

BEGC-132
Selections From Indian
Writing: Cultural
Diversity

Block

2**Language Politics: Hindi, Urdu and English**

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BLOCK 2 LANGUAGE POLITICS: HINDI, URDU AND ENGLISH

This Block will consider the question of language per se as also Hindi and Urdu in the Indian subcontinent, making special references to Indian writing in English. It will acquaint the learner with the complex circumstances in the twentieth century Indian context that shaped the role of communication among the larger population. By reading parts of an essay that grappled with the dialectic of struggle against a colonial regime, the learner will understand the questions that are posed regarding the political and ideological preferences that might be made while spreading education and propagating ideas. The poems discussed are vitally linked to these concerns so that the learner will have an informed view regarding the politics of language.



UNIT 1 UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

(In view of Excerpt from ‘Introduction: A Conspectus’ in *A House Divided: the Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi* by Amrit Rai)

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 About the author: Amrit Rai
- 1.3 Excerpt: Understanding Hindavi
- 1.4 Discussion
- 1.5 Khusrau and Hindavi
- 1.6 Language, Culture and Power: The case of Hindavi
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Aids to Activities
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- 1.10 Unit End Questions
- 1.11 References and Suggested Reading

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall consider the question of language per se as also Hindi and Urdu in the Indian subcontinent. You will be acquainted with the complex circumstances in the twentieth century Indian context that shaped the role of communication among the larger population. When you read parts of an essay that grappled with the **dialectic** of struggle against a colonial regime, you will, with the help of the points raised in the essay, understand the case for appropriate language-use in our country.

Words given in **bold** throughout this unit are explained in the **Glossary** at the end.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us, at the outset, come face to face with an issue that is of prime importance concerning communication generally, and connecting members of society in a thread of unity particularly. The first relates to saying something in words that are sound patterns denoting a view about the world in which we live. We call it language and that is a part and parcel of our existence. Language is a human act in which the mind plays an active part. The study of such an act is known as linguistics, the science of language. The second that concerns uniting people, fulfils a social purpose. In it we perceive the social sense, the urge to live in a bond that will strengthen us as well as create an atmosphere of goodwill and friendship. It deals with the role that language may play in life, and how it may add richness to our existence. Thus, we know how we handle questions of culture, ideas and relationships. Let us reiterate - language is defined to gain clarity so that we understand its nature. Further, under this head, we have information

about the way ideas are structured. The starting point is sound patterns which later evolve into units of impressions and ideas. Still later, when we confront problems of repetition and being stuck to certain notions, the study of language may assist us in sorting out word-entanglements. But this theoretical endeavour is pursued because we realise that it has a purpose beyond mere study. That is where society is brought in and we start looking at language from the point of view of usefulness. In this unit, we shall engage with the twin issues with respect to the use of Hindi.

Activity 1

In your opinion, based on your reading of the above, how is language and its study relevant to society?

1.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: AMRIT RAI

Amrit Rai was a prolific Hindi novelist, a critic and a translator. He is renowned in academic circles for his definitive biography of Premchand, *Qalam ka Sipahi*, which won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1963 and later, the Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1971. He also wrote several novels such as *Dhuan*, *Sargam*, *Hathi ke Dant*, etc. He translated Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* into Hindi, and wrote critical works such as *Nai Sameeksha* and *Vichardhara aur Sahitya*. Versatile in many languages, he also wrote one of the most significant works on the Hindi-Urdu debate in English, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi*.

1.3 EXCERPT: UNDERSTANDING HINDAVI

Before we move further in pursuit of these aspects and comprehend how social life involves us in the working of a language, let us take a look at the following argument that Amrit Rai presented in one of his books, *A House Divided*. I quote a passage from the beginning of a chapter titled "A House Divided." This offers a comprehensive view of the issue we are discussing in this unit. The passage is as follows:

A House Divided

The present work proposes to be a study of the earliest origins of the language Hindi/ Hindavi, and an investigation into the causes that led to its division into two separate languages, modern Hindi and modern Urdu.

Sometimes, this word 'Hindi' is also used in a general sense, as noted by Grierson:

It is a Persian, not an Indian word and, properly signifies a native of India, as distinguished from a 'Hindu' or 'non-Musalman' Indian. ... In this sense, Bengali and Marathi are as much Hindi as the language of the **Doab**.

However, at various places Khusrau (1251/54-1325) uses the word 'Hindi' in the specific sense of the language, and that, naturally, the language of North-Western India with which the Muslims first came in contact in the Punjab and then in Delhi. Speaking of this Hindi language Khusrau had occasion to comment:

I shall be wrong if I do not say what I know to be true: the Hindi word is in no way inferior to the Persian. With the exception of Arabic, which is ahead of all languages, it is better than all the others. For example, the language of Ray and Rum (places in Iran and Turkey respectively) are, after careful thought, found to be inferior to Hindi.

Then, further reinforcing his opinion:

If you ask me about the expressive power of this language—do not think of it as less than that of any other.

Elsewhere, referring to Masud Sad Salman, an earlier poet, Khusrau says:

No other prince of poetry, before now, had three *Divans*. I am the only one who has, so I am verily the king of my domain. True, Masud Sad Salman too, is credited with three *Divans*, one each in Arabic, Persian and Hindavi, but I am the only one who has three such collections in Persian alone.

Speaking of the same poet, Masud Sad Salman, Mohammad Aufi says:

He has three big collections of poems—one in Arabic, another in Persian, and a third in *Hindi*.

It is to be noted that Khusrau and Aufi refer to the same language as Hindi and Hindavi. It would thus be safe to assume that the two words are interchangeable. Therefore, I shall also, in the course of this study, use the terms Hindi/Hindavi for the language under review; and if in the interest of brevity 'Hindi' alone is used, it is clearly to be understood that I use it in exactly the same sense as did Aufi and Khusrau, and that it is *not* intended to mean modern or standard Hindi, or what Grierson calls **High Hindi**.

It would seem that this use of the word Hindavi is much the same as Gilchrist's 'Hinduwee':

Hinduwee I have treated as the exclusive property of the Hindoos alone and have therefore constantly applied it to the old language of India, which prevailed before the Moosulman invasion and in fact now constitutes among them the basis or groundwork of the Hindoostani, a comparatively recent superstructure composed of Arabic and Persian.

I advisedly say 'much the same', because Gilchrist's basic characterisation of the language as 'the old language of India which prevailed before the Moosulman's invasion' is acceptable but with some important reservations. First, it does not seem right to describe Hinduwee or Hindavi as 'the exclusive property of Hindus alone.' Some of the greatest poets of Hindi-Hindavi are Muslims. Secondly, to refer to Hinduwee as 'the old language of India which prevailed *before* the Moosulman invasion' seems to imply that the development of Hinduwee or Hindavi came to a stop *after* the 'Moosulman invasion'. This was not so. As we go along and trace the development of this language we shall see that it had a natural and quite uninterrupted growth until several centuries after the Muslim invasion.

In the light of the foregoing remarks, the present study is, in the first place, a research into the earliest origins of Hindi/Hindavi and, secondly, a socio-linguistic

inquiry into the causes that led, at some point in time, to its division into two separate languages - standard or High Hindi and standard or High Urdu as we know them today, and also as they are known in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

However, their recognition as two separate languages under the Constitution need not deter linguists from questioning the scientific validity of their separation. For example, Gyan Chand, a noted Urdu scholar, says:

It is absolutely clear that Urdu and Hindi are not two separate languages. To call them two languages is to belie all principles of linguistics and to deceive oneself and other...Even though Urdu literature and Hindi literature are two different and independent literatures, Urdu and Hindi are not two different languages...Enumerating Urdu and Hindi as two languages in the Indian Constitution, is political expediency, not a linguistic reality.

Activity 2

Do you think that it is right to characterise Hinduwee or Hindavi as exclusive to Hindus?

1.4 DISCUSSION

First, let us summarise the passage. Initially, says Amrit Rai, the word “Hindi” denoted the country India - anybody who lived in India could be called Hindi with the same meaning that “Indian” had. Thus, a person was Hindi and a language such as Tamil or Marathi was Hindi. But, “Hindi” also denoted the Hindi language that was spoken in Northwest India. This was the case, said Amir Khusrau, to whom the language existed before the Muslim invasion occurred. The name given to the language was, however, “Hindavi” or “Hinduwee.” The two words were interchangeable. Khusrau also asserted that from the point of view of use and expression, Hindavi was the best language in the world barring Arabic. Soon after, Rai says that the Muslim invasion did little to Hindavi except putting it into a creative mode which, indeed, contributed to its growth. As such, Hindavi did not stagnate but kept its pace of evolution in the coming centuries. Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it entered a new phase and became Modern Hindi, or what came to be called High Hindi.

What about Urdu? In Rai’s opinion, Modern Hindi and Modern Urdu are one language, they cannot be separated since they share the history of Hindavi with which they are vitally connected. In this sense, the two words did not do much except lead one to believe that it was not one but two languages. In this, there is a catch, says Rai. Whereas the language is one, literature written in it has gone in two directions and resulted in two distinct literatures - Hindi literature and Urdu literature. They are separate from each other and each enjoys a distinct identity.

Do you see how the argument presented by Rai has become subtler? The two literatures have separate sets of words to compose states of mind and express cultural norms - these are linked with their separate identities. Also, the literatures use separate scripts, Devanagari in one case and Persian in the other. This combination of factors has come handy, suggests Rai, to those who dabble in the political arena for pursuing their limited interests, both social and cultural.

At this juncture, a comment on the passage quoted above would be in order. This will help us, too, in laying bare the context in which Rai's argument is located. Consider how at the outset, the word 'Hindi' is problematized by use of the epithet 'modern' to give each language a different face. Rai is aware that his argument would gain relevance if it referred to a context, that which was mentioned at the initial point. This means that modern Hindi and modern Urdu have assumed different shapes, distinguishable from each other in a long historical process. This suggestion should be borne in mind so that the discussion remains on track. Thus, principles of living are asserted as invariably exerting pressures on specific sections of society at a specific time. There is also a clear hint in the quoted passage that through reference to the roots of the two languages, we can identify the source of culture affecting communication.

Activity 3

In spite of springing from a more or less common source, why is it that Hindi and Urdu literature have evolved separately?

From this general point in the passage, we are soon taken to the next point that George Grierson (b. 1851), the famous linguist made regarding the history of the word. Grierson was a British India administrator particularly associated with the Linguistic Survey of India. Mark the expression "native of India" that has connection solely with India as a country, not with the religion Hindu or Muslim. Indeed, this is the crux. 'Hindi' is used in the passage as denoting India's natives, as equivalent of Indian. As a word, it signifies that all languages used for communication in India are Hindi. Later, when reference is made to Hindi as a language, it enjoys association with Doab, the place where it is spoken. The distinction will throw a subtler light on the issue.

1.5 KHUSRAU AND HINDAVI

How fascinating it is to note that Amrit Rai's opinion and that of Amir Khusrau meet so well with regard to Hindi! Amrit Rai quotes Amir Khusrau to establish his point more firmly and says that Hindi or Hindavi as a language had immense power and potential to communicate.

On his part, Khusrau has used the word "expressive power" in the context of comparing the two languages - Hindi/Hindavi on the one side and Persian on the other. Khusrau is so enamoured of the capability of Hindi that he explicitly places it on a par with Persian, a classical language and, therefore, long established for its wide acceptance. Khusrau goes on to iterate that Hindi is indeed superior to Persian since it could embody with great effect the intent and force of the one who used it. Note the phrase "prince of poetry" that suggests the ability of the person who decides to express himself through poetry.

There are two things that impel Khusrau to revere the poet - the sense of beauty that resides in the poet's heart, inspiring her/him to compose a poem and, the skills that a poet brings into play through one language in preference to another. Is it vocabulary, richness of phrases or flexibility inherent in a language that makes it worthy of praise? It appears that in the case of Hindi, Khusrau sets store by the rootedness in the actual life of a community as well as a multiplicity of dialects that a language derives its strength from. We see this argument in the

case of Khusrau's own poetic compositions one of which we shall consider in Unit 2 of this block where we shall bring in the interplay of a variety of languages that are woven together to create a work of unparalleled beauty.

Khusrau takes pride in saying that he is the only poet who has three Divans in Persian, a feat that no other poet of his time has equalled or surpassed. Quite clearly, this achievement qualifies him to pass judgment on the capability of one or other language. Why does Khusrau state that his choice of language for asserting its linguistic superiority is Hindi, not Persian? The reason is that Persian had characteristics of a classical language that was good for coining new words but had the limitation of **elitism**. It had no worthwhile contact with the common use of language on the street, so to say. For this reason, being tied to fixed rules and principles, it could not grow and change with time to suit new conditions and so a powerful language known as Hindavi established currency and Persian quietly moved to the scholars and the court.

The idea central to the debate on language was its communicability to the largest number of people. But along with number, it was necessary to gauge the vocabulary and the length of linguistic reach. Even as Urdu and Hindi were eligible candidates for the job, each faced a hurdle in terms of ease of use. Urdu's base was its adoption by the common people living in cities and small towns, yet it tilted heavily towards Persian words among the urban intelligentsia and the elite. Hindi employed Sanskrit words assiduously to distinguish it from Urdu. Oddly enough, both ignored the common speech imbued with functional aspects that ordinary people spoke. It clearly worked for the educated elite who stressed subtlety and nuance more than basic intent.

Also, in Urdu as well as Hindi, writers have one position on the issue and scholars or analysts another. Writers, for instance, aim to articulate and express, whereas scholars are driven by formulating and arguing. This reflects concretely in the linguistic conduct of one or the other. Add to this the attitude of the political activist who caters solely to the person on the street. Amidst this complexity of approaches, the answer lay in the spoken language carrying the energy of the dialect. To be sure, nearness to the dialect appeared the answer. Thus, subtle and nuanced expression would have to give way to the common functional use. Such a requirement necessitated neither Urdu nor Hindi but **Hindustani** that looked towards both for inspiration and focused on easy and effective communication to the larger number. Political leaders, reformers and propagandists and activists chose for their campaigns what could be loosely described as Hindustani. It was thought that Hindustani would facilitate exchange even in those areas that were out of bounds for Urdu and Hindi like Gujarat, Maharashtra, eastern Bihar and Odisha, where Hindustani played the role of linking people of one region with those of another. In the obvious sense, such a view might appeal to the activist and the writer, but it left the thinker and analyst cold. Certainly, a Gandhi or Premchand would support Hindustani; the rest, however, would stick to their specific approaches rigidly. It might yet be said to the credit of the Urdu lobby that during discussion, they veered round to Hindustani gradually. The Hindi lobby, however, remained firm on their stand favouring Hindi.

Activity 4

What is the language that is spoken by a large number of Indians today as well as used in modern Hindi films – Hindi, Urdu or Hindustani? Why do you think this is so?

1.6 LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND POWER: THE CASE OF HINDAVI

It makes sense that a language taking shape through cultural ups and downs and becoming an effective means of communication finally should be adopted to preserve time-tested norms. The vocabulary it picked up from active social usage contained seeds of growth and evolution that would ensure continuation with the change-oriented past. They would also equip its new users with skills of learning and experimenting - so useful for taking society forward.

Yet, there are hurdles on the way. A vast country with a rich variety of ideas and attitudes is deeply conscious about identity. It would think twice before accepting policies and strategies proposed by distantly situated intellectuals. The national movement had a dynamism of its own; it was broad-based and highly sophisticated in terms of sorting out needs of the specific context. The leadership had an eye on an integrated India and they sought guidance from the desired unity of people against a common enemy. The **Khari boli** in its Urdu-Hindi combination had proved to be an effective tool to expand the nationalist message opposing the colonial regime. The aim indeed was political and ideological, not aesthetic.

Meanwhile, writers felt bound to the medium in which they were active - writing is addictive since it makes inroads into the subconscious layers of the writer's mind. They sought identity in the medium of expression and quite significantly, they saw a part of their self not just in word-use but also in the script. We should remember that poets, fiction writers and dramatists, while playing a role in the arena of literature, earned credit from the readers' appreciative response. Soon, particularly in the nineteen twenties and thirties, they felt deflected from the nationalist aim and toyed with authorial prospects of success. That is why the debate about language, script and vocabulary intensified around this period. Wasn't there also a chunk of cultural thought that was double-edged? It sought direction in religious-cultural appeal on one hand, that was divisive, and conversely looked for the answer in nationalist-secular ideals on the other. The problem is well articulated by E.V. Ramakrishnan in the following observation:

Language is the site where, very often, social, cultural and political battles are fought in India. Alternatively, one may say that socio-political conflicts invariably acquire cultural and linguistic overtones, necessitating negotiations with and through languages. Some of these fault-lines that cause fissures and ruptures run deep and will have to be factored into the discussion of the shifts of our cultural terrains. (Ramakrishnan 57)

He states unequivocally that the context is India-specific. There might be, in our country, clashes, but why "social, cultural and political battles"? If post-Independence, the country aimed to establish a solid democratic base on which differences could be expressed for building consensus, why battles? The second thing rearing its head is the shift of cultural issues to social and political fields. This means that subjects such as language become a cause for socio-political tensions in society.

Ramakrishnan sees language as power. In the conventional understanding of the term, language is taken in the sense of a means of communication. In the twentieth century language was interpreted as an act that involved use of signs to forge

concepts about the life around an individual. It became thus a means to construct knowledge. The first query then would be whether knowledge is power or a part of the social process where power is created and wielded.

Seen objectively, language has economic ramifications - it is linked with specific groups getting a chunk of jobs when one or other language acquires a national character and becomes a national language. Add to this the fact that in India in the twentieth century under British rule, English had created a middle class that enjoyed power and privilege through it. The form of power manifested in influence, clout and role of language-based policies in an emerging economic scenario. Without going into the nitty-gritty of details, we might think of the upper middle class wielding enormous power in the formation of policies at the centre and in the states. Elitism was the recipe that the upper echelons in our country relished. There is no doubt that policies we are talking of left an imprint on writing and production of books for schools and colleges and for general consumption. Since all this required economic resources for profitable investment, retention and development of English appeared the best bet.

Activity 5

In what way can language be seen as power?

Looking at the journey covered by knowledge so far, we might assume that knowledge has given humans and societies a special capability to effect changes in the surroundings. If the face of the world has changed unrecognizably, it is because of the mental capacity of humans and language is linked firmly with knowledge. Regarding ideology, we notice that societies over the world remain active in constructing and using social thought on a big scale in a mode that works as a system of ideas, and as we have observed, it does not matter whether the system is wrong or right till it serves one or other purpose. Such a system is considered ideology, and since it is neutral to wrong or right depending on whose purpose it serves, its joining up with society's power structure assumes dangerous implications. Language is not neutral, it is itself ideology in the practice of adoption and use in a situation. In the second unit of this block we will discuss Raghuvir Sahay's poem 'Hindi,' and this issue of ideology inherent in the social working of language will be taken up. Let us say that the issue touches a multiplicity of factors in the working of an organised social structure. This is what Hindi writer Premchand said in precise terms in his controversial essay 'Urdu, Hindi and Hindustani':

The fact is that India's national language can neither be Urdu that heavily draws upon Arabic and Persian words that are unfamiliar and not in common use and is burdened with them, nor Hindi that borrows the difficult vocabulary of Sanskrit. If the partisans and supporters of these two languages stand before each other and exchange views in their respective literary languages, neither group would perhaps make sense of that spoken by the other. Only that language shall qualify for becoming the national language that has the base of general comprehensibility - that which all make sense of with ease. Why would such a language bother that a certain word be dropped since it originated from Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit? The only criterion it would follow would be that of the ease with which common people will follow it. And the common people come from Hindus, Muslims, Punjabis, Maharashtrians,

Gujaratis, and all others. If a word, a phrase or a term is popular among the masses, it cares little about their origins, where it emerged or came from. And this is Hindustani. The way the English have English, the Japanese have Japanese, Iranians have Irani and the Chinese have Chinese, the national language of Hindustan would appropriately and necessarily be Hindustani alone...India's national language is neither Urdu nor Hindi but Hindustani that is understood all over India, and spoken, too, in a very large part of it, even though not written as such. And if by chance, one wrote (what was spoken), the litterateurs of both Urdu and Hindi would show him the door. What is really proving an obstacle in the spread of Urdu and Hindi is the love of distinctness of each. Whether we write in Urdu or Hindi, we write not for the common man, but for a limited section of society. And this is behind the unpopularity of our literary writing. It is indeed true that in no country are written and spoken languages the same. The English we read in books or newspapers is not spoken anywhere. Even the educated do not converse in the language used in books or newspapers. Still more, the ordinary masses speak an altogether different language. Yet, in England every educated person is expected to grasp the written language, and do speak if need be. The same we wish to happen in India. (Premchand. 101. My translation).

The case of the great Hindi debate stands compounded by cultural-political compulsions cited by Alok Rai in his *Hindi Nationalism*. For him, the interests of specific social groups became more influential than the concerns of relevance and efficacy of the required medium. The terms of Rai's argument are as follows:

The fundamental conservatism of the *mahajani* classes, as well as their need to evolve a new language of status - in addition to the sensibilities and proclivities of the newly-educated *savarna* intelligentsia that we have encountered already - are an important determinant of the complex cultural formation that is indexed by the name "Hindi"...What substitutes for the lost radical energy is a kind of high-minded *moralism*. Of course, like all real phenomena, this one too must be over-determined, deriving not only from the **sanctimoniousness** of the *mahajani* patrons but also from the contrastive relationship with the Urdu-Muslim world of aristocratic indulgence - and even, at a purely literary level, with the erotic *riti-kavya* that is Braj Bhasha's dominant mode. (Rai 98-99)

The issues suggested above range from class and caste divisions to the values that are projected through activities based on language use. The inter-mix of these engages the attention of thinkers and scholars in our midst. The most important reference point of language use is at the same time the life lived by common masses who pursue their goals within the political framework. The expression "complex cultural formation" is the challenge that Hindi and Urdu face today. That underpins the subject of the book from which the main passage of discussion in this unit was taken - *A House Divided*. It pertained to whether something tangible could be done to cure the malady of division our society is visited by, particularly on the question of language.

Activity 6

How can language be considered an ideology?

1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we examined the issue of language politics linked to Hindi and Urdu. What emerged in the discussion is that the two are so close in their origins and roots that they cannot be considered different or unconnected, to the extent that they can indeed be called inseparable. Where a language was seen as a medium that played a positive unifying role during India's national movement, Hindi or Urdu were both in the fore-front. But the literary writing they fostered split into two parallel streams giving an identity colouring to the language they were written in. A solution could be sought in the interests of the common people for whom both language and literary writing are envisioned as domains; hence the internal characteristics of language/languages and their links with one or other classical languages could be kept out of the purview. In their place, we should consider an easy and effective linguistic medium. As such, an open and ever-evolving language denoted by the term Hindustani could be considered a viable option. Amrit Rai attempted to form a unified view of Hindi in the modern context and marshalled many arguments to put forth a perspective of utility concerning language-use. When the struggle for India's independence from the British colonial stranglehold began in the opening years of the twentieth century, a language was needed to spread the message of equality. Indeed, it could be only that language which was spoken by a sizeable chunk of people and had an ethos of diversity and the urge to learn. Other related factors also came into consideration and contention arose mainly between Hindi and Urdu. The debate about this question was sharp in the nineteen twenties when the movement against British imperialism had intensified. Many scholars joined the debate from the opposite sides of the issue and presented opinions on various aspects ranging from society, politics to culture.

1.8 AIDS TO ACTIVITIES

- Activity 1:** Language also has a social purpose.
- Activity 2:** It would be wrong to come to that conclusion as some of the greatest poets of Hindi-Hindavi were Muslims.
- Activity 3:** The two literatures have evolved separately, with different scripts and set of words and the expression of cultural nuances.
- Activity 4:** Hindustani is used because it has more fluid boundaries and can act as a linking language between people of various regions.
- Activity 5:** Language is power because it has economic ramifications.
- Activity 6:** It is an ideology because of the policies leading to the adoption and use of a particular language for a specific purpose.

1.9 GLOSSARY

- Dialectic** : the logic that considers opposites as linked and feeding upon as well as fighting with each other.
- Divan** : collection of poems
- Doab** : literally, area between two rivers, particularly, the area between Ganga and Yamuna in Uttar Pradesh and

Sutlej and Beas in Punjab, denoting composite culture and inclusiveness.

- Elitism** : exclusivist approach confining itself to the selected few.
- High Hindi** : the established Hindi that has set standards of effective expression and enjoys wide appeal.
- Hindustani** : a language that prides itself in commonness and day-to-day use, borrowing freely from current linguistic usage and sticks to functionality. It consciously shuns vocabulary of classical languages - Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic.
- Khari boli** : also known as Kauravi or Dehlavi. A straightforward and earth-bound way of expression; a dialect of Hindustani of which standard Urdu and Hindi are the different registers.
- Sanctimonious** : superior; smug

1.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the difference between Hindi and Hindavi?
- 2) Discuss the cultural use of Hindavi.
- 3) Do you think language is connected to power? Give examples to substantiate your answer.
- 4) Comment on Amrit Rai's understanding of Hindavi.
- 5) What were Khusrau's view on Hindavi?

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UNIT 2 ‘GHAZAL’ BY AMIR KHUSRAU AND ‘HINDI’ BY RAGHUVIR SAHAY

Structure

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, our aim is to consider in detail the two poems in your course, ‘Ghazal’ by Amir Khusrau and ‘Hindi’ by Raghuvir Sahay. The discussion will bring forth the requirements the two literary forms met at the time they were composed. We shall emphasize those points that connect the poems with our own time when debates about language use have been carried on in view of relevance and role. By the end of this unit, you will have a basic idea of the issues raised regarding the use of language. You will know that they pose questions regarding the political and ideological preferences we might make while spreading education and propagating ideas. You will see how the appeal of these poems was vitally linked to their content and concerns.

Words given **bold** in the unit are explained in the **Glossary** at the end.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The ‘Ghazal’ taken up in this unit was composed more than seven hundred years ago, in the early medieval period in India. It was a new art at that time and followed a distinct rhyme scheme as well as thematic convention. The appeal of

the ghazal was because of its focus on delicacy of feeling and its inherent musicality. The other poem taken up for discussion in this unit, 'Hindi', was written in the nineteen fifties. Separated from each other by more than seven hundred years, the two poems enjoy some common strands. The consciousness about the nature of literary writing and its role is one important thread that they share. Equally, they are self-reflexive - they use words and phrases with care. The writer of 'Ghazal' combines Persian, Hindi and Braj deftly in the same line and creates a rare sense of beauty. The writer of 'Hindi' is metaphorical to the core. In one breath, he talks of language, politics and nationalism, weaving them together subtly. It is to be iterated that poetry and other forms of literature yield appropriate meaning only when their writers are seen as **repositories** of social norms and culture and receive credit and importance for their artistic feats.

2.2 KHUSRAU - THE MAN OF LITERATURE

Dear student, let us first talk in general about the poet Amir Khusrau and attempt to link him to his ghazal that is in your course. Khusrau's ghazal carries the influence of **Sufism**. (You have been reading about Sufism in the previous Block). He wrote mainly in Persian and was equally conversant with the local Braj Bhasha tradition that left its mark on his poetry. For this reason, he is considered the pioneer of 'Hindavi,' an emerging dialect close to life on the street. He brought together the sufi strains, Persian poetic forms and dialects of the Avadh region in his works. Khusrau's poetry deviates from the typical court poetry written in his day to please patrons and kings alike. His ghazals do not carry amplification of conventional literary forms. In fact, his poetry is intimate, carrying the simple spontaneous elements of folk poetry. Khusrau followed the Sufi tradition and wrote poetry closer to the emotions and experiences of common life.

Khusrau in his ghazals takes on a feminine persona and refers to his poet friend Amir Hasan Sanjari as his lover. The present ghazal is a case in point. The poem evokes the love tradition and the emotion ('rasa') love-in-separation that was a part of the ancient Indian aesthetics. He says in the ghazal, "Talk to me with your eyes; dear heart, I cannot bear the sorrow of parting". This is an essential trait of Sufi poetry written in the early medieval period where ideas of **Ishq** carried resonances of ardent love. This love was, however, shared between the subject and god and sometimes transferred to fellow human beings who were equal participants in the quest for mystic union. For Khusrau in the present context, the emotional bond between friends is an example of experience much like that between lovers and it may be viewed as an extension of the frenzy of divine Sufi love. Sufi poets often used secular tales of love and incorporated them in their poetry. For instance, Jalaludin Rumi (1207-73) used the epic Laila-Majnu tale to express his love for God. Madness (a concept familiar to you from your reading of the previous Block) associated with this love also finds expression here. The idea of self-annihilation known as **Fanah** and suffering that is dear to Sufi saints is borrowed by Amir Khusrau and is made to represent his human-centred approach. Khusrau captures the intensity of human sentiment and at the same time remains sensuous in his descriptions. Take for instance the expression – "Long as tresses the night of parting". He gives his love a human form. The night without the lover is as dense and enveloping as a woman's tresses. On the other hand, the "the day of love is short as life". The poet suffers the pangs of separation and reiterates the longing to see the beloved in "If I see not my love, O friend, how can I spend dark nights of grief?" The language of the ghazal is simple. The

lines alternate between the Persian and the Braj as if the poet were translating his emotions from Persian to Braj and vice versa. It also projects the spontaneous flow of the poet's feelings that are not inhibited by any one language and freely moves in and out of the two languages. Still, the two languages add different meanings to the context of the poem while maintaining its lyrical quality and adding variety of speech.

Activity 1

What do you understand by the word 'lover' in the context of Amir Khusrau's poem and Sufi poetry in general?

2.3 A READING OF KHUSRAU'S 'GHAZAL'

Now, that you have a general idea of the poet and his work, let us first read the ghazal written in Urdu by Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) that goes as follows in translation:

Ghazal

Forget me not, the sorrowful,
Talk to me with your eyes;
Dear heart,
I cannot bear the sorrow of parting,
Keep me well within your heart.
Long as tresses the night of parting,
The day of love is short as life,
If I see not my love, O friend,
How can I spend dark nights of grief?
Two magic eyes with a hundred charms
Have put my sad heart's rest to flight;
Now who would care to go and tell
Dear love my sad and lonely plight?
As a candle lit, as an atom struck
No sleep in my eyes, no rest in my heart
Banished, alas, from that moon's grace
He sends no news, nor shows his face.
On the day of love, for truth, Khusrau
The loved one tricked me and went away
If I could find him, I will keep
Him in my heart with love always.

(translated from Urdu by Ahmed Ali)

Interpretation

See what the poet observes in the beginning—he becomes one with the male lover and tells the woman that she has become forgetful of late, and that there is something that engages her mind. What can it be? We are made to think that preceding this situation, the woman has lost interest in the immediate surroundings. But she at least can speak with her eyes, since in certain situations

eyes talk more eloquently than the tongue. In response, the woman's eyes reveal the fact that forgetfulness is the result of parting with her lover-husband. This is followed by a suggestive simile, comparable picture of the fact with the day and the night—the day is short since one is in the company of others, whereas the night is long since one is then alone. Also, see that night is black as the hair of a woman. It is communicated through the suggestion that the woman's hair is long as the night is long. This is in passing. The fact, however, remains that dark nights do not come to an end because of the pain caused by the lovers parting and because of which the woman cannot sleep. The question looms large in the imagination of the reader. In the words of the woman, "How can I spend dark nights of grief?"

Think of the persona (hidden behind the eyes) changing with movement of the ghazal. First it was the man. For a brief period, however, the eyes become of the woman-lover, possessed by him for use, because of which the rest of the woman's heart has taken flight and gone away from her. In that moment of the dear one's departure, the heart's rest alone is the lover. For this reason, the woman is lonely and not lonely at the same time. Consequently, the woman's plight is as of "a candle lit," as of "an atom struck," and with "no sleep in my eyes, no rest in my heart." We may ask, why so, why has such a thing come to pass? To this, the poet's answer merged with the woman's is: The man-lover "sends no news, nor shows his face."

2.4 KHUSRAU'S POEM AS A COMPOSITION IN THE CLASSICAL MODE

Khusrau's poem is of the woman's helpless misery caused by separation from the lover. In such a situation, she can neither sleep nor be at peace with herself when awake. At the same time, the woman's anguish intensifies the effect of love suggested by the incident of the lover's leaving. Mark that the strong statement of the bonding between the two brings out beautifully the feeling the woman has for her lover and the way she would have enjoyed her time in his company. This is effected as much through her words as the pictures woven into her utterance—of the tresses, the dark night, and the lighted candle. Indeed, the three objects have their own stories to tell, of their association with sensuous mingling of the two lovers in moments of intimacy.

As said in the beginning of the comment, the ghazal as a poetic form is meant to paint a scene of sensuous experience that celebrates human bonding. In it, the thematic content is conventional but the poet uses images that lend freshness to the representation. We might locate in the lines a discipline that classicism uses to capture the mood of a love-situation.

Finally, Khusrau's use of words and images is a fine example of evocative language enriched by the context of love and longing. The emotionality crafted in the lines is closer to the body of the woman and her lover than would be the case if the poet planned to raise the level of meaning through abstraction. The feeling here is more earthy than ethereal, with each phrase denoting that which is required to denote the loneliness of the woman. Never for a moment does the description leave the plane of the real woman and man. Likewise, the poet-persona has remained stuck to a simple innocent woman in common village surroundings. In the English translation, we notice a conscious adherence to the diction bereft

of ornamentation. This was exactly the case in the original version where Khusrau used the Awadhi dialect.

2.5 VIEWING THE POEM AS A GHAZAL

Here, we look at the poem from the angle of “ghazal” as a literary form. You might be wondering as to why it is given this name. In the literal sense, the word stands for beauty and innocence enshrined in the looks and conduct of a female deer, the word for which is “ghazala.” The transparent nature of the eyes of the deer is used in literature to signify the purity of gaze of the young woman whom the amorous male desires as a companion. With such a friend by his side, the lover will give vent to his softer feelings. The relationship between the young and handsome male and his lover, will project a view of romance and longing. These are indeed the features of poetry in general. Specifically, in the case of the ghazal form, the expression will attain heights of imaginative wonder and magic. We may regard this to be the main purpose of the poet attempting a ghazal that is entirely devoted to the theme of love which is considered synonymous with beauty traditionally. If you apply this description of the ghazal form to the poem given above, you may reach the conclusion that human life attains nobility and gentleness through literature, and for this reason, poetry is used to create the aura of sensuous pursuit of beauty. Let me ask this question squarely of you: “Does one not like to talk about sweetness in a relationship?” In fact, the same is enjoyed when one watches a drama or a film. From this general point, we shall later turn to the ghazal as a poem in which feelings are depicted through word-pictures of states of mind and language use.

Activity 2

Try to read this poem in the original. Why do you think Khusrau would combine two or three languages or dialects while composing ‘Ghazal’?

2.6 IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSLATION

While engaging with this poem, we are conscious that it is a translation from the original Urdu into English. We have also to remind ourselves that the English translator aims to adhere to an already existing expression. It is not expected that a translator will take liberties with the depiction and edit or change the original composition to create an effect. Let me say that this is precisely the difficulty with this ghazal. In its translated form, the poem does not let us know, for instance, that the writer Amir Khusrau made use of three languages in each line—Persian, Urdu, and Awadhi. That was an artistic feat, a miracle. We do not see that in the translation and read the text as an articulation of a lover’s emotions by the poet in the chaste medium of English. I draw your attention to this fact of anomaly between the original text and its translated version. For me, this might serve the purpose of focusing upon language in literary expression. Amir Khusrau blended the three languages to forge an imaginative response guided entirely by requirements of a beautiful representation.

Nevertheless, we might pick up certain words from this poem to realise that the poet is intent upon telling us particularly about the subtle emotion of love, and the woman pining for union with her lover who has gone away from her. Thus,

we have three persons involved in the situation that is at the centre of this poem—the poet, the woman and the figure of the man in the background. It is against this backdrop, that we must read this poem by Amir Khusrau.

'Ghazal' by Amir Khusrau
and 'Hindi' by Raghuvir
Sahay

2.7 GHAZAL AS AN ART FORM AND ITS INTERACTION WITH SOCIETY

Most of what we have said about Khusrau's ghazal so far is from the point of view of form. Under such a view, we have considered aspects of composition, linguistic use, voice of the lover, emotions of a woman in a situation of distance from her lover-husband and the overall beauty of poetry in the hands of a master composer of the ghazal. Let us also consider the question of social and cultural surroundings in which literature operates and performs a specific function. For instance, Khusrau lived at a time when society was in a state of turmoil, mainly at the political level. Conditions in India were such that no single approach as that of the governing authority would be accepted as final. There would be voices in India in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that laid stress on originality and freedom and take to ways of enjoyment and self-indulgence. Let us bear in mind that freedom of this sort available to the artist and thinker reflects peculiar facets of social living.

2.7.1 Creativity - The Primary Motive

People become creative and approach their horizons differently than those that were visualized by their predecessors. We might call it an act of courage, but it also takes us towards challenges that are hidden from the common eye. Apart from being an act of courage, the creative endeavour in the time of Khusrau also pointed towards the penchant for learning. The early medieval India had social sections that mixed with unknown and lesser known people with a sense of curiosity and pleasure. No section or group of people was seen as a threat and challenge. Even as there would be competition in trade, workplace and neighbourhood living, people welcomed novelty of thought. Ghazal as an art form could serve to reveal the urge to change one's way of expressing oneself. Otherwise strictly hierarchical, the society of the time left the common masses in the lower rungs to fend for themselves and be what they wished to be. Among people of the upper strata, too, there would be a vision of beauty that crossed boundaries of accepted standards. The present ghazal offers a pretty picture of coexistence of languages struggling to forge ahead of others in effect and appeal.

2.7.2 Celebrating Union with the Lover

As we have noticed, the present ghazal is not merely about a lonely woman thinking of her lover, but also about a common urge to celebrate union with a lover. The physicality of this ghazal brings forth in clear terms the honest emotion of bonding that is lyrical and sensuous. Khusrau, the man from the upper echelons derives a great deal of pleasure from visualizing words and phrases and the element of senses embedded in them to join in mutuality with the lower sections of people in his own time. There is no doubt that the early medieval India was a place where people met one another on equal terms at the level of imagination. It is noteworthy that the ghazal under discussion is a means of high entertainment at a time when India was opening up to the world beyond its boundaries in productive and exchange areas as also in regions of culture and art.

2.8 'HINDI' BY RAGHUVIR SAHAY

Raghuvir Sahay (1929–90) was a Hindi poet, short-story writer, essayist, literary critic, translator, and journalist. He was the chief-editor of the political-social Hindi weekly, *Dinmaan* from 1969 to 1982. He was awarded the 1984 Sahitya Akademi Award in Hindi for his poetry collection, *Log Bhoole Gaye Hain (They Have Forgotten, 1982)*.

Before going any further, let us take a look at the poem:

Hindi (Raghuvir Sahay)

We were fighting
a language battle to change society.
But the question of Hindi is no longer simply a question
Of Hindi—we have lost out.

O good soldier,
Know when you're beaten.
And now, that question
Which we just referred to in connection with the so-called language battle,
Let's put it this way:
Were we and those on behalf of whom we fought
The same folk?
Or were we, in fact, the agents of our oppressors—
Sympathetic, well-meaning, well-schooled agents?
Those the masters are slaves.
Their slaves are those who are not masters.
If Hindi belongs to masters,
Then in what language shall we fight for freedom?
The demand for Hindi
Is now a demand
For better treatment—
Not rights—
Put by the agents
To their slave masters.
They use Hindi in place of English,
While the fact is
That their masters
Use English in place of Hindi—
The two of them have struck a deal.
He who exposes this hypocrisy
Will dispose of Hindi's slavery.
This will be the one who, when he speaks Hindi,
Will show us what simple folk really feel.

(Translated from Hindi by Harish Trivedi and Daniel Weissbort)

Interpretation

The title as well as the language of this poem refers to the **Khari Boli** that came to be known later as Hindi. Raghuvir Sahay chooses the metaphor of the battle in his poem 'Hindi' to highlight the language debates specifically in post-Independence India. The period was marked by several internal feuds and fights. Since the fifties belonged to the post-Independence era, the poem had to carry the burden of the government policies related to language, culture and literature.

Sahay speaks of the battle for language supremacy in which Hindi was supposed to receive the status of an official language but did not. Sahay critiques, through the poem, the entire exercise of fighting over language that in a way betrayed the idea of a unified India visualized by writers and thinkers. He seems to direct our attention to the larger cause of this phenomenon urging us to look beyond provincial linguistic identities. As he says in the poem, "the question of Hindi is no longer simply a question of Hindi" suggesting that the issue is more complex than it appears.

2.8.1 Questioning Certain Attitudes

Sahay questions the values of those who pitch battles and delude "soldiers," forcing them to enter the field of the battles. In the end, it is the soldier who loses his life - not those in power. He puts the question squarely - "Were we and those on behalf of whom we fought the same folk?" The answer is obviously in the negative. However, Sahay wishes to make the reader aware of this dimension. He seems to suggest that the people on whose behalf we fight the battle (in this case for language) are very different from us; they have political clout and power. Ordinary folks whom he calls "soldiers" are pawns in battles. Sahay doesn't go soft in his critique and further poses a sharp question— "Were we, in fact, the agents of our oppressors—sympathetic, well-meaning, well-schooled agents?". The statement appears to be a paradox—how can agents of oppressors be well meaning? It is in fact loaded with suggestion. First, it strikes the note of self-criticism which could extend to criticism of the class that the writer belongs to - the "we" in the sentence makes the poet subject as guilty of the act as the reader. Secondly, Sahay is making a theoretical and complex point that is generally not taken up in poetry for it makes it terse and abstract. Still, Sahay views the middle class as complicit in the act of violence perpetuated by the oppressive upper class. This, in the opinion of the writer, is carried out not necessarily by active engagement by middle class individuals. They become agents of oppressors the moment they adopt the approach of sympathy and harmony that facilitates the status quo leaving little scope for disruptions and change. The middle class's desire to live a decent, peaceful and well-meaning life outlines that they are in fact well-schooled, cultured people who would not enter the murky world of politics. The critique offered by Sahay here is scathing and betrays the position of the writer who doesn't believe in taking the comfortable middle path of life. Further, Sahay plays on words and deliberately twists and turns phrases. Does he wish to remain ambiguous and if so why? Is it the complexity of the idea that makes his phrases convoluted? Take for instance the line, "those who are masters are slaves. Their slaves are those who are not masters".

Activity 3

Read the poem once more. Why has the poet chosen the battle metaphor?

2.8.2 The Bewildering Stance

The reader may feel bewildered by the first half itself—how can masters be slaves? What Sahay seems to suggest is that the master needs the slave more to get the ‘dirty’ work done and, in this sense, is dependent on (is a slave of) the worker/soldier/ordinary person. But does the slave know that? S/he doesn’t and, therefore, Sahay says that s/he remains a slave and doesn’t become a master. This poem is a criss-cross of postures taken by the poet. It is a difficult poem to make sense of, since it has consciously avoided making a direct statement. At every step, the poem apparently goes against the previously expressed stance. For this reason, it may be necessary for us to remain ever alert while reading it. We notice in the beginning that rhythm is deliberately avoided by the poet. The first two lines are one single sentence broken as if casually to make two lines out of it. Put straight, it would read like, “We were fighting a battle to change society.” The abruptness of such a beginning wakes us up. We as readers wonder whether we were fighting a battle some time back, and whether it was aimed to change society.

2.9 BACKGROUND OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

As we stretch our memory, we are reminded of India’s national movement that ended in 1947 as well as of the issue in the nineteen fifties of accepting Hindi as the national language. Post the country’s Independence, for many years we had a tumultuous phase of debate around the question of accepting and evolving a national language. The process had indeed begun in the nineteen twenties in the wake of carrying the message of liberation to the common masses. In those days, it fell on Hindi to assume the responsibility of communicating the political and social ideas in a simple spoken medium. Also, the Hindi of the period was not equipped with word and phrase to effectively articulate the rising aspirations of colonized India for opposing the British colonial power. Quite significantly, in that moment Hindi came forward at the hands of its writers and other users to serve the job. At each step in the journey towards the goal, there would be hurdles - linguistic, cultural and political. The last one was particularly problematic, since the people involved had to take cognizance of the religious-linguistic divide. Consider that communities and languages were to work in such a way that the goal of achieving emancipation from the colonizing power was not jeopardized. Yes, the fight with the colonial enemy was a battle and it was being fought on two levels, political and linguistic. Let us in this light read the poem’s first line again that “We were fighting a battle to change society.” As a reader of the poem, I can make this sense of the first line. What would you say? Would you not agree that we had begun moving along the path of progress that included changing society?

Activity 4

Is the poet merely talking about Hindi as a language or saying something broader than this?

2.10 A COMMENT ON 'HINDI,' WITH QUESTIONS RAISED ABOUT IT

'Ghazal' by Amir Khusrau
and 'Hindi' by Raghuvir
Sahay

As we approach the next point, we realize that the poem has in fact presented a whole new argument. First, read the statement which apparently contradicts the previous one saying, "But the question of Hindi is no longer simply a question/ of Hindi - we have lost out." See how the poetic point is constructed. It is done through a gap that is left at the end of the words "no longer simply a question of Hindi." Normally, the sentence might have continued using "but also." Why has the poet not done it? I call it a deliberate administering of shock. The gap thus created makes us wonder. This is a trick that poets try on the readers sometimes. As we think and gradually move out of the shock, we confront a heavy sentence - "we have lost out." The questions, then, to mull over are two - what have we lost out, and how?

In the context, the explanation given above would be of help. Hindi as a language was the child of India's National Movement, meaning thereby that the two were intertwined. With respect to evolution as well as articulation, the political change aimed through the anti-British struggle would have effected establishment of Hindi as the national language. To reiterate, a national integrated unity across the country would be based on a fully developed and enriched national language. That somehow did not happen. In such a case, it was impossible for the language to realize the dream of seeing the country fully and meaningfully unified. To me, that is what "we have lost out" means. Would you agree?

In the explanation given above, the issue of language stands somewhat elucidated, which is incidentally not the case with what or how "we have lost out." Let us move in that direction here. The poet Raghuvir Sahay had the political orientation of a socialist; he thought along lines of master and slaves, haves and have-nots. The words denoting this occur from the beginning to end in the poem. See, for instance, the words "agents," "oppressors," "masters," "slaves," and "slavery." Through them, the poet has referred to class relations in Indian society. For re-creating the process of nation-building following the exit of the British from Indian soil, the poet has drawn a complex picture of the powerful natives as they contained and controlled the social energy of India's masses. Indeed, the poem is about this scenario in which the act of containment is centrally placed. For the poet, what we witnessed in the nineteen fifties was the misuse of dynamism of the masses by the native oppressors. Particularly, the middle classes of the country were turned into agents of the oppressors with respect to establishing Hindi as the national language. This caused the simultaneous use of two languages in the country - Hindi and English. Let us remember that initially English was in use for promoting the interests of the colonial oppressors. On the other hand, Hindi served the cause of emancipation of the colonised. This was cleverly mixed in post-Independence India to cause a rupture in the process and derail it finally. Two different sets of arguments were offered to problematize the cultural-social thought. The result was, as the poet states, "The demand for Hindi/ is now a demand/ for better treatment - /not rights - /put by the agents/to their slave masters./ They use Hindi in place of English,/while the fact is/ that their masters/use English in place of Hindi - /the two of them have struck a deal." As said above, agents in the case are the middle classes, whereas the privileged are oppressors and the common masses are slaves. The poet does not mince words when he says that

democracy is to obey the writ of the masters who are indeed the common people. However, the scene is manipulated to achieve the reverse - through a trick, the masters are turned into slaves and the slaves have occupied the throne to become oppressors. Truly, “we have lost out.”

2.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learnt about the poets Amir Khusrau and Raghuvir Sahay as individual writers who composed poems of great literary merit. This was followed by a view of Khusrau’s ‘Ghazal’ and Sahay’s ‘Hindi.’ The first poem gave us a glimpse of how medieval India’s sufi tradition shaped the poetic form. This helped us understand the nature of love and longing in the early medieval period and the soft feel of the experience that Khusrau presented. Raghuvir Sahay dealt with the question of language and its political as well as cultural role in the post-Independence period. The discussion revolved around the use of languages and dialects in the hands of Amir Khusrau, as well as Raghuvir Sahay’s interpretation of the complex issue of Hindi as a national language in the nineteen fifties and sixties. Whereas Khusrau had laid the foundation of Hindi as a language that was used at the grassroots, Sahay linked Hindi with the origin and development of India’s national consciousness in the twentieth century. Together, the two poems threw light on a few important facets of India’s rich and somewhat problematic cultural history.

2.12 AIDS TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: The lover frequently referred to as a worshipper of god.

Activity 2: In order to make it more beautiful and representative of all the voices that are to be found in the poem.

Activity 3: The impassioned ‘for’ and ‘against’ debate gives rise to this metaphor.

Activity 4: He is referring to the unity of the nation.

2.13 GLOSSARY

- Fanah** : merging of the self with the emotion.
- Ishq** : love, intense and of many hues. Mainly, it refers to the real human as well as the spiritual.
- Khari Boli** : literally, the straight dialect signifying simplicity and ease of use. In explanation, it assumed importance as the basis of the two languages, Urdu and Hindi.
- Repositories** : in the contest, the persons who contain or symbolize specific qualities.
- Sufism** : the tradition of mysticism that primarily underlined the link between humans and an invisible yet highly appealing presence.

2.14 UNIT END QUESTIONS

'Ghazal' by Amir Khusrau
and 'Hindi' by Raghuvir
Sahay

- 1) What characteristics did the ghazal form assume in the hands of Amir Khusrau? Elaborate.
- 2) Explain the role and function of the ghazal form in the early medieval period.
- 3) Elucidate the political points made by Raghuvir Sahay in his poem 'Hindi.'
- 4) Bring out the implications of "But the question of Hindi is no longer simply a question/ of Hindi - we have lost out" in Raghuvir Sahay's poem 'Hindi.'

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UNIT 3 M.K. NAIK AND THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE

‘Indian Pride and Indian Prejudice: Reflections On the Relationship Between Regional Indian Literatures and Indian Writing in English’ by M.K. Naik

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 M. K. Naik and the Issue of Language
 - 3.2.1 Relevance of Indian English Literature
 - 3.2.2 Social Life and Language
- 3.3 Raja Rao and Indian English
- 3.4 Indian English: An Alternative Form of Expression?
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Aids to Activities
- 3.7 Glossary
- 3.8 Unit End Questions
- 3.9 References and Suggested Reading

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall discuss the politics of language with special reference to Indian writing in English. We have in our midst a phenomenon of writing in a language not our very own, so to say. The construction “not our very own” might cause raising of eyebrows, and quite understandably so. Different aspects of this issue will be taken up here and we shall be dealing with what of late has come to be called a prejudice. To discuss the clash between a language of foreign origin and other languages that have been ours since ages, we need to consider a text on which to hang our argument for or against the issue. The text to be used for this purpose in this unit is an excerpt from ‘Indian Pride and Indian Prejudice: Reflections on Relationship between Regional Indian Literatures and Indian Writing in English’ by M.K. Naik. By the end of this unit, you will be in a position to see both sides of the question and have an informed view regarding the politics of language.

Words in **bold** are explained in the **Glossary**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It is observed that literature draws its substance from real life expressed in a language of common use. This goes in favour of Indian languages capable of carrying the values of a culture that has developed in India over centuries. Yet, one can see in it the hidden politics of certain sections of people who wish to project one or the other language of India at the cost of specific languages and dialects as well as a language of foreign origin that has come to acquire legitimacy and privilege in the country. The last is a reference to English in whose support

stands a whole lobby structured into the socio-cultural and political system prevailing in this country. Let us also keep in mind the fact that since the country gained independence from British rule in 1947, we have been contending with the issue of a national language and a link language acceptable to all. Language as a contentious question in our country affects the spectrum of the vast middle class spread over our society. The excerpt of the M.K. Naik text serves the purpose of presenting an argument that might become an entry point into the debate about the use and adoption of one or other language. Significantly, literary writing has assumed a peculiar dimension here as it adds to the complexity of the linguistic phenomenon before us. The aspects brought in by literary writing relate to ideas, life norms and values, imaginative construction of social vision and cultural hegemony. Add to this the working of power centres linked with economic and political clout, as well as an entire administrative machinery meant to serve the interests of an integrated India. All these come into play when language is discussed in detail.

Let us also talk about specific facts linked with the issue of linguistic debates going on in our country. We are a society with many languages, cultures, ethnicities, and belief systems. Thus, we need an ideological-cultural glue to bind diversities. There is an apprehension that the diversity of the country may not remain secure if there are one or two powerful languages amidst the many we have. The former might impose a pattern of thought not suitable for specific cultures and social formations. This is a matter of apprehension. However, apprehension plays a big part in constructing a **consensus**, by creating hurdles that will counter efforts of harmonizing and smoothening life's processes. Come to think of it, this is the stuff of literary writing that engages with details and the nitty-gritty of social life. **Narratives and imaginings** in literature provide richness of thought, a sense of togetherness and an atmosphere of mutual learning. Consider that whenever the language issue came up for adopting one language that would bind different sections of people, all these points came into play and made the social atmosphere ideologically charged and politically agitated. As mentioned, the role of English as a language capable of binding the various communities together was broadly highlighted. To gain clarity about this problem, let us first look at the argument of Naik's essay in some detail.

Activity 1

Look around you and observe the different ways in which English language is being used. Who uses it and for what purpose?

3.2 M. K. NAIK AND THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE

First, a few words about M.K. Naik, former Professor of English in a university of repute in India, who has greatly contributed to the understanding of Indian English writing through books and independent essays. He has approached the issue of writing with an open mind, giving credit where it is due and commenting critically where mistakes had occurred in assessing the worth of certain literary trends and works. We can safely assume that Naik's arguments enrich our comprehension and prove useful in making sense of contemporary depictions. His clear-headed and robust approach would be of value for the students of literature. At the same time though, we might spot areas in his present essay where mistaken emphases and lapses have occurred. For us, these generate

discussion and enable us to disagree and observantly come upon difficulties and hurdles.

We are struck in the essay initially by the provocative and a slightly rhetorical use of the metaphor of the joint family. Naik likens India's languages to "a vast joint family (so typical of the Indian ethos), blessed with many brothers, some of whom are veritable **Methuselahs**." His reference is to the long-standing figures of India's literatures, in the historical sense that they have a long history of evolution and change, that have stood the test of time and remained major mediums of imaginative communication and expression. His list comprises Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Marathi, and Bengali literatures that are 2000 years, 1500 years, 1000 years, 950 years, and 900 years old respectively. This is immediately followed by the mention of English writing that takes the form of "the youngest of these brothers ... [being] Indian English literature—a baby not even two hundred years old; but to be the youngest of the lot ... not [being] its only misfortune." For Naik, the "baby" has been "born with a hideous birth-mark" that "has given rise to the strange notion that the young fellow is a bastard, the untouchable product of an unholy alliance between a White father and an Indian mother." At the end of the description of the metaphor comes the serious point that Naik has made: "Several strategies—linguistic, literary, cultural and even political—have been employed in the attempt to prove the utter redundancy of Indian English literature."

Before we paraphrase the issue for our benefit, let there be mention of a lapse. In the number of literatures occurring in Naik's excerpt, Hindi literature does not figure – a literature that has as long a history as Telugu, Marathi and Bengali. Has Hindi literature been left out of the purview since the number of literatures mentioned was already five, a sufficiently big one to serve as an example? That does not seem to be the case. Indeed, the literature written in Hindi enjoys additional weight for initially being the official language on which there existed consensus in the early fifties. Hindi as a language has from the beginning of Independent India been in the eye of the storm with many states rising in revolt against it. Hindi was perceived as an imposition by north India on all Indian languages. A yet greater charge against Hindi was that it replaced English—replacement being a kind of dethronement of English from its position of power. The argument that ran in favour of English was that it connected Indian society like no other language would, making the country a strongly integrated unit. Presumably, English played the role of keeping India's middle classes effectively informed about policies legislated by the Parliament and procedures of law and administration. Could Hindi not play such a role as a national language and a link language? Naik's essay might be understood and interpreted against this backdrop. We have Naik sweeping aside this language from consideration as if that would enable us to understand the question objectively. We note that Naik has in this essay assiduously avoided discussion of English as a language and solely spoken of English literature. But can those literatures he refers to in the beginning of the essay be separated from their languages? Be that as it may, we have on hand the subject of viability of English language involving the merits and demerits of the case.

3.2.1 Relevance of Indian English Literature

Naik's first point in the discussion is that a whole section of scholars and writers have undertaken various "strategies" and attempted "to prove the utter redundancy

of Indian English literature.” He seems to be arguing that it reflects the prejudice against a whole body of literary writing. Indeed, Naik has rightly pointed out that Indian English literature is anything but redundant; it has much to offer in terms of an open attitude to the intricacies of relationships obtaining in India. Also, this writing engages with problems of inequality, social pressures on communities and sections, poverty, persecutions and restrictions, to name a few. Together with literatures available in other Indian languages, English has served the purpose of an important means of communication between regions, cultural domains, and ethnicities. Let us look at how Naik shares with us characteristics of depiction in English by Indian writers. The essay begins with a pot shot that Naik takes at the well-known Bengali writer Buddhadeva Bose. It goes as follows:

In his note on ‘Indian Poetry in English’ in *The Concise Encyclopaedia of English and American Poets and Poetry*, the much-respected Bengali scholar, Buddhadeva Bose condemned Indian English poetry as ‘a blind alley lined with curio shops, leading nowhere’. (This venerable intellectual must be turning—rather badly—in his grave today, to find the ‘blind alley’ turning into a veritable fashion street, and the ‘curio shops’ giving way to literary Marks and Spencers and Harrods and Gimbells.)

In the same note, Bose argues that it is difficult to see how they (Indian English poets) can develop as poets in a language which they have learnt from books and seldom hear spoken in the streets or even in their own homes, and whose two great sources lie beyond the seven seas. But the fact is that it no longer matters whether the Indian English poet learnt his English, not from British or Scottish or Irish or American or Australian or New Zealander or South African teachers but from fellow Indians. This is because English today can no longer be regarded as a non-native language in India. If the question of official and legal status is to be raised, let us not forget that English is additional official language of the Indian Union; and it is also the first official language of at least one Indian state—Nagaland, while in three Indian states, viz. Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram, it is an associate official language.

Let us have a critical look at this passage. In the first para, the transformation from “curio shops” to a “fashion street” is brought forward as an example of English’s assertive presence. Yet, the irony cannot be missed. Naik notes with satisfaction the emergence of English as an impressive entity that attracts notice. The entity is tied up with the glamour of popular store-chains of the corporate world. The question is whether that does not at least partially reflect upon the view of English as an elitist agency. That apart, the point is well taken that the prediction of Buddhadev Bose has proved false. In the second paragraph, Naik’s tone changes and he lets the “fact” speak for itself. Bose’s idea that a language is learnt from the street may be theoretically true. Yet, the crucial issue is of what happened, not what generally happens. Even as difficulties stand in the way, English has emerged victorious and shown one and all that it has arrived on the scene to play a decisive role and give voice to the travails of life in the Indian context. Naik is right in saying that the Indian English writer learns his language not from any foreign source but “from fellow Indians.” This is a convincing point since the people around a writer are the best sources for a grasp of the social scene where conflicts of different kinds take shape.

Activity 2

Observe the different fields of social life in which English is used and write a brief note about it.

3.2.2 Social Life and Language

Yet, Naik is stretching the point too far when he marshals examples to buttress his argument. The reference to Indian English poet Dom Moraes does not serve the purpose of establishing the fact of Indian English writing which is recognized in any case because of the existing literature in that language. Individual cases in such situations are only of partial value. However, the next reference to the prejudice has something to offer for pondering over. This concerns the issue of language yet again but in a different context. To quote Naik:

R.C. Dutt (who produced abridged English versions of the Hindu classics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in standard Victorian verse) declared, ‘All attempts to court the muses in a foreign tongue must be fruitless. ... True genius mistakes its vocation when it struggles in a foreign tongue’ (1895). Writing in the same year as Bose, but hundreds of miles away from him, in the south, M. Chalapathi Rau, a brilliant journalist, who wrote perceptive reviews (in trenchant English), is equally strident in condemning Indian writing in English, which, according to him, is ‘at best composition, and the best of it is translation. Nothing more is possible except for someone who can live the language, think the language, and write, not compose in the language’. Writing in the same vein, two bright young Indian students studying in England dashed off a letter to *The Time’s Literary Supplement* with more self-confidence than is good for smart young things, presumably in their thirties. Their logic was impeccable: ‘English with most Indians is still a language of official public affairs, of intellectual and academic debate. They do not use English for their most intimate purposes, to think and feel, bless and curse, quarrel and kiss’. Are we to believe that educated Indians never say, spontaneously on various occasions, when the words and phrases are appropriate, ‘My God’, ‘O shit’, ‘You fool’, ‘You see’, and a hundred other things of the kind? And pray, how exactly does one ‘kiss’ in English? One had always thought that the said operation had a universal language and in fact, it needed no language at all, four lips being actively engaged for purposes far finer than of articulating mere words. (But perhaps the bright young things knew the secret then, which, alas, they must have lost now forty years later, for, who can remain young for ever?). Though, of course, one can always remain ‘of his opinion, still’, all the time.

Naik’s effort at use of anecdote or light words (“two bright young Indian students” and “smart young things”) does not add value to the discussion. It dismisses the point as not worth considering seriously. This also sheds negative light on the issue that R.C. Dutt and M. Chalapathi Rau raised. The former argued that struggling in a foreign language has serious disadvantages. What Dutt meant was that a language that is not one’s own in the sense that it is not integral to social life and culture of one’s time is deficient in scope for struggling to express. There, the referents are people addressing audiences far away from one’s own atmosphere of sound patterns and word use. The distinction made by Chalapathi

Rau in writing and composing points goes towards the same idea. Writing is spontaneous, whereas composition is self-conscious. The person who composes always looks over his/her shoulder to get approval from the invisible onlooker whether s/he has observed rules of grammar and expression appropriately. The charge of smartness put at the door of young bright minds can equally well be turned back to Naik who takes attention away from serious aspects of learning, adopting, grasping and feeling in a language, not just when the person attended school but when s/he was born and was oblivious of what went on. The flood of examples unleashed by Naik on the reader only suggests that there are no serious answers but replies that exhibit effort at proving a point. Having said this, we may realise that there is indeed a question of English writing in India connected with the dialectic of many pressures brought to bear upon the educated middle class sections, and the same writing playing an important role in comprehending the surrounding socio-cultural reality profitably. This may be recognized as a given. Our job is to give weight to all existing parameters, recognise their role and significance as well as the tasks they might perform in the world we inhabit. One may also not overlook the interwoven modes of expression in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the land of the English language. All that can be got together for supporting a language would have worked in the case of English in Elizabethan England. That may only be overlooked at the risk of damaging the vibrancy and breadth of English in those centuries. It may also be helpful to make sense of the practice of John Milton in the seventeenth century. The great poet used Latin words in ample measure and placed them in the middle of sentences and clauses, denoting heightened creativity. His 'Latinisms' were noted for effect as well as conscious distancing so they conveyed a spectacle away from the planet Earth. Yet, Milton's *Paradise Lost* remained deeply rooted in the soil of England's cultural and aesthetic life. The answer lies not in mocking but giving a response that assists in clearing ways of aesthetic expression.

Activity 3

Read a poem/short story in Hindi or any regional language and one in English. Compare and contrast the world view expressed in both.

3.3 RAJA RAO AND INDIAN ENGLISH

Near the middle of Naik's essay, there are two points that are particularly worth going over. The first is of Raja Rao who wrote a short introductory note to his novel *Kanthapura* way back in 1938. It drew attention as soon as the novel was published in the heyday of India's National Movement. To many at the time, it appeared odd that someone was attempting a fictional piece about the national political phenomenon in a language that only a fraction of the Indian population understood. But it did not worry Rao. It certainly was a question though and must have been raised. This perhaps required the writer to offer a rationale of his decision to express his writerly intent in English. Rao's stance was emphatic and had a ring of conviction in it. It said, "We cannot write like the English. We should not: we can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression, therefore, has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it." How to write like Indians? Rao's stress is on the Indian experience and Indian vision. In the nineteen thirties, Indians were to look around for trends that were of an economic and political nature and which

would prove decisive for the Indians. We say economic because enterprise was in the hands of the British. They were the masters. On the other hand, Indian leaders such as Gandhi were raising their critical voice against a foreign power in control of the resources. This was political. The phenomenon required naming of the stakeholders in the existing economic-political enterprise. This was the Indian experience. Could it be expressed in English? Raja Rao thought so. Since naming of the stakeholders was crucial, Rao ranged a whole battalion of poor and deprived Indians in the resistance mode. The British, too, got a clear mention. They had their managers and administrators to run the show and present a point of view that would carry a message of governance to the Indian populace. For Raja Rao, rightly, such a scenario could be presented in a linguistic medium that was different from the one available to writers of English in Britain and elsewhere. The linguistic medium was the dialect that Rao used. He mentions adjectives like “distinctive” and “colourful.” He proved to the hilt that the voice of Indians could be captured authentically in English on the strength of the issues he raised and the persons he chose to depict and to whom he assigned a point of view. At the end of his writerly campaign in *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao proved beyond doubt that with the right substance and equipment, he could achieve the desired result.

The second point is that English is to be considered the second language in India and the need to redefine the issue in view of the role a language might play in a country’s cultural life. In this regard, Nair refers to a thinker-critic, Paul Christopherssen who, says Naik, “distinguishes between a foreign language, ‘which is not one’s own’, though one may have a good knowledge of it, and a second language, which is one’s own, though not... usually the first to be learnt. ‘A foreign language is used for absorbing the culture of another nation; a second language is used as an alternative way of expressing the culture of one’s own.’” It is not in an agency’s power to bring a language from another country and establish it in one’s own. The use of a language involves parameters that work on their own dynamic. A foreign language has value of a different kind. So far as English is concerned, it has had a long association with India. There is a whole group here that employs English not merely for studying the literature available in it, but for purposes of communication in many areas, most notably in administration, law, journalism, educational institutions, to name a few. The efficacy of English is established as an authentic means of communication. The presence of English in the Indian ethos is unmistakable. All these factors make it a second language. Christopherssen defines it “as an alternative way of expressing the culture of one’s own.” What does it mean? It implies perhaps that a culture has many options to choose from for its way of expression. There is also the suggestion in the statement that the way of expression is not confined to words alone but is indeed a mode with its own laws of articulating and shaping culture. That opens a new window of perceiving the question, introducing the idea of culture becoming less or more rich depending on which language is employed to express it. Even outside this consideration, the point is well made that English is a “second language” in India and may effectively be used. Once accepted, it assumes a valid and legitimate role, the one in fact that it plays today.

Activity 4

Read a newspaper article in English. How do you think English helps you relate to the world?

3.4 INDIAN ENGLISH: AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF EXPRESSION?

A substantially large part of Naik's essay is devoted to proving that Indian writing in English has an acceptable rationale and justification. In the essay, there are references to many writers and thinkers arguing for and against the claim of acceptability by English. Towards the end, however, Naik also takes up the cause of Indian languages in which, so far as he is concerned, regional literatures exist. The term "regional literatures" is unfortunate in that it restricts the scope of writing in India's languages along geographical lines. Yet, Naik sheds the tone of bias temporarily and makes some critical comments about Indian writers in English. To quote:

Only two percent of India's vast population know English today, and though the number will certainly rise in future, it is difficult to envisage a situation, when Indians will give up writing in their mother tongue altogether. Poetry in the Indian languages is hundreds of years old, and a tradition as old as that is not going to become extinct so easily. The regional cultures of India are vigorous and vibrant. They have survived over millennia, reacting to foreign influences, by changing, and adapting to new situations. They show absolutely no signs of dying out, on the contrary, they continue to flourish. Then how can their languages and the poetry in them decline? All the signs point in the opposite direction. Thus, during the last 30 years, Dalit verse has added a new dimension to Marathi poetry, by making the lowest of the low vocal in it. One sees and foresees not decline but distinct development in the regional literatures at present and in the future.

There are significant aspects to the "two percent" bit in this quote. One is that population wise, the appeal of English is limited. This is offset by the influence this small number wields in India, across regions, states and languages. Another is that even if English-knowing Indians increase, they will not "give up writing in their mother tongue altogether". Mark the expectation though. Then there is the grouse lying beneath the grudging acceptance that the poetry in the Indian languages "is not going to become extinct so easily." The interesting part is that the lighter tone and indicated desire mix-up reveals something other than what it says. The most important facet of the quote is the reference to "regional literatures." That the writing in Indian languages is not necessarily limited to the regions but spills over to vast areas in the country and strikes new roots in a variety of backgrounds is proved by Urdu-Hindi writing. The area of Urdu-Hindi or Hindustani, (the description had the stamp of Gandhiji and Premchand in the nineteen twenties), starts from Punjab and goes up to Bihar in the east, the boundaries of Madhya Pradesh where southern India begins, and stretches beyond Rajasthan to parts of Gujarat. Even Bengali writing is not contained within the boundaries of Bengal beyond which it merges with Odia on one side and Assam on the other. The cultural combine of Gujarat and Marathi will raise difficulties regarding the term "regional literature". Indeed, difficulties do not end here. The question is not of culture, but of life, ideas, perspectives and ideological as well as political paradigms that constitute the staple of literary expression. Yes, this is the point we should discuss to gain clarity on the link between culture and literature on one side and society and literature on the other.

There is no doubt that as an activity of importance, culture is the space to which literature belongs: there it gets its nourishment and is nurtured. The more rich and refined the culture, the more subtle and nuanced would be the literary expression. Also, refinement in culture is the outcome of a long tradition of struggle through which writers and artists pass in their journey to expression. Where does language stand in this process? For an answer to this, let us remind ourselves that language is not merely a medium but is an act of articulating experience on the strength of fighting with words. On their side, words carry a whole world of collective understanding and wisdom that comes into play when the writer engages with the literary making-unmaking of his travails. As the writer contends with pressure from words, s/he energises language, already laden with feelings from the past. It is to be recognized that at the centre of it is situated a dynamic language chosen consciously by the writer. This is the basis of Naik's stand on the language debate related to Indian writing in English. One could term it culture-centred, where values, outlooks and approaches interact and make ground for the literary work. This explains why Naik relies so heavily on specific works and comments of critics, thinkers and writers for discussion. In the said works and comments are then spotted ideas useful for ascertaining whether English or Indian languages with a long history would suit Indian writing.

To my mind, there is something amiss in this culture-centred argument. There is little concern here with the energy that flows from life into a language which in turn infuses sensations and vibrancies in the existing life. Such a **dialectic of life and language** was in play in the nineteenth century India, particularly in the years post 1857. The forties, fifties and the later decades of the nineteenth century were witness to a rising social temperature. Indian writing in English originated in this period, gave a few inspiring works but the intensity soon dwindled. In comparison, the appeal of Indian literatures increased in intensity and volume. A phase was visible at the turn of the century when a new crop of writers in Indian languages turned towards a new task. The question is whether the task was essentially cultural or deeply socio-political. In this context, two examples come to mind, of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. The former began his writing career with a novel in English but soon decided to shift to Bengali. The latter was bilingual in a stronger sense and prospered better in Bengali than in English. Such a shift was seen also in Premchand, with the difference that he shifted from Urdu to Hindi. In his case, the writing continued in the two languages simultaneously, but he learnt Hindi specifically because there he saw a larger readership. The newly emerged need for ideas, social comment and politics compelled Premchand to edit and publish two monthly magazines, both in Hindi. Marked changes occurred in his language, too, that moved closer to the expression heard on the street. Mulk Raj Anand was directly in touch with activists among writers in the National Movement. Even Raja Rao took a keen interest in the political happenings as a participant rather than as an observer (Alterno 5-6). Was there a correspondence in surge of this kind between Indian writing in English and all Indian languages? The question is worth pondering over. Suffice it to say that the point I am raising has not much to do with culture, but with a literary-linguistic requirement of the political hue.

Activity 5

Speak to at least five different people from different age groups. Ask them about their views of English as a language and how they use it. Compare their responses

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have focused upon Indian writing in English and its importance in our cultural life. This has been in view of the long drawn out language debate that argues for or against the value of Indian writing in English. To gain insight into the issue, M.K. Naik's essay on the debate has been discussed at length. It has come up as an acknowledged fact that English writing in India has come of age and touched great heights. Yet, the debate has refused to die down. Significantly, the struggle for gaining supremacy has contributed to a healthy rivalry and produced a new vigour and vitality in today's writing. The debate has lighted up new areas of perception, sensitivity and social relevance.

3.6 AIDS TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Depending on their background, people use English in a variety of contexts.

Activity 2: English is mixed liberally with Hindi/other languages in everyday conversations, advertisements etc.

Activity 3: The points you could focus on could be the contexts of the stories/poems that you have read; whether they talk about universal issues etc.

Activity 4: See if English newspapers make the reader familiar with terms and issues that are prevalent in international circles.

Activity 5: The use of English would vary according to age, rural/urban and educational background.

3.7 GLOSSARY

Consensus : general agreement.

Dialectic of life and language : the reference is to the process. The two inspire and strengthen each other. That is how they remain alive.

Narratives and Imaginings : novels and poems. The idea is to present them from the point of view of their form.

3.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What are M.K. Naik's views on Indian English?
- 2) Critically comment on Raja Rao's remarks in the Preface to *Kanthapura*.
- 3) What according to you is the social role of English language in India?
- 4) Examine the use of English in advertisement and pamphlets. Pick up any two slogans and comment on their use.

3.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

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UNIT 4 ‘MOTHER TONGUE’ BY PADMA SACHDEV; ‘PASSAGE TO AMERICA’ BY K. AYYAPPA PANIKER

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Padma Sachdev, the Dogri Poet
- 4.3 Text of ‘Mother Tongue’
 - 4.3.1 Reading ‘Mother Tongue’
 - 4.3.2 Thematic Significance
 - 4.3.3 ‘Mother Tongue’ as an Aesthetic Expression
 - 4.3.4 Language as Mother Tongue and Language of Translation
- 4.4 K. Ayyappa Paniker, the Malayalam Poet
- 4.5 Text of ‘Passage to America’
 - 4.5.1 Reading ‘Passage to America’.
 - 4.5.2 Thematic Significance
 - 4.5.3 Passage to America as an Aesthetic Expression
 - 4.5.4 English as Language of Translation in ‘Passage to America’
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Aids to Activities
- 4.8 Glossary
- 4.9 Questions
- 4.10 References and Suggested Reading

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Our objective in this unit is to consider in detail two poems, the first written in Dogri and the second in Malayalam. We shall learn here to relate poetic writing with the socio-political world surrounding us and see how they become intermeshed in the hands of literary writers. You will be able to look critically at the rich domain of language where poetic writing is shaped to raise pertinent issues of culture and social truth.

Words in **bold** are explained in the **Glossary**

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We read and discuss in the two poems, ‘Mother Tongue’ and ‘Passage to America’ the issues and concerns of the present-day world. The first is a Dogri poem written by Padma Sachdev, and the second is a Malayalam poem by K. Ayyappa Paniker. The central subject of the first poem is the role of the writer. The poem’s title gives a clear indication of what the poet thinks about herself and how she might interpret the world she belongs to. The second poem has a larger canvas and takes into its fold, the problems of the modern person caught up in a web of

multiple identities. As we read it, we come to grips with the working of the mind and imagination of the human subject called the poet. In this process, the poets find their moorings. The writer also ventures into the arena of borders which divide the world and create issues of finding a home. This has something to do with what M. K. Naik has called the “Indian sensibility” (5). Clearly, the two poems offer ample scope for exploration of modern living. In the two poems, we are struck, too, by the nature of language that speaks of experience and thought simultaneously. In tone and tenor, the two poems are deceptively simple but reveal a spectacle of clashing interests when seen closely. The pictures and images built into these poems require elucidation and analysis. Even as they are “freed from the restraints of meter, rhyme and form,” they are able to avoid the “versified chaos” that Naik feared (212). And it is not only because they are here in English translation. In this unit, we shall locate clues from where we could launch an exploratory excursion into the surroundings the poems capture.

Activity 1

Read a couple of poems – some written in free verse and others which conform to conventional notions of rhyme and meter and see what difference this makes.

4.2 PADMA SACHDEV, THE DOGRI POET

Padma Sachdev belongs to the Jammu region of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. She was born in 1940 and starting writing from an early age. She learnt her lessons in literary expression at a time when India was evolving as a society with a democratic and egalitarian ethos. This was something new to young Padma who was surrounded by a tradition-bound generation of men and women. For her, writing might have been an exercise in an assertion of selfhood. She was bilingual, writing in Dogri and Hindi where she won recognition for her libertarian views. It came naturally to her to speak for the feminist cause. Her writing has been characterized majorly by her autobiographical impulse. She relates as a woman with the world of home, neighbourhood, market and commerce. These are the problematic areas she contends with, and takes them as an intellectual challenge. Her presence has been noted as the first woman Dogri poet and fiction writer. A winner of many awards, she has published books such as *Tavi Te Chanhan* (*River Tavi and Chenab*) and *Nheriyan Galiyan* (*Dark Lanes*).

4.3 TEXT OF ‘MOTHER TONGUE’

I approached a stem
Swinging on a reed
And asked him
To give me a quill.
Irritated, he said
I gave you one only the other day
A new one, what have you done with it?
Are you some sort of an accountant
With some *Shah*
Writing account books

Where you need a new pen
Every other day, he asked.
No, I don't work for a Shah
I said, but for a *Shahni*, very kind, very well off
And I am not the only one
Working for her
She has many servants
Ever ready to do her bidding
That *Shahni* is my mother tongue
Dogri
Give me, a quill, quickly
She must be looking for me
The reed cut off its hand
Gave it to me and said
Take it
I too am her servant.

(This poem has been translated from the original Dogri by Shivanath.)

4.3.1 Reading 'Mother Tongue'

The first sentence is split into four lines. You may wonder why. The reason is that poetry in our times has shed the shackles of **conventional versification**. It does not follow established rules of poetic composition such as rhyme, meter, rhythm, etc. Meter would imply the length of the line in terms of sound. The splitting of the sentence serves the purpose of giving pauses. At the end of the line, you pause and think as well as wait for the sentence to move further where at some time it would stop. Such a verse is called free verse, the French word for it being *vers libre*. It goes with the mental state of the poet who relies on the flow of meaning inherent in each word used. Mark, then, that the full sentence—"I approached a stem swinging on a reed and asked him to give me a quill"—is in the manner of a story, a happening. The only thing that creates hurdles here is the word "stem" that is "swinging on a reed." Generally, humans do not speak with trees, or stems. Yet, here the poet is doing precisely that. Also, the act inspires us to imagine that we might talk to a stem that can be treated as a friend. The request is for a quill, used as a pen that may enable the poet to write. "Stem" is a man, "him". Indeed, soon the stem assumes the role of a person and feels "irritated," a typical human trait. He is angry since the one he gave the poet the previous day could still be used. Why cut a quill from the reed unnecessarily? To help the poet grasp his intent, the stem explains that only accountants of a "Shah" would write so much as to need a new quill every day. For readers, this response leads straight to the world of reality constituting accountants, shahs, money, trade and commerce.

Activity 2

What effect does the treatment of the stem as a person (personification) have in the overall impact of the poem?

For us, the reference to a Shah raises a whole lot of questions, opens a new window to the world we live in. Firstly, the world we know stands in direct

contrast to nature with which this poem began—a stem, a quill, a reed. The poet herself was closer to nature, she appeared to be innocent, honest and curious—a dreamer. She was not aware of the existence of a society driven by parameters of buying and selling, of keeping accounts. When quizzed by the stem, the poet too talks with a sense of distinction into which she has been pushed now. The poet’s answer to the stem is fully informed, not expected of a dreamer. This is the complexity we face while reading this poem. Suddenly it appears that the poet has woken up to an atmosphere of **difference and discrimination**. Saying she does not work for a Shah, since that would be restrictive if not downright demeaning, the poet introduces the alternative figure of Shahni, a female and one who inspires and enables creativity. Who or what is Shahni? This is the question the poet raises and addresses. Her answer is long, comprehensive and ever widening. Since it is the crux of the poem, let me quote in full for emphasis—“Shahni [is] very kind,/ Very well off/ And I am not the only one/ Working for her/ She has many servants/ Ever ready to do her bidding/ That Shahni is my mother tongue/ Dogri/ Give me, a quill, quickly/ She must be looking for me/ The reed cut off its hand/ Gave it to me and said/ Take it/ I too am her servant.” What do we see in this? For one, we learn from this an important dimension of the metaphorical mother on one side and language on the other. These two join and come to represent a paradigm of initiative, positive truth and progress. Yet further, the mother tongue, the language we grow up with, covers our whole enterprise of living with one another. The idea of the mother tongue bestows upon us prosperity and flowering, not individually but in a relationship of togetherness. The scope of the mother tongue is so vast and energy-giving that the stem itself joins the poet in their common search for fulfilment.

Activity 3

What do you think the last few lines of the poem convey?

4.3.2 Thematic Significance

The theme of “Mother Tongue” is clearly hinted in the previous part of the unit. The poem sends out the message of human expression through sound patterns that assume the form of language in social living. Sound patterns are signified by “tongue.” Language helps a person preserve oneself as a mother would. She speaks to the child who takes in her voice and responds - think of the bonding between the child and the mother from the very beginning of one’s life.

Very deftly, however, another aspect is added to language, that of the quill which raises language to the height of drawing symbols. The ink into which the quill is dipped leaves specific marks on the surface of the paper. What the mother spoke is transferred by the person to the sheet of paper. That, too, is language. Through the actions of the writer, a whole new drama will unfold, that of expressing ideas, impressions, emotions and other symbols of worldly use. The last is economic and production-related. Further, a record is to be kept of the items produced in society. This is covered by accounting. For the poet, accounting, even if given and necessary, is of limited significance. From here, the message of the poem branches out and goes into two distinct directions—use-related and creative. The first one is critically assessed, whereas the second is lauded for its visionary nature.

For the poet, commerce and trade are activities that take us away from the fun and pleasure of life, rendering it prosaic and mundane. Mechanical and limited,

they give a vision of competition and profit, not of humanist values that believe in creating an ethos of modernity. Writing accounts is considered equivalent to assessing society as depending solely on utility. At a later stage, utility might look at the whole social effort from the angle of making profits that are to be constantly accumulated and multiplied. This also hits at resources of nature that are meant to meet needs and requirements. Production aimed at competing with other producers and not keeping focused on social needs results in waste. That is how the stem countered the poet by asking why she was demanding another quill when one had been given to her only the previous day. The pointed criticism is of capitalist ventures that exploit nature's resources only for personal gain.

Conversely, so far as the visionary nature of human initiative is concerned, the poet has evoked the woman figure Shahni. Is there any significance of the man being Shah and the woman being Shahni? We can see that Shah is a man of commerce, engaged in trade of goods that are produced in society through use of precious resources. Along with him, there is the woman Shahni who is his opposite in all respects. It stands to reason that we understand her as one who would counter him from close quarters, as closely as a spouse. Yet, this is not said in the poem. The poet lets us guess, a deliberate act of teasing the mind of the reader. Shahni "has many servants" who would do what she would ask them to. This is a simple statement, not a command on Shahni's part. This is since she works through affection, through an urge she creates in them for carrying out the task she may assign to them. Also, "servants" does not denote employees, but those who trust her fully and gladly perform the duty she expects them to accomplish. Following this, the poet gives Shahni a name, 'Mother Tongue'. It is interesting that the name is enough to describe her, and to establish her as the embodiment of sustenance. Through the mother tongue, humankind earns its identity, the faculty of articulating its intent and spreading it to all who will then be connected mutually, as if they belonged to one tribe. This unifying agency would ensure an organic bonding among all the humans.

Activity 4

What is the significance of the female figure as opposed to the male?

4.3.3 'Mother Tongue' as an Aesthetic Expression

In literature, we distinguish intent or message from the aesthetic form. As such, the aesthetic form is the body or shape that separates one linguistic composition from another, for instance, an essay on economics and a lyric meant to be sung. The music or lyricism is the aesthetic quality of a song. What is the aesthetic quality of the poem 'Mother Tongue'? How does it stand separated from a philosophical tract, or even a dramatic piece?

In 'Mother Tongue', we find pictures or images as well as snatches of conversation. These are short and crisp. They also work at many levels and are multi-layered. The poet walks to a stem, "approaches" it. It is easy to visualize a person walking towards a small tree. Walking tells about movement, purpose, as well as an inner need to connect with something or someone. Imagine a stem "swinging on a reed." It is a happy sight, as if the stem were dancing at a slow pace. Next, the poet holds a conversation with the stem through human speech. The act turns the stem into a human being who could hear and talk back. As the conversation proceeds, a sort of enactment takes place—the poet and the stem

share a situation involving request, suspicion, query, an explanation, and the final coming together as part of a mission. The whole thing is transformed into a game that the two have played and reach through it a happy joining. When the problem is laid out, interpreted variously and moved towards a resolution, the result is of fulfilment. An additional layer in the poem is that of the social truth that sheds light on the clash of interests in society at one level and rejection of commercialism at the hands of visionary art. Hanging delicately with it is the fragrance of motherly bonding of language with the human subject who will in turn communicate with all others. Count how many layers, levels, images, acts and situations have been woven into the texture of this poem!

Activity 5

Trace the development of thought and images in the poem.

4.3.4 Language as Mother Tongue and Language of Translation

Let us bear in mind that the poem ‘Mother Tongue’ is a translation from Dogri into English. When the original writer’s piece is rendered in another linguistic medium, it affects the original language and does something creative to the other language. Also, you must realize that language enjoys nearness with its speaker and changes shape and form in her/his hands. The translation plays another role as well; it puts a composition in touch with the sensibility of a person other than that of the original writer. This means that in the act of translation, two sensibilities clash, contend and finally merge with each other. Keeping this in sight, let us look at ‘Mother Tongue’ once more.

As we read the poem in its present form, a translation in English, we have an indication of the words in Dogri. There, too, the words would have been simple, close to the speech of children that hold a dialogue with one another. We might also imagine a gap, a distance between Dogri and English. In the original, there may have been a hint of the Dogri dialect that would evolve into a standardized Dogri sometime later. That is not the case with English, which is in its standard, established form in this poem. All these facts shed light on the nature of languages in their different roles.

4.4 K. AYYAPPA PANIKER, THE MALAYALAM POET

K. Ayyappa Paniker, poet and critic, was born in 1930 in Kerala and received his education up to Ph.D. in English. Later, he started teaching and assumed a key role in the creative and academic field. He became a poet of great influence and inspired a whole generation of poets. His critical work was in the domain of literary theory; in it he participated actively and published many books. He wrote poetry in Malayalam and English simultaneously. To quote his own words: “I was in Bloomington, Indiana, from 1969 to 1971, doing my Ph.D. at Indiana University, taking poetry with Samuel Yellen. I was perhaps writing simultaneously in Malayalam, my mother tongue, and in English, my second language. In the early days, it was quite easy to get used to the new surroundings and make friends with Americans” (Quoted in Kumar 120).

K. Ayyappa Paniker’s poem ‘Passage to America’ given here for study is in fact Section 7 of the long poem ‘Passage to America.’ The full text is published in *Many Mountains Moving*, Vol. 1, no. 3.

4.5 TEXT OF 'PASSAGE TO AMERICA'

'Mother Tongue' by Padma
Sachdev; 'Passage to
America' by K. Ayyappa
Paniker

it's as if i suddenly meet you on the way
when i go for my usual walk in the evening
the earth that begins at your feet
seems to end at mine
the air you breathe out
enters into my lungs
and the light that escapes from your eyes
focuses on mine.

America

i see your map like the palm of a hand stretched out on my lap
mississippi traces your lifeline to the south
while the great lakes draw circles
along the st lawrence headline
but where is your heartline
on the mount of jupiter
new england cocks its eyes at Europe
your venus is still in heat
in the far south in florida
and the mount of moon
shimmers on the california beach
but america
where has vanished your heartline
has some test explosion
sucked it underground
i remember river phalgun
that goes dry in summer defying our prayers
where once the **buddha got enlightenment**
and learned to take the earth for a begging bowl
but here the fission and the fusion
your scientists envision
offer your palmist nothing but confusion
sailing back from mescaline to marijuana
someone said
there was never such a line
in this ancient newborn land
where we grow corn and PL 480
and make colour tv sets in plenty
till our chests are nearly empty
and brains spout tons of TNT
it's christmas again
the shape of a heart neatly painted to a cross

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

that stand on a hill we have set up with skill.

(This poem has been translated from the original Malayalam by the author.)

4.5.1 Reading ‘Passage to America’.

The first thing we note in the text is that it has avoided the use of the capital letter entirely. Neither does the sentence begin with a capital letter, nor do names of places, or references to people, such as the subject’s pronoun ‘I’, contain the big letter. What could be the reason for it? Think and guess. My own guess is that somewhere in the middle years of the twentieth century, the feeling among writers was to look at the poetic venture subjectively. They wished to make a personal statement for sharing their perspective on writing. The capital letter in writing denoted special status. See the hidden bias in grammar. There is a reason behind calling someone the first person, as also someone else the second and another one the third. The same may hold true for the place one may refer to—the place enjoys weight and, and may therefore, have the capital letter at the beginning. Are divisions necessary in a longer paragraph? In speech, we stop to gather breath. In composing, this has translated into closing and starting sentences. The speech does not observe such rules consciously. Negation of such conventions reflected a sense of revolt and rebellion on the part of the writer. Consider whether the present poem has kept such a stance consciously.

The title of the poem is ‘Passage to America’. This takes us back to E.M. Forster’s ‘A Passage to India’. Later, Nirad C. Chaudhuri felt inspired to give the title ‘A Passage to England’ to his account of confrontation with England. The similarity of those titles with that of the present poem might say something in that regard. Is that indeed the case? You might ponder over this issue. Yes, the poem talks of the new and unfamiliar country Paniker has gone to. Also, there are many things that occur to him while facing situations in America. As they are under the writer’s lens, they urge the viewer to respond to them in a specific manner.

The opening lines are a bit strange, in that they make the writer alert about himself in a peculiar way—the earth he carried from India ended where that of America began. There is a sudden jolt and we wake up, as it were, to the new colours and smells, and shapes of the country called America. (How does it feel when America is spelt as ‘america’? Normal, unfamiliar, or mildly threatening?). The next moment, we read a reference to the air— “the air you breathe out/ enters into my lungs.” These lines next to those talking of the earth strengthen the feeling of a new relationship that the author became conscious of. There is something to taking in borrowed air into one’s lungs. The third statement is less raw than the preceding ones. It is to do with exchanging stances, with someone looking at the poet critically and thus unnerving him, rendering him self-conscious. In the following description, three words capture our attention—lifeline, headline and heartline. Is the poet raising the issue of material aspects of life, first of the social existence and then extending it specifically towards head (thinking, planning, rational approach) and heart (feeling, sensing, linking with instincts)? That seems to be the case. We from India might say that the more advanced a society, the more it will take one away from matters of strong emotions such as of bonding, roots, and traditions. These lead to the question— “but america/ where has vanished your heartline?” Soon, quite explicitly, the poet refers to the culprit, science— “some test explosion/ [that] sucked it (heartline) underground.” The

poet draws a clear line of distinction between the (Indian) “river phalgun . . . where once buddha got enlightenment” and (in America) “your fission and the fusion/ your scientists envision.” Following this, some amalgamation takes place. Towards the end, the poem mentions some meeting points. Mescaline and marijuana affect the mind and make the faculty of reason blurred, whereas PL 480, TNT, and Christmas merge into one another to create confusion. We may thus reach a problematic in which food, drugs and explosives make a blinding mix. It appears that the poet has brought in an impossibility with which we might have to contend.

4.5.2 Thematic Significance

The theme of the poem, call it concern if you like, is the clash of societies and cultures. An Indian poet of middle class origins visits a new country far away from his own. In the situation, it is a difficult task to relate to the unfamiliar surroundings. In the text, one is faced with a view, an impression, and a dramatic addressing of the scene by a conscious observer. Additionally, the voice of the observer has combined with that of a commentator and judge. Why? The reason is that he is a poet and carries cultural baggage from his own country. The address contains an attitude of criticism and potential accommodation. The new place is modern, advanced and technologically equipped to take care of life's difficulties. The poet came from an atmosphere of mysticism, vision, and sensuousness. The clash gives rise to unease, questioning and a bit of negation. Will it lead to reconciliation of the two cultures? The question is squarely posed. The answer lies somewhere in the tone of the poem—it indicates recognition of specific issues such as lack of conformity between head and heart, reason and feeling. One could, thus, say that the more elaborate and broad the description, the better chances would be of meeting things half way. Since there is no direct rejection of the spectacle in front, the poet considers the phenomenon problem-ridden. Recourse also is taken to outlining one's view, and posing the riddle of the novel ways. See that in the poem exist stances of philosophical viewing and connecting threads. This is in the mind of the poet. On the other side stand adoptions of the scientific and rational parameter of handling and controlling nature. Yet, at the end we note a “neatly painted cross” and the use of skills for constructing a specific scene up the hill. Is that not appreciative at least mildly? I say this since irony too seems to have been worked into the image. This may be a combination of acceptance and questioning in the larger frame of modernity.

4.5.3 'Passage to America' as an Aesthetic Expression

In the present case, the aesthetic aspect would draw strength from the poetic skills used by the poet. Indeed, Paniker does not state things as they exist, but through the prism of his consciousness. All that he presents in the poem is loaded. A part of the earth ending and another part beginning from that point is not simple talk of an innocent person, but a version that compels the reader to think. The poem happens not in front of the perceiver but deep down in his own mind where pre-existing images influence that which he confronts. For this reason, our attention might be drawn in the modern period to the craft of writing. Pramod K. Nayar has observed, “The art of composition, the poet's dilemma, the anticipation of response and the issue of craftsmanship become the subject of poetry” (in Ramanan 76). It is using a mirror in which the object is reflected. The American scene is reflected in the mind of an Indian poet. Aesthetically speaking, this is the case of dealing with a multi-dimensional phenomenon centrally

governed by impressions. We might say that the poetic method discernible here is of modernism that swore by images with a life of their own. Does the poet take a position on the issues he is dealing with at the level of capturing them? We do not see a clear or unequivocal position. Thus, presenting questions and enjoying the worth inherent in them against the background of mild fascination is what he has achieved. This is worked with the help of linguistic play visible in internal rhyming as in— “that stand on a hill we have set up with skill,” or clever mixing of meaning as in the “river phalgun/ that goes dry in summer defying our prayers.”

Activity 6

As you move from one place to another/ one state to another/ one country to another, how does your understanding of belonging change?

4.5.4 English as Language of Translation in ‘Passage to America’

We know that “Passage to America” was written originally in Malayalam, and the poet then translated it into English. There is the advantage that the poet’s perceptions and imaginings were re-created in another linguistic medium not by another person. If that had happened, the version may have evoked a different view. Here, we have flow and spontaneity that make it quite close to what was composed in Malayalam. Even if not familiar with Malayalam, we might conjecture that in the poem a clear awareness about the potential American/ English reader exists. The scene captured in the poem tells us this. The ingenuity of not using capital letters creates a distancing we cannot overlook. This takes the attention of the reader away from the fact of translation. It also informs us that the Malayalam original has been recreated in English through changing to use of small letters as the word-play to which reference was made above, under the head “aesthetic expression.”

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed two poems— ‘Mother Tongue’ by Padma Sachdev and ‘Passage to America’ by K. Ayyappa Paniker. The first poem presented the complex issue of expression in the mother tongue that is an integral part of human existence, whereas the second poem had the distance between two cultures at its centre. The unit has also considered the two poems as texts in translation. The aspects of theme, concerns and aesthetics have come in here, and we have seen in them a significant link with life and culture in the modern period.

4.7 AIDS TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Rhyme and metre have a lot to do with how a poem sounds when it is read aloud.

Activity 2: The personification lends a sense of intimacy.

Activity 3: The ending conveys that the mother tongue is supreme.

Activity 4: As a female, it is seen as a creative force which assigns identity.

Activity 5: The poet utilises images from the world of nature and worldly power leading to the conclusion that there is nothing greater than the mother tongue.

Activity 6: One feels a sense of belonging in various places at various points of time.

'Mother Tongue' by Padma Sachdev; 'Passage to America' by K. Ayyappa Paniker

4.8 GLOSSARY

- Buddha got enlightenment** : The Buddha, literally one who has attained enlightenment. Enlightenment is synonymous with self-knowledge, self-realization and that core in the mind that is lighted for showing the truth clearly in all situations. "buddha got enlightenment" means Prince Gautam attained self-realization.
- Conventional versification** : use of meter and rhyme in verse as was the convention. Later, in the nineteenth century, poets took to writing verses with no binding of meter or rhyme. The new form was called free verse.
- Difference and discrimination** : difference is dissimilarity between two things; discrimination, however, is a negative term that wilfully favours one person unjustifiably as against another who is put down.
- Envisioning** : stretching the imagination to form a dream about a phenomenon; idealizing.

4.9 QUESTIONS

- 1) Write a critical note on the poem 'Mother Tongue' by Padma Sachdev.
- 2) How does K. Ayyappa Paniker relate in his poem 'Passage to America' to the American scene? Do you see the scope of reconciliation between the values cherished by America and India? Explain.
- 3) Comment on the aesthetic aspect of the poem 'Passage to America.'

4.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

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