

# ***READINGS FROM THE FRINGES***

**(ENG2 A03)**

**II SEMESTER**

**COMMON COURSE**

**B.A. /B.COM/ BBA**

**2022 Admission onwards**



***UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT***

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**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**  
**SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**  
**STUDY MATERIAL**  
**Common Course in English**  
**II Semester**  
**B.A. /B.COM/ BBA**  
***READINGS FROM THE FRINGES***

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# **MODULE: 1**

## **CONSTITUTION, DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM**

**When Salihan took on the Raj**

**P Sainath**

### **About the Author**

Palagummi Sainath is a famous Indian Journalist and a specialist in reporting rural India. He was born in a Telugu family in Madras and he is the grandson of India's former President V.V Giri. He graduated in History from Jawaharlal Nehru University and has an honorary D.Litt from University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Amartya Sen called him, "one of the world's experts on famine and hunger", while the Times of India institutionalized his methods of reporting and sixty other leading newspapers initiated columns on poverty and rural development.

P Sainath has won 40 global and national awards for his reporting. He has awards like European Commission's Lorenzo Natali Prize, Amnesty International's Global Human Rights Journalism Prize, UN's Food and Agriculture Organisations Boerma Prize, Inspiration Award at the Global Visions Film Festival, Edmonton, Canada, Ramon Magsaysay Award for

journalism Literature and Creative Communications Arts and the World Media Summit Global Award for Excellence to his credit. But he refused to accept Padma Bhushan, telling “Journalism should not be judged by the Government and journalists should not accept awards from governments they are covering or writing about.”

He covered 100,000 km across India for his work, *Everyday Loves a God Drought*, of which he walked over 5000 km on foot. He founded People’s Archive of Rural India (PARI) in 2014, an online platform dealing with socioeconomic inequalities, poverty and the aftermath of globalization etc.

### **About the Text**

“When Salihan took on the Raj” is an article published in People’s Archive on Rural India (PARI), in which P. Sainath brings the lesser known Demathi Dei Sabas (salihan) to the limelight. She is an adivasi of Sabar tribe of Odisha and she led a group of ladies to take on armed British police during a police crackdown in their native village. The article is an attempt to bring attention to such brave historical figures from the marginalized section of the society. They are largely forgotten and ignored by mass media. He concludes the article with a short poem on Salihan and the politics of media that ignores phenomenal figures like Salihan.

### **Analysis of the Text**

Demati Dei Sabar and other Adivasi women were in the fields when they were informed about the crackdown by British Police in their village for remaining defiant. The police torched their homes and assaulted and shot people, including Demati's father. A youngster from the town came running towards the women in the field and informed Salitang and others that their

village had been torched and people, including Salihan's father, were being beaten up. Demati Dei Sabar narrates what she witnessed when she raced back to the village. Her father was beaten up, and he was shot in the leg.

Women used to carry lathis when they went out to the fields for protection from wild animals. Demati Dei Sabar attacked the officer holding the loaded gun with her lathi. Fellow women started blowing their lathis as well at other officers. They were left with no options but to retreat. Officers ran for safety; they were chased along the street lanes by the tribal women lashing several blows. Demati Dei's father, Karthik Sabar, was removed from the spot for treatment.

Karthik Sabar was later arrested as he was organising many anti-British meetings. Demati Dei Sabar became known as Saliha after the village Saliha in Odisha. She became a famous freedom fighter, taking on armed British officers with a lathi. Sainath tells us that she doesn't consider the feat extraordinary or dwells on it.

Historically this incident in 1930 came to be known as Saliha Uprising and Firing. When Sainath met her, the 16-year braveheart with a lathi of the episode was in her late 80s. She was losing her vision owing to old age, but her long arms still seemed to possess the power and courage with which she wielded her lathi. There was beauty and strength in her face, even at that age.

Sainath goes on to explain the present status of this brave freedom fighter as she was living in poverty in the Bargarh district. Outside her village, nobody remembers her bravery anymore. Even the Government certificate mentioned more about her father than her. She had no pension and never received assistance from State or Central Governments.

The scene of her father being assaulted and shot enraged her and made her lose her temper. She replicates that mood even now when she is reminded of that incident by a mention of her father. She recalls that her elder sister Bhan Dei was also arrested along with two other women. Her father spent two years in jail.

Ironically the place of such resistance, Saliha, is now primarily dominated by feudal who were once facilitators of the Colonial Raj. They have earned land right while the real fighters remain in the fringes, unrecognised, in poverty. She has three sons: Brishnu Bhoi, Ankur Bhoi and Akura Bhoi. Even though she struggles to recall the names, the recollections of her sensational resistance fill her with an everlasting spirit.

While concluding the article P. Sainath has written and added a short poem as a dedication to her titled For Demati Sabar 'Saliha', in which he criticises the politics of National media. He admits that the media will not write an editorial on Page 3 nor allot prime time space in the visual media. Typically page 3 of a newspaper either carries editorials or features the news regarding celebrities or politicians. Visual media spend prime time discussing politics and sensations.

Sainath praises her in successive lines as she doesn't beg at the British's feet but instead takes him on and makes him a run. They had to flee from a 16-year-old girl conceding defeat. Sainath wishes that the children of this country may know her story in future. But he is sure the corrupt media will not write anything about her.

The article and the celebratory poem are true dedications to a real freedom fighter of our land. Sainath hopes this would at



least document Salihan, the primarily forgotten brave freedom fighter's sensational act of courage to some extent.

### **Glossary**

crack down : to take strong action to stop something

defiant : showing a disposition to challenge, resist, or fight

vigour : energy, and enthusiasm

wield : hold and use (a weapon or tool).

page 3 : the name given to the section of newspaper where High Class Indian news especially on actors, celebrities and other famous personalities is published

liposuction: is a surgical procedure that uses a suction technique to remove fat from specific areas of the body, such as the abdomen, hips, thighs, buttocks, arms or neck.

prime-time: in television and radio broadcasting, the time when the largest number of people are watching or listening.

sleaze : immoral, sordid, and corrupt behavior or activities.

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.**

1. Why is Demathi Dei Sabar called 'Salihan'?
2. What made Demathi Dei Sabar lose her temper?

3. Why did the women take *lathis* as they went to work in the fields or forest?
4. What is Page 3 of a newspaper?
5. How did ‘Salihan’ and the women come to know of the attack of British police on their village?
6. “There’s a spark in those eyes that’s still you.” Explain.

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. What did ‘Salihan’ and the other Adivasi women do on hearing about the attack on their village by the British police?
2. What was the condition of ‘Salihan’ when the writer visited her year later?
3. Why does the writer say that the “prime time” is not for her?
4. What is the theme of the poem “For Demathi Sabar ‘Salihan’”?

**III. Answer the following question in about 300 words.**

1. How does the writer portray the hollowness of our society that forgets fighters like Salihan and focuses on celebrities?
2. Compare the past glory and the present dire condition of Salihan caused by the indifference of the society.

## How Many More Days Democracy?

Sameer Tanti

### About the Author

Sameer Tanti is a well-known Assamese poet raised in tea estates where his parents used to work. He was one among their 13 children, of which only seven survived. His parents, Karna Tanti and Nuwago Tanti, could provide education to only two of their children while others worked in the plantation. Sameer Tanti studied Hindi for three years but wanted to learn in Assamese medium, as he was impressed by an Assamese song, '*O Mur ApunarDesh*'. He later graduated in English literature from Dergaon College and completed his Master's from Gauhati University in 1983. He published his first poem during his university days, which appeared on the front page of *SadiniyaNagarik*, posted by Assamese author HomenBorgohain. Sameer Tanti has 12 collections of poetry, four literary and critical essay collections, and two translations of African and Japanese love poems to his credit. He was a government servant and retired from the Tourism department in 2016.

Sameer Tanti gave prominence to give voice to the muted labourers and to throw a light into the reality of their lives, the ethnic assimilation of different communities into an Assamese cultural whole. He has also documented the oral poetry of folk tradition, which includes a book on the oral poetry of Naga people published at the Guwahati book fair.

Being a vocal spokesperson of plantation labourers, he highlights social inequality and disparity as a matter of great concern. He has received awards like Assam Valley Literary Award (2012), Chayanlal Jain Literary Award etc.

## **About the Poem**

*How Many More Days Democracy* is a poem in which democracy has been personified. Democracy has been pictured as chained, mutilated and humiliated. Tanti alerts the reader about the danger democracy is in. Even after decades of independence, inequality and magnification of the oppressed prevail. A large section of society is yet to taste the sweetness of freedom. The poem is written in Assamese originally. It is translated into English by Siddharth Tanti.

And how many more days this way, democracy?

Head down, on bended knees, with eyes closed

No end to your mutilation

No end to your humiliation

I hear your bedlam, democracy.

How I love you with my life

I see your lips sewed together

Your eyes covered with a blindfold.

I wish to speak out, yet I cannot

Perhaps harm befalls you

I desire to ask, yet I cannot

For fear it will offend.

Democracy, so much darkness inside your home

Yet outside, I see a riot of light  
Democracy, I wish you a long life  
One day before you become barren  
One day before you turn bloody  
Let me speak out for you  
Democracy, before you weep  
May I erase myself from your heart?

### **Analysis of the Poem**

The poem starts with a rhetorical question. How long can democracy survive in this present state? He personifies democracy as a prisoner-chained, knees bent, eyes closed, facing unending mutilation and humiliation. Democracy is in a muted condition with lips sewed together, in a blind state as the eyes are covered with a blindfold.

The poet laments the conditions we are in. Despite claiming to be a sovereign democratic country, people still live in fear, unable to voice their voices freely.

“I desire to ask, yet I cannot

For fear, it will offend.”

Modern India is in a state of darkness. But there are promises outside. A glimmer of hope as there are people who riot to light it new. But every such attempt prove to be short-lived. The poet wishes democracy a long life. The poet expresses his strong desire to stand up for democracy and democratic rights and raises his tone of dissent. But the poem concludes in a pessimistic

tone, as democracy may turn sterile soon. The poet wishes to erase himself before the total fall of democracy.

The poem laments the loss of freedom of speech and expression and the persistent injustice faced by millions of marginalised people in India. The claim of being independent doesn't show justice to the charm and meaning of the word 'freedom'. Yes, we elect our rulers. Yet, we live in a state sans ideal freedom. The visionaries of the national movement envisaged a romantic ideal. Still, our form does not live up to it nor showcase a will to end the centuries-long injustice and discrimination prevalent in the country. The pessimistic tone is fully justified as the glimmer of hope, and light, once mentioned in the poem, proves somewhat unattainable.

### **Glossary**

mutilation : the infliction of serious damage on something

bedlam : a scene of uproar and confusion

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. "I hear your bedlam, democracy." Explain.
2. How does democracy appear to the poet?
3. Why does he call democracy 'barren'?
4. "Democracy, I wish you a long life." Identify the figure of speech in this line.

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. How does the poet describe the present condition of Democracy
2. Explain the significance of the title “How Many More Days, Democracy?”
3. Pick out words from the poem that suggests that democracy is in a bad state.

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. How does the poem bring out the dire condition of democracy?
2. Attempt a critical analysis of the poem “How Many More Days, Democracy?”

## OBJECTIVES RESOLUTION

### Jawaharlal Nehru

#### **About the Author**

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first and longest-serving Prime Minister, was a multifaceted genius. Following his mentor Mahatma Gandhi, he joined the freedom struggle after he graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge and his law degree. His father, Motilal Nehru, was an affluent lawyer and a former president of the Indian National Congress. He married Kamala in 1916, and his daughter Indira Priyadarshini was born in 1917. Following the footprints of Gandhi, the Nehru family abandoned foreign clothes and goods; Nehru was seen wearing a khadi kurta and a Gandhi cap. He became India's first Prime minister in 1947 when India gained freedom.

He made efforts to reform India socio-economically and politically. Being a socialist and federalist, he upheld democratic values. He promoted science and technology, and in international politics, he led the Non-Aligned Movement. He is well-read and well-regarded as an author. His *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1929), *An Autobiography* (1936), and *The Discovery of India* (1946) are well known around the world. In 1955, Nehru was awarded Bharath Ratna, India's highest civilian honour. He died on May 27, 1964, due to a heart attack.

#### **About the Text**

Nehru moved the objective resolutions in the constituent assembly on 13 December 1946. He aimed to give the upcoming constitution of India a solid foundation framework and guiding philosophy. The resolution was unanimously adopted by the constituent assembly in 1946. The soul and spirit of the Indian



constitution can be seen in the objectives suggested by Nehru in the form of a resolution.

### **Analysis of the Text**

The major points in the resolution can be briefly mentioned as follows;

- Proclaim India as an Independent Sovereign Republic with a constitution for future governance.
- India will be a Union of erstwhile British Indian territories, Indian states and parts outside British India that are willing to be part of this Union.
- Territories forming the Union shall be autonomous units and exercise all powers and functions of the Government and administration, except those assigned to vested in the Union.
- All powers and authority of Sovereign and Independent India and its constitution, constituent parts and government machinery should be derived from the people.
- All citizens of India shall be guaranteed and secured social, economic and political justice; equality of status and opportunities and equality before the law; and fundamental freedoms of speech, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to the law and public morality.
- The minority, backward and tribals should be provided with adequate safeguards. The same should be extended to the depressed and backward classes.

- Territorial integrity of the Republic and its sovereign rights and land, sea and air shall be maintained according to justice and law of the civilized nation.
- The ancient land would make full and willing contributions to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.

Nehru moved this resolution on the fifth day of the first session of the constituent assembly. Nehru stressed the importance of framing an outline, indicating to those in the assembly and the millions in India and the world at large regarding which direction the new nation should head. Nehru, in the speech, tagged the resolution as a declaration and a firm resolve. Nehru urged the house to consider the resolution in the spirit of legal wording rather than in the spirit behind the resolution. Nehru admits that a Nation's passion may not be articulated in words, and even the resolution may not voice the passion of India. But in Nehru's view, the resolution will reflect what we dreamt so long, our hopes for the future. Nehru requested the house to pass the resolution as a pledge by standing up unanimously. The resolution was adopted unanimously on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1947. This passing of the resolution is a watershed moment in the history of India as it helped to give a clear vision to the committee entrusted with the duty of shaping the spirit of a nation into a printed constitution.

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following questions in one or two sentences.**

1. When was the Objectives Resolution presented?
2. Which sections of the society are adequately safeguarded in the Objectives Resolution?

3. What are the rights guaranteed to all citizens of India?
4. What is the real step or real work of the Constitutional assembly as mentioned in the speech?

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. “I wish this house, if I may say so respectfully, should consider this resolution not in a spirit of narrow legal wording, but rather to look at the spirit behind the Resolution.” Explain.
2. What are the things that Nehru emphasizes in his speech on the fifth day of the first session of the Constituent Assembly?
3. Why does Nehru feel that the Objectives Resolution is “something much more than a resolution”?
4. Why is the Objectives Resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru considered a watershed event in the history of India?

**III. Answer the following question in about 300 words.**

1. What is the Objectives Resolution? What were the ideals presented in the Objectives Resolution?
2. Discuss how “a Nation’s dream and aspirations” are articulated through the Objectives Resolution.

## **MODULE: 2**

### **ECOLOGY AND SCIENCE**

#### **Knowledge is Power**

**Yuval Noah Harari**

#### **About the Author**

Yuval Noah Harari is an Israeli thinker, academician and historian best known for his works *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* and *21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, of which the first probes deep into our past, while the second is a prophetic account on the far future scenarios, and the third work discusses the critical questions of the present respectively. His books have been translated into 65 languages, and over 35 million copies were sold. *Sapiens: A Graphic History* is a radical adaptation of *Sapiens* into a graphic novel series. He has a PhD in History from the University of Oxford and is a lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He lives with his gay partner in Jerusalem.

#### **About the Text**

‘Knowledge is Power’ is an excerpt from *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, published in Hebrew based on the series of lectures at the Hebrew University by Harari. This chapter discusses the relationship between science and technology. He discusses the differences between technologies developed from trial and error methods and scientific research. Modern-day weapons used in world wars and ever after are developed from

scientific research. Harari satirizes modern war weaponry, as ancient empires were not built with the aid of advanced technology. He suggests that technology can also be used for defence; nanotechnology can be used to take terrorism. He adds the inappropriateness of using bionic flies or thought-reading scanners in defence.

### **Analysis of the Text**

Yuval Noah Harari opens this chapter by providing an insight into scientific language, its access, the difference and connection between science and technology etc. With its mathematical codes, the language of science is difficult for common people to grasp. Still, science is regarded as prestigious mainly due to the powers it gives. The national leaders and military generals may not understand nuclear physics but are aware of the power of atomic bombs.

Francis Bacon, the renowned essayist, published a scientific manifesto, *The New Instrument*, in which he argued that “knowledge is power”. The test of knowledge is not in its truth but in how it empowers us. It is a utility that matters. Any theory that enables us to do newer things can constitute knowledge.

Over the centuries, science has offered new tools-mental tools as well as technological tools. Predicting mortality rates, economic growth etc., are mental tools. Nowadays, people confuse science and technology because they are used interchangeably.

The general assumption is that technology cannot be developed without scientific research, and the success of scientific research solely depends on its contribution to the development of newer technology. This connection between

science and technology is a recent development until 1500 AD when they were considered two separate fields.

Francis Bacon connected them in the seventeenth century. Such a notion was novel and revolutionary. Even early 19th-century rulers who fancied military force or even business magnates didn't invest much in research.

Harari points out that the pre-modern rulers or entrepreneurs didn't finance research about the nature of the universe to develop technologies. Thinkers didn't bother to apply their theories to the development of new technological gadgets. The investment in education during those rulers was only to spread traditional knowledge in the most traditional methods.

The technologies developed during that period were mainly the results of innovations by uneducated artisans who used trial and error. For example, cart manufacturers should have invested in research to improve carts' technological aspects. They kept producing the same year in and year out. Improvements were the results of some deviations or errors unknowingly committed.

The stark contrast between the pre-modern past and the present is most visible in the case of weaponry. Most potent military forces fund scientific research and technological development of this weaponry. In a public address, former US President Dwight Eisenhower mentioned the military-industrial complex. He should have called it a military-industrial scientific complex due to the scale of scientific research taking place in it.

During the First World War, most nations looked towards their scientists to help them succeed. They obliged and started bringing out newer wonder weapons such as combat aircraft, poison gas, tanks, submarines, improved machine guns, artillery pieces, bombs and rifles. Science played a massive part in the

Second World War as well. Despite their strongest ally Italy and its leader Mussolini surrendering to the Allies, Germany kept fighting, believing that their scientist would roll out some magic weapons, like V-2 rockets or jet-powered aircraft, to see the threat off. American researchers developed atomic bombs, which were used in Japan since Germany had conceded.

The Generals of the US Army informed President Harry S Truman that the invasion of Japan would cost the lives of around a million US soldiers and prolong the war into 1946. Hence Truman decides to use the new atomic bombs. Japan surrendered unconditionally.

Science can be used not just in offence but in defence as well. Many Americans believe that the solution to terrorism is technological. They can develop bionic spy files and send them to underground shelters and hideout caves of the terrorists in Afghan and trace the heirs of Osama Bin Laden with ease. Significant sum investments in brain research can reveal angry and hateful thoughts with the aid of FMRI scanners. We cannot be sure whether developing ionic spies and brain readers is wise. Still, the US defence ministry is already spending millions of dollars in Nano technological and brain laboratories for such ideas.

The ancient or pre-modern empires were not built with such sophisticated technological weapons. They didn't even give it a thought back then. The Roman Army, for example, had no advantage against Carthage, Macedonia or the Seleucid Empire. They won the war through qualities like efficient planning and discipline. They never had an R&D department to strengthen their armoury.

It is predictable to think what could have happened to a Commander like Napoleon had he led his troop against a modern-day armed brigade. Napoleon was a tactician, and the skills of his force would have turned useless against the modern day weapons.

In pre-modern times as in Rome, emperors in China or India didn't bother to develop weapons. In Chinese history, the most significant advancement was gunpowder. Unlike modern-day inventions, it was invented accidentally. Daoist alchemists accidentally developed the chemical in search of an elixir of life. Without realising its impact, China mainly used the powder to create firecrackers. The Song Empire of China lost to the Mongols; no one alerted the alchemists to develop a lethal weapon to prevent the fall. It is almost six centuries later that gunpowder became decisive in the Warfield in the form of cannons. Neither kings nor business people believed that military technology could save them and make them rich. Napoleon was an artilleryman. But even he had no interest in new weapons. The industrial revolution and the Capitalist system tied the intertwining knot between science, industry and military technology. A combination that has changed the world order ever since.

Through this chapter, Harari stresses that the connection between science and technology is a relatively recent phenomenon. He even mocks the modern-day military men obsessed with improved weaponry, citing the examples of ancient empires and men of war. But he concludes the chapter with a note that the connection thus established will stay, and more investments will flow in the development of nanotechnology and brain research to support the defensive mechanisms in place.



## **Glossary**

- Francis Bacon : Philosopher, statesman, lawyer, historians, intellectual reformer and author was the chief figure of the English Renaissance.
- Dwight D. Eisenhower : American military officer and statesman who served as the 34<sup>th</sup> president of the United States from 1953 to 1961.
- Harry S. Truman : 33<sup>rd</sup> president of the United States, serving from 1945 to 1953.
- Mongol : Mongol, member of a Central Asian ethnographic group of closely related tribal peoples who live mainly on the Mongolian Plateau and share a common language and nomadic tradition.
- Seleucid Empire : Seleucid Empire was a Greek state in Western Asia, during the Hellenistic Period that existed from 312 BC to 63 BC.
- Song Empire : Song dynasty, Wade-Giles Romanization Sung, (960-1279). Chinese dynasty that ruled the country during one of its most brilliant cultural epochs. The song Dynasty ruled parts of China for more than three centuries.

## **Exercises**

### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. Why do most people have a hard time digesting modern science?
2. What are the Francis Bacon mean by ‘Knowledge is power’?
3. What are the new tools offered by science over centuries?
4. What is the confusion between science and technology among people?
5. Why do rulers finance educational institutions?
6. What are the new wonder-weapons invented during the First World war?
7. “German soldiers and civilians thought not all was lost during the Second World War.” Give one reason.
8. How can nanotechnology find a solution to terrorism?
9. What is the surprisingly recent phenomenon about science and technology?
10. How was gunpowder invented?

### **II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. What is the relationship between science and technology?
2. Comment on the role played by science in World War two.
3. How can science be used in defence?
4. Why did President Truman decide to use the new bomb?

5. Discuss the invention of gunpowder and its subsequent use.
6. “Science is not just about offensive weapons.” Comment.
7. How did ancient rulers fight and win wars?

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Comment on the difference in the use of technology by ancient and comment modern rulers.
2. Critically examine the chapter ‘Knowledge is Power’ by Yuval Noah Harari.
3. Trace the history of the development of military weapons.

## **A White Heron**

**Sarah Orne Jewett**

### **About the Author**

Theodora Sarah Orne Jewett is an American story writer and novelist best known for using local colour and regionalism. Since she was diagnosed with Rheumatoid early in childhood, Mr Theodore Herman Jewett, her father, suggested long walks to find peace. She explored the place and enjoyed the most minute details of nature surrounding her. Her first story was pushed at the age of 19, and her first novel was *Deepheaven* (1877). *Old Friends and New, Country By-Ways, A White Heron and Other Stories, A Native of Winby and Other Tales* are some of her notable story collections. She has also penned successful books for children. Her poetry collection titled *Verses* was published posthumously. She was the first woman recipient of an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Bowdoin College. She was forced to stop writing after an accident in 1902 and died seven years later.

### **Introduction to the Text**

Regionalism was a post-civil War genre of literature popular in the US. *A White Heron* is an example of fiction with local colour. Unique environments, local cultures, and landscape details are a feature of regionalism. *A White Heron* is a tale of a nine-year-old girl living in the woods in Maine, New England. She is in communion with nature throughout. Her love for nature is contrasted with the hunter's desire to tame it. Eco-critical and Eco-feminist readings of the short story are possible, as Sarah Jewett incorporates themes like man versus nature and woman and nature.

## **Analysis of the Text**

*A White Heron* is one of the most anthologized short stories of Sarah Orne Jewett. Written in third person narrative form, it narrates the story of a young girl, Sylvia, who lives with her grandmother, Mrs Tilley, in the woods. The very name is symbolic as Sylvia is derived from the Latin Silva, meaning wood. She is very much part of the woods she lives in. When the story begins, Sylvia drives home her mischievous cow. The sun had set, and it was dark, yet Sylvia and her companion cow were treading along as the pathway was familiar. Sylvia likes to wander in the woods, loitering and comes home late on most occasions.

Sylvia had lived in a crowded city with her parents for eight years since birth. She never returned to the town as she grew fond of the natural life and setting. Her grandmother claims that Sylvia is afraid of people and prefers the company of the animals. Apart from her cow, she seems connected to birds as well.

On her late return home, she was greeted with all whistling sounds. She was terrified and tried to hide but to no avail as a strange young hunter with a gun caught up with her. He asked her for the direction to the road; she told him it was a long distance away. He explained to her that he had lost track of the road while hunting a peculiar white bird. He requested she takes him to her home so he could spend the night there. Sylvia couldn't say anything as she was stricken with shock. She hesitantly took him to her house. She feared her grandmother would scold her for bringing a stranger to the home. To her surprise, Mrs. Tilley seemed welcoming and offered him space to board in for that night on her farm.

As the hostess, Mrs. Tilley talked to the stranger about Sylvia, herself, her farm etc. The man told them that he was an

ornithologist. He explained to them that he would stuff the birds as a token of his feat once he hunts them down. He wanted to catch a white heron which has come in this direction of the wood. He detailed the physical attributes of the bird to them. He learned from his grandmother that Sylvia knows more about the woods and birds, and he seemed excited about it.

The next day, he took Sylvia with him while he searched for the elusive heron. Sylvia was too shy to lead the way, so she followed him and barely spoke to him. She had a clue of where they could find the white heron since she had caught a glimpse of it before. But she chose not to tell him. He has offered ten dollars for the said help. Sylvia was aware of the fortunes she could buy with the money and had slowly developed an inner fancy towards this man; the woman in the girl seemed to have awakened. Out of that love, she wanted to help him. But seeing him shooting the birds from the trees at once horrified her. The thought of killing the heron stopped her from disclosing her knowledge.

At night, Sylvia found it hard to sleep as she was left brooding over the confusing riddle. She wanted to help him out of her love. But she didn't want to hurt the bird either. She left the farm and headed to the big oak tree, the only one the woodcutters left behind when rampant deforestation occurred. She toiled to make her way up the tree and finally reached atop the tree. The scene she witnessed was magnificent; her presence troubled some birds in the trees. She didn't move and waited to see the stunning white bird in all its glory. She felt heavenly: the clouds, the sea, the splendour of the dawning sun, the flight of the heron. The beauty of all spellbound her.

The heron came to a tree near her, and they watched the sea together before it flew away from her. She slowly came down and reached home with her clothes torn in her struggles to climb

the tree. Grandmother was already calling out for her, and she and the stranger questioned her. She didn't slip a word about the word. She didn't want to betray it. The man left sad, not having shot the heron down. She could have won his love and ten dollars and even opened up a new life outside the wood. But she didn't want any of these at the cost of that bird's life. The story concludes with the narrator praising her for their bond with nature.

An Eco-critical reading of *A White Heron* compels us to view it as an ecological allegory on biodiversity conversation. A white heron is an endangered species, and the girl has saved her life from the hunter. Being a girl in harmony with nature, Sylvia, the nine-year-old girl, is a model and a champion of ecological conservation.

Her male friend, her only human companion in the tale, presents us with the opposite. He wants to kill the birds for the pride of having them stuffed as tokens of his adventure. An Eco-feminist reading of the story is also possible, as in the last scene, Sylvia identifies herself with the bird in the previous scene. The whiteness of the bird can symbolize the child's inner innocence. In the conflict between innocence and experience of the adult world, she prioritizes integrity and love for nature over her romantic love.

An archetypal reading of the same story brings the fairy tale elements to our notice. A shy girl, lonely and loitering, living with her grandmother, the male threat, her resistance can also have such archetypal overtones.

*A White Heron* is an excellent example of regionalism and local colour in writing. Sarah Orne Jewett is often recognized as the "master" of American literary regionalism. It is considered so mainly because of its use of the dialect and manners of a particular

group of people. As a regionalist writer, she pictures Maine, the New England countryside, in its minute details. Sylvia's love of nature and keen observation of the heart and other species all amount to such detailed regional detailing.

### **Glossary**

Loiter : stand or wait around without apparent purpose

Ornithologist : a person who scientifically studies on birds

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. Who is the protagonist of the story and whom does she live with?
2. Where does Sylvia stay? Why did she not like to return to her home in the town?
3. Why was the girl suddenly horror-stricken in the words?
4. What help does the stranger ask Sylvia?
5. What did hunter think of Sylvia's grandmother's house when he entered there?
6. Why was the stranger surprised when he came to know that Sylvia knows all about birds?
7. What does the stranger do with the birds?
8. Who is an ornithologist?



9. What was the offer given by the stranger to anybody who helps him find the white heron's nest?

10. Why did Sylvia climb the great pine?

11. Why did Sylvia not speak about the nest of white heron to the stranger?

12. What did Sylvia do at the end of the story?

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. Describe Sylvia's relationship with the cow.

2. Analyze the character of Sylvia in "A White Heron."

3. Comment on the significance of the pine tree.

4. How does nature serve as a setting for the story?

5. Comment on the symbolism in "A White Heron."

6. Discuss the use of language in "A White Heron."

7. What is the theme of the short story "A White Heron."?

8. Comment on the ambiguous endings of the story.

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Analyze the "regionalism" or "local colour" in the story.

2. Discuss "A White Heron" as an ecocritical and eco-feminist short story.

## **FISH**

### **Elizabeth Bishop**

#### **About the Author**

Elizabeth Bishop was born in 1911 in Worcester, Massachusetts. She lived her early childhood with her maternal relatives as her father died when she was just one, and her mother had to undergo treatment at a mental asylum.

She befriended Marianne Moore at Vassar College, which has been influential in her literary journey ever since. She settled in New York, and her earlier poems and short stories appeared in *The New Yorker*. Her second poetry collection, *Poems: North and South/Cold Springs*, brought her the prestigious Pulitzer Prize. *The Complete Poems, 1927-1979* and some of her non-fiction works were published posthumously.

#### **Introduction to the Poem**

*The Fish* is a poem published in her first *North and South* collection. This is a first-person narrative poem in free verse, comprising 75 lines without any stanza break. The poem depicts the shift in the attitude of the Speaker/Fisher as the speaker's heart gets filled with admiration for the great fish. The speaker releases the fish, sharing its joy and victory. This act is a celebration of ecological coexistence and the love of nature. The minute details regarding the fish, the boat and the setting provide a fine example of Bishop's observation skills.

I caught a tremendous fish

and held him beside the boat

half out of water, with my hook

fast in a corner of his mouth.

He didn't fight.

He hadn't fought at all.

He hung a grunting weight,

battered and venerable

and homely. Here and there

his brown skin hung in strips

like ancient wallpaper,

and its pattern of darker brown

was like wallpaper:

shapes like full-blown roses

stained and lost through age.

He was speckled with barnacles,

fine rosettes of lime,

and infested

with tiny white sea-lice,

and underneath two or three

rags of green weed hung down.

While his gills were breathing in

the terrible oxygen  
—the frightening gills,  
fresh and crisp with blood,  
that can cut so badly—  
I thought of the coarse white flesh  
packed in like feathers,  
the big bones and the little bones,  
the dramatic reds and blacks  
of his shiny entrails,  
and the pink swim-bladder  
like a big peony.  
I looked into his eyes  
which were far larger than mine  
but shallower, and yellowed,  
the irises backed and packed  
with tarnished tinfoil  
seen through the lenses  
of old scratched isinglass.  
They shifted a little, but not  
to return my stare.

—It was more like the tipping  
of an object toward the light.  
I admired his sullen face,  
the mechanism of his jaw,  
and then I saw  
that from his lower lip  
—if you could call it a lip—  
grim, wet, and weaponlike,  
hung five old pieces of fish-line,  
or four and a wire leader  
with the swivel still attached,  
with all their five big hooks  
grown firmly in his mouth.  
A green line, frayed at the end  
where he broke it, two heavier lines,  
and a fine black thread  
still crimped from the strain and snap  
when it broke and he got away.  
Like medals with their ribbons  
frayed and wavering,

a five-haired beard of wisdom  
trailing from his aching jaw.  
I stared and stared  
and victory filled up  
the little rented boat,  
from the pool of bilge  
where oil had spread a rainbow  
around the rusted engine  
to the bailer rusted orange,  
the sun-cracked thwarts,  
the oarlocks on their strings,  
the gunnels—until everything  
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!  
And I let the fish go.

### **Analysis of the Poem**

Elizabeth Bishop's poems typically have straightforward openings. *The Fish* opens plainly, stating that the narrator has caught a tremendous fish. It is no ordinary fish; it is gigantic and causes a sense of pride in the mind of its captor due to its majestic look. The title, *The Fish*, and the first line establish a solid connection which helps to retain the readers' attention firmly on the giant fish. The fish is seen hooked and raised partly out of the

water. The hook has not been removed. While addressing the fish, Elizabeth Bishop consciously uses the pronouns “he” and “his”, etc., instead of “it” or “its”, to treat the fish on equal terms with the narrator. Personification is cleverly employed. ‘My hook’ in ‘his mouth’ is a striking image of a man trying to tame nature and the natural to his liking and benefit.

The narrator feels surprised that, despite his large size, the fish didn’t seem to resist at all. This amazed the narrator and started to observe the fish closely.

The fish is motionless, as the expression ‘grunting weight’ suggests. Bishop then goes on admiring the features of the fish. She calls it ‘venerable’; respected. She uses a simile to describe the skin as it resembles old wallpapers. The pattern of the skin also adds to that feeling. Bishop assumes that, like the ancient wallpaper she compares, the fish is also ageing. The descriptive manner in which she details the skin and appearance of the old fish suggests her connection and admiration towards the creature. Concluding the wallpaper analogy, she shifts to an even more realistic detailing. The fish's skin seems to have carried tiny white sea lice, and she mentions the rays of green weed hanging down.

The mood of the poem takes a shift. The image of the fish with the ‘frightening gills’, ‘that can cut so badly’, is coupled with the fact that it is wounded and dying. Fish can’t live out of water. The same oxygen that sustains human lives is terrible for the fish. The life of the fish lies in the hands of the speaker.

The speaker thinks of the fish as food for the first time. The thought of white flesh and bones all refer to this aspect of the fish. But then the narrator looks at the eyes of the fish. Bishop tells us that ‘his eyes’ were ‘larger than mine’. The Fisher versus the Fish or Man versus Nature theme becomes further

conspicuous. 'isinglass' refers to the gelatin from fish used to make jellies, glues, etc.

The movement of the eyes and its troubled breathing are the only signs of the fish being alive. The fish doesn't look towards the captor. Elizabeth Bishop presents images and expressions that humanise the fish and treat it more as an object.

The poem again takes another turn as the narrator notices. Five old pieces of fishing lines. It is not just the fish line, but fragments of hooks are also seen in the jaw. The giant-like fish has survived five previous instances of hooking. Here it shows no resistance but instead remains stoic.

These fish lines seem to hang or trail like medals with their ribbons. The fish was victorious in previous encounters with human beings, and the hook and wire are tokens of its feat. The old fish is feeling the pain now. The last meetings might have taken a whole lot out of it.

"I stared and stared", tells the narrator. The speaker has been staring from the very start of the poem. And for the first time, the poet shifts the attention away from the fish, and mentions the rented boat used for fishing. The rusted engine, sun cracked thwarts, oarlocks, gunnels, all get mentioned. A normal sort of oil spillage on the water causes a rainbow impression on it. The mention of rainbow is repeated a few lines later;

"until everything

Was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!"

There were mentions of various colours: green, rose, brown, black, white, etc. All those culminate in the perfection of a rainbow, the seven colours together. The Rainbow stands here as



a symbol of hope and beauty. In the biblical tale of Noah and the Arc, a rainbow appears in the sky after all the hardships, marking the end of difficult times. Here also, it marks the end of suffering.

The speaker earlier mentioned ‘victory’ filling that boat. The victory belongs to whom? The angler or the fish? The speaker releases the fish. Thus they share the success.

The themes of man’s dominance over nature, his quest to tame the animal kingdom, exploit resources, and reign above fellow beings are juxtaposed with ideas of humility, empathy and co-existence. Revelation dawns upon the speaker between the first and last lines, between fishing and releasing it. The respect for the fish, its humanising attributes, and the praise for its endurance fill the speaker's heart. As ‘everything’ seems like a rainbow’, he can view beauty in all.

The poem is free verse and runs over 75 lines without stanza breaks. This gives us a sense of structural unity; the extended structure of the fish hanging from the hook seems well connected with the very form of the poem itself. She uses the punctuation, ‘¾’, often, maybe for pausing and allowing the reader to think about what has just been said. The Fish can be read from an eco-critical perspective as a poem on co-existence and empathy for nature.

### **Glossary**

- Venerable : accorded a great deal of respect, especially because of age, wisdom, or character.
- Barnacle : small shellfish that fix themselves tightly to rocks and the bottom of boats.

Entrails	:	inner parts of animals or people, especially their intestines
Peony	:	a garden plant with large red, pink or white flowers.
Isinglass	:	a substance obtained from the dried swim bladders of fish.
Swivel	:	turning round a central point to face in another direction
Crimp	:	to compress (something) into small folds or ridges
Bilge	:	water that gathers at the bottom of the boat near the engine, usually mixed with oil from the engine
Bailer	:	a device used to bail out a boat
Thwart	:	a structural crosspiece forming a seat for a rower in a boat
Gunnels	:	the upper edge of ship's or boat's side.

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. How does the speaker hold the fish at the beginning of the poem?
2. Explain, "He didn't fight. He hadn't fought at all."
3. What is surprising about the fish?

4. How are the eyes of the fish different from the eyes of the speaker?
5. Identify the figure of speech used in the phrase “tarnished tinfoil.”
6. What does “rainbow” symbolize in the poem?
7. What does the expression “sun-cracked thwarts” refer to?
8. Why did the speaker let the fish go at the end of the poem?

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. What are the poetic devices used in the poem?
2. Comment on the use of domestic images in the poem.
3. What is the message of the poem?
4. How is the fish described in the poem?
5. Comment on the setting of the poem?
6. Discuss the change in attitude of the speaker towards the fish.

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Discuss the theme of the poem “The Fish.”
2. Discuss how “The Fish” illustrates the oppression and cruelty imposed upon the animal world by human beings.

# **Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest**

**Vandana Shiva**

## **About the Author**

Vandana Shiva is a leading activist, scholar, ecologist and writer born in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, in 1952. Her father was a forest conservationist, and her mother was a farmer. She is often called the Gandhi of grain and the rock star of the anti-GMO movement, and the eco-warrior goddess.

After her PhD in Physics from the University of Western Ontario, she returned to India. She established Navdanya Farm and Bija Vidhyapeeth to spread awareness about biodiversity practices and organic farming. Time magazine identified her as an Environmental Hero in 2003. She was also the recipient of the Sydney Peace Prize in 2010. She is well known for her writings on the Chipko movement and often regarded as an eco-feminist.

Her first book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, analyses the position of women with nature. *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, *Tomorrow's Biodiversity*, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace*, and *Making Peace with Earth* etc. are her notable works.

## **Introduction to the Text**

The essay *Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest* was published in the Yes! Magazine in 2012. The article

prescribed in the text is a revised version of the former published in *The Namta Journal* in 2013.

### **Analysis of the Text**

Vandana Shiva opens the essay, *Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest*, by revisiting the experiences in her ecological journey. She tells us that this journey commenced in the forests of the Himalayas. Having to flee into the Himalayan ranges during India's partition, her father used to farm there, and her mother used to sing about nature and forest civilizations of the past. This has influenced her perspective to a considerable extent.

Her ecological activism begins with the Chipko movement. Deforestation affects the women most as they used to rely on forest streams and other natural resources for food, water, fuel and fodder. They valued and worshipped forests as their protector and sustainer. So an unexpected and unprecedented non-violent protest sprung to the scene. The peasant women declared they would hug the trees to prevent the chopping of trees in the Garhwal Himalayan region. They used to sing;

These beautiful oaks and

rhododendrons,

They give us cool water

Don't cut these trees

We have to keep them alive.

She recalls how her favourite stream and forest where she used to swim vanished when she returned after her PhD from Canada. She volunteered herself for the Chipko movement. She could carry outpadayatra, take note of the activities inside the forest and bring public and media attention to the Chipko movement.

One instance worth mentioning during the Chipko agitation was the resistance of a lady named Bachni Devi, who resisted her husband, who had obtained the contract to cut the trees in the village of Adwani in 1977. As a note of meaningful protest, these women held lit lanterns even during the daytime when the officials arrived. The officers mocked the women and claimed that the forests bear resources like resin and timber, which can amass large profits. The women sang a song in the chorus as a reply ;

What do the forests bear?

Soil, water, and pure air.

Soil, water, and pure air.

Sustain the Earth and all she bears.

In the second section of her essay titled 'Beyond Monoculture', she expresses her views on diversity and monoculture. She has penned a book on the same idea titled *Monocultures of the Mind*. She claims that the failure to appreciate biodiversity is the root cause of natural and cultural depletion.

Vandana Shiva learned about the importance of biodiversity from the Himalayas and replicated its essence through her farm, which she set up in 1994. After collecting seeds

from the farmers, she used her farm for demonstration and training. The farm came to be called Navdanya Farm and was located in the Doon Valley, Uttarakhand. The farm now cultivated around one hundred and thou varieties of rice, one hundred and fifty types of wheat and hundreds of other species. This biodiversity-intensive form of farming brings more produce and nutrition per acre and can efficiently remedy the nutrition crisis.

The Navdanya movement started in 1987 before establishing an independent farm. She worked to set up one hundred community seed banks across India. Farmers were given training to resort to biodiverse ecological systems depending on the sun and soil instead of chemicals and fossil fuels. Vandana Shiva lounds biodiversity as her teacher of abundance, freedom, cooperation and mutual giving.

The essay's third section is titled 'Rights of Nature on the Global Stage'. Considering Nature as a teacher, sustainer and creator, we must also pay attention to its rights. Ecuador is a nation which has incorporated such a right in its constitution. Inspired by this, UN General Assembly organised a conference on harmony with nature on World Earth Day. The focal point of discussions was to deconstruct the power relation in which man dominates nature, men dominate women, rich dominate the poor into a partnership system.

The report submitted by the UN general stated that human beings are an inseparable part of its nature and any damage done to tature will also damage humankind.

Separatism is the root cause of all these mistreatments. Nature has been disconnected from men or vice versa, and according to Cormac Culloden, apartheid meant separateness.

World fought apartheid, and we are past it. What we have to overcome in the present times is a new form of apartheid which is eco apartheid, a sense and belief that nature and humans are separated.

The fourth part, titled 'The Dead Earth World View', offers more profound insight into what has been discussed before. The separateness can be traced back to the beginning of industrialisation. Earth began to be treated as raw material instead of earlier notions of mother earth. Francis Bacon considered the father of modern science, asserted the belief that scientific inventions have the power to conquer and subdue nature. Robert Boyle, a famous chemist and the governor of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel among the New England Indians, attacked the native view of nature as their goddess. This attitude, for him, was a discouraging impediment to Man's dominion over nature and other creatures.

Such people view Earth as dead, and since it is already dead, they claim there is nothing like killing the Earth. Historian Carolyn Merchant believes such a shift in attitude suits capitalist needs. Bacon and others removed the cultural constraints related to the exploitation of nature.

The following section is titled 'What Nature Teaches'. Vandana Shiva believes that we must return to the older ecological paradigm and learn from nature. For this cause, she has set up the Earth University/Bija Vidyapeeth at the Navdanya farm. Earth University teaches Earth Democracy. Earth Democracy is the concept that ensures freedom for all species and protect and respects the rights of all species. It is a shift from anthropocentrism to eco-centrism. The university teaches the importance of biodiversity. Since it is located at Navdanya, a biodiversity farm, participants of the offered training programme



get first-hand experience with biodiversity practices. Participants include farmers, students and even people from other nations as well. Two popular one-month courses at her Earth University are 'The A-Z of Organic Farming and Agroecology' and 'Gandhi and Globalization'.

In the last section of her essay titled 'The Poetry of Forest', she reveals the inspiration behind the idea of Earth University. Rabindranath Tagore inspired her as he started a learning centre in Shantiniketan, a forest school. The school is now one of the most famous Universities in India.

In his 'The Religion of the Forest', Tagore lauds forest dwellers' influence on Indian Classical Literature. They can teach us democracy as they are storehouses of biodiversity.

In his essay 'Tapovan', Tagore claimed that India's civilisation and its philosophical ideas came from men in communion with the forest. It is the culture of the forest that has fueled the culture of Indian society. Forest teaches us the unifying principles of pluralism and democracy. The notion of Unity in diversity is the foundation of both ecological balance and democracy. Diversity without unity leads to conflict. Forest teaches us this sort of union and compassion.

For Tagore, the forest is a source of knowledge and freedom and a source of beauty, joy, aesthetics, harmony and perfection. Forest is a teacher of socialism, as the web of life in the forest doesn't exploit nor accumulate its resources. Such an end to consumerism and accumulation can lead us to a world of joyful living.

Vandana Shiva concludes the essay by telling us that forest can serve us as a guide since our world is filled with

ideologies that legitimise greed, conquest and violence. Forest can teach us compassion, cooperation and harmony instead.

Vandana Shiva expresses her eco-centric ideals, as she feels that human beings are more detached from nature. She details her experiences with the Chipko movement and her efforts to promote biodiversity practices. Vandana Shiva also warns us about the dangers awaiting us as the world shifts to an anthropocentric ideology. Society may fall into further disintegration. She looks toward nature and the forest in particular for guidance. Nature can teach us lessons of unity in diversity. She alludes to Tagore, our National poet, who considered nature as his teacher of values, art, and aesthetics. The essay mentions ideas like Earth Democracy and details her endeavours to practice what she preached through Navdanya and Earth University. The article highlights the necessity to return to nature and draw the spirit's peaceful co-existence from it.

### **Glossary**

**Chipko Movement :** also called Chipko Andolan, a non-violent social and ecological movement by rural villagers, particularly women, in India in the 1970's, aimed at protecting trees and forests slated for government-backed logging.

**Apartheid :** a former social system in South Africa in which black people and people from other racial groups didn't have the same political and racial groups did not have the same political and economic rights as white people and were forced to live separately from white people.

## **Exercises**

### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. What were themes of the songs and poems that our mothers composed for us?
2. What was the real value of forests according to women of Garhwal Himalaya?
3. What were the changes that Shiva observed when she revisited her favourite forests and stream in 1973?
4. Where did Vandana Shiva learn about ecology?
5. What is a eco-apartheid?
6. What does the Earth University teach us?
7. Name the two most popular courses taught at the Earth University?
8. Where and when did the Navdanya farm start?
9. Why did Tagore start Shantiniketan as a forest school?
10. What power, according to Francis Bacon, does science and technology have over nature?
11. What is Earth Democracy?
12. Who are the participants of Earth University?

### **II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. Discuss the childhood experiences of Vandana Shiva that bonded her to nature.

2. What is Chipko movement?
3. Write a note on Navdanya movement?
4. Discuss Robert Boyle's concept of nature.
5. How did Robert Boyle attack native people's perception of nature?
6. Comment on the idea of Earth University.
7. Comment on Tagore's view about nature.
8. What ideas of Tagore inspired Vandana Shiva to start Earth University?

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Discuss Tagore's view's on forest as a source of beauty and joy, of art and aesthetics, of harmony and perfection.
2. Vandana Shiva's "Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest" is an attempt to highlight the integration of humans with nature. Discuss.

## MODULE: 3

### GENDER

#### FIRE

**Nikita Gill**

#### **Introduction**

Nikita Gill, one of the most successful instapoets, enjoys more than 600,000 followers on Instagram. She has Kashmiri Sikh origin and was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She was inspired by poets like Sylvia Plath, Maya Angelou and Robert Frost. She immigrated from Haryana to South England and completed her master's degree at the University for Creative Arts in England. She is a regular face on BBC, contributing to Radio Four, Radio Three and BBC Asian Network.

Her poems are primarily reflections on love. She offers feminist retelling of fairy tales and Greek myths. *Wide Embers: Poems of Rebellion*, *Fire and Beauty*, *Your Soul is a River*, *Great Goddess: Life Lessons from Myths and Monsters*, *Your Heart is the Sea*, and *The Girl and the Goddess* are her noted collections. The poem Fire is taken from the anthology *Wide Embers: Poems of Rebellion*.

#### **About the Poem**

As the title of her anthology suggests, the *Fire* is a poem on rebellion and protest. Nikita Gill poses a challenge to the patriarchal conventions in bold language. The poem is in two stanzas of 15 run-on lines. Run-on lines or Enjambment is a poetic term for continuing a sentence or phrase from one line of

poetry to the next. An enjambed line typically lacks punctuation at its line break, carrying the meaning to the following lines.

The first stanza comments on the state and status of women and how patriarchy exploits them. The second stanza is a revolutionary urge for women to shed the conventional gender norms and react against patriarchy taking advantage of their kindness and softness. She talks about power using some ferocious images. It is a poem on women's empowerment.

### **Analysis of the Poem**

#### **First stanza**

“Remember what you must do  
when they undervalue you,  
when they think  
your softness is your weakness,  
when they treat your kindness  
like it is their advantage”

The poet addresses the entire women folk to take note of their exploitation at the hands of patriarchy. The male-dominated section of society takes advantage of their so-called ‘feminine virtues’ of softness and kindness. Women, as a result, are taken for granted in society. Gill reminds the womankind that their softness is the weakness they should eliminate.

#### **Second stanza**

“You awaken

every dragon  
every wolf,  
every monster  
that sleeps inside you  
and you remind them  
what hell looks like  
when it wears the skin  
of a gentle human.”

The poem's tone and mood shift is visible from the very beginning of the second stanza. The tone changes into a fast, angry one of protest and rebellion. Nikita Gill advises the women to declare revolt against all patriarchal subjugations. She asks women to bring the demon out of themselves, like the Goddess of Power; they should resist forcefully. Mere suffering is never going to help their cause. Images of ‘dragon’, ‘wolf’, and ‘monster’ sleeping inside each woman refer to the undermined potential residing in every woman. Like all the ferocious figures mentioned, the resistance should be violent, not passive. Like the fire-spitting dragon, the brutal devil or the carnivorous wolf, they should take the challenge head-on, and such a defence is required.

Gill reveals that inside every soft, tender, kind woman, there is a robust lady ready to rage a revolt against patriarchy. The poet asks to bring that power out to resist this prolonged marginalization. She says that those who are taking advantage of women should meet hell in human disguise when facing a woman. Like the ‘Christ of Second Coming’, the women should come out raging, leaving behind the Christ-like values of meekness and tenderness.

In every sense of the word, the poem is a revolutionary against the injustice and humiliation women face in society. It serves as a wake-up call to all women who suffer without protest. The title *Fire* suggests the fire or power in every woman that needs to be manifested to stop patriarchal persecution and exploitation.

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.**

1. What does “your softness is your weakness” mean?
2. What is the tone of the poem?
3. What does the poet mean by “you remind them what hell looks like when it wears the skin of a gentle man”?
4. What does “every dragon, every wolf, every monster” mean?
5. What is the main theme of the poem “Fire” by Nikita Gill?

#### **II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. What advice does the poet give to the readers in the poem “Fire” by Nikita Gill?
2. What is the message of the poem?
3. Discuss “Fire” as a feminist poem?
4. Comment on the style, structure and language of the poem “Fire.”

#### **III. Answer the following question in about 300 words.**

1. Analyse “The Fire” by Nikita Gill as a poem of protest and rebellion.



## **Accept me!**

### **Living Smile Vidya**

#### **About the Author**

Living Smile Vidya is an iconic Indian trans woman activist, writer, director and artist. She is also known as Smiley. She was born in a Dalit family in Chennai and was named Saravana before she chose to be known as Vidya. She is a theatre artist and director and possesses a Master's degree in Linguistics. She underwent Gender Reassignment surgery in Pune. She worked in a bank for two years and was the first transgender person to work in the mainstream.

Her autobiography, *I Am Vidya*, was written in Tamil and translated into English and other languages. The Kannada movie 'Nanu avanu alla....aval' was based on her life.

#### **Introduction to the Text**

*Accept Me* is a chapter from *I am Vidya*, the autobiography of Living Smile Vidya. It is the first-ever transgender autobiography in India. Accept Me narrates the journey from Chennai to Pune for gender reassignment and her new life as a Tirunangai. It is a term in Tamil referring to Trans women. The emotional trauma, the cultural shift and the identity struggle of Vidya find a voice in the narrative. The scene with the family captures the emotional conflict and stress the transgender people must overcome to pursue their true identity.

## **Analysis of the Text**

Living Smile Vidya opens the chapter, "Accept Me", narrating her experiences on a train journey with Kalaichelvi Ayah and Shanti. She was on a trip to Pune and joined a family of Tirunangais. It is a term coined by former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi to refer to transgender people. She had to undergo gender reassignment surgery in Pune.

The Tirunangais had a convention and cultural code, which can be theoretically considered a subculture. During the journey, Kalaichelvi Ayah was bossy and made Vidya do various errands for her. Vidya was willing to do anything as she wanted to endorse femininity and shed all traces of manliness in her. She thought such a submissive approach would serve better for that cause. In Tirunangai tradition, once you join any family, you will have a new mother, grandmother, etc. Kalaichelvi Ayah was her Nani, the maternal grandmother. And Arunamma, who ran an NGO, was her 'new mother'.

In the tradition of the Tirunangais, younger tirunangais usually have to lay respect and perform service to older tirunangais. It is more like college ragging as seniors boss the juniors until they turn seniors themselves. The induction of younger tirunangais will help the cause, as there are new entrants to the boss. Unlike college ragging, this helps the thirunangais to perform agency, assertion and dominance in some sense. They are not even allowed to do any of these in mainstream society. And it might release them from the torments they face from others in the society—a kind of role reversal. Cleaning the spittoons used by elder tirunangais and pressing their feet are all deemed part of their traditions. The so-called ragging or harassment is temporary.

Arunamma, being part of an NGO, had access to the public and the mainstream world, and it was easier for Vidya to get on with her. Vidya mentions the name of Priya, whom she met before as well. She joined the tirunangais at sixteen and was also going to Pune. When they reached Pune railway station, Kalaichelvi Ayah hired an auto rickshaw to reach City Post. During that brief journey, she instructed Vidya about the do's and don'ts of a tirunangai. She advised her to seek the blessings of Nani as soon as she met her in the new home. Ayah dragged her along as she moved slowly, looking around for sights. When they entered, she went to the inner room to meet Nani, and as instructed, she fell at her feet to get her blessings.

Vidya mentions the room in detail. Apart from photos of Lord Ganesha and Goddess Lakshmi, there was a picture of Mata, who is believed to be the goddess of transgender people.

Nani introduced to Vidya what all things are to be taken care of. One thing specifically mentioned was about paying respect to elders. Satya was her akka, a sister in the new family. Nani told her Satya would accompany her while seeking alms at town shops.

She had to go to Mumbai to do the reet. It is an admission. It is about formally getting enrolled into the community of the Tirunangais. You have to pay a nominal sum as a fee. There are seven Tirunangai Parivar in Chennai, of which she was enrolled on the Bhendi Bazaar Parivar. If you want to change the group, you must pay a sum as a transfer fee. You will get an amma, nani and dadi. Dadi is the great-grandmother. Arunamma was her mother. So she is known as Arunamma's 'Chela' disciple. A new tirunangai is also known as a 'Nathi Chela' of her Nani. A senior Chela is the Akka or sister, and her Satya is the senior chela of

Vidya. Her Nani was Saradammal. *Reet* was formally completed from Mumbai.

Before that, she had to choose a name. She was known as Preethi before changing it to Vidya. Vidya is a name suggested by Satya as they rhyme well. They wanted to change the name Preethi because there was an older tirunangai of the same name. She died young; hence the name was considered a bad omen. She liked her new name too.

Various inmates of the house are introduced. We see people like Lakshmiammal wearing a T-shirt and jeans, which doesn't suit her, Nandiniammal, a beautiful lady. There are more inmates like Parimalammal, Chithramma, and Seethamma. Chithramma escorted her on her journey to Mumbai to do the *reet*.

Vidya often thinks about her family members in the real world. Appa and Radha and Chithi must have searched for her. Radha learned about Vidya's decision to be transgender from Professor Mu Ramaswami, who knew about Vidya's intentions. Appa learned this from Radha, and the family had to go through agonies due to Vidya's choice. She felt sad at all of those but was left with no choice. Mu Ramaswami gave them the contact details, and the family contacted Arunamma. Arunamma called Vidya back to Chennai to arrange a meeting with the family. She was tensed about how this could turn out to be. Tirunangai sisters Viji and Bhumika accompanied her to the station. She was wearing a black saree, and once they met, Radha addressed her as "Saravana", her old name. The name felt strange to her, and she corrected it immediately. Shekhar Chittappa, a follower of Periyar E V Ramaswamy Naicker, was also there. That was relaxing to her as he held progressive ideals. Meeting her father was her biggest fear. Appa refused to meet her once he saw her

wearing a saree. He refused to even come out of the train. The scene became calmer later, and all boarded auto rickshaws. Radha could reminisce how Vidya used to fancy her dress, sing and dance like women or actresses, but indeed didn't foresee this.

Radha told her about her effort and pain to break the news to Appa, who used to weep and wail. Appa refused to see her in a saree, but Vidya was determined not to wear men's clothes. She tried to convince her father by equating the state with that of the physically challenged. Why can't they accept her like they would have accepted a physically challenged child? She tells him she will prove successful in acting, only to see her father more enraged.

The meeting was inconclusive. She could explain her plans and feelings, but others could not digest them. They left, and Vidya could breathe better, relieved that her family eventually knew the truth.

Society, including family members, considers the state of transgender people as an abomination, an insult to their family. Vidya's case is no different. But her determination to express her gender identity and to face all the suffering from mainstream society and the trans community paid dividends. Vidya, as we speak, is one of the most notable celebrities in Tamil Nadu, an established and well-read author, theatre artist and director who also works in films. Her journey would have been incomplete had she concealed her gender demands and desires and decided to live an uncomfortable life in a gender she was not fit into.

Body, for a transgender person, is more like a cage into which you are trapped. Your gender and body seem disconnected. To establish a connection, you must undergo gender reassignment surgery, which is available in limited hospitals and proves costly.

Families do not back them. They must live in their communities, seek alms, and earn money. The plight of such a trans community is familiar to Vidya. She has truthfully portrayed it to us through her autobiography. And we come across different cultures and conventions with which the transgender people in India live. Being first in that category. Vidya's autobiography throws light into otherwise unknown or lesser-studied subcultures of transgender existence.

As the title suggests, *Accept Me* is an appeal by Vidya to the general society which is still largely ignorant of transgender existence and identity struggles to accept her as Vidya, an individual with a choice. That was also her request to her Appa, which was mercilessly turned down. She expects a share of compassion and considerate inclusion; acceptance.

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. Who is Kalaichelvi Ayah?
2. What are the etiquettes expected by the older *tirunangais* from the younger ones?
3. Who is Arunamma?
4. How is the harassment of *tirunangais* different from the ragging of college students?
5. What was the advice given by Kalaichelvi Ayah to Vidya on their way to the city post in an autorickshaw?
6. Why did Ayah ask Vidya to change her name?
7. Why did Satya propose the name "Vidya"?

8. What is *reet*?
9. Why did Vidya get disturbed when Radha called her 'Saravana'?
10. Why was Vidya anxious to meet her father?
11. What was the only consolation felt by Vidya at the end?
12. How does Arunamma help in consoling Vidya's Appa?

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. What advice does Nani give to Vidya?
2. Comment on the 'Parivar' or family system of *tirunangais*.
3. What are the customs followed by *tirunangais*?
4. What was the reaction of Saravan's family when they learned that he was a *tirunangai*?
5. Comment on the first meeting of Vidya and her parents.
6. How did Appa react when he first met Vidya?

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Discuss the agonies and anxieties felt by Vidya on her journey to be a *tirunangai*.
2. "My worries were mine and his tragedy was his. It was an inclusive meeting." Discuss.

## Dear Ijeawele

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

### **About the Author**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a famous Nigerian feminist writer. Her TED talk, “We should all be feminists”, popularised her. Her father, James Nwoye Adichie, was a University Professor in Statistics, and her mother, Grace Ifeoma, was the first woman registrar of the University of Nigeria. She studied medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria before she went to the US to study Communication and Political Science at Eastern Connecticut State University. Later she was awarded her Masters in creative writing by John Hopkins University and studied African History at Yale University.

Her first literary work of repute was her play *For Love of Biafra*, published in 1998. Her debut novel *Purple Hibiscus*, published in 2003, won Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book and Best Book in 2005. It was shortlisted for Orange Prize for Fiction in 2004. *Half of a Yellow Sun* was an international bestseller and won the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction in 2007. *Americanah* is her more recent bestseller.

### **Introduction to the Text**

*Dear Ijeawele* is an excerpt comprising three suggestions out of fifteen tips written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, addressing her friend Ijeawele on how to raise her daughter, Chizalum Adaora as a self-respectful woman. The full title of the epistolary manifesto is *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*. The first three suggestions in the text deliver



advice on the need to live a whole life, sharing parenting duties and not teaching the newborn baby the norms of traditional gender roles of being a girl assigned by patriarchy. As the full title suggests, though it is a friendly letter written to a friend, it gains more political significance as it becomes a feminist manifesto.

### **Analysis of the Text**

*Dear ijeawele, or Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*, is an epistolary guide on how to raise children as feminists. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's friend Ijeawele has given birth to Chizalum. She has sought advice from Adichie regarding parenting, and Adichie's response was this lengthy manifesto. It was first posted on Adichie's social media handle and later published by Knopf Publishers in 2017.

Adichie lives in the US, and Ijeawele is in Nigeria. Adichie exposes the gender inequalities in both countries through this letter. The target readers of this essay in the form of a letter are mothers, but extends beyond that. She criticizes the concepts of gender roles and calls for financial independence.

Before detailing the suggestions, she praises Ijeawele and Chudi, her husband, for bringing a child into the world. Afterwards, she offers two feminist tools as basic guidelines for feminist living. The first is to have the premise, "I matter. I matter equally. Full stop". To raise a child as a feminist, the mothers should endorse feminist ideals first.

The second tool is to adjudge whether something is sexist, "can you reverse X and get the same results?". For example, she talks of infidelity. If the husband forgives a wife for cheating, a feminist wife can forgive him for his infidelity. But if the husband leaves her behind, she should also leave him. The same standard and approach should be employed.

Out of the fifteen suggestions, our textbook prescribes the first three for study. Through the 'First Suggestion', Adichie alerts all mothers like her friend, not to identify too much with the duties of motherhood. Motherhood can be a beautiful thing; it's all about the choices you make. From a feminist point of view, defining oneself solely in terms of motherhood can sometimes be problematic for both mothers and daughters. Mothers do not consider their own needs and desires. It can be a wrong message to the daughter as well. A girl child living with such a mother will learn from the example before her and start to conceptualize and mistake womanhood as motherhood.

Chimamanda tells her friend that she can send a better message if she lives a whole life with her daughter. Following our aspirations, desires, and interests can go hand in hand with raising children. It will help to increase the confidence level and a sense of achievement and bring financial independence. Work need not affect the process of mothering. Adichie quotes Marlene Sanders, the first woman to report Vietnam War; Ms Sanders said, "loving what you do is a great gift to give your child". So in the form of the first suggestion, Chimamanda points out her first proclamation of her Feminist manifesto, 'be a full person'. She also mentions that this notion of a woman as a homemaker is relatively new and came with the British. The precolonial Igbo women used to do trading in the market, and most of the markets were handled by women alone.

The second suggestion she puts forward is the division of labour between the two parents. Adichie comments that the father should also be part of the child-raising and caring responsibilities. It has its advantages. It will give the mother time to work and provide the child with a male role model ready to perform non-masculine activities like cooking, cleaning, etc.

She talks about the biological aspects; there is no inherent distinction between the nature of men and women, which enable them to perform specific tasks better. A father can do all activities related to childcare except breastfeeding.

Mothers often have fears that the fathers may handle the kids roughly, or won't change the diaper properly etc. They will learn such things through practice; mothers should let them have that chance. She concludes that section by warning her friend and all mothers around not to tag the father as a 'helper' or 'babysitter' because this will indirectly assert the idea of the mother as the primary caretaker. Divide the labour into whichever proportion suits the circumstance. And the father indulging in such baby care duties need not be given undue praise. It is normal and should be treated thus.

The third suggestion is to teach the newborn baby that the idea of gender roles is absolute nonsense. Critically speaking, this suggestion is somewhat more significant as this talks about how the infant girl should be raised as a feminist from a tender age itself. We are forced to believe that gender is a defining factor in accessing the capabilities of individuals. Adichie explains that boys and girls are born equal. Gender roles are labeled and thrust into them by the society to make them behave differently. Adichie also criticizes the blue and pink colour division denoting the gender difference. Boys are often given active toys like guns and vehicles, whereas girls are given dolls to play with. It is a clear message to a young girl that her gender role is to perform baby care, as she internalizes it unknowingly with her doll. She narrated an instance of a mother refusing to buy her girl child a toy helicopter stating that she had dolls to play with.

Adichie asserts that clothes, toys etc., need not be categorized on gender lines. They can be ordered based on size,

age or type. Adichie tells her friend to buy her daughter any toy she wishes, be it a doll or a helicopter. The harm of imposing restrictions is severe to a girl. It will curtail her ability to discover what she likes and wishes to be. Daughters ought to be treated as individuals first and girls second. Adichie concludes this section by advising her friend to let her daughter remain independent and active, able to make her own choices and discover for herself.

The letter and the three suggestions under discussion are guiding lights that all mothers can follow, and such a paradigm shift in the general attitude will alone the society to a better tomorrow, if gender justice and equality.

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. Who is Chizalum Adaora?
2. What was the purpose of writing “Dear Ijeawele”?
3. What are the ‘two feminist tools’ discussed in the chapter “Dear Ijeawele”?
4. What was the advice given by Marlane Sanders to the younger journalist?
5. What does your job do for you?
6. Why does the narrator advise to reject the ‘language of help’?
7. Why does the author recommend not to say Chudi is babysitting?
8. Why does the narrator think that ‘gender neutral’ is silly?

9. How are toy for boys and girls arranged in a toy selection of the shop?

10. Why is it important to make sure that Chizalum rejects gender roles from the beginning?

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. Discuss the author's opinion about motherhood.
2. Comment on the form of "Dear Ijeawele."
3. What is parenting according to Chimamanda Adichie?
4. Comment on the blue/pink binary dichotomy.
5. Why does the narrator think that the idea of gender roles is absolute nonsense?
6. Comment on the narrator's views on cooking.
7. How do the mothers of baby boys and baby girls behave in a baby play group?

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Childcare is an equal responsibility of both parents. Comment.
2. Critically evaluate Chimamanda Adichie's concept of Gender.

## **MODULE: 4**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS**

#### **Entre-vous to Adulthood**

**MaliniChib**

#### **About the Author**

MaliniChib, the Indian disability rights activist and the author of *One Little Finger*, her inspirational autobiography. Her parents took her to England for better care, as she had Cerebral Palsy. Once back in India, they found getting her admission to schools hard. Her mother, MithuAlur, started a school called The Centre for Special Education for Malini and other children like her. She later attended Thomas Delarue Boarding School for children with cerebral palsy, St Xavier's College, Mumbai, for her BA. She possesses two master's degrees, one in Gender Studies and the second in Library Science and Information Management. She is the Co-founder, CEO and trustee of ADAPT (Able Disabled All People Together) and National Adapts Rights Group, an activist wing of the former.

Despite having to confine herself to a wheelchair, she has presented numerous research papers published widely. She travels extensively across the globe to promote awareness regarding disability rights and their inclusion.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment honoured MaliniChib as a Role model with the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. She received the Global Cerebral Palsy Day Award from the Cerebral Palsy

Alliance of Australia for her contributions to disability rights movements. *Margarita with a Straw* is an Indian movie based on her life.

### **About the Text**

*Entre-vous to Adulthood* is a chapter from her autobiography *One Little Finger* (2011), detailing her visit to the University town of Berkeley, US. The place inspired her of its accessibility. Each office or public home was disabled-friendly. The story, in general, and this chapter in particular, tells us Malini's search for independence, survival and efforts to lead a meaningful life despite her inability to move freely.

### **Analysis of the Text**

The chapter begins with Malini narrating her experience in Berkeley, US and her admiration for the place due to the vision with which the city was planned and constructed. Malini made a short visit to the US in 1988 with her father after her degree from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. When she visited the University of Berkeley, she was struck by the care given to persons with disabilities. Electric wheelchairs are the order of the day. In Berkeley, electric wheelchairs were teeming up, and the traffic came to a halt when one of the wheelchairs had to cross the road; entire pavements were ramped for the wheelchairs to access the library, museum, restaurant, shops, schools, theatre, public toilets - all were easily accessible and turned disabled-friendly. Since you can operate these wheelchairs independently, it reduces the sense of being disabled to a certain extent. It gave her a sense of independence, not having to wait for the help of others to access any of these.

Apart from access and mobility, these facilities' sense of freedom makes one forget they can't walk independently. The

contrast between Indian towns and Berkeley was stark. Even the most reputed five-star hotels, public parks or government offices do not have a ramp. No thought has been invested into the needs of disabled individuals.

Malini visited the Centre for Independent Living, an organisation dealing with disabled people, in Berkeley. The institution trains people with disabilities to manage their lives despite severe disabilities. One thing Malini noticed was the fact that disabled individuals were holding the offices and power there. They had the right to hire and fire personal attendants, who were usually outsiders, so the element of sympathy and emotional attachment could be avoided.

Disabled persons in Berkeley viewed all human beings as interdependent. None is independent in the real sense. An average person seeks the assistance of workers like electricians or carpenters to get things done. Disabled persons depend on these attendants for independent living so that they can work on their own. At the centre, people with disabilities are taught how to train their private attendants and hire and fire. According to Malini Chib, this enables a disabled individual to contribute positively to society.

Society stereotypes the disabled as largely dependent, isolated and helpless. Malini Chib questions this and urges all to treat Disabled people as human beings. The public stares at the deformities and disabilities and forgets to notice the person and their attributes.

Inspired by the Berkeley model, Malini decided to appoint a personal assistant. Her mother interviewed and selected Maya, a Nepalese woman in her mid-40s, capable of articulating in English. She had a pleasing look. Maya thus happened to be a part



of her life. The visit to Berkeley was an eye-opener for her in many regards. While returning from Berkeley, Malini and her father spent some time in London. They went to visit Oxford Polytechnic. Oxford Polytechnic offered a course in publishing. Malini applied with the help of her father and was called for an interview.

The interview headed by the Dean was an informal one, more like an informal chat. Upon her return, Malini spent most of her time setting up ADAPT (Able Disabled All People Together), where people meet socially. The purpose was to facilitate interaction between people with disabilities and the non-disabled. The name ADAPT was a common suggestion of Malini and her friend Zubin. Malini used to spend hours with Zubin, who was her best friend. He aspired to go to England to study Chaucer. Malini had a relative on the board of the Inlake Scholarship. But Zubin was brilliant enough to get the scholarship on his own. He earned the scholarship and left for Oxford. Malini was sad about his absence. She spent more time on the research of the Spastics Society. One day, a letter from the Oxford Polytechnic arrived, intimating her about her provisional selection. She was over the moon, and her mother was filled with joy. She advised her to apply for a scholarship. Malini felt like entering into adulthood, independence. She felt unsure about the reason for her overwhelming joy. She wanted to be at Oxford and be with Zubin simultaneously.

The chapter is an eye-opener to all who disregard the disabled existence. The facilities at Berkeley and the evident contrast with the condition in India, the inability to access public places here are all relevant even today. Attention should be paid to the rights of disabled persons, and accessibility should be provided. Such a vision of inclusion should replace the stereotypical approach towards people with disabilities.

Malini's inspiring story of survival and fitting in is a message and an appeal at the same time; a letter to people with disabilities not to let themselves down; and a request to the authorities and society at large to consider people with disabilities as human beings first.

### **Glossary**

Cerebral palsy : Cerebral palsy (CP) is a group of disorders that affect a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture. CP is the most common motor disability in childhood.

Entre-vous : A French word meaning between

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. Why was the narrator pleasantly surprised at the University of Berkeley?
2. Why is it advisable for a disabled person to have an electric wheelchair at the University town of Berkeley?
3. What are the difficulties faced by a person who cannot walk in India?
4. Why did the disabled people in Berkeley argue that nobody is completely independent?
5. What are society's stereotypical concepts about disabled people?
6. Who is Maya?

7. What is ADAPT?

8. In which subject did MaliniChib get admission at the Oxford Polytechnic?

**II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. Why is the University town of Berkeley recognized as a disabled-friendly place?

2. What is peculiar about the Centre for Independent Living?

3. What is the speciality of electric wheelchairs?

4. How do personal attendants help a disabled person?

5. Who is Maya? How is she important in the narrator's life?

6. How did the narrator get admission at the Oxford Polytechnic?

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Discuss how “Entre-vous to Adulthood”, a chapter from MaliniChib's *One Little Finger*, breaks the barrier that restrict the life of disabled people.

2. Narrate and critically analyze MaliniChib's visit to the University town of Berkeley.

## **The Body Politic**

**Hiromi Goto**

### **About the Author**

Hiromi Goto is a Japanese-born poet who immigrated to Canada with her parents at the age of 3. Goto earned her degree from the University of Calgary in 1989. Her first novel, *Chorus of Mushrooms*, won her the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1995. It also bagged the Best First Book Canada and Caribbean Region and shared Canada-Japan Book Award. *The Kappa Child* (2001), her science fiction work, won her the James Tiptree Jr. Award. *Hopeful Monsters*, *Half World*, and *Darkest Light* are other significant works of broad critical appreciation. Her work *Shadow Life* is a graphic novel. She has served as a writer-in-residence for various universities and libraries in Canada. Goto's initial inspiration was the Japanese stories narrated by her grandmother. Her father used to tell her life stories. Her works incorporate myth, folklore and such elements of Japan. In her works, themes of race, gender, and culture are intertwined with fantasy, horror and myth.

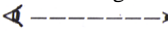
### **About the Poem**

*The Body Politic* is a poem that explores the racialised discrimination of immigrants. Hiromi Goto presents her first-hand experience of the identity crisis immigrants and those who do not fit into rigid binary stereotypes face in daily life, having to struggle to fit into the category of 'normal' in the eyes of the prejudiced society. The body, colour and race play a massive role in categorising people as Normal or Other. Hiromi Goto uses Japanese symbols, images, and even her photograph to reflect her racialised identity, which cannot be adequately expressed through

English Words. Critic Wendy Gay Pearson praised its hybrid nature -English and Japanese, word and image, concrete and linguistic. She highlights her internal struggle to extend into public spaces when she doesn't fit into the normative structures around her.

### The Text of the Poem, 'The Body Politic', by Hiromi Goto

That which you carry with you at all times and  
cannot be removed like a costume or eaten like a five course dinner.  
The single fold in the eyelid that isn't there.

Seeing from slanted eyes rather than seeing with a slant,  
though the latter is possible in conjunction with the former.  
My slant is different from yours, don't you see?  
Of course you do, you were the one who brought it up, after all.  
Slant as opposed to straight, honesty  
lying in the curve of an eye.  
If I glance sideways, I see more  
than you do looking straight  ahead.

my vision i s o b l i q u e  
y  
e  
is y  
m  
oblique.


M 

I dress with culture  
every single morning.  
I eat my culture for breakfast,  
and bag it for lunch and it simmers  
in a slow cooker while I'm out at work.  
I eat culture for dinner then I bathe in it  
and it's my sleeping partner at night.

the distance from me

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Some people are confused, perplexed,  
downright angry with my culture fixation.

You only make it more obvious, by pointing  
to  it yourself, they say,  
being so politically correct and all that.  
“We’re talking about art, here.  
Leave your politics at home.”

I try scraping the hue  
off my skin  
with an exacto knife.  
I try sliding a razor blade  
to slice folds into my eyelids.  
It is painful, and now I am deformed  
as well as  
coloured.

A friend of mine asked me  
if I always thought of myself  
as a coloured person.  
Is white a colour and do you  
think of yourself as white? I asked.  
Or do you just think of yourself as normal?

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**If I don’t address my colour,  
It is addressed for me in ways I find intolerable.**

m  
e

People want to dress me up in  
ke-mo-nees and garter belts.  
They want to hear about  
Zen and Buddhism and ritual  
Hairy Carrie.

t  
o

They want to squeal over tiny slices of raw fish  
And finish off with exotic Oriental sex,  
whatever that is.  
I rather I wasn’t dressed in your TV costume.  
Let’s stand together, naked,  
and see who blushes first.



People ask me what I do  
and I say, oh, I do a little writing.  
Do you write poetry too? someone will ask,  
and I say, yeah, a little bit.  
OH! Please make up a haiku for us, we’d love to hear a haiku

from you.

Uh — I don't —

Oh, don't be shy! You Japanese are so clever with haiku!

Sure, why not.

*When I was here the — uhmm  
When I speak English  
There is something I need to — uuuh, no,  
When I speak English  
I make up words I like more  
Than the ones I learned!*

Sure, I would love to talk  
about the way the prairie curves into the mountains,  
the feel of cool mud squeezing between toes and  
the shriek of children catching frogs for the first time in their lives.

I would love to talk about the way  
the moonlight looked on bare skin.,  
the moisture of breath hanging in the air  
above our faces, the sweet kiss lingering  
in the fold of my elbow for days.

I could talk of new-born foals and singing birds and strangers  
hugging strangers.  
Sure, why not?

**But choice is a position of privilege  
That needs to be addressed.**

I can never unzip my skin

and step into another.

I am happy with my colour until someone points  
out it clashes with my costume.

I hold my culture in my hands and form it on my own,  
so that no one else can shape the way  
it lies upon my body.

I'm a happy person, mostly.  
I smile a lot you know.

My health, my body, my politic,

A slant, a skin, a slice of —



It's only that I want someone to know me by  
my name.

### **Analysis of the Poem**

The Body Politic is a poem racializedothering of immigrants living in the White-dominated Western countries. This is not just the case of Hiromi Goto, but something widely practised in various parts of Europe, Australia and the American continents. Here the poet is a Japanese immigrant living in Canada, and she faces racial slurs every day. The title becomes significant as the body and bodily features are often used as the yardstick for racial othering. Hiromi Goto talks about the politics of constructing the notions of 'normalcy' and 'otherness' around the body. She deconstructs such notions by highlighting her body and identity markers in an attempt at self-assertion. This poem is against all such racial stereotyping and exclusionary practices at play.

The first thing that strikes the reader while reading the poem is the structure and unconventional patterns, symbols, images etc. Even the photograph of the poet herself is incorporated into the text. This novel reading immediately shakes any reader out of their comfort zones and draws us straight into the thorny political questions raised.

Critic and commentator Wendy Gay Pearson have mentioned that this form is "impure" and perhaps "monstrous". He adds that the poem is a hybrid if "English and Japanese, of word and image, of the concrete and the linguistic". The poem cannot be categorized into any such genres. It is not strictly concrete poetry because it doesn't rely solely on structural arrangements of words and designs. It incorporates Japanese symbols as well. So the typical word is 'hybrid'. In a post-colonial



sense, she attempts to celebrate the hybrid existence and identities of the diasporic immigrant communities living in the West by writing such a hybrid poem.

The poem opens with Goto speaking about cultural identity. Goto says that cultural identity remains with us, something that we internalize that cannot be shed or removed, like the dress you put on. It is also not something that you feast on. The white community of Canada and other parts of the West racially stereotype people of Asian countries, especially Japan, based on the lack of fold in their eyelids. They abuse the immigrants using such bodily differences. Goto asks them back whether the problem is actually with their eyes or the slanted, biased vision of the whites.

The white men have brought this binary equation of slant versus straight. The essence of identity is limited to a mere fold of the eyelids. Goto mocks them by claiming she can see more as her perspective is broader than their narrow-minded vision.

The poem incorporates elements of concrete poetry immediately after this statement, and we can see repeated use of the word oblique. Oblique and slanting are words used for stereotyping, but Goto uses them to compare the vision of the white and immigrant sections of society. She admits that her vision is oblique.

The lines continue to discuss culture from where she left off. What she wears and what she eats are all parts of her culture. She lives with it and sleeps with it. Many in the dominant class question the cultural fixation of the poet and the like. They accuse the Orient community of making the cultural difference more conspicuous. Goto slams them and tells them to keep their politics at home.

Then she elaborates on the efforts of the immigrant orient community to fit into the normal. The image of the exacto knife is suggestive of the double eyelid treatment and plastic surgeries many undergo to be like the dominant white class. But all such efforts give only a sense of being deformed rather than usual.

She then brings up the issue of colour, which also plays a part in the racist stereotyping of the Orient community as the cultural and racial other of the dominant whites. She ridicules the expression 'coloured' and recalls asking her friend whether white is also a colour. The lines printed in bold are statements of significance. She tells us that if the Orient writers and activists don't address the issue of colour, it will define them in intolerable ways. The only way is to react, resist and pose a body politics of self-assertion against the body politics of exclusion.

She details the stereotypes the whites have constructed about being Asian and Japanese. They expect her to wear ke-monees, a mispronunciation of Kimono they wear. They want to talk about Zen and Buddhism, the ritual Hara-Kiri (mispronounced as Hairie Carrie), and exotic sex. She challenges them to check who is more ashamed or shy about their bodies. The Orient propel are not ashamed of it at all, she says.

The stereotyping goes on. Since Hiromi Goto writes poetry, they want her to write a haiku for them. Being Japanese and a poet makes them reduce her to haikus alone. Then she attempts to write a haiku, a poem within a poem, maybe. Again it breaches the conventional definition of fitting into a genre. She talks of her use of English. She falls short in vocabulary. She confesses that she makes up words to express herself adequately. The linguistic difference is noticeable, and her attempt to break it and express herself fully is seen throughout the poem. She admits that she will be more than happy to write verses on Canadian

landscape and romance and all. But that choice is not there. The option is the position of the privileged, certainly not for the people belonging to the immigrant community.

She uses an image of a banana and its layer is partially unzipped,, and we can see a picture of a small eye. The single-eye call draws allusions to the single-eyed Cyclops,, as some critics say. But the idea of the eye can easily be a substitute for the first person 'I' since the white reduces their existence to the appearance of the eyes. So the eye image becomes an apt substitute for "I". We can see her using M and the idea of the eye instead of "My", again a first-person pronoun. It is indicative of the fact for the western white folks; her identity is something connected to the way her eyes look.

She tells us she cannot shed the skin, as mentioned in the opening lines. She says that culture is something that lies on her body quite naturally. She says she is happy with it until someone makes a remark on it.

She concludes in a tone of celebration and self-assertion. She tells us that she is happy with the body she has. She is pleased with the culture she carries with her and of which she is a part of too. "My health, My Body, My Politic", all mine. Others need not bother about these. She expresses her desire to be known for her name, rather than for these racialisedcategorizations. She has posted a smiling photograph of herself to stress the point. The poem concludes in a tone of vindication and a message that she is and will remain to be herself in both bodies and mind.

## **Glossary**

Oblique	:	slanting
Simmer	:	keep (food) just below boiling point when cooking or heating it.
Exacto knife	:	a blade mounted on a pen-like aluminium body, used for crafting and hobbies, such as model making
Ke-mo-nees	:	mispronouncing 'kimono', a long, loose traditional Japanese robe with wide sleeves, tied with a sash.
Hairy Carrie	:	mispronouncing 'hara-kiri', ritual suicide by disembowelment with a sword, formerly practiced in Japan by Samurai as an honourable alternative to disgrace or execution.
Haiku	:	a Japanese poem of seventeen syllables
Foal	:	a young horse
Coloured	:	an expression used by White community to racially refer to people of non-white origin

## **Exercises**

### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. What is “That which you carry with you at all times and/cannot be removed like a costume or eaten like a five course dinner?”

2. Why does she say “my vision is oblique”?
3. Who is a “colored person”?
4. What is “Ke-mo-nees”?

## **II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. “I dress with culture/every single morning.” Explain.
2. What are the questions people pose to the poet as an immigrant from Japan?
3. “It’s only that I want someone to know me by my name.”
4. “People want to dress me up in/ke-mo-nees and garter belts/They want to hear about Zen and Buddhism and ritual/Hairy Carrie.” Explain.

## **III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Discuss the politics related to the body of a racial minority that Goto talks about in the poem.
2. What are the stereotypes assigned to the poet as an immigrant from Japan?

## Love-Lines in the Times of Chaturvarna

Chandra Bhan Prasad

### About the Author

Chandra Bhan Prasad, the first Dalit to gain regular space in an English National Daily, was born in 1958 in Bhadwan village in Azamgarh, UP. His weekly column in *The Pioneer*, titled “Dalit Dairy”, other articles in leading vernacular dailies, his participation in TV channels etc., popularized him. He started Dalit ShikshaAndholan and was the architect of the Bhopal document, seeking the creation of opportunities beyond reservation for Dalits in 2001. He began as a Marxist thinker. Later he adapted to support modern-day capitalism and neoliberalism to eradicate caste lines. He proposed the notion of Dalit Capitalism, advising the Dalits to take gains from the new globalized world order rather than lamenting the irretrievable. He served as a visiting scholar in the Centre for Pennsylvania and has been profiled by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. His Writings include *Defying the Odds- The Rise of Dalit Entrepreneurs*, a co-authored publication. He is an advisor to DICCI, the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

### Analysis of the Text

*Love Lines in the Times of Chaturvarna* is Chandra Bhan Prasad’s *Dalit Dairy* column published in *The Pioneer* on 14 May 2000. It touches on burning issues like honour killings, caste-motivated violence etc. In India, caste is the critical criterion for marriage, and those who defy it face torture, violence and even death. Decades after independence, the caste lines, discrimination

and Chaturvarna tradition prevail. He brings the legendary Meera Bhai as the symbol of victimisation and emphasises the fact that caste remains a reality in India.

Meera Bhai, the renowned Sixteenth-century Bhakti poet, was poisoned twice. The first attempt was by her in-laws as she joined Sangati and started singing Bhajans. She was influenced by the Dalit saint Ravidas and declared him her guru. This was the reason for the second attempt. Though her associations were purely spiritual and intellectual, those were unacceptable for her clan, the Rajputs. Europe, on the other side of the world, was entering enlightenment.

Five hundred years later, in this so-called free world, such instances do happen again. In Hardoi, close to the capital city of Lucknow, a Dalit boy fell in love with a Rajput girl. They transcended the caste lines as they announced a new norm in this new world. But they were under the scrutiny of society, especially the Rajputs. The boy and three family members were killed for this very reason. A similar incident occurred in Mathura district in 1992 when two lovers, a Dalit boy and a Jat girl, decided to do the same, breaching the caste lines. It drew the ire of the cruel Jat panchayat. The couple were hanged in public.

The secrets of the Chaturvarna order unfold in the closer reading of Manu-dharma shastra. Occupation and marriages were the foundations of the order. People were banned from taking up any occupation other than that was assigned to their varna. They can't marry outside the varna too. Any violation may draw punishments, including death. Even after the constitution of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), society subtly practices varna-based laws.

The Hardoi incident was reduced to mere family disputes in the report of the district administration. But the killing wouldn't have occurred if the boy had been a Rajput. But unfortunately, the boy was a Dalit, hence killed. Love has such limitations in India. Love should be between the members of the same Varna. Many believe it is not practised in Urban India. Even in Urban India, lovers usually come from the same varna orders. Author talks about his own personal experiences and the study he conducted on it. He tells that even love affairs breaking religious barriers are somewhat common or seen in the society, but not across varna/caste. So lovers have a love line. A line below which love/marriages shouldn't take place. Chandra Bhan Prasad concludes his article by affirming that love is redefined and subjected to social censure in India.

### **Exercises**

**I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.**

1. Who is Meera Bhai?
2. What happened to the dalit boy and rajput girl in Hardoi?
3. What happened in 1992 in Mathura district?
4. According to Chandra Bhan Prasad, what would unfold the secrets of the Chaturvarna order?
5. What does the district administration describe about the Hardoi murders?
6. What is the love-line Chandra Bhan Prasad discusses in his article?



II. Answer the flowing questions in a paragraph.

1. Why was Meera Bhai poisoned twice?
2. Narrate the tragic incident of Hardoi?
3. Explain Chaturvarna order in terms of Manudharmashastra.
4. What is the theme of the article “ Love-lines I the Times of Chaturvarna”
5. “That means lovers have a love-line, below which neither love nor marriage can take place.” Explain.

III. Answer the following question in about 300 words.

1. Critically analyse the article. “Love-lines in the Times of Chaturavarna” in terms of the caste discrimination and inequality that persist in India.

## History Lesson

### Jeanette Armstrong

#### About the Poet

Jeanette Armstrong is a renowned Canadian aboriginal writer, poet and novelist who belonged to the tribal community of Okanagan. She got a formal and traditional Okanagan education and could speak English and Okanagan fluently. After her diploma from Okanagan College, she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Victoria. She was awarded PhD in Indigenous Environmental Ethics from the University of Greifswald in Germany.

Her poem about John F. Kennedy was published in a newspaper at the age of fifteen. She published more poetry, and aboriginal authors such as Pauline Johnson and Chief Dan George were her significant sources of inspiration. Her children's books *Enwhisteetkwa* (Walk in Water), *Neekna* and *Chemai* added to her reputation. Her novel *Slash* is considered to be the first novel by a Canadian first nation Female writer.

Her anthology *Breath Tracks* and short story collection *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction* preceded her second novel *Whispering Shadows* (2000), which is an account of the life of an Okanagan activist woman. Her non-fiction work, *The Native Creative Process* (1998), which she co-authored with Douglass Cardinal and *Land Speaking* (1998), speaks about aboriginal art and the Okanagan language and its influence on her writing.

She was appointed as Director of En'owkinCentre, which is run by the Okanagan Indian Educational Resources Society (OIERS) and in 1989, helped them to establish the En'owkin School of International Writing and became its director and instructor. It was the first creative school for Aboriginal people in Canada.

She was honoured with the George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award in Literature and the Eco Trust USA Buffet Award in Indigenous Leadership. She is a Lifetime Fellow of Okanagan College and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Out of the belly of Christopher's ship

a mob bursts

Running in all directions

Pulling furs off animals

Shooting buffalo

Shooting each other

Left and right.

Father mean well

Waves his makeshift wand

forgives saucer-eyed Indians

Red coated knights

gallop across the prairie

to get their men  
and to build a new world

Pioneers and traders  
bring gifts  
Smallpox, Seagrams  
and rice krispies

Civilization has reached  
the promised land.

Between the snap crackle pop  
of smoke stacks  
and multicoloured rivers  
swelling with flowered powered zee  
are farmers sowing skulls and bones  
and miners  
pulling from gaping holes  
green paper faces

of a smiling English lady

The colossi  
in which they trust  
while burying  
breathing forests and fields  
beneath concrete and steel  
stand shaking fists  
waiting to multilate  
whole civilizations  
ten generations at a blow

Somewhere among the remains  
of skinless animals  
is the termination  
to a long journey  
and unholy search  
for the power  
glimpsed in a garden

forever closed

forever lost.

### **About the Poem**

*History Lesson* is a poem written in the third person perspective which recounts the first encounter between indigenous people and the first set of European settlers. Jeanette Armstrong details the exploitation of nature, destruction of the cultural fabric, oppression of the Aboriginals etc., which the Europeans practised. Armstrong has always tried to alter the misconceptions regarding Aboriginal people and their culture. She advocated for indigenous peoples' rights and sought to rewrite colonial history through this poem.

### **Analysis of the Poem**

In *History Lesson*, Jeanette Armstrong writes about the European colonization of North America and its impacts on the indigenous through their perspective. The first stanza opens with an allusion to Christopher Columbus, the first European to land on the American continent. Columbus stands as a symbol for the first settlers who arrived in ships and, like a savage mob, acted violently, actions hostile to the indigenous people. But instead of Columbus, she uses the first name Christopher to rob him of the Significance given by European society. To be specific, Columbus never landed in Canada. But his arrival in the American continent guided many others into different parts of the continent.

These settlers ran around the land with guns, hunting down animals and shooting the natives and their fellow Europeans in greed for land and its resources. Here we can find a reference to the Seven Years' War on Canadian soil, fought

mainly between France and England for the occupation of specific regions. The war eventually resulted in the British Conquest of Canada. Talking about Canada, the natural resources were looted and polluted. The opening stanza presents us a picture of the occupation's brutality and throws light on the atrocities on the first nations.

The second stanza reveals how they established social dominance by setting up Christian Church and bringing Christian religious rules into Canada. 'Father' refers to the Christian priest, whom the natives should approach to seek forgiveness. The makeshift wand symbolizes the power that these parish authorities power during colonial rule. The white men disregarded the native culture, beliefs and practices and treated natives as ignorant children. The language in the line "Father means well" bears this tone in Pigeon-English, a style used by British colonizers while conversing with the first actions.

The expression "Red Coated Knights" refers to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The armed police chased the natives across the Prairie, forcing them to leave the mainland and find shelters in the reserves. The force was used for ethnic cleansing inhumanely as they sought to establish a new world in the new land they colonized.

The third stanza is ironic intone and contrasts the manners and traditions of both cultures. The ancestors of the natives, when they used to pay visits, brought gifts with them. The gifts the colonial settlers brought were diseases like smallpox and unhealthy habits like alcohol consumption. These were alien to the land. Another instance of irony immediately follows this. Civilization has reached/the Promised Land. The claim of the colonizers regarding civilizing the natives was hollow. The native cultural and natural shape, which were once pure, faced

defilement as the colonizers desecrated the entire cosmos of North American existence. The Promised Land is barren, void and, polluted, devoid of value. There is a Christian Biblical allusion here, as the followers of Christ are destined to lead the whole world to a new promised land of contemporary civilization. Ironically, the followers of Christ from Europe rampaged the natives and their customs without any trace of humility.

The following stanza opens with the expression “snap crackle pop”, which might be an onomatopoeic reference to the rice crispies and the guns the colonizers used. These arms and crispiest were both unknown to natives, nor they had any access to these. With the aid of these weapons, the colonizers forced the indigenous to retreat and give up their land seeking shelter in reserves leaving the mainland.

The images of ‘smoke stack’ and ‘multicoloured rivers’ reference the pollution due to industrialization. The farmers, miners and all other natives had to adapt accordingly. The expression farmers sowing skulls and bones indicates the introduction of chemical pesticides into agriculture. The ‘green paper faces’ refers to the currency with the face English queen. The colonizer introduced money to the land, and the natives had to tune themselves into the capitalist norm set by the White man.

The ‘colossi’ refers to enormous power or significance. In the poem's context, it can be the colonizer's religion. The indigenous culture and beliefs were in synchrony with nature. They lived in harmony with the forests, the fields and animals. The new faith the white man introduced left the ‘breathing’ forests and fields buried for capitalist gains. The expression ‘breathing forests and domains is an instance of personification. The natives considered them as living white the colonizer treated them as non-living and as means for money. The word ‘garden’,



which comes later in the stanza, also bears similar significance. The land of the natives was once a peaceful garden where all species were in a state of communion; the human and natural lived ever so connected. The park can be a biblical allusion to the Garden of Eden. The sinned human beings lost the garden and were doomed to loiter on earth.

Similarly, the greed of the sinned Colonizers turned the garden into a barren land. The animals there were skinless due to their skins being used for the fur trade by the settlers. The white man's greed disconnected men from nature as they ransacked the character in the continent. In their unholy quest for power, they exercised authority, battled, killed and terminated a whole culture.

The forests and fields were destroyed to build new concrete and steel buildings: their greed affected ten generations in a single blow. The aftermath of the colonial project is continuous, and it has forever pillaged and desecrated the cultural life of Canada. The repetition of the word 'forever' stresses this point. The poem lacks proper punctuation, symbolically suggesting that colonization's impact is sustained and per now the present.

The central theme of the poem is reflected in its title itself. The historical texts prepared by Western historians will present a picture of colonial invasion as an act of civilizing the Orient natives. The poet presents an alternate history from the perspective of the natives, recounting the horrors of the brutal occupation, destruction of a culture, massacre of the first nations, and evils of the new culture. The poem's tone is predominantly pessimistic, as there is little hope of redeeming what they have lost. Thus the poem challenges the European version of history

and provides a picture of the violence and destruction that the land suffered at the hands of colonizers.

### **Glossary**

Red coated : The Royal Canadian Mounted Knight.

Seagram : might be a reference to the Seagram Company Ltd., the largest owner of alcoholic beverage lines in the world.

Colossi: a person or thing of enormous size, importance, or ability.

### **Exercises**

#### **I. Answer the following question in one or two sentences.**

1. What did the whites bring as gifts?
2. “Civilization has reached the promised land.” Explain.
3. What is the green paper mentioned in the poem?
4. Explain “farmers sowing skulls and bones.”
5. What does “skinless animals” signify?

#### **II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.**

1. How does colonization affect the lives of tribes?
2. Comment on the use of irony in the poem.
3. What is the theme of “History Lesson”
4. Discuss the literary devices used in the poem.

5. Explain the significance of the title “History Lesson.”

**III. Answer the following questions in 300 words.**

1. Analyze “History Lesson” as a poem on colonization.
2. How does “History Lesson” portray the destruction of the land and culture of indigenous people by the white colonizers?