicate. Also, recently, you must have heard about the idea of a "One Language, One Nation" policy, which is nothing but an example of a power and language relationship, or the politics of language.

Let me now take you to 384 BCE, the time of one of the greatest Greek thinkers, who proposed some fundamental ideas about writing and aesthetics. Yes, I am here talking about Aristotle, whose Poetics is considered the foundation of literary criticism. Who talked about tragedy, poetry, music, and also how to write poetry? In his definition of tragedy, it is mentioned that tragedy is "an imitation of an action, serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, **in a language beautified in different parts with different kinds of embellishment**, through actions and not narration, and through the sense of pity and fear, bringing about the catharsis of these emotions." Read again the bold and italicised parts of the definition. What did Aristotle mean by that? Did he mean that the poetry should be written in a beautiful language with different kinds of figures of speech? Yes, exactly. He said the same. So, that means there are certain rules and regulations for writing poetry. (Poetry here means literature.) If you read his Poetics, you will understand these rules and regulations clearly. At that time, God and the royal family were the subjects of literature. Poetry was either written about Gods or about royal families like Kings, Dukes, etc. And obviously, the language of these people was dignified. I challenge you to find any classic epic where a hero is a common man or woman from a low background or outcast like Jimmy Porter in "Look Back In Anger" or Eklavya. I doubt you will get any epic because if you take a look at Ramayana or Mahabharata, Iliad or Odyssey the protagonists are not outcasts, they all are from Royal backgrounds only. But why so? And why

not the outcasts? Was it because they were superior and the outcasts were inferior? Then what about the language the outcasts speak? If the language of the royal people is dignified, then are the languages of outcasts or countrymen undignified? According to Longinus, to achieve sublimity, the poet needs a dignified language. What if a common man writes poetry in his own language? Isn't that great or sublime poetry then?

Since outcasts were not considered in the dominant culture, then there is no question about their language. And that is why the Dalits needed a language like English to express their thoughts and show the world the culture they belong to. The use of English as the medium of expression helps in preventing traditional and skewed thinking and the establishment of hegemonic social structures. According to Madhopuri, the usage of Hindi and Sanskrit encourages rigidity and prevents Dalits from participating in society at large.

Raj Gauthaman, a Dalit activist, makes a compelling case for the use of language by Dalits. He asserts that the proclaimed intention of Dalit works is to challenge accepted contemporary (upper caste) linguistic conventions and to "expose and invalidate the present language, its grammar, its polish, and its deceptive order as emblems of dominance." He adds, "For it is according to these measures that the language of Dalits is marginalised as a vulgar and obscene language, the language of slums. English for the Change of Social Status English has helped a great deal in making Dalits ex-untouchables. It might be included in university curricula throughout the nation and even beyond because of the growing usage of English in Dalit works for translation purposes. Now, this has helped the movement a lot because it could associate youth and intelligentsia in its fold. Any movement with youth as its force becomes a force to reckon with. Madhopuri also feels English education for Dalits has brought in rational thinking as an alternative to conforming to the established socio-cultural setup. The key to that change was education: *parhai kar ke zaat badalni* (altering caste status by acquiring education). This was the mantra that B.R. Ambedkar gave to his people.

Even Dalit critics like Chandra Bhan Prasad have elevated English to the rank of a deity and even supported building a shrine dedicated to her (Times of India, 2010). Such measures would be in opposition to the Dalits' anti-traditional system attitude, according to Dalit thinkers like Madhopuri. Giving English the title of deity would be anti-Dalit and in favour of the current quo. Thus, we can see how language and the politics of language are important for any culture. Let us now take a look at the translation and literature of protest in the next section.

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### 1.3 TRANSLATION AND LITERATURE OF PROTEST

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Some Dalit activists refer to English as the Dalit Goddess because it is the language of empowerment, protest, and resistance. Through the English translation of Dalit texts, a socio-cultural revolution's growth and importance are attained. What happens to the text when it is modified by the translator in the process of making it available to the readers of a



different language if the goal of translation is to be heard and understood by a greater readership? Does the power of manipulation and interpretation that the translator has to empower the source text or the translated text? When it comes to the topic of marginalised literature, which develops as a result of or as a component of the fight in the lives of the downtrodden, this issue, which is significant in the translation of texts, becomes even more vital here, each and every word is a product of a culture that the author, translator, or both encounter or witness. The author tries uncompromising when it comes to important matters like Dalit identity, and he or she subtly critiques the dominant Dalit culture and calls for critical reading of Dalit tradition. Some voices are silent, some are muffled, and some are occasionally and ineffectively heard. Literature supports a chance for the voices that have been muted or have been silent for a long time if verbalization is empowerment. If being heard by a sizable population is an act of empowerment, then many voices end up being ignored and less heard due to a variety of both overt and covert factors.

Language is primarily the fundamental cause of not being heard or being heard less, among other factors. It may be national and international languages compared to regional languages or standard languages compared to dialects. When there is a need to voice and convey literature to more readers, translation, in the context mentioned above, seems to be one of the worthwhile strategies. Actually, a major part of Dalit literature is available only in regional languages. Then, English is the sole language through which one may read Dalit literature in other languages. With the exception of the fact that very few Dalit writings have been translated into English, there have been quite a few disputes and controversies with regard to a variety of issues regarding the translation of Dalit texts into English as there have been any translations from regional languages into English. English-language literature is unquestionably enriched by the translation of Dalit texts, which also empowers Dalit authors. It offers up a whole new realm of real information about the oppressed, their hostility, their responsibility, and their engagement. The translations fill up major gaps in Indian writing in English which has not been able to hold the voices of the socially and economically marginalised sections. Let us try to scan how Dalit writings have been empowered in translation into English. It's debatable whether it actually empowers the Dalit text or not. The translation's enhancement of Dalit literature is a symbol of Dalit empowerment that is connected to the Dalit revolution. It is influential that when a writer writes to assert the Dalit identity, the translation takes the text as close as possible to that identity. According to well-known Dalit activist Sharan Kumar Limbale, "Dalit texts arise from experience, but non-Dalit literature emerges from fantasy" (Limbale, 1993). Most Dalit writers corroborate this view that their life is their literature. Hence, it is only extending the established empowerment into the target language and target literature. The obligation for communicating the culture, experience, identity, and argument of the original writer falls under this endeavour to empower target writing and, in turn, Dalit literature. According to sociologist Ashish Nandy, "I definitely endorse every oppressed minority or individual's freedom to pick up any weapon, be it a political, academic, or intellectual error, to combat the

establishment. It's the sheer audacity of it that makes it so forceful." He further says that Dalits must no longer see themselves as oppressed and repressed; they have their own traditions and knowledge systems which must be preserved. There's a very powerful tradition of history, music, and life, which the younger generation must be proud of. (Vrinda Gopinath, 2006)

With the help of many languages, translation no doubt plays a very important role in spreading thoughts from one culture to another. As far as literature of protest is concerned, it is mostly in the regional languages and thus to bring the literature of protest from regional language to the global level, translation is very much important.

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## 1.4 SUMMING UP

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Dear learner, let us sum up what we have learned in this chapter. We discussed concepts such as Literature and Protest, Politics and Language of Protest and Translation and Literature of Protest. We have arrived at a basic understanding of the literature of protest and its origin and development. The chapter also discussed the Indian Bhakti Movements and their contributions to their role in the history of the literature of protest. We then took a cursory look at politics and its relation to the language of protest. And lastly, we studied the importance of translation in the literature of protest with illustrations.

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## 1.5 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

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Consider working on the following concepts with the help of notes and the references given at the end of the chapter.

- The role of Bhakti Movements in the history of literature of protest.
- Write a detailed note on the Politics and Language of Protest.
- What is the essence of Translation in the Literature of Protest?
- Comment on the emergence and growth of Bhakti Movements in India.
- Write an essay on "Bhakti and Social Protest".
- Write a critical analysis of Dalit activists and literature and their role in the literature of protest.

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## BACKGROUND TOPICS-II

### Unit Structure

#### 2.0 Objective

#### 2.1 Concept of Caste, Varna Theory and Division of Labour

##### 2.1.1 Definition and meaning of caste

##### 2.1.2 Essential characteristics of Caste System in India

##### 2.1.3 Varna System

##### 2.1.4 Division of Labour

##### 2.1.5 Forms of Division of Labour

#### 2.2 Concept of Race and Discrimination

##### 2.2.1 What is Race?

##### 2.2.2 What is Race discrimination?

##### 2.2.3 What the Equality act says about Race Discrimination?

##### 2.2.4 Different types of Race Discrimination.

##### 2.2.5 Discrimination.

##### 2.2.6 What Drives Discrimination?

##### 2.2.7 Some key forms of Discrimination.

#### 2.3 Protest in African American, Dalit and Tribal Literature

##### 2.3.1 Protest in African-American and Dalit Literature

##### 2.3.2 Protest in Urmila Pawar's Aaydan (The Weave of My Life) and The Autobiography of Malcolm X/ Al-Hajj Malik Al-Shabazz

##### 2.3.3 Protest in Tribal Literature

##### 2.3.4 Women in Tribal Society

#### 2.4 Let's Sum up

#### 2.5 Important Questions

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit will make the students aware with:

- The voices of discord, rhetoric and cultural contexts.
- How to compare and contrast the artistic manoeuvres.
- The protest spectrum in literature.
- The panoramic understanding of global protest literature and ideologies.
- The historical links between forms of protest and meanings of literature

With this knowledge the students will be able to read and interpret cross cultural texts, understand protest literature, get sensitized towards global issues. Students will also learn to look into past, correlate it to present and future. They will also be able to Understand the historicity of protest literature.

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## 2.1 CONCEPT OF CASTE, VARNA THEORY AND DIVISION OF LABOUR

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### 2.1.1 Definition and meaning of caste

The English word caste is derived from the Spanish and Portuguese word *casta*, and which, according to the John Minsheu's Spanish dictionary means "race, lineage, tribe or breed". However, it was the Portuguese who first applied the term 'casta' in the primary modern sense of the English word 'caste'. And when the Portuguese applied it to the thousands of endogamous, hereditary Indian social groups they encountered, undergone and experienced upon their arrival in India in 1498. The term 'caste' also indicates 'race' or 'kind'. Whereas the Sanskrit word for caste is 'varna' which means colour. And according to the Chaturvarna doctrine, the Hindu society was basically divided into four main varnas such as, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. The varna system which was prevalent during the Vedic period was generally based on the division of labour and occupation.

The term 'Caste' is a form of social stratum which is represented and defined by endogamy, hereditary transmission of a style of life which generally comprises an occupation, ritual status in a hierarchy, and customary social interaction and exclusion which is based on cultural belief of purity and pollution. Its paradigmatic ethnographic illustration is the division of India's Hindu society into rigid social groups, with roots in India's ancient history and persisting and perpetuating to the present time. As a result, the economic importance of the caste system in India has been declining and diminishing due to the urbanisation and affirmative action programs.

### 2.1.2. Essential Characteristics of Caste System in India

- **Hereditary**

An individual's Caste status is determined and decided strictly by his heredity, i.e. the caste into which an individual is born. No extent of personal accomplishment, background, history, knowledge or efforts can change his/her caste status.

- **Endogamous**

In endogamous groups inter-caste marriages are strictly and rigidly prohibited and there is merely an inclination to marry within the group. However, an individual who is born to a low caste can never hope and



think to marry someone who is from higher caste. Every individual is supposed to marry within his caste and sub-caste.

- **Hierarchal**

Indian caste system has a system of superiority and subordination. However, according to Hindu Caste the hierarchy is that the Brahmin occupies the highest level which is followed by kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

- **Fixed occupations**

Having developed from the Varna system the occupation in caste system is fixed and definite for instance the son of a carpenter becomes carpenter etc. With development of industrialization and mechanization people belonging to different castes have lost their occupation and have taken agriculture or some other occupation.

- **Restricted Food Habits**

In Indian caste system, the higher castes try maintaining their traditional purity followed by distinct food habits. Therefore, the Brahmins will only take 'Satwil' or 'Pure' food, while Kshatriya and Vaishya will take 'Royal' food. A Shudra takes 'Tamsi' food. Each caste has its own laws which govern the food habits.

- **Untouchability**

In Indian caste system the Shudra, the people belonging to the lowest stratum castes are considered to be untouchables. There was a time when the Shudra were considered to be as pollution and even if the shadow of a low caste would fall on a Brahmin, then the latter was said to have been polluted.

### 2.1.3. Varna theory

The term varna in the context of Hinduism, attributes to the Brahminic ideology of hierarchizing society into classes. This ideology and belief are embodied in the texts such as Manusmriti, which classify and categorize the society into four varnas as follows;

- Brahmins were mostly Vedic scholars, priests and teachers.
- Kshatriyas were rulers, warriors and administrators.
- Vaishyas were agriculturalists and merchants.
- Shudras were laborers and service providers/servant.

The communities which belong to one of the four varnas or classes are known as Savarna whereas the ones who do not belong to any varna were called avarna.

The four division i.e. the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras is a form of social classification, completely different from the regional Jatis, which were later mapped and outlined by the British, to the European term "caste". The varna system is discussed in Hindu texts, and it is understood as idealised human callings. However, the concept is often traced to the Purusha Sukta verse of the Rig Veda. The commentary on the Varna system in the Manusmriti is frequently cited. Counter to these textual classifications, many Hindu texts and doctrines question and disagree with the Varna system of social classification. The varna system provides an example of unity in diversity.

The word 'Varna' appears in the Rigveda, and it means "colour, outward appearance, exterior, form, figure or shape". The term Varna contextually means "colour, race, tribe, species, kind, sort, nature, character, quality, property" of an object or people in some Vedic and medieval texts. According to this theory, it was in around 1500 BC, when the varna originated with the arrival of Aryans in India. And according to this theory, the Aryans invasion led to the conflict and clashes between them and the original inhabitants of the subcontinent who were called the Dashuds.

The varna system, does not believe in superiority of inferiority, it is wrong to believe that one job belongs to an "inferior" category and another to a "superior". No work is greater or superior, every work is equal in varna system.

#### **2.1.4. Division of Labour**

The term Division of labour first originated from the division of workers in distinct occupations. For example, in an extensive readymade garment factory, a man does the cutting of cloth, the second man stitches clothes with machines, the third buttons the clothes, the fourth makes folding and packing, the fifth checks all the packages, etc. So, this way of doing the work is known as division of labour for the reason that, different workers are engaged and involved in performing and fulfilling different parts of production. As said by Watson, "Production by division of labour consists in splitting up the productive process into its component parts."

The Scottish economist Adam Smith said that the division of labour was limited and restricted by the extent (size) of the market. If the demand for a commodity and goods is low, then the size of its market will be small. The manufacturer will employ only a small number of workers. Hence, here one worker will have to perform a number of operations and as a result the division of labour will be small. Whereas, on the other hand, if there is great demand for the commodity then the size of the market will be large. In order to meet the large demand, the manufacturer will have to increase the scale of production. Therefore, he will split production into distinct processes and sub-processes which will be operated by different persons. Hence, this increases the division of labour. Thus, division of labour depends on the extent of the market.

- **Simple Division of Labour**

When the production is split up into distinct parts and a number of workers come together to complete the work, but the contribution of each worker cannot be known, it is known as simple division of labour.

- **Complex Division of Labour**

When the production is split up into distinct parts and each part is performed and accomplished by different workers who have specialised in it, it is known as complex division of labour.

- **Forced Labour**

Forced labour is also known as Slave labour, which is performed involuntarily and under threat, hardship, compulsion and pressure generally by relatively large groups of people.

- **Occupational Division of Labour**

When the production of a commodity or product becomes the occupation of the worker, it is called occupational division of labour.

Division of labour possesses some advantages and disadvantages which are as follows:

### **Advantages**

- **Increase in Production**

With the adoption of division of labour, the total production increases. The Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith has elucidated the advantage of division of labour with the help of an illustration that a worker can produce only 20 pins daily. And if the making of pins in a modern factory is divided into 18 processes, then 18 workers can produce 48,000 pins in a single day.

- **Increase in efficiency and competence of labour**

With division of labour, a worker has to do the same work again and again, by this the worker gets specialisation in it. Hence, in this way, the division of labour leads to a great increase in efficiency and competence among them.

- **Increase in skill**

With the repetition of the same work, the worker becomes specialised in it and hence, this specialisation empowers him to do the work in the best possible way, which ultimately improves his skill.

## Disadvantages

- **Monotony**

Under division of labour, a worker has to do the same job again and again for years together. As a result, after a passage of time, the worker feels bored or the work becomes annoying, irritating and monotonous.

- **Loss of Efficiency**

Division of labour is most of the times accounted for the loss of efficiency, effectiveness and competence. For example, if a cobbler goes on cutting the leather for a long period of time, he may lose the efficiency and competence of making shoes.

- **Danger of unemployment**

The danger and fear of unemployment is another disadvantage of division of labour. When the worker frequently produces a small part of goods or commodities, he ultimately gets specialised in it and he does not have the complete knowledge of the production of goods. For example, a man who is expert in buttoning the clothes and if due to some reason he is dismissed from the factory, then it will be very difficult for him to find the job of buttoning. Therefore, division of labour has a fear and danger of unemployment.

So, to conclude, we can say that the division of labour is beneficial and helpful to the workers, to the producers and to the society as a whole.

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## 2.2 CONCEPT OF RACE AND DISCRIMINATION

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### 2.2.1. What is Race?

A race is a categorization of human beings primarily based on shared physical or social characteristics into groups usually regarded as definite within a given society. The term race was first used to refer to speakers of a common language, and then later on to denote national affiliations. And by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the term race began to refer to physical (phenotypical) traits. Modern science sees the term race as a social construct, an identity that is assigned and based primarily on rules made by the society. Whereas, it is partly based on physical similarities within groups. The term race does not have an inherent physical or biological meaning.

It was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the modern meaning of the term race with reference to human beings began to arise and emerge. Until then, the term race has had a variety of meanings in the languages of the western world. Most of the definitions of race that have in common is an attempt and effort to categorize peoples often through their physical differences. In the United States, for instance, the term race usually refers to a set of or group of people who have in common some visible physical traits, such as skin colour, facial features, hair texture and eye formation etc. Such distinctive features are allied with large, geographically separated populations, and these

continental aggregates are also designated as races, as the “African race,” the “European race,” and the “Asian race.” Most of the people think of race as reflective of any visible physical (phenotypic) variations amongst human groups, despite of the cultural context and even in the absence of fixed racial categories.

Modern scholarship sees racial categories as socially constructed, that is race is not intrinsic to human beings but moderately an identity which is created, generally by socially dominant and powerful groups to establish meaning and significance in a social context. Different cultures characterize different racial groups, and usually focused on the largest groups of social relevance, and these definitions can change over time.

### **2.2.2. What is Race Discrimination**

Race discrimination is when you are treated differently because of your skin colour or racial or ethnic origin. This treatment could be a one-off action or due to a rule or policy primarily based on race. And, it doesn't ought to be intentional to be unlawful. Individuals can discriminate by way of means of refusing to do business with, socialize with or share assets with people of a certain group. Governments can discriminate in a de facto style or explicitly in law for instance, through the strategies and policies of racial discrimination, distinct enforcement of laws and legal guidelines or disproportionate and divergent allocation of resources. Some jurisdictions have anti-discrimination laws which restrict and prohibit the government or individuals from discriminating primarily based on race (and sometimes other factors) in diverse and varied circumstances. Some institutions and laws use positive and affirmative action to endeavour to overcome or atone for the consequences of racial discrimination. In few cases, that is merely enhanced recruitment of members of underrepresented groups; whereas in other cases, there are rigid racial quotas. For most of the people not just race discrimination, but discrimination based on class, caste, gender, race religion etc. is the everyday reality.

### **2.2.3. What the Equality act says about Race Discrimination?**

In the Equality Act, race can mean your colour, or your nationality (such as your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which might not be similar to your current nationality. For instance, you can have Chinese national origins and be dwelling in Britain with a British passport. Race additionally covers ethnic and racial groups. A racial group can be made of two or more distinct racial groups, for instance black Britons, British Asians, British Sikhs, British Jews, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers. You can be discriminated against due to one or more facets of your race, for instance people born in Britain to Jamaican parents may be discriminated against due to the fact they are British citizens, or due to their Jamaican national origins.

### **2.2.4. Different types of Race Discrimination.**

There are basically four important types of race discrimination which are mentioned below in detail.

1. **Direct Discrimination-** Direct discrimination is when you're directly discriminated due to your race. Direct discrimination takes place when someone treats you very badly than another person who is in a same situation due to your race i.e. due to your skin colour or your nationality. For example, age, race, religion and belief, disability, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment etc.
  - For instance, if you are looking for a flat to purchase but, the letting agency would not let a flat to you due to your race, so this will be referred as direct race discrimination.
  - Someone with good potential is not offered a job because they are woman, or their colour is dark, and the job goes to the less qualified man. This is also an example of direct race discrimination.
  - Direct discrimination also happens when applying for a job, someone is treated unfairly and did not get selected just because the job gets to someone who is directly associated with the interviewer.
2. **Indirect Discrimination-** Indirect discrimination happens when an organisation has a particular rules or arrangements, or policy or way of working that puts group of employees or job applicants or the people of your racial group at a disadvantage.
  - For instance, a sales company is recruiting for a head of sales and the HR team only advertises the job internally, and the only people who could apply internally are all men. This means that the sales company could be discriminating indirectly, based on sex.

Racial bias exists not just in the company or at any work place, but it also exists in the medical field affecting the way how patients are treated and the way they are diagnosed. There are many instances where patients' words are not taken seriously, and they are left unnoticed, the best example would be the recent case with Serena Williams. After the birth of Serena William's daughter via C-section, the tennis player began to feel pain, misery and shortness of breath. It took her several times to convince the nurse they actually took her self-said symptoms seriously. Had she not been incessant and demanded a CT scan, which showed a clot that was resulting in blood thinning, Serena might have not been alive. This is just one of hundreds of cases where systemic racism can perturb and affect women of colour in pregnancy complications.
3. **Harassment-** Harassment takes place when a person makes you feel humiliated, outraged or degraded due to your skin colour, race, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, disability etc. Harassment can take place in a variety of circumstances such as harassment in the workplace, harassment in schools, sexual harassment, landlord harassment, harassment related to religious beliefs, sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual and gender employee harassment, racial harassment etc. Harassment can never be justified.



- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, or a supervisor in different area, an agent of the employer, he can be a co-worker or can be a non-employee.
- The victim does not always have to be the person who is harassed, but the victim can be anyone affected by the offensive and abusive conduct.
- Unlawful harassment may occur without economic injury to, or discharge of, the victim.

**4. Victimization-** Victimization takes place when you are treated very abominably because you have made a complaint of race related discrimination under the Equality Act. It can also take place if you are supporting or helping someone who has made a complaint of race related discrimination.

For instance, rape, sexual touching, physical abuse, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, domestic violence etc.

### **2.2.5 Discrimination.**

Discrimination hits hard at the very heart of being human. It is harming someone's rights certainly due to who they're or what they believe. Discrimination is pernicious and perpetuates inequality. We all have the prerogative to be treated fairly and equally, irrespective of our race, class, caste, ethnicity, nationality, religion, belief, intercourse, gender, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, intercourse characteristics, age, fitness or different status etc. even though we have the right to be treated equally often hear the heart-breaking tales and stories of people who go through cruelty and endure a lot just for belonging to a "different" group from the ones in positions of advantaged or power.

Discrimination occurs when a person of any class, caste, caste, ethnicity, nationality, religion, belief, gender etc. is unable to enjoy his or her human prerogative or other legal prerogatives on an equal basis with others due to an unjustified distinction and differentiation made in policy, law, rules and regulation or treatment. Discrimination can take diverse forms such as direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and intersectional discrimination. In direct discrimination differentiation is made between groups of people that impacts in individuals from some groups being less able than others to exercise their prerogatives. For instance, a law that requires women, and not men, to provide proof of a certain level of education as an essential for voting would constitute direct discrimination on the grounds of sex. Whereas intersectional discrimination occurs when various forms of discrimination associate and incorporate to leave a particular group or groups at an even greater disadvantage and loss. For instance, discrimination against women time and again means that they are paid less than men for the same work. Discrimination against an ethnic minority generally results in members of that group being paid less than others for the same work.

### 2.2.6. What Drives Discrimination?

At the heart of all forms of discrimination is the biasness and prejudice which is primarily based on the concepts of identity, and the need to identify with a certain group. This prejudice can result in division, hatred or even the dehumanization of other people due to the fact that they have a disparate identity. In most parts of the world, the politics of condemn, fear and worry are on the rise. Intolerance, hatred, prejudice, animosity and discrimination is inflicting an ever-widening rift in societies. The politics of fear and worry is driving people apart as leaders peddle toxic rhetoric, blaming certain groups of people for economic or social problems. Some governments attempt to reinforce and strengthen their power and the status quo by blatantly justifying discrimination in the name of morality, religion or ideology etc. Discrimination can even be cemented in national law, even if it breaks international law, for instance, the criminalization of abortion which denies and refuse women, girls and pregnant people, the health services only they need. Certain groups can even be seen by the authorities as much more likely to be criminals simply for who they are, such as being impoverished, indigenous or black.

### 2.2.7. Some key forms of Discrimination.

- **Racial and Ethnic discrimination**

Racism impacts and hits hard virtually almost every country in the world. It systematically and consistently denies people to enjoy their full human rights simply due to their skin colour, caste, class, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin etc. There are many cases in India, in which the members of the Dalit community are targeted, by the members of dominant castes, for a range of human rights violation and abuses. The crimes such as gang rapes, killings and the destruction of their homes, often go un-investigated by the police because of the discriminatory attitudes and mindsets which do not take crimes against Dalits seriously.

- **Discrimination based on Caste**

Even after 73 years of Independence, it can be seen that our Indian culture and society is not free from separation, violation and discrimination based on caste, class, gender, religion, politics, culture, and treating downtrodden sections as untouchable is still prevalent in the society. In an orthodox and tradition-bound societies both women, and backward classes are persistently repressed and suppressed irrespective of their caste, religion, class, gender or education and are treated as inferior and subjugated groups in hierarchical social structure by the powerful. Discrimination based on work and descent which is referred to as caste discrimination is widespread and it is deeply rooted in society, it exhibits itself in everyday lives, in individual perceptions to culture and customs, in social and economic structures, in education and employment, and in access to services, opportunities, resources and the market. Discrimination is perpetuated and bolstered from generation to generation, and is in few cases completely and intensely

internalized, regardless of the existence in some countries of laws and affirmative action to tackle the circumstances.

- **Gender Discrimination**

In most of the countries, and in almost all regions of the world, the policies, laws, customs and beliefs that exist, denies and refuse, women and girls their rights. Women cannot dress as they like, because if something happens, then the girl is to be blamed for, or she is not allowed to work at night, or she is not even allowed to go out at late night. Whereas there are few countries in which the discriminatory laws place limits on a woman's right to divorce, own property, exercise control over her own body and enjoy protection from harassment.

In the ongoing battle for justice and equal rights, hundreds of thousands of women and girls take to the streets to claim their human rights and demand gender equality. All over the world, women and girls, trying their best, fighting for their rights, and they have been at the leading edge of demands for change.

Howbeit, the social media has given more prominence in some parts of the world to women's calls for equality in the workplace. In almost all over the world, in many places, women are not only paid less, on average, than men, but are more likely to do unpaid work and to work in informal, insecure and unskilled jobs. This injustice against women can be seen just because of social norms and the orthodox and tradition bound societies that consider women and their work to be of lower status. Gender-based violence by the patriarchal society disproportionately and immensely affects women, yet it remains a human rights crisis that politicians continue to ignore.

- **Discrimination based on disability**

As many as 1 in 10 people around the world lives with a disability, though in many societies, people with disabilities must grapple with stigma, being blackballed and treated as objects of sorrow, sympathy, pity, worry or fear. For about 70 to 80 percent of the people with disabilities, developing countries are their home. Women with disabilities are two to three times more likely to encounter physical and sexual abuse than women without disabilities.

- **Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.**

Discrimination is something which can be seen everywhere in the world. People not just face discrimination based on race, skin colour, or ethnic origin, they also face discrimination because of who they love, who they are attracted to and who they are. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people despite of recent advances, risk being unfairly and unjustly treated in all areas of their lives, whether it's in education, employment, housing or access to health care, and they may face harassment and violence. It is extremely and

immensely very difficult and painful, and in most cases, impossible for LGBTI people to live their lives freely and seek justice for abuses, exploitation and injustice, when the laws are not on their side. Even, when in some cases it is to their side, there is strong stigma and stereotyping of LGBTI identities that restrains them from living their lives as equal members of society or accessing rights and freedoms that are available to other members of the society.

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## 2.3. PROTEST IN AFRICAN AMERICAN, DALIT AND TRIBAL LITERATURE

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### 2.3.1. Protest in African-American and Dalit Literature

The dilemma and predicament of African Americans and Dalits can be compared and correlated in some ways. Though the African Americans had been slaves, they could buy their freedom with money. While the Dalits were technically not slaves, they couldn't even pay to rent a house. Whereas the untouchables were not slaves, but the savarnas had no concern and care for them and hence they were deprived and degraded by the Savarna society. The African-American is bereft and deprived by the White society whereas the Dalits by the Savarna society. The Untouchables were viewed as societal slaves. The main reason of the African slavery was economic. The African American can do any kind of work, however their hard labour was no longer taken into consideration, and were disgraced and undignified, whereas on the other hand, Dalits can perform the lowest form of the job, but even their hard work is always termed as disgraced and undignified. The African American cannot hide the colour of his skin, whereas the Dalit cannot conceal and hide his caste, hence they both suffer a similar kind of plight and injustice.

It is significant to comprehend the condition and plight of the subalternity which was repeatedly suppressed and repressed by the bureaucratic power structure and their voice are always silenced. Music was perhaps considered as an alternative mode to exhibit the suffering, pain, sorrow, grief and the struggles musingly. Music gave voice to the subalterns by challenging the flow of power within the social system.

African-American social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer and statesman, Frederick Douglass in the year 1845 wrote an autobiography, 'Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass', which was the first slave narrative that gain more popularity before the civil war. Harriet Jacobs, an African-American writer wrote about the gender-based violence, savagery, brutality, cruelty, fierceness and pugnaciousness of her own life when she endured and experienced as a slave. Harriet Jacob's autobiography, 'Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl' which was published in the year 1861, was considered as another notable and memorable slave narrative by the time of the civil war. In India, Mulkraj Anand, who is famous for his portrayal of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society, was the first writer to write in the genre of Dalit literature.

Marathi language author, poet and a literary critic, Sharankumar Limbale also acknowledges that the Literary fronts of Dalits and African-American also have many similarities. Dalits writers see the sorrow, suffering and pain of African-American writers as their own. African Americans have expressed their sorrow, suffering, pain and grief through music genre such as blues, ballads, stories, novels, dance and songs. African American and Dalit movements have proceeded with distinctive paths and have taken distinctive shapes, but the core of both the movements were same. Despite differences of countries, society, language, region, economy, the similar treatment meted out with these two communities exhibits the fact that both were targets of injustice, slavery and subjugation and their experience of suffering, pain and grief are of a world-scale.

The experience of racism, bloodshed, lynching, rampage, state sponsored rampage and violence, Jim Crow indignity, discrimination, injustice, racial prejudice alienated the African-Americans from the mainstream American life. Penury, destitution, illiteracy, ignorance, hunger, insecurity, violence, horror, fear, psychological and emotional trauma represents their life. Their artistic sensibility is conditioned and affected and influenced by the circumstances of their life. The African-Americans used their writings to protest, resist, oppose and negate the White supremacy and liberate them from the slavery, servitude and subjugation of White dominance. Music played an important role in the life of African-American. It gave them relief from pain both emotionally and voluptuously. Music played an important role in the life of African-American. It gave them relief from pain both emotionally and voluptuously.

### **The “Blues”**

The African slaves were brought from Africa to America and they were as the workers of the plantations. As songs and dance were known as the cultural significance of these black people, they sang to themselves the songs of their miseries, pain, agony, despair and spiritual yearnings and desires. These songs which came down from generation to generation in the oral form are called as “Blues”

### **Jazz**

It all started around 1819 in Congo Square, New Orleans, was the birthplace of jazz. Both Blues and jazz have always influenced each other, and they until now interact in innumerable ways today. Jazz songs galvanised the civil rights movements for the reason that its lyrics often evoked the pain, agony, grief, sufferings and frustration of the blacks.

Music has been an immense source in the universe which connects and links all the human beings together. Music has always been considered as an timeless strong and powerful force for both the African- Americans as well as the Dalits in India to resist and withstand against the injustice, inequality, violation and the cruelty, inhumanity, and savagery in their lives.

Dalit Literature is about the oppressed and subjugated people. People, who are known by the name Dalits in the Indian society, have a history of being

lived in marginalization, oppression and subjugation under the high-classes of the Indian society. Hence, they have been considered as a marginalized, downtrodden and subaltern group since centuries. But it was due to the struggles and efforts of many social reformers such as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, and Mahatma Gandhi, this community has seen a drastic change and had been progressing and developing day-by-day. However, their marginalization has not come to an end, and they are still facing many problems with their existence in the present scenario. Omprakash Valmiki, Munshi Premchand, Mannu Bhandari, Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Amrita Nagar, Malkhan Singh, Jai Prakash Kardam, Suraj Pal Chauhan, Vasant Moon, including few other writers in their books and autobiographies, portrayed the issues of marginalization and injustice towards the dalit community. Mahaswetha Devi, Arundhati Roy, Basudev Sunani, Bama, Sivakami, Poomani, Marku, and Paul Chirakkarode are some other notable writers who wrote about the subjugation and social injustice towards Dalits.

Dalit literature first originated and emerged in Marathi and hence, spread in many languages all over India. Writers such as Sharankumar Limbale, Bandhu Madhav, Laxman Gayakwad, Annabhau Sathe, Daya Pawar, P.I. Sonkamble, Shantabai Kamble, Raja Dhale, Namdev Dhasal, Laxman Mane, Hari Narake, Arun Kamble, Waman Nibalkar, Bhimsen Dethe, Bhau Panchbhai, Ambadas Shinde, Kishor Shantabai Kale, Murlidhar Bansode, have contributed to a great extent in Dalit literature. Dalit literature, is a literature which basically focuses on the social marginalization and suppression of the oppressed communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and religious minorities. Following are some of the notable autobiographies of Dalit literature:

### **Joothan**

In 'Joothan' Omprakash Valmiki depicts his life as an Untouchable, or Dalit, in the newly independent India of the 1950's. Joothan means 'polluted', or scraps of food left on a plate, or the food that associated with animals. The autobiography describes the struggle between Chuhra (Dalits) and upper caste Tagas of Barla.

### **Siddalingaiah's Ooru Keri**

Siddalingaiah's Ooru Keri, depicts poverty and anxiety of Dalits in Karnataka state.

### **Bama's Karukku**

Bama's Karukku, is the well-known prominent Dalit woman autobiography in Tamil. The autobiography portrays the life-story of a Dalit woman, and the author herself considers Karukku the story of Dalit mass.



### **2.3.2. Protest in Urmila Pawar's Aaydan (The Weave of My Life) and The Autobiography of Malcolm X/ Al-Hajj Malik Al-Shabazz**

Background Topics-II

- **Urmila Pawar's Aaydan (The Weave of My Life)**

A Dalit woman, Urmila Pawar, rejecting the traditional social role and identity which is foisted on her and her community by the traditional Hindu society, by educating herself and endeavouring for modernity, creative and intellectual life protested the tradition of Brahminil supremacy and dominance and traditional social role and expectations on her part. Urmila Pawar's Aaydan also embodies her struggle and strive for identity and modernity as well as her struggle and hardship against the exploitation and oppression of the weaker and poor in the traditional Chyaturvarna and patriarchal and orthodox Indian society.

- **The Autobiography of Malcolm X/ Al-Hajj Malik Al-Shabazz**

Malcolm X, the eminent mid twentieth century black American Human Rights leader, anti-integrationist, revolutionary firebrand, militant nationalist, the fiery and intense eloquent speaker, the great liberator of black consciousness, and a black Muslim leader was born of father Earl Little and mother Louise at Omaha, Nebraska in the year 1925. The White supremacist Klan's men ruined and demolished Earl's house, killed his brothers and they later killed him when Malcolm X was a child. Life was a nightmare for them.

Malcolm's militancy, nationalism greatly and largely influenced and inspired young black activists who upon his foundation and base, and force Black Power Movement. Malcolm's protest and militancy has brought about significant and progressive change in the identity of African American.

### **2.3.3. Protest in Tribal Literature**

India is home to a number of indigenous people, who are nevertheless untouched by the way of the lifestyle of the modern world. Indigenous people in India comprise an estimated population of 94.4 million, which is the largest population of the tribal people in the world. These tribal people are also called by the name as the Adivasi's, and they are the poorest in the country, who are until now reliant on hunting, agriculture and fishing. While some of the considerable tribal groups in India comprise Gonds, Santhals, Khasis, Angamis, Bhils, Bhutias and Great Andamanese. And all these tribal groups have their own culture, tradition, language and lifestyle. While, during the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, these tribal people were called as the Depressed Classes.

Whereas terms such as atavika, vanavasi (which means forest dwellers), or girijan (which means hill people) are also used for the tribes of India, while the term Adivasi carries the particular and definite meaning of being the original and autochthonous inhabitants of a given region and was particularly coined for that reason in the 1930s. Land dispossession, deprivation, servitude and subjugation by British and zamindar interests

resulted in a large number of Adivasi revolts and rebel in the late eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries, such as the Santal Hul (or the Santhal rebellion) of 1855–56. The economic dispossession, deprivation and hardship, in few cases, triggered internal Adivasi migrations within India that would continue for another century, including as labour for the emerging tea plantations in Assam.

The Tribals unlike the Dalits are facing discrimination and injustice and are until now fighting for their voice to be heard. Tribes have continued to be at the margins of Hindu civilization since time immortal and these margins have always been considered as vague, uncertain, unclear, dubious, and fluctuating. The distinct and the peculiar attributes of the tribe in India has been its isolation, for the most part, in the interior hills and forests as well as in the frontier areas. Each tribe has its own different and distinct dialect which may alter fundamentally from the prevalent and existing regional language. But many a times, this differentiation does not work because there are many tribes in western India including the Bhils or Bheels, an Adivasi ethnic group in India, who do not have any language of their own but have and adopted the language of the region.

#### **2.3.4 Women in Tribal Society**

The tribal women, like many other social groups, comprise of about half of the total population. The status of the tribal women in a society can be divided into two categories. The first category being; the tribal women have a comparatively low status as compared to men, just like in the caste Hindus. Excluding the case of matrilineal, matriarchal, and polyandrous tribal communities, the status of women in most of the tribes are inferior and secondary as compared with men. Whereas, the other group of studies centres on higher social status of tribal women. It can be seen that the tribal women are comparatively well off than their non-tribal counterparts, and in that, they are free to move outside the home, mix with men folk, they can completely participate in the various economic activities of the household etc. For instance, between the Tharus of Terai, who live in both India and Nepal, the status of women is traditionally high. These women dominate over their husbands, they have the property rights, keep poultry, they own it, they fish, make baskets and sell the products of their hard work. Howbeit, the women in social groups, are more illiterate as compared with men. However, with the outset of development programs, economic changes have started taking place which ultimately have affected tribal women. These tribal women who sustained themselves on the natural resources had to face economic impoverishment, depletion and poverty followed by loss of social status.

To conclude it can be said that the African-Americans and the Dalits are embodied by comparable hegemonies and power of subjugation and duress that depicts and differentiates the identities of the subaltern in the irrespective cultures. Regardless of the drastic changes which took place due to the pace of urbanization, mechanization and industrialization the different tribes of India is still maintaining their traditional religion, values and culture.

Protest are one of those events that no one can predict, and it has wide-reaching implications. Protest is a part and parcel of human life and hence is observed in distinct walks of life. Voice against the marginalized and oppression has been a universal phenomenon since time immortal. Protest is affirmation of dissent, assertion of disagreement. Protest can be individual or it can be collective, organized and instant. It can be against ideology, belief, policy, action, rule system, opinion, principle etc. When one becomes aware, alert and careful of the cause of protest, he thinks of protest. Protest ranges from direct massacre, rampage, violence, assault, cruelty, to militant agitation to amicable and amiable democratic rallying to the writing of ideas and literature.

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## 2.5. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

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- What are the main basis of caste system?
- What is the concept of caste?
- Who was highest in caste system?
- How many types of varna are there?
- What do you mean by Varna. Explain in detail?
- What are the three types of division of labour?
- What is the largest benefit of division of labour?
- How does division of labour increase productivity?
- What are the advantage and disadvantage of division of labour?
- What is race discrimination?
- What are the best ways to identify biases we all have?
- What are the different types of race discrimination?
- What are the key forms of discrimination?
- What drives discrimination?
- How did African American fight for equal rights?
- Write about the protest in African-American.
- Protest in the autobiography of Urmila Pawar and Malcolm X.
- What was the main focus of Dalit Literature?
- What is the importance of a Dalit consciousness in Dalit writing?

- What is the motto of the Dalit movement?
- Why is the tribal literature neglected?
- What is the role of women in tribal society?

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## CRITICAL STUDY OF I WANT TO DESTROY MYSELF

### Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 About the Author
- 3.2 Back ground
- 3.3 Dalit Women's Autobiography
- 3.4 *I Want to Destroy myself* – Detailed Analysis
- 3.5 Conclusion
- 3.6 Questions / Exercise

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES:

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*I want to destroy myself* is a translated version of Marathi autobiography of Mallika Amar Sheikh. The book has Introduction in which the author makes the objective of her autobiography clear –

“I have peeled away skin of my life and served it up to you. Some may say this fruit is inedible but that doesn't matter. It is more important for me to present this very different world of experience in which I have lived, telling the story from my point of view and from the point of view of all women who have been exploited.

As a woman I seek justice in a patriarchal world. My role is clear to me...”

The objective of this study, therefore, is to know inner life of a woman her sufferings and her responses to the situation she was put in. The book is offers a rare account of cross cultural conflict between wife and husband in which the man is labelled as villain because he does not comply with her expectations and in doing so, makes her suffer.

Autobiography as a literary form has unique facility of making an individual life open to readers. There is no scope for imagination in autobiography. The facts that are narrated relate the readers with the author. Thus, new relationship is formed.

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### 3.1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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#### **Malika Amarsheikh**

Malika Amarsheikh was born of Muslim father and Hindu mother. Her father Shahir Amarsheikh in the communist movement in Maharashtra. As a child she was sick and delicate and was brought up with love and care. She was a witness to the various socio – cultural and political movements

in Maharashtra as her father was a prominent person with cordial relations with political leaders of the time. She had developed love for poetry and dance in the childhood itself, but, unfortunately, could not develop it further as her marriage with Namdeo Dhas the celebrated Dalit poet in Maratha, turned out to be dismal. She, however, could publish a collection of poems entitled –.. Her autobiography in Marathi – मला उध्वस्त व्हायचं (I want to destroy myself) made her famous overnight, as it portrays the picture of a woman, extremely sensitive and tortured by the man whom she loved and married.

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### **3.2 BACKGROUND DALIT WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES:**

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Let there be no misunderstanding about I want to Destroy Myself as a Dalit woman's autobiography. It is not Malika Amarsheikh was born and brought up in as atmosphere where caste and religion did not exist. Her father was a staunch communist and refused to be associated with any religions group. Malika grew up as her father's daughter and believed in human values. In fact, her autobiography does not elaborate the earlier impression she received as a child, as it concentrated upon her life after marriage. Her memoirs of Dalit literature was in full swing in Maharashtra. Several autobiographies by male Dalit writers like Daya Pawar, Madhav Kondnrilkar, P. Sonkamble and others had made this literary form very popular. It was followed by Dalit women's autobiography. Shantabai kamble's The Pictursque story of my life Baby Kamble's The way are Live, Kumud Pawade's Antsphot, Urmila PAwar's (Aaydan) Closed doors Muhta Sarvagand etc. Malika's husband Namdeo Dhasal was a very popular Dalit poet at that time. Therefore, her wife will say something suitable and supportive to the Dalit movement. When the book came out it was criticized by a group of Dalit thinkers, whereas, others praised it as an exposition of the internal contradiction of a movement which claimed to be liberator of humanity.

Autobiographies in Marathi has a long glorious history. It began form Laxmibai Tilak's Smrutichitre and in the course of time, came down to Sangye Aika by Hunsa Wadekar, Aahe Manohar by Sunita Deshpande, Nach g Ghuma by Madhavi Desai etc. Dalit women's autobiographies was the culmination of this literary form as it opened up the inner world of women in general, and of Dalit women in particular underlining the fact that women suffer in patriarchy despite caste, colour or creed. Malika Amarsheikh's I want to Destroy Myself was yet another testimony to it.

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### **3.3 DALIT WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY:**

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I want to Destroy Myself is not precisely a Dalit women's autobiography it is not about atrocities inflicted in the name of caste or religion yet it inevitably relates itself with the Dalit surroundings and curses vehemently the Dalit movement amid which she is compelled to live. Therefore, a brief survey of Dalit woman's memoirs will not be out of the contest.



Dalit women are dual victims of casteism and patriarchy. In fact, caste system in India and patriarchy cannot be separated from each other. They are two sides of the same coin. Indian women have always suffered in the male dominated social structure, besides they have also been victims of caste system. The Indian social structure has striking similarity with that of the social structure in America where racism prevailed for many years. Severed black women in America (now called African-Americans) have narrated their position is precisely like that in their memoirs. Dalit women's position is precisely like that of black American women. Toni Morrison has depicted dual victimization of women in her community in – She writes –

The following words She writes Edging into life from the backdoor. Becoming. Everybody in the world was in a position to give them order. White women said- “Do this white men said- “Come here” black men said- “lie down.” The only people they need not take order from were black children and each other.

But they took all that and recreated in it their own image. They ran the house of the white people and knew it when white men beat their men they clean up blood and went home to receive abuse from the victim. They beat their children with one hand and stole for them with the other. The hands that fell trees also cut umbilical cords, the hands that wring the neck of chickens and butchered hogs also nudged African violets into bloom, the arms that loaded sheaves, bales and sacks rocked babies into sleep. They patted biscuits into flaky ovens of innocence and shrouded the dead. They ploughed all day and came home to nestle like plume under the limbs of their men. The legs that straddled the mule's back were the same ones that straddled their men's hips. And difference was all the difference there was...

Dalit women's condition Indian society was no different from that of black women is described by Toni Morrison-

Malika Amarsheikh, though not precisely a Dalit woman, share her fate nevertheless, because she is unknowingly dragged into the world where Dalit is she come up prominently.

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### 3.4 I WANT TO DESTROY MYSELF: THE TEXT

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Malika begins the memories by recalling her father's background. Her father was called 'Bhai' at home as he was from a place called Barshi in Sholapur district of Maharashtra. He was a famous folk singer who propagated the communist ideology through stage performances. He developed contacts with prominent Marxist leaders of the time like Shripad Amrit Dange and others. He had also visited USSR to learn more about the Marxist ideology as propose it further in India. Bhai was Muslim by birth but had forgotten his religious background and the Marxist-Communist activities which do not allow religion to interfere. He fell in love with a Hindu girl who was also a party worker. They married despite opposition. It was to this couple that malika was born. She had elder sister called Prerana, who later married to Sunil Barve, a well-known poet and dramatist in Marathi. Mallika's father would always be on tours and the three women

would stay alone at home. However, Mallika's mother was strong enough to raise the two daughters, in amid the difficulties that they always faced,

Mallika was a sick child and had developed pleurisy- the disease that affects lungs. She was well taken care of and a protected child. She preferred to be left alone and lived in dream world. As a result she grew up as lonely, sensitive and stubborn girl. Namdev Dhasal was a well known Dalit poet of 1960s who often visited Mallika's family. There was a kind of liberal atmosphere at home where several progressive minded people would come together. They would discuss movies, theatre. Poetry and plan to perform. It was here that Namdeo came into Mallika's life. They fell in love with each other as married.

Meanwhile, Mallika's father passed away, He did not leave much for the family on he led life of a gipsy wondering from place to place as tour any thought for future. As a result, his family suffered economically But Mallika's mother, who was a strong-willed woman, managed to run the family and took care of everything at home. Namdeo Dhasal had earned reputation and fame by writing about prostitutes, beggars, slums and the underworld experiences. His first book of poems published in 1972 is called *Golpeetha*-a red-light area in Kamathipura of South Bombay where all sorts of underworld activities take place. Dhasal had lived there and shared the experiences therein. As a result, he turned out to be an insensitive husband, beating his wife on and off, always domineering and unmindful of the sufferings he came to his young wife Mallika's life after marriage became a saga of sufferings. She narrated instances of Namdeo's cruelty, indifference and promises to behave of decent behavior next time whenever he the animal instinct in him awoken. This would happen many times. The woman had to give in and look for ways to abort. She suffered a great deal during pregnancy where her husband would be away from home reciting poems on feminism and Dalit issues. A wife of a famous poet in Maharashtra, She compelled to deliver her firstborn in a Government hospital where pregnant women are treated as if sleeping with husbands in shame, where women in labour pain are abused and are called by nasty names. Mallika underwent all these experiences while her husband, elsewhere was busy in receiving honors as a great poet. Namdeo Dhasal is also depicted as a womanizer, a lecherous man who had sex with all sorts of women including prostitutes. Consequently he had developed diseases like gonorrhea, and had transmitted it to his wife adding wretchedness to her miseries. Mallika has a son from Namdeo. They named him as Ashutosh.- Even the child could not bring the wife and husband emotionally together as Namdeo's waywardness had new limitations. He continued to ill-treat his wife and remained indifferent to her needs.

As the autobiography reveals, Mallika suffered a great deal, and the blame goes to Namdeo, her husband, who is depicted as a villain, a hypocrite who would lecture on women's liberation and treat his wife as a slave. His extreme liberalism devoid of any substance comes one through two incidences. He makes the young Mallika sleep with him before marriage. The young girl is tempted into sex by a man who had lived among prostitutes. Second incident is more hateful. A common friend of the two- the wife and

husband – Mallika and Namdeo's – desires to sleep with the wife – Namdeo, the husband, has no objection even if they have it under his very nose. The kind of permissiveness, if it hurts the wife, is detestable. Namdeo Dhasal is portrayed as detestable.

Namdeo Dhasal was one of the leaders of Dalit literary movement and renowned for her poetic genius and potentialities. Several of his supporters and activities in Dalit literary movement found Mallika's account as a stunt, an attempt by a woman to come into limelight who has nothing else to show. She is always critical about the Dalit movement, quotes European philosophers, draws references from Hindu mythology and has attraction for popular Hindi movies. Can such a woman be taken seriously? That is a reason why *I want to Destroy myself* does not find place in literary studies of Dalit women's autobiographies or, if at all it does is casually mentioned.

Mallika seems to be aware of her the situation and represents her case of vehemently. She has made her feminist stand clear. She refuses to call herself Dalit, or even Ambedkarite as her husband claims to be. She refuses to participate in the Buddhist rituals at the time of her son's birthday celebration and prefers to stay away. Hurt by husband's disloyalty, she blames the entire movement as a whole.

However, Mallika seems to be aware of the situation and represents her case vehemently. She makes her stand as a feminist clear at the end of the book Mallika Amarsheikh's book thus, is not a Dalit woman's autobiography. It is an autobiography of a woman who has cast off all the shades of caste and creed, and wants to be known only as a woman alone. She writes-

I hope this autobiography is not just a story of the quarrels between a husband and wife. And I hope it does not seem as if I have offered a one-sided view of things, my side. Truly, I was fighting against the system of male domination. Namdeo was not a villain in that fight. Every person is at one time or the other, a villain. Not just Namdeo, the social system in which we live was also responsible for what I had to suffer.

And-

Sometimes I think it might have been best to keep this hidden, to crush the poisonous butterfly inside my first to stop it from fluttering. But being aware can be disturbing. Perhaps if I had remained wishfully ignorant and lived accordingly to tradition, things might have ended up differently. I might have been happy. In the end, I do need to wear the shirt of the happy man. Who is to engineer the jail break that women must make to attain self-hood, independence? I am just one more face in the mass of ignored faceless women. I hope this book will help at least, one woman find her face, that it might help her find her way out of her circumscribed and shortly world. For this one woman's sake I am willing to bear whatever criticism patriarchal society heaps upon me.

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### 3.5 CONCLUSION:

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I want to Destroy myself thus is not an autobiography of a Dalit woman although Dalit literary movement and the social movement of Dalit panter looms large over the narrative. The reader comes across famous literary names of the time. Anil Barve, Raja Dhale, Shamita Gokhale, Anna Bhau Sathe, B.R. Khedkar, the sculptor, Vijaya Mehta, Vijay Tendulkar, Paresh Mokashi, J.V. Pawar, Bhau Samarth, the poet and painter, Rupa Deshpande, etc. Disappointed with her husband, Mallika expresses her disapproval with entire Dalit movement. She even offers immature comment on Dr. Ambedkar's conversion into Buddhism. This, of course, reveals her disgruntled pessimism about life in general. The entire narrative reveals her limitless sufferings at the hands of her husband. She is extremely angry with him for what she has done to her. Towards the end, however, she feels pity for him as an experiment of patriarchy, who is ignorant about what he is doing. She assumes the feminist stand and speaks for the 'let the butterfly out of her fast.' By writing this book. She has released the tension which had accumulated in her mind and heart since long. It is hoped that she might have found peace after writing the autobiography. Considering all things together, it can be concluded the, beside being memories of a woman who has suffered at the hands of her husband, is also an inspirational document for women in general.

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### 3.6 EXERCISE / QUESTIONS:

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1. Consider Mallika Amarsheikh's. I want to Destroy myself' as an autobiography of a woman who suffered at the hands of a man whom she loved a great deal.
2. Bring out the nature of relationship between the narrators and her husband in I want to Destroy myself, by Mallika Amarsheikh.
3. I want to Destroy Myself is not an autobiography of a Dalit woman, yes Dalit movement in Maharashtra looms large over its narrative. Discuss
4. Mallika Amarsheikh asserts staunch feminist stand towards the close of her memory – I want to Destroy Myself.' But shows no courage to step out of the institution of marriage. Discuss.
5. Mallika Amarsheikh's I want to Destroy Myself is nothing but an emotional outcry of a sentimental woman, who curses her husband as the movement he is involved in. Do you agree with this view? Answer with sufficient references from the text.



## CRITICAL STUDY OF BARACK OBAMA'S DREAMS FROM MY FATHER - I

### Unit Structure

#### 4.0 Objectives

#### 4.1 Introduction: A Short Bio-literary Sketch of Barack Obama

#### 4.2 Barack Obama and US Politics

#### 4.3 Life after the Presidentship

#### 4.4 Introduction to *Dreams from my Father*

#### 4.5 *Dreams from my Father*: Brief Summary

#### 4.6 Conclusion

#### 4.7 Important questions

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES:

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The objectives of this unit are to:

- Know the life and works of Barack Obama
- Understand Barack Obama's approach towards Politics
- Get acquainted with *Dreams from my Father*
- Get familiar with the characters in *Dreams from my Father*

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION: A SHORT BIO-LITERARY SKETCH OF BARACK OBAMA

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Barack Hussein Obama II is a well-known political figure in international politics as he served as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of America. He was born on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1961 in Honolulu, Hawaii. His parents came from different racial and national backgrounds. His father, Barack Hussein Obama Sr., was a Luo from Nyang'oma Kogelo, Kenya, who had won a scholarship to get educated in America. During his stay in America, Obama Sr. got engaged with Stanley Ann Dunham resulting eventually in their marriage and Barack's birth. Stanley was mostly of English ancestry from Wichita, Kansas, who was courageous enough to accept a Kenyan black man as her life partner.

The married life of Obama Sr. and Stanley came to an end immediately after the birth of Obama Jr. because after the completion of his education, Obama Sr. wanted to return to his native country. After returning home, he shouldered the responsibility as an economist with the government of Kenya. After her the divorce, Obama's mother remarried an Indonesian,

named Lolo Soetoro and shifted with him to Jakarta. Here Obama lived with his mother, step-father and half-sister, Maya.

Obama's initial schooling started in Jakarta before he returned to his grandparents in Hawaii. He graduated from Punahou School, Honolulu and then moved to Occidental College, Los Angeles for two years. He earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Columbia University in 1983. After taking a break for some time, he enrolled himself for a law degree in Harvard University and graduated with flying colors.

While Barack was working as a summer associate with a Chicago law firm, he got acquainted with Michelle Robinson, who worked there as a lawyer. This acquaintance led to the couple's marriage in 1992. They have two daughters, Malia Ann Obama and Sasha Obama.

Barack Obama's autobiography, *Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* is an account of his early childhood and school days, his constant movements from one place to another along with his mother and also from one school to another in search of better educational opportunities eventually leading to his enrolment to Harvard Law School. *The Audacity of Hope, Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, Obama's second book was published in 2006 that deals with his vision for the United States. Referring to this book in a tweet, Obama said he aimed to 'provide an honest accounting of my presidency, the forces we grapple with as a nation, and how we can heal our divisions and make democracy work for everybody.'

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## 4.2 BARACK OBAMA AND US POLITICS

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Barack Obama is the first African American to be sworn in as the President of America on January 20, 2009 and again for the second term from January 2013 to January 2017. It is clearly mentioned on the White House web page that Obama's 'story is the American story — values from the heartland, a middle-class upbringing in a strong family, hard work and education as the means of getting ahead, and the conviction that a life so blessed should be lived in service to others.' This journey from a middle-class African American to the White House of America was by no means an easy one. He must have worked harder than his capabilities to prove himself as a man with strong belief in the value system that was firmly grounded in the ethical thinking that is reflected in all his later actions both as an individual as well as a public figure.

Barack Obama's rise to the White House had its roots in his early life as a student who supported his education through scholarships and student loans. He was the first African American president of the *Harvard Law Review*. Immediately after graduating from Harvard, he moved to Chicago and became civil rights attorney and also entered into academics by taking a teaching job at the University of Chicago.

It was in 1996 that Obama got elected to the Illinois Senate for the first time. His stint as the Senator is marked by many significant achievements in the form of supporting the passage of the legislation that tightened campaign



finance regulations, expanded health care to poor families, and reformed criminal justice and welfare laws. This outstanding contribution to the public welfare enabled him in getting elected to the U.S. Senate in 2004. During the next less than four years, Obama proved himself as a strong contender for the Presidential candidature in the party to which his colleagues supported and he won the 2008 general elections and became the first African American to hold the post of US President in January 2009.

Before becoming the US President, Barack Obama had to overcome the internal rivalry among the other members of his party to get nominated for the Presidential post. Though Senator Hilary Clinton was a strong contender, Obama's charismatic personality, clear political vision, strong sense of social responsibility, and his selfless service to the people helped him won the nomination.

The next hurdle for Obama was his Republican opponent, John McCain, a seasoned politician, who left no stone unturned to prove himself as the better candidate for the President's post. He criticized Obama for his stand on Iraq, on tax reforms, and also for his being inexperienced for the Presidential job. However, Barack Obama survived all this criticism by taking on McCain's objections one by one. For example, he selected Joe Biden to be his Vice Presidential candidate, who had a long experience in foreign policy. Besides, he also managed to mobilize huge financial support from his countrymen that enabled him to reach to the people by way of advertising and involving grassroots organizations to work for him. All these efforts led to his victory in the Presidential election.

During his two terms as the US President, Barack Obama made his mark in national and international politics. His decision to withdraw American troops from Iraq helped him win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009. His getting the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed, his attempts to create peaceful environment at international level, particularly the issues related to Iraq and Afghanistan, his pumping in more than \$700 billion to help the banking sector to come out of the recession, etc. have helped him become one of the most successful US Presidents. However, though Obama achieved national and international recognition by his pro-people outlook and constructive policies, he is also criticized by his opponents for his failure in addressing the issue of slow pace of economic recovery, high unemployment rates, not involving the Republicans in policy decisions, and few others.

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### **4.3 LIFE AFTER THE PRESIDENCY**

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Barack Obama's Presidential term ended in January 2017. But still he is active in US politics. He took aggressive stand against Donald Trump for some of his controversial policies. He also actively participated in electoral campaign for Joe Biden that resulted in Biden's victory in January 2020. Besides politics, Barack Obama kept himself busy in writing and delivering public speeches. Obama Foundation in Chicago is working for his people by organizing various welfare activities that include training the future leaders, helping young African American boys and girls in honing their

different skills and the like. Obama also published the first volume of his memoir in 2018 that became the best seller all over the world and brought in millions of dollars for Obama.

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#### 4.4 INTRODUCTION TO *DREAMS FROM MY FATHER*

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Barack Obama's *Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* was published in 1995. It is a story that roughly covers Obama's early childhood life till his enrollment at Harvard Law School in 1988. It speaks about Obama's parents – a black man from Kenya and mostly an English woman from Kansas. As a young man, his father, Obama Sr. had won the Kenyan government scholarship to study in US. During this stay, He married Ann Dunham. Obama Jr. was born in 1961 and the very next year, Obama Sr. moved to Harvard to earn a Ph.D. in Economics. The following year, his parents divorced as his father wanted to get back to Kenya to serve his country. After that the father and son could meet only once in 1971, when Obama Sr. returned to US for a month's stay. This was a time when Barack as a 10 years old boy came in direct contact with his father and has attempted to recollect those memories in his autobiography. Soon after in 1982, Obama Sr. died in an accident in Kenya. Though after few years, Barack Obama visited his paternal relatives, there is not much left between them.

After the divorce from her first husband, Barack's mother remarried an Indonesian, Lolo Soetoro, and moved to Jakarta when Barack was just six years old. There he lived with his step-father and his family for four years and then returned to his maternal grandparents. After graduating from the high school, Barack attended Occidental College for two years and then moved to Columbia University to earn his degree in Political Science.

*Dreams from my Father* received several positive reviews for its style of narration, authenticity of expression, for being 'the most honest, daring, and ambitious'. It is referred as 'the most evocative, lyrical and candid autobiography' and also for being 'an affecting personal memoir with grace and style, narrating an enthralling story with honesty, elegance and wit, as well as (for the author's) instinctive gift for storytelling.' Time magazine has listed the *Dreams* on its top 100 non-fiction books written in English since 1923. Besides these encouraging reviews, Obama's book brought him a lot of money. It got translated into several major languages of the world including German, French, Spanish, Hindi, Marathi, Dutch, Hebrew, Chinese, Arabic and many more. Its audio book version won Grammy Award for Barack Obama in 2006.

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#### 4.5 CHARACTERS IN *DREAMS FROM MY FATHER*

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*Dreams from My Father* contains numerous characters both major and minor. These include:

Barack Obama: Narrator and protagonist of the memoir

Michelle: Barack's wife

*The Old Man: Barack's father*

*Ann: Barack's mother; daughter of White parents, Gramps and Toot*

*Gramps: Barack's maternal grandfather*

*Toot: Barack's maternal grandmother*

*Frank: Gramps' friend*

*Lolo: Barack's step-father; Ann's second husband from Indonesia*

Maya: Barack's half-sister born of Ann and Lolo.

Obama: Barack's great-great grandfather from Kenya

*Hussein Onyango Obama: Barack's paternal grandfather*

*Akumu: Barack's one of the three paternal grandmothers; the Old Man's mother*

*Granny: Barack's one of the three paternal grandmothers*

Omar: Barack's paternal uncle

Yusuf is one of **Barack's** uncles

*Sayid: Barack's paternal Uncle; the Old Man's youngest half-brother*

*Aunt Sarah: Barack's paternal aunt; the Old Man's sister*

Aunt Jane: Barack's paternal aunt

Kezia: The Old Man's first wife and the mother of Auma, Roy, Bernard, and Abo

*Ruth: The Old Man's third wife; mother of Mark and David*

*Auma: Barack's half-sister born of the Old Man and Kezia*

Bernard: Barack's younger brother born of the Old Man and Kezia

Roy: Also known as Abongo; Barack's half-brother; Auma's brother

George: Barack's younger half brother

Mark is one of **Barack's** half brothers

David is one of **Barack's** half brothers

Reverend Wright: The reverend of Chicago's Trinity Church in Chicago

Rafiq: The president of the Roseland Unity Coalition

Deacon Will Milton: A Black man who works with Marty

*Marty Kaufman: Barack's boss in Chicago*

*Harold Washington: The first Black Mayor of Chicago*

*Sadie: A young mother, who works with Barack in the Chicago parents' group*

*Regina: A Black student at Occidental College*

*Dr. Rukia Odera: A professor of History; the Old Man's friend*

Mr. Foster: The former head of a Chicago neighborhood Chamber of Commerce

Tim: Barack's friend and classmate

Mr. Anderson: The project manager of Altgeld

Dr. King: The principal at Asante's school

Jeff: Barack's white friend in school

Scott: Barack's friend

Hasan: Barack's college roommate

Salina: Billy's mother

Besides the above mentioned characters, Angela, Billy, Shirley, Mona, Smitty, Marcus, Ms. Alvarez, Reverend Smalls, Reverend Reynolds, Reverend Philips, Miss Omoro, Asante, Amy, Elizabeth, and few others keep coming in the course of various incidents that are narrated by Barack Obama in his memoir.

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#### **4.6 DREAMS FROM MY FATHER: BRIEF SUMMARY**

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*Dreams from My Father* begins with the author's telling his readers about the educational adventures and achievements of his father, Barack Obama, Sr., who was a Kenyan by birth. As a child, Obama Sr. had won a scholarship to study in Nairobi. Then he became the first black student in Hawaii University and completed a course in Econometrics. His winning of another scholarship enabled him to get enrolled and complete his Ph.D. in Economics from Harvard. During these years he had got acquainted with Ann Dunham, an English young woman from Kansas whom he married. The marriage resulted in the birth of Obama Jr. However, after two years, Obama Sr. left his son and wife back in America and returned to his homeland, for Kenya to serve his country as an economist. Soon after Barack Obama's mother married an Indonesian and shifted to Indonesia with her son.

During his stay in Indonesia, Barack's schooling started. Barack's mother definitely had thought about the hardships Barack and she would have to face in Indonesia. But it was for Lolo's kind and considerate behaviour that the life for her had become more tolerable than she expected. She was happy

to notice that Lolo had developed an emotional bond with Barack and was always concerned of his well-being even if Barack was not his own son.

Indonesia was a country with large population divided in hundreds of tribes and their diverse cultures, languages, colonial history, the War and the freedom struggle. Obama's mother had taken up a job of teaching English to rich Indonesian businessmen in American Embassy. However, it was not enough for a woman with a small child to fall upon on a foreign, war-ridden land. Though everything seemed fine between her and Lolo till the birth of Maya, Barack's sister he became more and more engaged with his job, and she felt lonely. Corruption was rampant and everybody was trying to grab his share in it. Education at local Indonesian school was not qualitative and she could not afford to send Barack to International school where the children of other foreign nationals usually study. So she was worried about his future. She was so much concerned of Barack's education that she had enrolled him for a U.S. correspondence course. She herself taught him English before she left for her job. She wanted her son to imbibe some values which will help him to move ahead in life. To instill those values in her son, she used to tell Barack stories of Black children in the South who became doctors, lawyers and scientists reading from their second hand books. She used to present her first husband, Barack Obama Sr. as an epitome of good values which he had carefully acquired by educating himself in the best schools. From the stories which Barack's mother used to tell Barack about his father, he remembers how his father 'had grown up poor, in a poor country, in a poor continent; how his life had been hard, as hard as anything... He hadn't cut corners, though, or played all the angles. He was diligent and honest, no matter what it cost him. He had led his life according to principles that demanded a different kind of toughness, principles that promised a higher form of power. I would follow his example... I had no choice. It was in the genes.' These deliberate attempts on the part of Barack's mother to give her son lessons on value education at early age enabled him to think of him differently than other children of his age. At later stage he could gauge the significance of those values in one's life.

The narration of such events from the life of Barack's father and also from the lives of other successful black professionals presents Ann as an idealist, who wanted her son to tread on the path of moral and ethical values and better himself as a human being. But when she saw that there is a lot of corruption in Indonesia, she felt that it was not a fit place for her son to grow. Therefore, she sent Barack to her parents in Hawaii. Barack's grandfather, Stanley "Gramps" Dunham was a salesman and his grandmother, Madelyn "Toot" Dunham was an executive with a bank. After some time, Ann and Maya also joined Barack in Hawaii. Barack was enrolled in an elite Punahou School. It was mostly an all-white school except a couple of black students. The kind of racial environment at school made Barack feel misfit for the place.

It was during this time that Barack met his father who had come to Hawaii for a short period of time. Until now, Barack had heard many stories about his father from his mother and grandparents. However, he realized that his

father was little authoritative and wanted to treat his son strictly particularly in matters of his studies. He was impressed by the brilliant talk his father delivered in his school and also by his dancing skills. After a month's time, his father left for Kenya.

Barack's mother wanted to be an anthropologist, hence she went to Indonesia for the related fieldwork leaving behind Barack to take care of himself in the company of his grandparents. As a growing boy in the racist atmosphere, Barack made friends with the coloured students in and outside the school. It became difficult for his tender mind to accept the different conditions at home and outside the home. When he was being told by his friends that all whites are racists, it was difficult for him to consider his grandparents as the racists as they had treated him in much kinder way. But his closeness to other angry black young people took him towards experimenting with drugs and alcohol as his reaction to the racist realities of his life.

The second part of Barack Obama's autobiography deals with his life at Occidental College in the suburbs of Los Angeles. It was here that, Barack came in close contact with a large number of coloured students. This association with these coloured students attracted the young Barack to get involved into various movements related to African American community. In those days, he himself was not sure to which race does he belong because of his peculiar racial status as both of his parents had their origins in mixed racial roots. It was in such a mental condition that Barack went to study at Columbia University, New York. He started attending the religious activities in the church. The changing conditions at and around the University campus influenced the young man to a great extent making him take a decision to dedicate his life to the service of the African-American community. This second part comes to an end with news coming from Kenya about the accidental death of his father.

In the last part of this book, the readers are told about Barack's decision to visit Kenya to get reconnected with his father's family. After reaching there, he met many of his half-brothers, half-sisters, aunts, uncles, and other close and distant relatives. His stay with these people made him understand about the real nature and character of his father. During this short stay in Kenya, Barack also learnt many details about his family's history from the time of Kenyan colonization to the present. Barack Obama's autobiography comes to an end with the event of Barack's marriage with Michelle Robinson, a lawyer working with the same Chicago Law firm where Barack himself was connected as a summer associate.

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## 4.7 CONCLUSION

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Thus *Dreams from My Father* is one of the best written and equally well-received African American autobiographies that throws light on the life of Barack Obama and brings out multiple facets of his personality. As he himself has said that many of the people whom readers meet during the course of his life-story are the real-life people; however, there are also some of them whose identity is not revealed by way of giving them fictitious



names so as to maintain their privacy. The translation of this book into dozens of languages shows its immense popularity among the readers all over the world.

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## 4.8 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

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1. Draw a short bio-sketch of Barack Obama.
2. What features of Barack Obama as a politician helped him occupy the position of the US President?
3. Do you think that Barack Obama has succeeded in bringing out all the necessary personal, social and political details from the life of the protagonist of his autobiography? Give suitable textual examples in support of your argument.

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## CRITICAL STUDY OF BARACK OBAMA'S DREAMS FROM MY FATHER - II

### Unit Structure

#### 5.0 Objectives

#### 5.1 Analysis of important Character in *Dreams from My Father*

##### 5.1.1 Barack Obama

##### 5.1.2 The Old Man, Barack's Father

##### 5.1.3 Ann Dunham

##### 5.1.4 Gramps Dunham

##### 5.1.5 Tutu Dunham

##### 5.1.6 Lolo

#### 5.2 Theme of education in *Dreams from My Father*

#### 5.3 Theme of race and identity in *Dreams from My Father*

#### 5.4 Conclusion

#### 5.5 Important Questions

#### 5.6 References

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES:

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The objectives of this unit are to:

- Know the characters of *Dreams from My Father*
- Understand the relationships among the characters
- Look into the thematic concerns of *Dreams from My Father*

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### 5.1 IMPORTANT CHARACTERS IN *DREAMS FROM MY FATHER*

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*Dreams from My Father* being the life story of Barack Obama has enabled him to draw some really life-like and memorable characters. It is also seen that during the course of the delineation of his characters though the autobiographer knew all of them from very close quarters, he has attempted to present them as much objectively as possible. Many of these characters have come to the readers with their real names, but there are also few who have been given imaginary names so as to protect their privacy. Though there are more than two dozen characters in this book, an attempt is made here to focus on the most important ones who are directly connected with

Barack's personal and socio-political life. These characters include: Barack Obama Sr., the writer's father, Ann Dunham, his mother, his grandparents, Gramps and Tutu, and his half-father from Indonesia, Lolo. So it will be worthwhile to look into the lives and personalities of these characters so as to better understand the personality of Barack Obama.

### 5.1.1 Barack Obama

Barack Obama is narrator and the protagonist of the memoir whom readers keep meeting on almost every page of his life-story. He is the son of a white Hawaiian woman and a black Kenyan man. The readers realize very early in the book that Barack could not get company of his biological father for a long time because his parents got divorced when he was just two years' of age. After this divorce, his mother, Ann married Lolo, an Indonesian and moved to Jakarta. After living there for some years, he came back to Hawaii and lived with his grandparents, who enrolled him in one of the best educational institutes of the place.

It was in this school that Barack realized his being 'black' as he witnessed discriminatory behaviour of his schoolmates towards him. After graduating from the school, Barack got admitted to Occidental College. Here he came in contact with many black students, who tried to teach him the black' ways of behaving with the world, particularly the white one. Though initially, Barack found it very difficult to digest such thoughts as he had been in care of his white grandparents and their white friends and acquaintances, who had treated him quite differently than what he was witnessing around him now. This emotionally charged atmosphere made him turn to alcohol and drugs for some time. To come out of it, Barack managed to get transferred to the Columbia University. Then he took a job of community organizer in Chicago. It was during this time that he dedicated all his time and energy to help his people to come out of the life of violence and drugs. He developed better connections with the local church that enabled him to get closely connected with his people.

After some time, he got enrolled for his law degree at Harvard Law School. He actively participated in academic and extension activities of the school and soon became the first black president of the *Harvard Law Review*. When he was working with Chicago law firm as a summer associate, he got acquainted with Michelle Robinson, a lawyer working with the same firm and married her.

### 5.1.2 The Old Man, Barack's Father

The readers meet the Old Man in the very first part of the memoir as he is the father of the autobiographer. He is Kenyan by birth and nationality who had come to the University of Hawaii to complete his higher education. It was during these years that he got acquainted with Ann Dunham, a young white woman and married her with the permission of her parents. The couple had the first and only child, Barack born in 1961. Immediately afterwards, the marriage came to an end as he wanted to return to his home country to serve his people. Barack was less than two years' old at that time. So whatever he writes about his father in his memoir, most of it is in the

form of stories he had heard from his mother, grandparents and other relatives. It was only once, when Barack was about ten years' old, when his father visited them for a month. And it was during this visit that Barack learnt dancing from his father. Of course, there was some communication through letters between the father and the son, but it was not frequent.

The readers come to know that he was a married man before he came to Hawaii to get western education. He had left behind his first wife, Kezia and their two children, Roy and Auma. After completing his education from University of Hawaii, he left his second wife, Ann and their son, Barack to take care of themselves and moved on to Harvard to earn his Ph.D. in Economics. During his stay in Harvard, he got acquainted with Ruth, a white woman, who followed him to Kenya and got married with him there. The couple had two sons from this marriage. During this time, he was also in contact with his first wife, Kezia, who gave birth to two more sons.

The Old Man worked with the government of Kenya but failed to adjust with the government and its policies. He openly criticized the government and spoke against its corrupt ways leading to his getting blacklisted. It seems that he failed to understand how he can utilize his western education to suit his Kenyan roots. With reference to his responsibilities as the son, husband and father of many children, it can be said that he miserably failed to keep his familial ties intact perhaps due to his loose emotional connections with the members of his family. There are multiple incidents in the memoir, where the readers come across negative comments about his behaviour by the members of his own family. It is reported that he meets his end in a road accident in Kenya.

### 5.1.3 Ann Dunham

Ann Dunham is the mother of the writer, Barack Obama, who is found playing an important role in the personal and educational development of her son, Barry. She is the daughter of white parents, Gramps and Toot. Her family was originally from Kansas but now they had settled in Hawaii. Her parents had great love for education and they encouraged Ann to study whatever she wanted. It was during a class in University of Hawaii that she met a black student from Kenya whom she married. But the marriage came to an end shortly after the birth of their son, Barack, who was just two years old.

Undeterred by this emotional shock, Ann moved ahead in her life and married an Indonesian man and left behind her native land and her parents. After reaching to the unknown place like Indonesia and meeting strange people there, Ann realized that it was not the fit place for her growing son. She took a job of a teacher with the embassy to keep connected with her homeland. She taught Barack English and also enrolled him in correspondence course. By the time she had given birth to Maya, her daughter. It seems that she knew the value of good education in one's life and hence sent Barack back to Hawaii, where her parents enrolled him in one of the elite schools there.

After some years, she joined her parents in Hawaii. Her first husband, whom she really loved a lot, visited her for a short time with an intention to get reunited. But this attempt failed and she led her future life taking good care of her children and their education. As she wanted to be an anthropologist, she enrolled for her Ph.D. and received it shortly afterwards. She was very much concerned with the well-being of Barack. So when she came to know that he is not much serious about his studies and has got involved into alcohol and drugs, she made utmost efforts and succeeded in diverting him towards good behaviour. Thus, Ann sincerely played the roles of faithful wife and caring mother to her children.

#### **5.1.4 Gramps Dunham**

Gramps Dunham is the maternal grandfather of Barack Obama. He is a salesman by profession, who allows Barry to stay with him and sees to it that he receives the best of the education. Gramps' family originally belonged to Wichita, Kansas. But it moved to different places in America to avoid the racist atmosphere around. He had married Toot and had Ann as their daughter. After getting settled in Hawaii, Gramps was now working as an insurance agent, the work he disliked. There are many incidents in Barack's memoir, which make it clear that Gramps and Toot believed in humanitarian principles treating all people on equal terms. It is quite evident from the fact that he allowed his daughter, Ann to marry Obama Sr., a black Kenyan and felt proud of having a black son-in-law. But it is also observed that they failed to understand what it really means to be a black person in the racist American society. That is why sometimes Gramps is found cracking racist jokes.

He was kind and considerate with Barack and all his needs. For him, education was the means of climbing the ladder of social hierarchy and moving ahead in life. That is why, he enrolled Barack in Punahou School, an elite school in Honolulu when he was sent back by his mother, Ann from Indonesia to live with her parents. It is also seen that he encourages his daughter, Ann to pursue her higher education even after getting married and having two children. Barack had high opinion of his grandfather even though sometimes he disliked his behaviour.

#### **5.1.5 Tutu Dunham**

Barack Obama's maternal grand-mother and Gramps' wife, Tutu Dunham had a great influence on the life and personality of Barack. She is introduced to the readers as an executive working with a local bank and earning more than her husband, which had been a reason of her fights with Gramps. She was a woman with high morals and work ethics that made her work long hours so that she can really contribute to the growth of her bank.

Toot's was a respectable family that led quite a comfortable life in the neighbourhood. When Toot fell in love with Gramps and announced her decision to get married with him, they did not like it as Gramps' family was not considered socially good as his mother had committed suicide. But finally, they allowed Toot to get married with Gramps and lead her life as she liked.

Toot played a supportive role when she realized that her daughter, Ann had made up her mind to get married with a black man from Kenya. She welcomed her black son-in-law in her house and treated him as kindly as possible. However, after her daughter's marriage came to an end, she felt little disturbed. But even after the divorce, she did not much object to Barack's father's coming and staying with them and trying to make the things better.

Toot was absolutely kind and considerate with Barack. When Ann realized that Indonesia is not the right place for Barack to get his education, she sent him back to her parents. On this occasion, Toot strongly supported her daughter's decision and saw to it that Barack gets admitted in one of the best schools there. She took good care of his emotional and educational needs. As a growing child living away from his parents, Barack sometimes felt lonely and lost. As a mother Toot usually understood Barack's state of mind and helped him to come out of it. She used to tell him stories of his father; how he took great efforts to educate himself and become successful in life. Naturally, Barack had developed a close bond with her that made him to use very kind words while writing about her in his memoir.

#### **5.1.6 Lolo**

Lolo is Barack Obama's step-father whom Ann married after her divorce with Barack Obama Sr. It was Lolo who took Ann and Barry with him to his native country, Indonesia. Though during their initial visits, Lolo tried to convince Ann that he loved his country and wanted to serve it by getting better education in the US, she afterwards came to know that it was, in fact, the Indonesian government that did not want him to continue to stay in the US and eventually forced him to return by seizing his passport. When Ann joined Lolo in Indonesia, she found him a changed man as he was disillusioned with the government and its authoritarian attitude towards the people. These conditions led him to the alcohol that became a cause of concern for Ann.

Ann gave birth to Lolo's daughter, Maya and lived with him for next few years. It was during this stay that Barack developed cordial relationship with Lolo. Whenever he faced any difficulty, Barack sought advice from Lolo, who was kind enough to take care of the growing child. It was Lolo, who taught Barack how to make his place outside the family by confronting all those who came in his way. But as Ann was worried about the future of her children in this foreign country, she decided to send Barack to her parents so that he could get better education. Taking into account her concern for her son, Lolo whole-heartedly supported her decision and arranged for Barack's travel to his grandparents in Hawaii.

Lolo was a responsible husband to Ann, who always cared for her wellbeing. He was equally good father to both Barack and Maya and is found taking good care of them. But his professional life working with the government was far from satisfactory that took a toll on his personal and familial life. He got heavily addicted to alcohol leading to medical complications. After some time, Ann left him and returned to live with



Barack and her parents in Hawaii. However, even after her divorce with Lolo, she helped him travel to America and get proper medical treatment for the complications in his liver, though he could not survive. Thus, Lolo can be remembered as a lovable person, who played a responsible husband and caring father.

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## 5.2 THEME OF EDUCATION IN *DREAMS FROM MY FATHER*

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Barack Obama's life-story, *Dreams from My Father*, begins with Barack's early childhood and ends with his moving out of the Harvard Law School, which generally is the period of education both formal and informal, for many of the children. Naturally, there are numerous incidents in which Barack is seen speaking about his ventures and adventures as a student. However, it is also found out that he not only speaks about his own education, but also about his father, mother and other siblings.

To begin with Barack's father, the readers are told that Obama Sr. was a serious student all his life. He was a Kenyan who had won a scholarship to study in Nairobi and then moved to America and enrolled for a course in Econometrics in Hawaii University as its first African student. He was a bright, hard-working student who won another scholarship to complete his Ph.D. from Harvard before he left for his native country.

Once Ann was a divorcee, she married an Indonesian and went to Indonesia with Barry. She took up a job of teaching English to rich Indonesian businessmen in American Embassy. However, it was not enough for a woman with a small child to fall upon on a foreign, war-ridden land. She was so much concerned of Barack's education that she had enrolled him for a U.S. correspondence course. She herself taught him English before she left for her job. She wanted her son to imbibe some values which will help him to move ahead in life. To instill those values in her son, she used to tell Barack stories of Black children in the South who became doctors, lawyers and scientists reading from their second hand books. She used to present her first husband, Barack Obama Sr. as an epitome of good values which he had carefully acquired by educating himself in the best schools. From the stories which Barack's mother used to tell Barack about his father, he remembers how his father 'had grown up poor, in a poor country, in a poor continent; how his life had been hard, as hard as anything... He hadn't cut corners, though, or played all the angles. He was diligent and honest, no matter what it cost him. He had led his life according to principles that demanded a different kind of toughness, principles that promised a higher form of power. I would follow his example... I had no choice. It was in the genes.'

These deliberate attempts on the part of Barack's mother to give her son lessons on value education at early age enabled him to think of him differently than other children of his age. At later stage he could gauge the significance of those values in one's life.

Barack Obama's life-story shows that Barack was provided better educational opportunities by his mother and maternal parents by sending

him to the best of educational institutes available in the country. It is even observed that after graduating from the school when Barack showed the signs of negligence with respect to his education, his mother reminded him of the legacy of his father and motivated him to do the best in college. Since his early childhood, she had paid close attention towards his education by sending him to school in time and helping him to improve his English by teaching him the subject at 4.00 O'clock in the morning. She even endured the pangs of separation from her son by sending Barack to her parents in America where, she believed, he would get the best of education.

So leaving back his mother and sister in Indonesia, Barack Obama came to America to have good education. Accordingly, with the intervention of his grandfather's boss, who was an alumnus of the same school, Barack was admitted to Punahou Academy, one of the best prep schools of the country. His grandparents were very much proud of Barry's attending such a prestigious school

The educational career of Barack Obama shows that since his early school days – both in Indonesia and America - he was good at learning, doing his homework in time and most of the times keeping himself engaged in his academic activities. Both of his parents have commented that education was in Barack's blood. It was during his visit to Barack, when his father was told that Barack was doing very well in school, he said that his brothers and sisters in Kenya have also excelled in their schooling and added that 'it's in the blood.'

The passion for best education on the part of Barack Obama Sr. can be judged from a story which Barry's mother narrates him. This incident was very much important for the Obama family that included Obama Sr., his wife and a small son. Actually, it was his sacred duty as the head of the family to give preference to the welfare of his wife and son. But instead, he preferred his own education at the best educational institute of America. She tells Barry, "When your father graduated from UH, he received two scholarship offers. One was to the New School, here in New York. The other one was to Harvard. The new School agreed to pay for everything-room and board, a job on campus, enough to support all three of us. Harvard just agreed to pay tuition. But Barack was such a stubborn bastard, he had to go to Harvard. How can I refuse the best education? He told me. That's all he could think about, proving that he was the best...."

This was the approach of Barack Obama's father towards education. This is further underlined from an incident that happened during his visit to America when Barry was attending Punahou Academy. Though he had come to America just for a month's stay with his son, he was very much concerned about his studies. During this stay, he observed that though Barack was doing well in school, he felt that he was not much serious about his studies and was wasting his time in watching the television. He did not like it and picked up the very first opportunity to remind his son the need of education in his life. It was Christmas vacation and Barack was spending much of his time in merry-making. One evening when he was watching his favourite programme on television, his father told him that he had watched

enough television and now he should go to his room and study. When Barack's grandmother switched off the machine and asked Barack to go and watch the show in the bedroom, his father objected saying that Barack had been watching television constantly which was affecting his studies. When Barack's mother tried to explain by saying that it was Christmas and Barack was waiting for that programme for the last one week, Obama Sr. was irritated to see that they did not understand his point, so he exploded, '...this is nonsense. If the boy has done his work for tomorrow, he can begin on his next day's assignments. Or the assignments he will have when he returns from the holidays... Barry, you do not work as hard as you should. Go now, before I get angry at you.'

This was Obama Sr.'s attitude towards education. He himself was an ideal example in the field of education for Barack Jr. to follow. He had succeeded in completing his education with flying colours. He started his education in his own country and then at University of Hawaii followed by a Ph.D. from Harvard which is a proof of his outstanding educational career that he wanted his son to emulate. His knowledge can be gauged from his interaction with the students of Barack's school where he was invited to deliver a special talk on his country. Though initially Barry was not sure of his father's abilities, after the talk, he was really impressed and proud to attend such a session conducted by his father. This brilliant talk of his father enabled Barry to improve his own image among the students and the teachers of his school. It led Barack to change his whole outlook towards education which, he realized in his later years, was the most powerful instrument in the development of his personality. It was not only with reference to Barry's classroom studies that Obama Sr. was concerned but also about other skills which his son was required to master to be a successful person in his life. That is why he taught Barry to dance by taking steps and swaying his body back and forth even though he had a bad leg.

But along with the incidents of Barack's formal education, there are also few of them that throw light on Barack's informal schooling. For example, Lolo, his step-father tried to train Barack to face his immediate surroundings as it was necessary for a black boy to survive in the foreign country. So Lolo bought two pairs of boxing gloves and taught Barack how to protect him if somebody bothers him. Lolo had realized the need for a Black boy in an unfamiliar country to master the skill of fighting in the street to protect himself from the gang of street children.

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### **5.3 THEME OF RACE AND IDENTITY IN *DREAMS FROM MY FATHER***

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Whenever the readers pick up a copy of any African American book, they are already sure that there might be incidents speaking about the racial discrimination practiced in America. Barack Obama's memoir, *Dreams from My Father* is also not exception to this belief. It is stated in the book that Barack was the son of a white mother and black man. So he can be termed as a biracial person having physical traits more of his father than his mother. When he became two years' of age, his father divorced his mother

and moved to Kenya to serve his native land. So Barack was left in the company of his mother and grandparents who were whites and hence did not realize the negative aspects of being black in the American society at this stage. When he became six years old, his mother married an Indonesian man and went to live with him in Jakarta. Barack lived there and took early lessons till he turned ten. But when his mother realized that Indonesia is not the right place for her son to grow, she sent him back to Hawaii to live with her parents.

Barack's parents knew the value of good education in one's life; so they put Barack in Punahou Academy for his school education. Barack was one of the very few black students of this school. He felt little nervous when he realized that there were not many students who wanted to befriend him or share his company in the class on the playground. Initially, he could not understand why he was being treated like that. Even he spoke about it with his grandparents at home. But as they did not want a small child of Barack's age to know about the racist atmosphere, they tried to tell him not to pay any attention towards those students. However, when Barack befriended other black students in and outside the school, he slowly began to understand the meaning of getting discriminatory treatment from the white students.

The similar attempts were also being made by Barack's mother not to make him aware of the racial intricacies all around him. To distract his attention from the discriminatory treatment given to the blacks, she used to narrate Barack the stories of African Americans who were fighting for the equal rights in America during the civil rights movement. She strongly believed that the African Americans were the people having immeasurable ability to endure, yet the terrible miseries in their lives had made them to revolt against their oppressor. During her stay in Indonesia, to enable her son to know what is happening in his home country, she used to borrow books on civil rights movement from the library of the Embassy. These books helped Barack understand the lives of African Americans and their struggle for equality. However, while reading the magazine, *Life*, Barack's whole outlook got altered when he saw a picture of a Black man who was shown trying to peel off his skin. After reading the article in the magazine, Barack became doubtful about his own self. He feared that anything can happen to him even without his own knowledge. He realized that there was some hidden enemy that was constantly working against the welfare of the African Americans. He seemed to have understood the subtle politics of the racial oppression which altered his vision permanently. In this connection, he writes, "I began to notice that Cosby never got the girl on *I Spy*, that the black man on *Mission Impossible* spent all his time underground. I noticed that there was nobody like me in the Sears, Roebuck Christmas catalog... and that Santa was a white man."

Though he did not let his mother know what he thought about the partial treatment given to the African Americans, he began to realize what kinds of problems he might face in his life. He had realized that as he was an African American, it was not easy for him to get fully immersed into American culture as the Whites won't allow him to do so. Therefore the only possible

means available for all African American children including Barack was equipping them with as much knowledge as possible. That's exactly Barack Obama did. But confrontation with the Whites seemed inevitable for him.

While sharing his experience of the first day at the new school, Barack was forced to go through an annoying experience because of the colour of his skin. Though his teacher, Miss Hefty, did not want to hurt his feelings by asking him questions regarding his Kenyan father and his tribe, Barry became the laughing stock for the students of the class as his father belonged to Luo tribe in Kenya. It hurt his tender feelings in such a way that Barack Obama 'spent the rest of the day in a daze. A redheaded girl asked to touch my hair and seemed hurt when I refused. A ruddy-faced boy asked me if my father ate people... a part of me felt trampled on, crushed.'

The sense of humiliation made Obama to keep himself locked in his room after coming back from the school in the evening. Such kind of treatment received at school made Barack feel that he does not 'belong' to the place. But afterwards he managed to make some friends at school by telling them that his father was the prince of his tribe and, if he wanted, he can also become the prince after his father's succession to the throne.

Along with the knowledge Barack Obama received from the books he studied at school on sciences and languages, he also learnt about the rampant discriminative practices on and around the campus which had severe effects on his young mind. He noticed that the Black children in the school, on the ground and in the streets were treated differently than the White children. This was humiliating for Barack. It seemed to him that his case was a little different from other African Americans as his mother was White, his grandparents were White and he was adorned by them at home. They had always taken care of his needs. Still somehow he felt that his 'self' was being insulted by the kind of treatment the other African Americans were receiving at the hands of the Whites. The education which he was provided in the school could not help him understand the intricacies of the racial relationships. Therefore, he decided to supplement his schooling by reading the books other than those prescribed for his regular studies at school. In this connection, he writes. "I gathered up books from the library – Baldwin, Ellison, Hughes, Wright, DuBois. At night I would close the door to my room, telling my grandparents I had homework to do, and there I would sit and wrestle with words, locked in suddenly desperate argument, trying to reconcile the world as I'd found it with the terms of my birth. But there was no escape to be had. In every page of every book, in *Bigger Thomas* and *invisible men*, I kept finding the same anguish, the same doubt; a self-contempt that neither irony nor intellect seemed able to deflect."

Barack Obama's attempts to understand the intricacies of racial practices of White America at an early stage of his educational career present him as a promising student who had determined to fathom out all the possible solutions to the problems that surrounded American life. Along with the books which he read to know about the race problem, he also tried to collect bits of information from his conversations with the Blacks in the area. It was during one of such conversations with Frank, a Black friend of his



grandfather, that Barack came to know that peeping into the hearts of Black people was not an easy task as there lay hidden the dark truths about the past lives of their people. Frank tells Barack that it was not possible for the Blacks to trust the Whites because the Whites had ‘humiliated their fathers and desecrated their mothers.’ So now, naturally the Whites were scared of Blacks because they knew that the Blacks had ‘a reason to hate’ the Whites.

This entire racial atmosphere at the school severely affected the sensitive minded Barack. That is why he started taking more interest in outside activities than the school activities in later days of his educational career. However, it became a serious cause of concern for his mother, who always wanted Barry to get best of the education. So when she observed that Barry was in bad company and recently one of his friends had got arrested for possessing drugs, she felt perturbed. When Barry told his mother that he was not much serious about going to college; rather he would take some classes and find some part-time job to support him, her anxieties increased manifold and she insisted him to take more ‘efforts’ rather than waiting for luck to come to him.

After graduating from Punahou Academy, Barack Obama got admitted to Occidental College, Los Angeles for the reason better known to him. Even though Barack was not sure what he would get out of college, Frank knew that he would get ‘an advanced degree in compromise’ from there. He warned Barry that he should not be like all other African American people who meekly accept whatever they are taught at school, take some job offered to them and get settled in their lives. Frank tried to explain Barry the prevalent educational system by saying that Barack was “not going to college to get educated. You’re going there to get *trained*. They’ll train you to want what you don’t need. They’ll train you to manipulate words so they don’t mean anything more. They’ll train you to forget what it is that you already know. They’ll train you so good, you’ll start believing what they tell you about equal opportunity and the American way and all that shit. They’ll give you a corner office and invite you to fancy dinners, and tell you you’re a credit to your race. Until you want to actually start running things, and then they’ll yank on your chain and let you know that you may be a well-trained, well-paid nigger, but you’re a nigger just the same.”

These words of wisdom from an African American person made Barack Obama aware of the existing realities in the field of education in America. Frank had rightly mentioned that the present system of education used to provide training to the learners to believe what the powerful policy-makers want them to believe. There is no scope for independent thinking; and if somebody tried to think independently, the system employed all the available means to crush the spirit of that person. Therefore, it was the need of the hour for the African Americans to be vigilant all the time and not to accept anything without evaluating it on the principle of rationality and humanity.

It is observed that this technique of the powerful always worked in their favour as the weak got driven away by the falsely upheld precepts of the powerful. It is particularly true with reference to the concept of racial

assimilation. The Whites make the people of minority communities believe that the Whites are superior because of their certain manners and the minorities can be one with the Whites if they acquire those manners. Naturally as soon as the members of African American community master those behavioral patterns, they think that they will be accepted in the White community on equal basis. However, in their attempt to get assimilated with the Whites, those individuals become alienated not only from the whites but also from their own community. Therefore African Americans should understand the politics of assimilation and try to keep themselves away from it.

It is so because of the kind of textbooks prescribed in the schools and colleges. Barack Obama writes in this connection that "...the book teaches me things... About white people... the book's not about Africa. Or black people. It's about the man who wrote it. The European. The American. A particular way of looking at the world. If you can keep your distance, it's all there, in what's said and what's left unsaid. So I read the book to help me understand just what it is that makes white people so afraid. Their demons. The way ideas get twisted around. It helps me understand how people learn to hate."

As Barack had learned how to read and interpret those books, he seemed to understand the most probable reasons of hatred between the Whites and African Americans. It is but natural for a person like Barack Obama to give a serious thought to the subtleties of the issue of racial hatred that prevailed American society for such a long time. And in this kind of discriminatory socio-political atmosphere, it was very difficult for Barack to understand who he was and what his identity was. However, the readers easily understand the peculiar situation in which Barack was trapped in American society that had forced him to lose his self-identity both as an individual in his own right as well as the respectable member of the African American community that had been immensely contributing to the development of America as a superpower.

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## 5.4 CONCLUSION

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The critical analysis of Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* shows that the writer has drawn his characters with utmost care paying attention to all the minute details of their personalities so as to make them life-like.

Though Barack Obama touches upon multiple themes in his autobiography, the major ones are the issues of education, race and identity that seriously affect the growth and development of the writer's personality.

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## 5.5 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

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Q.1: Draw the character sketch of Barack Obama.

Q.2: To what extent do you think The Old Man, Barack's father is responsible for the shaping of the personality of his son, Barry?



- Q.3: Write a note on the relationship between Barack's father and his wife, Ann Dunham.
- Q.4: Compare the characters of Gramps and Tutu.
- Q.5: Discuss the theme of identity and racial discrimination in Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*.
- Q.6: What role does education play in the personal and socio-political life of Barry in *Dreams from My Father*?

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## CRITICAL STUDY OF SELECTED SHORT STORIES FROM DESPERATE MEN AND WOMEN: TEN DALITS SHORT STORIES FROM INDIA

### Unit Structure

#### 6.0 Objectives

##### 6.1 About the author B. Rangrao

##### 6.2 Introduction

##### 6.3 Common Theme of the Short-Stories

##### 6.4 Analysis / Assessment of the Short Stories

###### 6.4.1 Death of a Rich Man

###### 6.4.2 When the Sun God Refund to Set

###### 6.4.3 Loneliness of an ex-soldier

###### 6.4.4 Confession of a Graveyard Keeper

##### 6.5 Conclusion

##### 6.6 Questions / Exercise

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVE:

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The Movement of Dalit Literature in India is one of the major assets of Protest Literature. Implied by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar architect of the Indian Constitution, it sought to awaken the readers to new social reality where had never be depicted by the writers of canonical values. Dalit it writers protested against exploitation of all sorts- social, economic political or **religious** and speaks for the underprivileged in society. This protest assures liberation to every individual and transformation of society into a better place live in.

The objective of introducing there short stories to the three year degree course in English is to acquaint the students with the social reality where had never been depicted earlier. Caste in India has always been a dominant factor. Caste has been responsible for the social divisions that have prevailed in India for centuries together. There social divisions offered innumerable privileges to a few, while a large portion of population suffered from all sorts of miseries and remained poor, **grurant** and wretched. This social imbalanced is theoretically dealt with in the Constitution after

Independence, but in practice, the evils of casteism can be observed by and large everywhere in India even today.

Critical Study of Selected  
Short Stories from Desperate  
Men and Women: Ten Dalits  
Short Stories from India

The Short-Stories by B.Rangrao aim to demonstrate the evils of casteism and their ill-effect on the lives of individuals. These short-stories, however, are not the documentary evidence, but an artistic portrait of the India social reality.

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## 6.1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR B. RANGRAO

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B. Rangrao is the pen-name of Dr. Rangrao J. Bhongle, professor and former Head, Dept. of English, University of Mumbai. He is a well-known Dalit writer and has published poetry, fiction, plays and criticism in English and in Marathi his first language. His books have won prestigious awards in the state and are discussed among the scholars and lovers of literature at large. The moon at the window is a collection of his poems in English which was received well by the readers of poetry. B. Rangrao has edited Marathi Dalit Kavita for the Sahitya Akademi and has added to it Introduction offering detailed and scholarly information about the movement of Dalit Literature in Marathi.

B. Rangrao writes regularly on the socio-cultural issues, taking revolutionary stand, opposing socio discrimination and injustice. All his writing makes the revolutionary spirit in him explicit and evident. The collection of his Dalit Short Stories Desperate Men and Women. Ten Dalit short stories from India is a landmark of Dalit writing in Indian English. The book was discussed in a seminar organized by a Private University in 2013. B. Rangrao was DAAD Professor at Otto von Guericke University in Germany where he held lessons on Indian English Poetry for the German students.

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## 6.2 INTRODUCTION:

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B. Rangrao is a Dalit writer and Ambedkarite scholar in Maharashtra. He has published poetry, fiction, plays and criticism in English and in Marathi- his first language. He is a former professor and Head, Department of English, University of Mumbai.

The short stories prescribed for the course are taken from Desperate men and women. Ten Dalit Short Stories from India (Now Delhi, Kalpa publication, 2013). The book has Preface and Introduction where explain several issues that have been dealt with by the author in these short stories. The issues involved are caste, religion, economic condition of the depressed classes, their relationship with the upper castes, miseries and wretchedness that plague their lives constantly and the ultimate destiny they are led to. There in fact, are the general issues which form major theme of Dalit literature. Dalit literature is not about economic inequality though penury and poverty are important factors in the writings of Dalit sensibility. It is not about religiosity, though evils of Introduction are major concerns of a Dalit writer, it is also not about illegitimacy in birth and social transaction, social though Dalit writer opposes such discriminatory norms. Dalit literature is about

evils of casteism and their devastating effects on individual and society. Caste has done irreparable damage to the nation. In fact, Castes and their internal contradictions denied the status of nation to India. They never allowed India to develop into a coherent whole. Consequently, India population remained scattered into country-wide wilderness. Dr. Ambedkar elaborates the damage done by castes in India and the reason speech Annihilation of caste. Castes rendered a large portion of India population on untouchables who were compelled to lead the life of sub-human inferior beings. They were denied education, respectable social existence and interaction with the social cultural social groups. Consequently, they remain ignorant, uneducated and clearless of general respectability. They here, what Fanon calls the wretched of the Earth. It has mainly due to the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar that the while untouchables raised themselves up above the social misery and wretchedness, and created social identity for themselves. This social identity can be traced in the writings of Dalit writers who speak for their community and the sufferings they have undergone. They revolt against the inhuman tradition that the India. Society nourished for centuries together. Their revolt does not remain a never verbal protest, but assumes the form of a revolution that would include within its range, all that is just and creative. It rejects all that is canonical, because canoers were formed by a society which was itself based on inequality of all sorts. Classicism and all the texts it produced was the product of that discriminatory nation where asserted – “the best and the rest”, “us and they” etc. A Dalit writer, therefore denounces the whole tradition itself. Namdev Dhansal proclaims in one of his poems-

Plato, Einstein, Archimedes, Socrates, Marx, Ashok, Hitler-Bitler, Camus Satre, Kafka, Baudelaire, Rambo, Ezra Pound Hopkins, Goethe, Dostoyevsky, Mykoevsky, Maxim Gorky, Edition-Medison, Kalidas, Tukaram, Homer, Vyas, Valmiki Throw them away into the gutter man hole.

The short stories by B. Rangrao after graphic account of the life of the depressed classes their sorrows and sufferings, brief rejoicing moments and the perpetual miseries that follow them everywhere.

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### 6.3 COMMON THEME OF THE SHORT STORIES:

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Desperate men and women contains ten short stories. All of them depict sufferings of the Dalits in India. In Fact, the word ‘Dalit’ has long been rejected by the writers of Dalit sensibility. They prefer to be called “the Ambedkarite”, because the term ‘Dalit’ has derogatory connotations and is no longer applicable to the present status of the ~~ur~~st-while untouchables. Despite this change in nomenclature, miseries of the Dalits in India continue to be what they were earlier. This is evident in all the short stories in the book. The four short stories prescribed for study do so more evidently. Poverty, ignorance, sentimental attachment, important rage and haplessness, make are present in all the short stories. This, however, does not these stories melodramatic rather they come up as presentation of new realism in Indian literature where had never been depicted by the so called

main stream writers. Death of a rich man presents the contradiction between the lives of the poor and the rich society. The poor boys from the untellable community are a neglected lot. They struggle for survival and perish in the process. The little Death of A Rich Man has sarcastic overtones, because it is a poor boy who died in the end it is his death that the writer is really concerned with. The rich man death, however, poses as a good paradox where in the Dalit sensibility resides. When the Sun God Refused to set is perhaps the best story ever written by a writer of Dalit sensibility. It depicts the plight of a man Raghoba who has spent all his life in raising up his two children after his wife dies at the young age. In old age, however, he is left all alone and develops derelium called back the memories of his wife who has left him alone to suffer. The story covers within its range social and psychological realism that make it a readable stuff which in one criterion of a good short story. Loneliness of an Ex-soldier offers yet another example of helplessness of the Dalit in India. Was an ex-soldier, who was known for his unparalleled courage and heroism, is rendered helpless after retirement. The evils of centrism and the insensitive government machinery leaves him nowhere. The brave soldier of an Indian army cannot protect his young sister who is raped and killed mercilessly by the casteist hoodlums. The irony in the situation is well brought out by the author. Confessions of a Graveyard Keeper is a humorous presentation of social reality in modern India. The protagonist is a graveyard keeper who narrates his experiences in a manner and style which evokes pathos and humans at the same time. Like other stories in the collection Confessions of a Graveyard Keeper depicts the de-humanizing social condition in which the oppressed class people are compelled to live. This story is marked with sarcasm, humour and pathos.

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## 6.4 ANALYSIS/ASSESSMENT OF THE SHORT STORIES:

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### 6.4.1 Death of a Rich Man:

This is the story of a Dalit boy called Satya who is enrolled in school register as Satyawant Tryambak Meshram. Satya does not like school and the lessons therein and mostly stays away from it. He spends most of his time on the bank of the river with his friends who are from other Dalit communities. These boys either swim in the river water or wander along the river bank teasing each other, giggling and indulging in things that really do not suit their age. They are aware of the fact that whenever someone dies in the village, the dead body is either buried or cremated on the river bank. This offers them a chance to collect a few coins hurled across the corpse in the funeral procession, also a few more left on the place of the cremation or burial. This is the time for them to 'earn' and help their parents who are always annoyed and angry at their waywardness. Satya's case, in particular, is noteworthy. His parents had enrolled him in school in response to their leaders on education and his call to "educate, unite and agitate." They knew their son's dislike for school therefore, they worried that he should at least work and help them to run the family. Satya, however, was good for nothing.

The village where in Satya lived had all the castes and communities living peacefully together. There were rich Marwaris with huge havelis and hundreds of acres of fertile land spread across the village. The poor villagers, men and women from backward communities, worked on these land and earned their livelihood. Therefore, they respected the rich marwaris and maintained respectful distance from them at the same time. Seth Jhabarmal a rich Marwari in the village in his late eighties, was sick for quite sometimes. He suffered from various ailments. The entire village knew about his condition and prayed for the old man to live longer, or at least die in peace. Satya and his friends knew this as well, and waited eagerly for the marwari's death so that they could 'earn' a few coins. So it happened. Seth Jhabarmal died at the ripe age. The news spread in the village like riled fire. A larger number of villagers gathered outside the haveli in desperate hope of last darshan of the seth. Satya and his friends were also present at the gate of the haveli and were overjoyed to see the dead body being taken out on a ladder. A huge funeral procession moved slowly towards the river bank where the seth's dead body was to be cremated. The chant of "Ram Nam Satya Hai" was heard in chorus. Coins of one rupee or of bigger value were hurled across the corpse. The boys wanted to collect the coins before they fall down on the ground and earn their share. A kind of race began to leap in the air and catch hold of the coins. Men in the procession were accustomed to this and did not really mind the disturbance. They, however, were insensitive towards the boys falling on the ground and trampled upon their bodies.

Satya, who was weak compared to other boys could collect none as the stronger and fitter boys succeeded in their efforts. Satya was desperate and wanted to earn a few, so that he could please his father who, otherwise would not allow him to enter the home. He, therefore, made the last effort- the last and the best. He kept up in the air, aiming at a coin above the head of the men in procession. But he missed the coin even this time and fell down on the ground like a pumpkin dropped down. The men cursed the boy called him fifty names and walked ahead treading upon his weary limbs. The procession moved ahead towards the river bank, Satya body, however, lay motionless on the ground. They were still chanting "Ram Nam Satya Hai", but it could not reach to Satya's lifeless ears. Was he dead? or was he alive?

The story in this manner, presents that aspect of life in India, which existed along with pleasant ones, but was never recorded in literature. The irony becomes explicit towards the end of the story when the readers want to know the condition of Satya and temporarily forget death of the rich man. The title of the story thus, is ironical and evokes the memory of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* where in death is treated in same what similar manner.

#### **6.4.2 When The Sun God Refused To Set:**

Each of the short stories in the collection is an example in itself. *When The Sun God Refused to Set* a combination of myth and reality. It offers a good example of psychological working in the mind of a Dalit man, who has



suffered throughout life, yet freshly the surrounding stoically till he ultimately succumbs to death.

Raghoba, a Dalit man, has lost his wife when he was young. He refused to remarry despite unsurmountable pressure from the relatives. He instead decides to raise his two children- girl and boy- and take proper care of them. However, he can never forget sweet memories of the day he spent with his wife. He loved her very much, and he loves his children equally. He lives in a small hut with his children and is happily settled. Raghoba enrolls his children in school, and when his daughter- kala- comes of age, he marries her off to a suitable young man. His Son-Babu-goes to school and reaches up to tenth standard without difficulties. Raghoba wants his son to continue education and makes preparation to send him to taluka place for higher studies. Raghoba's day starts with praying the sun with folded hands. Other things follow only after the prayer. That has become his daily habit. Time passes on. Age has started telling on Raghoba's nerves and he always falls ill. He gets delusion in which he behave improperly. He, however, is unaware of that and is under the impression that there is nothing wrong with him. Babu comes to know about his father's illness and decided to stay home to take care of his father. He gets a small job in village grampanchayat and earns enough to make the two ends meet. Raghoba asks his son to get married and bring Laxmi in hawse, so that pence prevails and they live happily together. Babu agrees, **unurillirgly** though.

Trouble starts on the first night of Babu's marriage. Raghoba is extremely happy and is often found talking to his dead wife who would have been equally happy seeing her new 'bahu' at home. He gets delusions once again. When his son and daughter-in-law are together during their wedding night he enters the room. The girl is deeply disturbed. Babu tries to explain the situation and his father's illness to his bride. She is convinced. Raghoba's delusion return the next night and he again walks into the place when the young couple are engaged in love making. Babu is extremely annoyed and should at his father sending him away. Raghob comes back to himself and realizes the blunder he has committed. He loved his son much that he would not forgive himself for causing disturbance in his joying moments.

Next morning the sky was overloaded with clouds. The sun did not appear. Babu did not see his father moving about as usual. It was late and he went to wake his father. Raghoba was no more. He passed away during the night itself.

The story often a beautiful blending of might and reality and opens up the psychological wiring of the working of the mind of a man who is deeply drowned in love for wife and children.

#### **6.4.3 Loveliness of An Ex-Soldier:**

This is the story of a young soldier called Wasu who has retired from army after serving it for fifteen long years. Wasu was a brave soldier and well-known for his courageous acts. He had carried his wounded lieutenants on shoulders fearlessly amid the shower of bullets from the army camp and

saved their lives. The whole battalion grew sentimental when he retired and returned home in his village after fifteen years.

Wasu was mahar by caste and a staunch follower of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He decided to teach the Ambedkarite principle to young boys of his communities and held regular meeting in which he appealed his community men and women to renounce discriminatory customised not to celebrate festivals that are expensive and based on untrue stories. He also taught them not to bow down to Brahmins and other caste –Hindus who think themselves superior.

This disturbed the village atmosphere which, till the arrived of Wasu, was running smoothly. The fellowmen of Dr. Ambedkar who agrled with Wasu, were ex-communicated. Young boys in the village from Wasu's community were framed into false allegation. Caste-Hindu women drawing water free well refused water to thirsty Wasu when he was returning home from work. And then – Wasu's young sister Suman – Sumi – as she was called – disappeared. She was formed dead the next day walk her young body mutilated and her clothes tattered. She was obviously raped and killed mercilessly.

Wasu was dumb formed and awe-struck. Those men and women from his community, who were his followers. Yesterday refused to side with him. His lonely struggle began. He went to the police authorities and reported the matter. The police, however, did nothing to give him justice. The police van came after two days, discussed the matter with head of the village panchayat and went away. The matter did not progress beyond the initial stage. Wasu, the brave soldier in the Indian army was left alone and helpless, drowned in loneliness and desperation.

The story, thus, is about the injustice meted out to the Dalits even after Independence. The soldier who fought for the nation's security was insecure in his own homeland. This is the general truth that prevails everywhere in India after Independence. It is pathetic but true.

#### **6.4.4 Confessions of a Graveyard Keeper:**

This is a humsusous story replete with amusing sarcasm. The Protagoras is a narrator himself who narrator the events in his life in an amusing manner. His parents were chandals attending the dead in graveyard. They worked on the bank of river Ganga at Benaras – that holy place where the dead were hurled out into the river water which Gangamai carried away quietly. The narrator grew up watching his parents attending the dead at the bank rives. He noticed the boats crossing the river, and watched the women bathing in Ganga water. He had his first successful masturbation here on the bank of river Ganga.

The Protagoras lost his father unexpected widow worst not allowed to touch the dead and watch the funeral rites. The came to a place called Rampur and worked a graveyard under the supervision of an old man called Anda Burji. This Anda Bhurji was drawn toward the young widow and allowed her to stay in the graveyard with her son. The old Anda Burji often visited their

house and then sent the boy away on some pretext or other. The women did not mind Anda Bhurji's approach, because she was in need of support, and was sure about the old man's ineffective, dangling scotch. Anda Bhurji died in course of time, and the entire charge of the graveyard came to the narrator and his mother. The narrator is married to Anda Bhurji's youngest daughter who is very talkative and as dark a tar. The Protagonist narrator narrates numerous events which are amusing and funny. His mother dies and is not allowed by customs, to be buried in the graveyard which was exclusively reserved for the upper castes. He, however, dares the conventions and buries his mother's dead in the graveyard itself.

The time passes on and he continues to be the sole keeper of the graveyard. His wife loses her front two teeth. That makes her keep her mouth shut and remain silent.

The story is extremely amusing and readable. A Dalit boy, as the Protagonist is, has no inhibition references to women bathing in the Ganga water, leaving their breasts uncovered, the mating couple, in the temple courtyard, elopement of a Muslim girl and a Hindu boy etc. etc.

The story is also remarkable for the Dalit ethos, the discriminatory Hindu customs and the sufferings they cause to the untouchables. Humour and pathos stay together in the short story named Confessions of a Graveyard Keeper.

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## 6.5 CONCLUSION:

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The short stories in Desperate Men and Women. Ten Dalit Short Stories from India are true representative of Dalit writings in India. The four short stories, in the life of oppressed classes in India, become more explicit here than perhaps, anywhere else. These stories are set in various parts of India so that they offer the picture of the nation as a whole. Confessions of a Graveyard Keeper describes life on the bank of river Ganga, while other stories like when the Sun God Refused to Set depicts the life in remote parts of the nation. The author's main concern in the short stories is social realism, that aspect of social realism, which had never been depicted earlier and which was, more or less, anathema to the so-called cultured society. Dalit writings assumes more inclusion within their range when Dalit writing found out and exposed to the new world. The short stories of B. Rangrao are the testimony.

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## 6.6 EXERCISE / QUESTIONS:

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- a) What Dalit writings in India? How do they surface in the short stories of B. Rangrao. Answer the question drawing references from the stories prescribed for study.
- b) Satya in Dalit of a Rich Man and Wasu in loneliness of an Ex-soldier cannot be blamed for the tragedy that ultimately strikes them. They, in fact, are the victims of larger oppressive social set-up which has mutilated the less-privileged for centuries together. Discuss.

- c) Bring out the elements of myth and psychology in which the Sun God Refused to set.
- d) Humour and pathos prevail everywhere in Confessions of a Graveyard Keeper. Discuss.
- e) Short stories by B. Rangrao are not a social documentation of poverty, ignorance, squalor, anger and protest associated with the life of Dalit in India. They are an artistic portrayal of the social life which had never been depicted in canonical writings. Do you agree with these statements ? Answer drawing references from the short stories you have studied.

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