

K N Govt. P G College, Gyanpur

M.A. SEMESTER IV (ENGLISH)

PAPER XV

WOMEN'S WRITING

(SHORT NOTES)

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UNIT-I

1. BHARTI MUKHERJEE: JASMINE

- ◆ Bharti Mukherjee was an Indian American writer. *Jasmine* is her third novel published in 1989.
- ◆ *Jasmine* is a novel by Bharati Mukherjee set in the 1980s about a young Indian woman in the United States who, trying to adapt to the American way of life in order to be able to survive, changes identities several times.
- ◆ Mukherjee's own experiences of dislocation and displacement in her life helps her in recording the immigrant experience of the protagonist in this novel.
- ◆ *Jasmine* is a novel of emigration and assimilation, both on physical and psychological levels.
- ◆ In this novel, Bharati Mukherjee fictionalizes the process of Americanization by tracing a young Indian woman's experiences of trauma and triumph in her attempt to forge a new identity for herself.

- ◆ The story is told from the first-person point of view by the female protagonist, who undergoes multiple identity transformations in her quest for self-empowerment and happiness.
- ◆ Mukherjee uses the cinematic techniques of flashback and cross-cutting to fuse Jasmine's past and present.
- ◆ Jasmine is the protagonist and narrator of the novel, and we follow her lifelong journey to resist the deterministic path set out for her by the fakir from Hasnapur, who predicted that she would live widowed and in exile.
- ◆ Jasmine inhabits many identities in her travels, and for each identity she has a new name given to her by the people she loves. Her parents name her Jyoti, her first husband names her Jasmine, Taylor Hayes calls her Jase, and in the Midwest, she goes by Jane.

2. SHASHI DESHPANDE: THAT LONG SILENCE

- ◆ Shashi Deshpande is an Indian novelist. Her fifth novel *That Long Silence* was published in 1988. She received Sahitya Akademi Award for this novel.
- ◆ Shashi Deshpande, as a feminist writer concentrates on the tortures and sufferings of middle-class Indian Women who are educated, sensitive and conscious of their legal, social and conjugal rights.
- ◆ Deshpande highlights the household conflict between wife and husband operating at the emotional, intellectual and sexual levels.
- ◆ The novelist being fully aware of the patriarchal set-up of Indian society does not plead for any kind of confrontation or militancy between Man and women, between husband and wife.
- ◆ Differences with her husband, frustrations in their seventeen-year-old marriage, disappointment in her two teenage children, claustrophobia of her childhood-all begin to surface. In her small suburban Bombay flat, Jaya grapples with these and other truths about herself-among them her failure at writing and her fear of anger.
- ◆ Shashi Deshpande gives us an exceptionally accomplished portrayal of a woman trying to erase a 'long silence' begun in childhood and rooted in herself and in the constraints of her life

- ◆ As it is often said and practiced that “Silence, tolerance, sufferance is golden” and though the novel is in the feminist framework, the novelist does not cross the limits of Indian, socio—cultural reality.

UNIT-II

1. BAPSI SIDHWA: THE CROW EATERS

- ◆ Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani- American novelist of Gujarati Parsi descent who writes in English and is resident in the United States.
- ◆ The Crow Eaters is Bapsi Sidhwa’s second but first published novel.
- ◆ It was published in 1978.
- ◆ It is a lively and humorous story about the Parsi community of Pakistan.
- ◆ The title of the book is translation of a derogatory term used for Parsis who are stereotyped as being excessively loud and talkative.
- ◆ The Crow Eaters first published in Pakistan in 1978, describes the social nobility of a Parsi family, the Junglewallas, during the British Raj in the early twentieth century.
- ◆ In just one generation, they increased their business from a single general merchant store in Lahore to a chain of stores, in several North Indian cities and license for “handling all traffic of goods between Peshawar and Afghanistan.”
- ◆ It also traces the attempts of Parsis, migrating from the west coast and settling in the more salubrious climate of North Indian cities, in the late nineteenth and the turn of this century.
- ◆ This is the hallmark of Bapsi Sidhwa’s work, she accurately depicts historical facts interwoven with satirical fiction.
- ◆ Though Faredoon Junglewalla is the protagonist of the novel, from the other women characters, we come to know how women are placed in the society and how they are blamed for the unfortunate happenings in their family life.
- ◆ Many of the incidents are comic with a touch of tragedy in them. This is the kind of writing Bapsi is known famous for and this book is a prime example of her art.

2. MONICA ALI: BRICKLANE

- ◆ Monica Ali was a Bangladesh born British novelist.
- ◆ Brick Lane was her debut novel published in 2003.
- ◆ *Brick Lane* brings the immigrant milieu of East London to vibrant life.
- ◆ Through the eyes of two Bangladeshi sisters—the plain Nazneen and the prettier Hasina—we see the divergent paths of the contemporary descendants of an ancient culture. Hasina elopes to a "love marriage," and young Nazneen, in an arranged marriage, is pledged to a much older man living in London.
- ◆ Ali's skillful narrative focuses on Nazneen's stifling life with her ineffectual husband, who keeps her imprisoned in a city housing project filled with immigrants in varying degrees of assimilation.
- ◆ But Ali reveals a bittersweet tension between the "two kinds of love" Nazneen and her sister experience—that which begins full and overflowing, only to slowly dissipate, and another which emerges like a surprise, growing unexpectedly over years of faithful commitment. Both of these loves have their own pitfalls: Hasina's passionate romance crumbles into domestic violence, and Nazneen's marriage never quite reaches a state of wedded bliss.
- ◆ Stressing the universality of the desire for freedom and autonomy, Ali's liberal point of view seeks to shed light on the predicament of less powerful members of non-Western cultures, such as women, who are oppressed by the customs and traditions of their cultures.
- ◆ By employing a liberal perspective, however, Ali not only oversimplifies the cultural concerns of the Bangladeshi immigrants in England but also reproduces a problematic and stereotypical picture of Bangladesh.

UNIT-III

1. YASMIN GOONERATNE: THE CHANGE OF SKIES

- ◆ A Change of Skies is the Sri Lankan-Australian academic and author's first novel published in 1991.
- ◆ In her novel A Change of Skies Gooneratne fuses two stories encompassing two centuries, two continents and two generations.
- ◆ The story of Edward, the grandfather and the story of Barry, the grandson run simultaneously. Gooneratne adopts a complacent tone and links these two stories of the grandfather's and that of the grand son's till the end of the novel.
- ◆ The expatriate experiences of these characters resemble the theme of 'acceptance' and 'willingness' which Gooneratne herself seems to have practiced to get accustomed to an alien soil.
- ◆ Bharat and Navaranjini Mangala-Davasinha move to Australia from Sri Lanka in the late 1960s/early 1970s, initially temporarily, for Bharat to take up a lecturing position at Southern Cross University in Sydney. Friends and family warn them that Australia is a complete backwater, the ends of the earth, a cultural wasteland, and that soon they will be pining to return to the centre of civilisation, Sri Lanka.
- ◆ What was a five year stint becomes a permanent move. Bharat and Navaranjini even change their names to Barry and Jean Mundy, to fit in in Australia.
- ◆ Clash of cultures and adaptation are the popular themes in this novel. Herself being an immigrant to Australia, Gooneratne relates her own experience to the characters in the novel. The novel adopts the theme of migration. The expatriate experiences of the central characters, Bharath and Navaranjini run throughout the novel hilariously.
- ◆ The novel is totally devoid of hatred.

2. MANJUSHREE THAPA: THE TUTOR OF HISTORY

- ◆ Manjushree Thapa is a Canadian writer of Nepali descent.
- ◆ The Tutor of History was published in 2001.
- ◆ It is no exaggeration to say that Nepal has had a difficult time on the political front in the later years of the 20th century and the early years of

the 21st century, as it tries to move from being an absolute monarchy to being a democracy.

- ◆ Thapa's novel documents this difficult transition from the perspective of one area – Khaireni Tar, a real place but entirely fictionalised for the purposes of this novel, according to Thapa in her introduction.
- ◆ It takes place during the run-up to the 1991 elections. Thapa is at great pains to show both different strata of society and different political parties, though she tends to focus on the (fictitious) People's Party, nicknamed the Teacup Party because that is its symbol.
- ◆ She is also keen to show the feminist perspective and bring to the fore the poor treatment of women in Nepal.
- ◆ *The Tutor of History* is an ambitious social saga, a compelling tale of idealism, love and alienation, set in contemporary Nepal caught between tradition and modernity. The events of the novel unfold against the backdrop of a campaign for parliamentary elections in the bustling roadside town of Khaireni Tar.
- ◆ The portrayal of women in society during the late 1990's is done brilliantly. It shows how at times women themselves are conditioned to such an extent by the society that they seem to accept the roles and regulations meted against them. Yet at the same time how a small change can bring a new lease of life and courage is portrayed well.

UNIT-IV

1. ARUNDHATI ROY: THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

- ◆ *The God of Small Things* is the debut novel of Indian writer Arundhati Roy.
- ◆ It won the Booker Prize in 1997.
- ◆ It is a story about the childhood experiences of fraternal twins, Rahel and Esthappen, whose lives are destroyed by the 'Love Laws that lay down "who should be loved, and how, and how much."
- ◆ The book explores how the small things affect people's behaviour and their lives. It is the story of the tragic decline of an Indian family whose members suffer the terrible consequences of forbidden love,
- ◆ *The God of Small Things* is set in the state of Kerala, on the southernmost tip of India.

- ◆ *The God of Small Things* is probably more than anything else a novel about family. It explores the relationship between brother and sister, mother and child, grandparent and grandchild, aunt and niece/nephew, and cousins. It looks at the ways families are forced to stick together and also how they fall apart. Unconditional family love is a major issue on the table here. Just like in real life, family relationships in the novel can be complicated, confusing, and frustrating.
- ◆ The characters in *The God of Small Things* are constantly coming up against the forces of society and class. Indian society was structured for centuries according to very rigid social classes and boundaries, through what is known as the caste system. Even though the novel takes place after the caste system stopped being a legal social policy, its characters still find themselves limited by what is and isn't deemed socially acceptable for them. Social rules dictate who can love whom, which occupations people can adopt, and who is considered to be better than whom.

2. KIRAN DESAI: *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

- ◆ *The Inheritance of Loss* is the second novel by Indian author Kiran Desai.
- ◆ It was first published in 2006.
- ◆ It won the Booker Prize.
- ◆ The major theme running throughout *The Inheritance of Loss* is one closely related to colonialism and the effects of post-colonialism: the loss of identity and the way it travels through generations as a sense of loss.
- ◆ The Gorkhaland movement is used as the historic backdrop of the novel.
- ◆ *The Inheritance of Loss*, explores immigration, identity, and relationships on both the interpersonal and international scale.
- ◆ Spanning India, England, and the United States, the novel details the conflict between traditional Indian ways of life and the shiny opulence of Western nations.
- ◆ The primary cast of characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* can be divided into two groups: those who have adopted Western cultural practices and those who struggle to maintain their native identity amid a changing culture. Some characters snub those who embody the Indian way of life,

others are angered by anglicised Indians who have lost their traditions; none is content.

- ◆ This extraordinary novel manages to explore, with intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in the mid-1980's, it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel.
 - ◆ *The Inheritance of Loss* explores the lives of characters who are trapped in India's class system—both the lower class and the upper class. The characters' hopes and dreams are conveyed in the novel, along with their ultimate dream of immigrating to America and finally escaping the rigid caste system of their homeland.
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