

MAENG 1.6



**M.A. ENGLISH
SEMESTER - I**

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WOMEN'S STUDIES

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Semester I – Course - V (B)

Title of the Course: Women's Studies

MODULE I: (2 CREDITS)

Unit I: Introduction: Concepts and the Scope of Women's Studies

Women's Studies: Relevance, Prospects and the Indian Context, Sex, Gender and Biological Determinism, The Three Waves or Phases of Feminism, theorisation of feminine psyche, motherhood, womanhood and sisterhood, Changing phases of New woman's quest for survival from housewives, to working women and self-dependent single women, widows and wedded women, survival and existence of women in regions without awareness, concerns of men oriented in Patriarchy and conflicting definitions of Masculinities

Unit II: Combatting Crimes and Discrimination:

- i. Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women -Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- ii. National Policy on Empowerment of Women and Constitutional Safeguards for Women (Articles 14, 15, 15 – Clause 3, 16 – Clauses 1 and 2, 19, 21 and 23 of Indian Constitution)
- iii. Vishakha Guidelines on the 'Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace
- iv. The Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- v. The Right to Education and The Right to Health
- vi. The Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947
- vii. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (Equal Pay for Equal Work)
- viii. Divorce Laws in India
- ix. Inheritance Laws in India

MODULE II: (2 CREDITS)

Unit III: Feminist Critics on Woman's Issues

Views of Western Feminist Critics – Simone De Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, Virginia Woolf and so on

Views of Indian Feminist Critics – Gayatri Spivak, Kamala Bhasin, Meghana Pant and so on

Unit IV: Exposition of Feminine Sensibility in Literary Studies

Poetry - (i) Maya Angelou: Our Grandmothers, Seven Women's Blessed Assurance, London
(ii) Deepti Naval: I Have a Melody in my Pulse, Smita & I, Black Wind

(iv) Margaret Atwood: This is a photograph of me, Siren Song, Spelling

Drama - Oscar Wilde: *Salome*, Lynn Nottage: *Ruined*

Evaluation Pattern:

College Assessment = Total Marks: 50			
S. No.	Nature of Assessment	Marks	
1	Classroom Participation (Student led discussions/activities) & Attendance	10	
2	Mid-Semester Written Test (on Unit I & II)	20	
3	Written Assignment	10	
4	Oral Presentation	10	
University Assessment (Semester End) Total Marks: 50			
S. No.	Pattern of Question Paper	Marks	Unit
Q.1	MCQ (10 Questions)	10	I, II, III & IV
Q.2	Short notes on ANY TWO out of four	10	I & II

Recommended Reading:

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- Bouson, Brooks J. ed.al. *Critical Insights: Emily Dickinson*, Loyola University Chicago.201
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- <https://journals.openedition.org/cve/2712>
- Feminine Voices in Emily Dickinson's Poetry | Atlantis Press <https://www.atlantispress.com/proceedings/ssehr17> <https://www.jstor.org/stable>
- Maya Angelou Writing Life, Inventing Literary Genre - JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable>
- AN ANALYSIS OF FEMINISM IN MAYA ANGELOU'S POEMS ...
<https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/81...>
- Interconnections and tensions between post-colonialism
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325107067_The_Poetics_of_Black_Feministic_Narrative_A_Literary_Analysis_of_Maya_Angelou's_Poetry
https://www.ijicc.net/images/Vol11Iss11/111122_Sameer_2020_E_R.pdf
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- Trifles* By Susan Glaspel Essay Research Paper, Главная > Реферат > Остальные работы, <https://works.doklad.ru/view/7ls7arnTUBw.html>
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INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTS AND THE SCOPE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

Unit Structure:

- 1.0 Objective
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Concepts and The Scope of Women's Studies Introduction
- 1.3 Women's Studies: Relevance
- 1.4 Prospects
- 1.5 The Indian Context
- 1.6 Sex and Gender
- 1.7 Biological Determinism
- 1.8 The Three Waves or Phases of Feminism
- 1.9 Theorisation of feminine psyche, motherhood, and sisterhood
- 1.10 Changing phases of new woman's quest for survival from housewives to working women and Self-dependent single women, widows and wedded women
- 1.11 The survival and existence of women in regions without awareness
- 1.12 Concerns of men oriented in patriarchy
- 1.13 Conflicting definitions of masculinities
- 1.14 Conclusion
- 1.15 Suggested Questions
- 1.16 References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Some of the major objectives of Women's Studies have been to point out and question the social, economic, political, and cultural constructs that mould women's lives and experiences and to strive towards a society with greater equity and justice. This field has several assignments: to uncover and question the bundle of prejudices and stereotypes that have caused women to be silenced and ignored throughout history and to open up avenues of self-expression for them. The department of women's studies seeks to create an enabling environment for multi-interdisciplinary

research, pedagogy, and community engagement to promote a deeper understanding of gender and its intersections with other forms of social inequality—race, class, sexuality, ability. It tries to raise critical consciousness about gendered structures of discrimination and oppression to empower women and other deprived groups to exercise control over their lives and self-determination and make positive contributions for creating an all-inclusive and fair society.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Women's studies is an academic field that draws on feminist and interdisciplinary methods to place women's lives and experiences at the centre of study, while examining social and cultural constructs of gender; systems of privilege and oppression; and the relationships between power and gender as they intersect with other identities and social locations such as race, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, and disability.

Popular concepts that are related to the field of women's studies include feminist theory, standpoint theory, intersectionality, multiculturalism, transnational feminism, social justice, affect studies, agency, bio-politics, materialism, and embodiment. Research practices and methodologies associated with women's studies include ethnography, autoethnography, focus groups, surveys, community-based research, discourse analysis, and reading practices associated with critical theory, post-structuralism, and queer theory. The field researches and critiques different societal norms of gender, race, class, sexuality, and other social inequalities.

Women's studies is related to the fields of gender studies, feminist studies, and sexuality studies, and more broadly related to the fields of cultural studies, ethnic studies, and African-American studies.

2.2 CONCEPTS AND THE SCOPE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

Women's Studies is a multidisciplinary field that explores the complex and dynamic experiences of women. It encompasses a range of concepts, including:

1. **Sex and Gender:** Understanding the biological and social constructs that shape women's lives, including the impact of sex and gender on their roles, behaviours, and expectations.
2. **Biological Determinism:** Challenging the idea that women's characteristics are predetermined by their biology, recognizing the importance of social and cultural factors in shaping women's experiences.
3. **Feminism:** The three waves of feminism, including suffrage, gender roles, and challenging traditional notions of gender and sexuality.

4. **Motherhood and Sisterhood:** Exploring the complexities of motherhood, including the responsibilities and challenges that women face in their caregiving roles, as well as the importance of sisterhood and solidarity among women. Introduction: Concepts and The Scope of Women's Studies
5. **Survival and Existence:** Examining the ways in which women survive and exist in various contexts, including patriarchal societies, regions with limited awareness and resources, and environments that reinforce traditional gender roles.
6. **Masculinities:** Understanding the different definitions of masculinity and how they intersect with gender dynamics and women's experiences.

The scope of Women's Studies:

- Women's empowerment and gender equality
- Gender-based violence and discrimination
- Women's health, education, and employment
- Intersectionality and diversity among women
- Feminist theory and methodology
- Policy and practice in promoting women's rights

By exploring these concepts and topics, Women's Studies aims to challenge traditional notions of gender and sexuality, promote a deeper understanding of women's experiences, and work towards creating a more equitable society.

2.3 WOMEN'S STUDIES: RELEVANCE

Women's Studies is relevant in today's world because it addresses the persistent gender inequalities that exist in society. Despite significant advancements in education, employment, and political participation, women continue to face discrimination, violence, and marginalization. Women's Studies provides a framework for understanding these issues and developing strategies to address them. It also highlights the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes and their role in shaping social and economic policies.

Women's Studies is a vital field that has significant relevance in today's society. Here are some reasons why:

1. **Promoting Gender Equality:** Women's Studies works towards creating a more equitable society by challenging patriarchal norms and promoting gender equality.
2. **Empowering Women:** The field aims to empower women by providing them with knowledge, skills, and resources to make informed decisions about their lives.

3. **Addressing Gender-Based Violence:** Women's Studies helps address gender-based violence and discrimination by highlighting its causes, consequences, and solutions.
4. **Understanding Intersectionality:** The field recognizes that women's experiences are shaped by multiple factors, including race, class, sexuality, and disability, and works to understand and address these intersections.
5. **Challenging Stereotypes:** Women's Studies challenges traditional gender stereotypes and promotes a more nuanced understanding of femininity and masculinity.
6. **Informing Policy and Practice:** The field informs policy and practice in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and law, ensuring that women's voices are heard and their needs are met.
7. **Fostering Solidarity:** Women's Studies fosters solidarity among women from diverse backgrounds, promoting a sense of community and shared purpose.
8. **Providing a Platform for Marginalized Voices:** The field provides a platform for marginalized voices, including those of women from low-income communities, racial and ethnic minorities, and women with disabilities.
9. **Encouraging Critical Thinking:** Women's Studies encourages critical thinking and analysis, helping students develop a more nuanced understanding of the world around them.
10. **Preparedness for Future Challenges:** The field prepares students to tackle future challenges, including the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the need to address emerging issues such as climate change.

2.4 PROSPECTS

The prospects of Women's Studies are vast and promising. As women's rights continue to be a major concern globally, the demand for research and scholarship in this field is increasing. Women's Studies can help policymakers develop more effective policies that address the needs and concerns of women. Additionally, it can contribute to the development of gender-sensitive curricula in education and promote gender equality in the workplace.

2.5 THE INDIAN CONTEXT

In India, Women's Studies is a critical area of study due to the country's complex social and cultural landscape. Despite being a democracy with a significant presence of women in various fields, India continues to struggle with gender-based violence, discrimination, and marginalization.

The Indian context is characterized by diverse cultures, languages, and social structures, which require nuanced understanding and analysis.

Women's Studies in India has made significant progress in recent years, with many universities and institutions offering courses and programs in this field. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has also established the National Council of Women's Education (NCWE) to promote women's education and empowerment.

2.6 SEX AND GENDER

While in ordinary speech, the terms sex and gender are often used interchangeably, in contemporary academic literature, the terms often have distinct meanings, especially when referring to people. Sex generally refers to an organism's biological sex, while gender usually refers to either social roles typically associated with the sex of a person (gender role) or personal identification of one's own gender based on an internal awareness (gender identity). Most contemporary social scientists, behavioural scientists and biologists, many legal systems and government bodies, and intergovernmental agencies such as the WHO make a distinction between gender and sex.

In most individuals, the various biological determinants of sex are congruent, and sex is consistent with the individual's gender identity, but in some circumstances, an individual's assigned sex and gender do not align, and the person may be transgender. Also, in some cases, an individual may have sex characteristics that complicate sex assignment, and the person may be intersex.

Though sex and gender have been used interchangeably at least as early as the fourteenth century, this usage was not common by the late 1900s. Sexologist John Money pioneered the concept of a distinction between biological sex and gender identity in 1955. Madison Bentley had already defined gender as the "socialized obverse of sex" a decade earlier, in 1945. As originally conceived by Money, gender and sex are analysed together as a single category including both biological and social elements, but later work by Robert Stoller separated the two, designating sex and gender as biological and cultural categories, respectively. Before the work of Bentley, Money and Stoller, the word gender was only regularly used to refer to grammatical categories.

2.7 BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

Biological determinism, also known as genetic determinism, is the belief that human behaviour is directly controlled by an individual's genes or some component of their physiology, generally at the expense of the role of the environment, whether in embryonic development or in learning. Genetic reductionism is a similar concept, but it is distinct from genetic determinism in that the former refers to the level of understanding, while the latter refers to the supposedly causal role of genes. Biological determinism has been associated with movements in science and society

including eugenics, scientific racism, and the debates around the heritability of IQ, the basis of sexual orientation, and sociobiology.

In 1892, the German evolutionary biologist August Weismann proposed in his germ plasm theory that heritable information is transmitted only via germ cells, which he thought contained determinants (genes). The English polymath Francis Galton, supposing that undesirable traits such as club foot and criminality were inherited, advocated eugenics, aiming to prevent supposedly defective people from breeding. The American physician Samuel George Morton and the French physician Paul Broca attempted to relate the cranial capacity (internal skull volume) to skin colour, intending to show that white people were superior. Other workers such as the American psychologists H. H. Goddard and Robert Yerkes attempted to measure people's intelligence and to show that the resulting scores were heritable, again to demonstrate the supposed superiority of people with white skin.

Galton popularized the phrase nature and nurture, later often used to characterize the heated debate over whether genes or the environment determined human behaviour. Scientists such as behavioural geneticists now see it as obvious that both factors are essential, and that they are intertwined, especially through the mechanisms of epigenetics. The American biologist E. O. Wilson, who founded the discipline of sociobiology based on observations of animals such as social insects, controversially suggested that its explanations of social behaviour might apply to humans.

2.8 THE THREE WAVES OR PHASES OF FEMINISM

The concept of feminism has been a subject of discussion and debate for centuries, with different waves or phases of feminism emerging in response to the changing social and political landscape. This essay will explore the three waves of feminism, highlighting their key characteristics, achievements, and challenges.

The first wave of feminism, which spanned from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, was primarily focused on women's suffrage. Women's rights activists, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, fought for women's right to vote and to participate in the political process. The 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified in 1920, granted women the right to vote, marking a significant milestone in the struggle for women's equality. The first wave of feminism also saw the establishment of women's organizations and clubs, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which played a crucial role in mobilizing public support for women's suffrage.

The second wave of feminism, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, was marked by a broader focus on gender equality and social change. Women's liberation activists, such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, challenged traditional gender roles and called for greater equality in

education, employment, and personal life. The second wave of feminism also saw the rise of feminist movements such as radical feminism, socialist feminism, and lesbian feminism, each with their own distinct perspectives and strategies.

The second wave of feminism was characterized by a range of significant achievements, including the passage of Title IX in 1972, which prohibited sex discrimination in education and athletics; the creation of women's studies programs and departments in universities; and the establishment of feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW). However, the second wave of feminism also faced significant challenges, including backlash from conservative forces and internal conflicts within the feminist movement.

The third wave of feminism, which began in the 1990s and continues to this day, is characterized by a more diverse and inclusive approach to feminist activism. Third-wave feminists have challenged traditional notions of gender and sexuality, embraced intersectionality and celebrated diversity. The third wave has also seen the rise of online activism and social media campaigns, which have enabled women to mobilize quickly and effectively around issues such as sexual harassment and assault.

One of the key features of third-wave feminism is its emphasis on intersectionality, recognizing that women's experiences are shaped by multiple factors such as race, class, sexuality, and ability. This shift has led to a more nuanced understanding of women's oppression and has enabled feminists to work together across different identity groups. The third wave has also seen a growing focus on issues such as reproductive justice, immigration rights, and environmental justice. All the three waves of feminism have played a crucial role in shaping the feminist movement and advancing women's rights.

2.9 THEORISATION OF FEMININE PSYCHE, MOTHERHOOD, AND SISTERHOOD

The concept of feminine psyche, motherhood, and sisterhood has been a subject of extensive theorization in various fields of study. Feminist scholars, psychologists, and sociologists have contributed to the development of complex theories that aim to understand the experiences of women.

Feminine Psyche

Psychoanalytic theory, developed by Sigmund Freud, posits that women's psyche is shaped by the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1923). According to Freud, women unconsciously desire the mother's love and attention, leading to a fear of castration and a desire to return to the maternal state. This theory has been criticized for its lack of consideration for women's experiences and its perpetuation of patriarchal norms. However, it remains a significant influence on the development of feminist thought.

In contrast, object relations theory, developed by Melanie Klein, emphasizes the importance of early relationships with caregivers in shaping the feminine psyche (Klein, 1945). This theory suggests that women's self-image is formed through interactions with others, particularly their mothers. Klein's work highlights the significance of early childhood experiences in shaping women's identities and relationships.

Motherhood

Motherhood has been a subject of intense scrutiny in feminist scholarship. The concept of maternal instinct, popularized by Jean Lied Loff's book "The Continuum Concept," suggests that women have an innate ability to care for and nurture children (Lied Loff, 1985). However, this idea has been criticized for its romanticization of motherhood and neglect of the complexities involved in childcare.

Sociologists argue that motherhood is a social construct, shaped by cultural norms and expectations (Hochschild, 1989). This perspective highlights the ways in which societal pressure can influence women's experiences of motherhood. For example, women may feel pressured to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations surrounding childcare.

Sisterhood

The concept of sisterhood has been explored by feminist scholars as a site of resistance against oppression (Lorde, 1984). Sisterhood is often seen as a powerful force that enables women to come together and challenge patriarchal norms. However, this idea has also been criticized for its potential to reinforce heteronormative and cisnormativity assumptions.

In recent years, scholars have emphasized the importance of intersectionality in understanding sisterhood (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality recognizes that women's experiences are shaped by multiple factors, including race, class, sexuality, and ability. This perspective highlights the need for more inclusive understandings of sisterhood and challenges dominant narratives about women's experiences.

2.10 CHANGING PHASES OF NEW WOMAN'S QUEST FOR SURVIVAL FROM HOUSEWIVES TO WORKING WOMEN AND SELF-DEPENDENT SINGLE WOMEN, WIDOWS AND WEDDED WOMEN

The 20th century witnessed a significant shift in the role of women in society, particularly in the Western world. Gone were the days when women were confined to the domestic sphere, relegated to the role of homemakers and caregivers. The emergence of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s marked the beginning of a new era, where women began to assert their independence and seek autonomy in various aspects of their lives.

The first phase of this transformation was marked by the rise of working women. Prior to this, women's primary role was seen as that of a homemaker, responsible for managing the household and caring for children. However, as women began to enter the workforce, they started to break free from these traditional constraints. The feminist movement played a crucial role in empowering women to take up paid employment, challenging patriarchal norms that had long restricted their access to education and career opportunities.

The next phase saw the emergence of self-dependent single women, who were no longer reliant on men for financial support. This marked a significant shift away from traditional gender roles, where women's identity was tied to their marital status. Single women, whether by choice or circumstance, were able to assert their independence and take control of their lives. This newfound independence enabled them to pursue their own goals, interests, and aspirations, unfettered by the expectations of others.

However, this phase also saw the rise of another significant group: widows. Women who had lost their husbands through death or divorce were forced to navigate the complexities of widowhood, often with limited resources and social support. While some widows were able to find support from family and friends, others were left to fend for themselves, struggling to cope with the loss of their partner and the economic challenges that came with it.

In recent years, we have seen a further shift towards self-dependent wedded women. With the rise of dual-income households and greater financial security, married women are no longer confined to traditional domestic roles. They are able to pursue their own careers and interests, while still maintaining a fulfilling personal life. This has led to a significant redefinition of what it means to be a wife, as women are now able to balance their roles as partners and individuals.

Throughout these phases, there have been several common themes that have emerged. One of the most significant is the struggle for financial independence. Women have had to navigate complex economic systems, often with limited access to resources and opportunities. However, as they have gained more access to education and employment, they have been able to build greater financial security and independence.

2.11 THE SURVIVAL AND EXISTENCE OF WOMEN IN REGIONS WITHOUT AWARENESS

In many regions around the world, women face numerous challenges that threaten their very survival and existence. These regions, often characterized by lack of awareness, poverty, and limited access to resources, create a toxic environment that makes it difficult for women to thrive.

One of the primary challenges faced by women in these regions is limited access to education. In many parts of the world, girls are not given the

same opportunities as boys to attend school, and those who do manage to attend school often face discrimination and marginalization. This lack of education not only hinders their ability to gain employment and improve their economic prospects but also limits their ability to make informed decisions about their own lives and health.

Furthermore, women in these regions are often subjected to violence and discrimination on a daily basis. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and exploitation, is a pervasive problem that can have severe physical and emotional consequences for women. In many cases, these forms of violence are perpetrated by men who believe that they have a right to dominate and control women. The lack of awareness about these issues and the failure to address them creates a culture of impunity that perpetuates violence against women.

Another significant challenge faced by women in these regions is limited access to healthcare. In many parts of the world, women are not given the same level of healthcare as men, and those who do receive healthcare often face discrimination and bias. This can lead to serious health consequences for women, including maternal mortality, which is a major cause of death for women in many developing countries.

In addition to these challenges, women in these regions often face significant economic constraints. They may not have access to formal employment or may be forced to work in informal sectors with limited pay and no benefits. This can lead to poverty and marginalization, making it difficult for women to survive and exist.

Despite these challenges, there are many examples of women who are fighting back against these injustices and working to create positive change in their communities. Women's rights activists, community leaders, and healthcare providers are working together to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality and to provide support to women who are facing discrimination and violence.

2.12 CONCERNS OF MEN ORIENTED IN PATRIARCHY

Patriarchal masculinities are those ideas about and practices of masculinity that emphasize the superiority of masculinity over femininity and the authority and power of men over women. Ideas about and practices of patriarchal masculinities serve to maintain gender inequalities and power hierarchies more broadly. Masculinity is a set of attributes, behaviours, and roles associated with men and boys. Masculinity can be theoretically understood as socially constructed, and there is also evidence that some behaviours considered masculine are influenced by both cultural factors and biological factors. To what extent masculinity is biologically or socially influenced is subject to debate. It is distinct from the definition of the biological male sex, as anyone can exhibit masculine traits. Standards of masculinity vary across different cultures and historical periods. This can include:

1. **Loss of power and privilege:** As patriarchy is challenged and dismantled, some men may feel that their power and privilege are being taken away, leading to feelings of insecurity and anxiety.
2. **Fear of change:** Men socialized in patriarchy may be uncomfortable with the idea of changing traditional gender roles and may resist efforts to promote gender equality.
3. **Sense of emasculation:** Men who are used to being in positions of power and authority may feel that they are being "emasculated" or feminized when they are challenged to adopt more collaborative or nurturing approaches.
4. **Fear of vulnerability:** Men socialized in patriarchy may be hesitant to show vulnerability or emotions, as this is often seen as a weakness in patriarchal cultures.
5. **Concerns about reputation and status:** Men may be concerned about how they are perceived by others, particularly if they are seen as not being "manly" enough or not conforming to traditional masculine norms.

2.13 CONFLICTING DEFINITIONS OF MASCULINITIES

Masculinities have multiple ways but often contradictory, and context-dependent ways in which masculinity is defined and perceived. This concept highlights the complexities and nuances of what it means to be a man, challenging the idea that there is a single, universal definition of masculinity.

There are several ways in which conflicting definitions of masculinities manifest:

1. **Traditional masculinity:** This is the dominant definition of masculinity, which emphasizes strength, aggression, and dominance over others.
2. **Alternative masculinities:** This includes alternative forms of masculinity, such as those that emphasize emotional intelligence, empathy, and vulnerability.
3. **Masculinities in crisis:** Some researchers argue that traditional masculinity is in crisis, as it is no longer seen as viable or desirable by many men.
4. **New forms of masculinity:** There is a growing recognition of the need for new forms of masculinity that are more inclusive, compassionate, and equitable.

5. **Intersections with other identities:** Masculinity intersects with other identities, such as race, class, sexuality, and disability, which can lead to complex and conflicting definitions of masculinity.

2.14 CONCLUSION

Women's Studies has evolved significantly over the years, from its early roots in feminist activism to its current status as a respected and vital academic field. Through the lens of Women's Studies, we have gained a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted experiences of women across cultures, histories, and societies. We have also come to recognize the ways in which gender intersects with other forms of social identity, such as race, class, sexuality, and disability, to shape the lives of women and girls.

Despite the progress made, there is still much work to be done to address the ongoing inequalities and injustices faced by women. Women's Studies scholars continue to push the boundaries of knowledge and challenge dominant narratives, using interdisciplinary approaches to interrogate the power structures that shape our world. By centring the experiences and voices of women, we can work towards a more equitable and just society, where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

Ultimately, the significance of Women's Studies lies not only in its academic contributions but also in its potential to inspire positive change in the world. By fostering a deeper understanding of women's lives and experiences, Women's Studies can help to create a more empathetic and inclusive society, where all individuals are valued and empowered to reach their full potential. As we move forward, it is essential that we continue to prioritize the study of women's experiences, working together to build a more just and equitable world for all.

2.15 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the relevance of Women's Studies in today's society.
2. How does the Indian context shape the study of women's issues and feminism?
3. How do sex, gender, and biological determinism intersect and influence each other in shaping our understanding of femininity and masculinity?
4. Comment on how feminist theories have challenged traditional notions of femininity and masculinity?
5. In what ways do feminist theories recognize and address the experiences of marginalized women, such as those from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds?
6. Comment on the concept of the "new woman" evolved over time.
7. What are some of the key challenges faced by widows and wedded women in Indian society?

8. Comment on patriarchal societies which shape men's attitudes towards women.

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COMBATING CRIMES AND DISCRIMINATION – I

Unit Structure:

2.0 Objective

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Women

2.3 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

2.4 National Policy on Empowerment of Women and Constitutional Safeguards for Women (Articles 14, 15 – Clause 3, 16 – Clauses 1 and 2; 19, 21, and 23 of Indian Constitution)

2.5 Vishakha Guidelines on the ‘Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace’

2.6 The Domestic Violence Act, 2005

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To enable the readers to understand the rights of women under Indian Constitution
- To make the readers aware of the National Policies and Constitutional Safeguards of women
- To study various Acts pertaining to women’s rights

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Combating crimes and discrimination against women involves a multi-faceted approach that includes legal, social, educational, and policy measures. Legal frameworks need to be robust and enforced effectively to protect women from violence, harassment, and discrimination. This includes ensuring that laws are in place to address various forms of gender-based violence such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and workplace harassment. Legal reforms should also encompass provisions that promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including employment, education, and political participation.

Social measures play a crucial role in changing attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate discrimination against women. Public awareness campaigns, community programs, and media initiatives can help challenge

stereotypes and promote gender equality. Engaging men and boys as allies in this effort is essential to create a more inclusive and respectful society.

Education is a powerful tool in combating discrimination against women. Providing girls with access to quality education not only empowers them but also contributes to broader social and economic development. Educational curricula should include gender studies to raise awareness among young people about gender equality and respect for women's rights. Additionally, vocational training and skill development programs can enhance women's economic opportunities and independence.

Policy measures are necessary to create an enabling environment for gender equality. Governments should implement and monitor policies that promote women's participation in the workforce, ensure equal pay for equal work, and provide support for working mothers through maternity leave and childcare services. Policies aimed at reducing poverty and improving healthcare access are also critical, as they address some of the root causes of gender-based discrimination and violence.

Support services for victims of gender-based violence are vital. This includes providing safe shelters, counseling, legal assistance, and healthcare services. Hotlines and crisis centers should be available to offer immediate support and guidance to women in distress.

Collaboration between governments, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies is key to addressing crimes and discrimination against women. Sharing best practices, data, and resources can enhance the effectiveness of interventions. International conventions and agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), provide a framework for countries to work together towards achieving gender equality.

Monitoring and evaluation are important to ensure that measures to combat discrimination and violence against women are effective. Regular assessments can identify gaps and areas for improvement, ensuring that efforts are continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of women.

Combating crimes and discrimination against women requires a comprehensive approach that combines legal action, social change, education, supportive policies, and international cooperation. By addressing these issues on multiple fronts, societies can create safer and more equitable environments for women and girls.

2.2 CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL SAFEGUARDS FOR WOMEN

In India, a range of constitutional and legal safeguards are designed to protect and promote the rights of women. These safeguards are embedded in the Indian Constitution and various legislative measures, reflecting the country's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Indian Constitution explicitly guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on gender. Article 14 ensures equal protection of the laws to all individuals, while Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 15(3) allows the state to make special provisions for women and children, recognizing the need for affirmative action to address historical and social disadvantages. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

Further, Article 39 of the Directive Principles of State Policy mandates that the state direct its policy towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women and ensuring that the health and strength of workers, men and women, are not abused. Article 42 directs the state to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief, reflecting the recognition of women's reproductive roles and their need for special protections in the workplace.

The legal framework in India also includes several key legislations aimed at protecting women's rights and addressing specific issues. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 criminalizes the giving and taking of dowry, addressing the prevalent social evil that often leads to harassment and violence against women. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 provides a comprehensive definition of domestic violence and offers civil remedies for protection and compensation to women facing abuse.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013 seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work, providing a mechanism for redressal of complaints and ensuring a safe working environment. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 ensures paid maternity leave and other benefits for women workers, promoting their health and well-being.

The Indian Penal Code also includes provisions to protect women from various forms of violence and exploitation. Sections 354 and 376 deal with assault or criminal force against women with intent to outrage her modesty and rape, respectively, prescribing stringent punishments for these offenses. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013, also known as the Nirbhaya Act, introduced several new offenses such as acid attacks, stalking, and voyeurism, and enhanced penalties for crimes against women.

Furthermore, the National Commission for Women (NCW) was established in 1992 to review constitutional and legal safeguards for women, recommend remedial legislative measures, facilitate redressal of grievances, and advise the government on all policy matters affecting women. The NCW acts as a watchdog for women's rights and plays a crucial role in addressing issues and challenges faced by women in India.

India's constitutional provisions and legal framework provide comprehensive safeguards for women's rights, aiming to eliminate

discrimination, promote equality, and protect women from violence and exploitation. These measures reflect the country's commitment to creating a just and equitable society where women can realize their full potential.

2.3 CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It is often described as an international bill of rights for women. CEDAW defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex that impairs or nullifies the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field.

CEDAW has a comprehensive approach to addressing gender discrimination and encompasses civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. It requires state parties to condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue a policy of eliminating such discrimination, and undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all areas of life. This includes enacting laws prohibiting discrimination, establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination, and ensuring the full development and advancement of women so they can exercise and enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with men.

The Convention also establishes an agenda for national action to end discrimination and sets up a monitoring body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to oversee the implementation of its provisions. States parties are required to submit periodic reports to the Committee on the legislative, judicial, administrative, or other measures they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and on the progress made in this respect.

CEDAW is a critical instrument in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality globally. It has been ratified by many countries, committing them to undertake legal reforms and policy changes to eliminate gender discrimination and improve the status of women. However, some countries have made reservations to certain provisions, and enforcement remains a challenge in various contexts, necessitating continuous advocacy and action to uphold the Convention's principles.

2.4 NATIONAL POLICY ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS FOR WOMEN (ARTICLES 14, 15 – CLAUSE 3, 16 – CLAUSES 1 AND 2; 19, 21, AND 23 OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION)

The National Policy on Empowerment of Women in India, adopted in 2001, aims to bring about the advancement, development, and empowerment of women. It focuses on creating an environment where women can realize their full potential and participate in all aspects of life, from economic and social development to political participation and decision-making. This policy underscores the commitment to gender equality and seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by addressing various socio-economic and legal challenges.

Key objectives of the policy include ensuring women's human rights, providing equal access to education, healthcare, and employment, and improving the quality of life for women, particularly those in rural areas. It emphasizes removing all forms of discrimination and violence against women, strengthening legal systems, and providing social security and support services.

To achieve these objectives, the policy outlines several strategic measures. These include promoting gender-sensitive legislation, implementing social and economic policies that promote women's development, and encouraging the participation of women in decision-making at all levels. It also stresses the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all developmental processes, ensuring women's access to resources and services, and providing support to women in challenging circumstances.

The Indian Constitution provides a robust framework to support and protect the rights of women through various articles that emphasize equality and non-discrimination. Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws to all individuals, thereby providing a foundation for gender equality. This means that men and women must be treated equally in the eyes of the law.

Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Clause 3 of Article 15 empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children, recognizing the need to address historical and social disadvantages that women face. This allows for affirmative action and other measures aimed at improving women's socio-economic status and ensuring their safety and well-being.

Article 16 deals with equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Clauses 1 and 2 of Article 16 ensure that no citizen is discriminated against in public employment on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, or residence. This guarantees that women have equal access to employment opportunities and can compete on an equal footing with men.

Article 19 guarantees certain fundamental freedoms to all citizens, including the freedom of speech and expression, assembly, association, movement, residence, and profession. These freedoms are essential for the empowerment of women, enabling them to participate fully in social, economic, and political life.

Article 21 ensures the protection of life and personal liberty, stating that no person shall be deprived of their life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law. This article has been interpreted broadly to include the right to live with dignity, which encompasses various rights and protections for women, including protection from violence and exploitation.

Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings and forced labor, providing an important safeguard against the exploitation of women. This article is particularly relevant in addressing issues such as human trafficking, forced prostitution, and other forms of exploitation that disproportionately affect women.

Together, these constitutional provisions form a comprehensive legal framework aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women in India. They provide the necessary legal backing for policies and programs designed to empower women and ensure their full participation in all spheres of life. The combination of the National Policy on Empowerment of Women and constitutional safeguards underscores India's commitment to gender equality and the continuous effort to improve the status of women in society.

2.5 VISHAKHA GUIDELINES ON THE 'SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE'

The Vishakha Guidelines were established by the Supreme Court of India in 1997 as a set of procedural guidelines to address the issue of sexual harassment of women at the workplace. These guidelines came as a response to a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by several women's rights groups following a brutal case of gang rape of Bhanwari Devi, a social worker in Rajasthan. Devi had been trying to prevent a child marriage, and in retaliation, she was gang-raped by men of a higher caste. The lack of any existing framework to address sexual harassment at work compelled the court to create guidelines to protect women's rights.

The Vishakha Guidelines marked a significant development in Indian law, as they recognized sexual harassment at the workplace as a violation of women's fundamental rights to equality and dignity under Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court's judgment emphasized the need for a safe working environment for women, free from any form of sexual harassment.

The Vishakha Guidelines provided a comprehensive definition of sexual harassment, which included unwelcome sexually determined behavior such as physical contact, demands or requests for sexual favors, sexually

colored remarks, showing pornography, and any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature. This broad definition was crucial in acknowledging the various forms that harassment can take, thereby offering better protection to women.

One of the key aspects of the Vishakha Guidelines was the directive for employers to take proactive steps in preventing sexual harassment. Employers were required to create a work environment that respected the dignity of women and ensured their safety. This included the development and dissemination of a clear policy against sexual harassment, the establishment of a complaints committee to handle grievances, and the provision of adequate facilities for lodging complaints. The complaints committee was mandated to be headed by a woman, and at least half of its members had to be women. Additionally, the committee had to include a third-party representative, such as an NGO or another body familiar with the issue of sexual harassment, to prevent any undue pressure or influence within the organization.

The guidelines also emphasized the need for awareness and sensitization programs within workplaces. This involved educating employees about what constitutes sexual harassment and the rights of women employees, as well as training programs to sensitize them to gender issues. The objective was to foster a respectful and inclusive workplace culture.

Moreover, the Vishakha Guidelines stressed the importance of confidentiality in handling complaints to protect the identity and dignity of the complainant. They also provided for interim measures to be taken during the investigation, such as transferring the complainant or the accused to prevent further harassment.

These guidelines remained in force until the enactment of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act in 2013. The Act largely built upon the framework established by the Vishakha Guidelines, codifying them into a comprehensive law aimed at providing a safe working environment for women.

The Vishakha Guidelines were a landmark in Indian legal history, providing the first structured approach to addressing sexual harassment at the workplace. They set a precedent for recognizing and addressing gender-based violence in professional settings, ensuring that women could work with dignity and safety. The guidelines played a pivotal role in shaping policies and laws regarding sexual harassment in India, contributing significantly to the protection and empowerment of women in the workplace.

2.6 THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005

The Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is an Indian legislation enacted to provide legal protection to victims of domestic violence and to address issues related to domestic violence comprehensively. It recognizes the

right of every woman to live a life free from violence and abuse within the family and in intimate relationships. Here's a detailed explanation of the key aspects of the Domestic Violence Act:

Purpose and Scope

The main purpose of the Domestic Violence Act is to protect women from domestic violence, which includes physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, and economic abuse. It extends to women who are in domestic relationships, whether married or living together, and also covers women in relationships where marriage is not recognized legally.

Definitions

The Act defines various forms of abuse, including physical abuse (any act that causes bodily harm), sexual abuse (coerced sexual acts), verbal and emotional abuse (insults, humiliation), and economic abuse (control over resources). It also defines 'domestic relationship' broadly to include living together in a shared household.

Protection Orders

One of the key provisions of the Act is the provision of protection orders. These orders can be sought by the victim to prevent the abuser from committing any act of domestic violence, communicating with the victim, or disturbing the victim's residence.

Residence Orders

The Act also provides for residence orders, which allow the victim to stay in the shared household even if she does not have any legal title to the household.

Monetary Relief

The Act allows the victim to claim monetary relief for losses suffered as a result of domestic violence, including medical expenses, loss of earnings, and damages for mental and emotional distress.

Custody Orders

In cases where the victim has children, the Act allows for custody orders to protect the interests of the children and prevent their exposure to domestic violence.

Duties of Police and Magistrates

The Act imposes duties on police officers to assist victims of domestic violence and to enforce protection orders effectively. Magistrates are also empowered to issue interim orders for immediate relief to victims.

Counseling and Assistance

The Act mandates the provision of counseling and medical assistance to victims of domestic violence through service providers designated by the government.

Penalties for Violation

The Act imposes penalties for violations of protection orders, including imprisonment and fines, to deter abusers from continuing their abusive behavior.

Legal Framework

The Domestic Violence Act, 2005 operates within the broader legal framework of Indian laws protecting women's rights, including the Indian Penal Code, the Dowry Prohibition Act, and other relevant legislation.

Criticisms and Challenges

Despite its provisions, the Act faces challenges in implementation, including inadequate awareness among law enforcement agencies, social stigma, and reluctance of victims to report abuse due to fear of retaliation or lack of support.

The Domestic Violence Act, 2005 represents a significant step towards recognizing and addressing domestic violence as a violation of women's rights in India. While it provides important legal remedies and protections, continued efforts are needed to ensure effective implementation, awareness, and support for victims of domestic violence across the country.

COMBATING CRIMES AND DISCRIMINATION – II

Unit Structure:

- 3.0 Objective
- 3.1 The Right to Education and The Right to Health
- 3.2 The Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947
- 3.3 Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (Equal Pay for Equal Work)
- 3.4 Divorce Laws in India
- 3.5 Inheritance Laws in India
- 3.6 Suggested Questions
- 3.7 References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To enable the readers to understand the rights of women under Indian Constitution
- To make the readers aware of the National Policies and Constitutional Safeguards of women
- To study various Acts pertaining to women's rights

3.1 THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

In India, the right to education and the right to health are crucial aspects of ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment. Historically, women in India have faced significant challenges in accessing both education and healthcare due to socio-cultural norms, economic disparities, and systemic barriers.

Right to Education:

Access to education for women in India has improved over the years, but disparities still exist, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized communities. The Constitution of India guarantees the right to education as a fundamental right under Article 21A, which was further reinforced by the passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act in 2009. This Act mandates free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14 years.

Despite these legal provisions, girls often face barriers such as poverty, child marriage, household responsibilities, and cultural norms that prioritize boys' education. These factors contribute to higher dropout rates among girls compared to boys, especially as they reach secondary and higher education levels.

Government initiatives like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) program aim to address gender disparities in education by promoting girls' enrollment and retention in schools. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots movements also play a crucial role in advocating for girls' education and providing support through scholarships, mentoring, and awareness campaigns.

Right to Health:

The right to health encompasses access to healthcare services, including maternal and reproductive healthcare, nutrition, and sanitation. In India, women's health outcomes are influenced by factors such as poverty, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, cultural taboos, and discrimination.

Maternal mortality rates in India remain high, partly due to limited access to quality maternal healthcare services, especially in rural and remote areas. The government has implemented programs like the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) to promote institutional deliveries and reduce maternal mortality. Despite these efforts, challenges such as lack of trained healthcare providers, transportation difficulties, and socio-cultural beliefs continue to affect maternal health outcomes.

Access to reproductive health services, including family planning and contraceptives, is essential for women's overall health and well-being. Initiatives like the National Family Planning Program focus on increasing awareness and access to contraceptive methods, but cultural and religious beliefs can influence acceptance and utilization.

Women's right to health also includes addressing issues like malnutrition, anemia, and non-communicable diseases. Government schemes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) aim to improve maternal and child nutrition through supplementary nutrition programs and health education.

In conclusion, while India has made significant strides in promoting women's rights to education and health, challenges remain in ensuring equitable access and quality services for all women, especially those from marginalized communities. Continued efforts are needed to address systemic barriers, improve infrastructure, and change societal attitudes to achieve gender equality in education and health outcomes.

3.2 THE MADRAS DEVADASIS (PREVENTION OF DEDICATION) ACT, 1947

The Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947, was a legislative measure enacted during British colonial rule in India,

specifically within the Madras Presidency (now part of Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala). The Act was introduced to address the practice of dedicating young girls and women as Devadasis in temples, a custom that had evolved from ancient religious traditions but had become associated with social stigma and exploitation.

Key Provisions of the Act:

1. **Prohibition of Dedication:** The Act explicitly prohibited the dedication of women as Devadasis in any temple within the jurisdiction of the Madras Presidency. This aimed to put an end to the practice of ceremonially dedicating girls or women to serve a deity or temple.
2. **Penalties:** The Act imposed penalties on individuals who attempted to dedicate women as Devadasis or who performed ceremonies related to dedication. These penalties were meant to deter the continuation of the practice and to enforce compliance with the law.
3. **Protection of Women:** The primary objective of the Act was to protect women from exploitation and abuse that often accompanied the practice of Devadasi dedication. By criminalizing the dedication and associated rituals, the Act sought to safeguard the rights and dignity of women who might otherwise be subjected to social and sexual exploitation.
4. **Social Reform Context:** The enactment of the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947, was part of broader social reform movements in colonial India. These movements aimed to eliminate social evils, promote social justice, and uplift marginalized sections of society, including women.

Despite the legislative intervention, the practice of Devadasi dedication persisted in some regions due to deep-rooted social and economic factors. Efforts to fully eradicate the practice continued after India gained independence in 1947, with subsequent legal and social measures introduced at the national level.

The Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947, remains significant in the history of social reform in India, reflecting efforts to reform religious and social practices that marginalized and exploited women. It underscores ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality and addressing traditional practices that discriminate against women in the name of religion or culture.

3.3 EQUAL REMUNERATION ACT, 1976 (EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK)

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, also known as the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, is a significant piece of legislation in India aimed at ensuring equal remuneration for men and women for the same work or work of a similar nature. The Act is part of India's efforts to eliminate

gender-based discrimination in the workplace and uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work, which is enshrined in the Indian Constitution under Article 39(d).

Key Provisions of the Act:

- 1. Equal Pay for Equal Work:** The Act mandates that men and women should receive equal pay for the same work or work of a similar nature. It ensures that there is no discrimination in remuneration between male and female employees.
- 2. Prohibition of Discrimination:** The Act prohibits discrimination against women in recruitment, training, transfer, or promotion. Employers cannot discriminate in any manner in respect to employment opportunities based on gender.
- 3. Employer's Responsibilities:** Employers are required to provide equal pay to men and women for identical work or work of a similar nature. This includes salary, allowances, benefits, and other remuneration-related entitlements.
- 4. Employment Conditions:** The Act ensures that the terms and conditions of employment, such as working hours, leave entitlements, and maternity benefits, are non-discriminatory towards women.
- 5. Enforcement and Compliance:** The Act empowers the appropriate government (central or state) to appoint authorities for the enforcement of its provisions. These authorities have the power to inquire into complaints of discrimination and take necessary actions against employers who violate the Act.
- 6. Legal Remedies:** The Act provides for legal remedies in case of violations. Employees who believe they are discriminated against in terms of remuneration or employment opportunities can file complaints with the designated authorities for resolution and appropriate action.

Significance and Impact:

- **Promotion of Gender Equality:** The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality in the workplace by ensuring that women receive fair and equal treatment in terms of pay and employment opportunities.
- **Legal Framework:** It provides a strong legal framework to address issues of gender-based pay discrimination and empowers women to seek redressal for any discriminatory practices they may face in the workplace.
- **Compliance and Monitoring:** The Act requires employers to comply with its provisions and undergo scrutiny by designated authorities, thereby promoting transparency and accountability in remuneration practices.

- **Challenges:** Despite its provisions, challenges remain in the effective implementation and enforcement of the Act, especially in informal sectors and smaller enterprises where compliance may be less stringent.

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, stands as a cornerstone in India's legal framework for promoting gender equality in the workplace. While it has contributed significantly to addressing wage disparities between men and women, continued efforts are needed to overcome challenges and ensure its effective implementation to achieve the goal of equal pay for equal work.

3.4 DIVORCE LAWS IN INDIA

In India, divorce laws are governed by various personal laws depending on an individual's religion, which include Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, and others. Each of these laws has its own provisions regarding divorce, including grounds for divorce, procedures, and rights of women.

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:

Under the Hindu Marriage Act, divorce can be obtained by either party on specific grounds. Women can seek divorce on grounds such as adultery, cruelty, desertion for a continuous period of two years, conversion to another religion, unsoundness of mind, and incurable mental disorder. The act also allows mutual consent as a ground for divorce, where both parties agree to dissolve the marriage.

Women have the right to claim maintenance and alimony under this Act. The court considers factors such as the financial status of both parties, duration of marriage, and conduct of the parties while determining the amount of maintenance.

Muslim Personal Law:

Muslim divorce laws in India are primarily governed by Sharia, and there are different forms of divorce recognized under this law, including Talaq (divorce initiated by the husband), Khula (divorce initiated by the wife), and Mubarak (mutual divorce). Women can initiate divorce through Khula by returning the mehr (dower) received from the husband.

Women in a Muslim marriage can also claim maintenance (mehr) during and after the divorce proceedings. The amount of mehr is typically agreed upon during the marriage contract and can be enforced through legal proceedings.

Christian Personal Law:

The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, governs Christian divorce laws in India. A woman can seek divorce on grounds such as adultery, cruelty, desertion for a continuous period of two years, or conversion to another religion. Mutual consent is also a ground for divorce under this Act.

Women have the right to claim maintenance and alimony during and after divorce proceedings. The court decides the amount based on the financial status of both parties, duration of marriage, and other relevant factors.

Parsi Personal Law:

Under the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936, divorce can be obtained by either party on grounds such as adultery, cruelty, desertion for a continuous period of two years, conversion to another religion, and unsoundness of mind. Mutual consent is also recognized as a ground for divorce.

Parsi women have the right to seek maintenance and alimony during and after divorce proceedings, which is determined by the court based on the financial status of both parties and other relevant factors.

Special Marriage Act, 1954:

The Special Marriage Act applies to all citizens irrespective of religion. It provides provisions for divorce on grounds such as adultery, cruelty, desertion for a continuous period of two years, conversion to another religion, and unsoundness of mind. Mutual consent is also a ground for divorce under this Act.

Women under the Special Marriage Act have the right to claim maintenance and alimony, which is determined by the court considering the financial status of both parties and other relevant factors.

Uniform Civil Code:

There have been ongoing discussions in India regarding the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) to provide a single set of secular laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption for all citizens regardless of religion. However, the implementation of UCC remains a topic of debate and has not been realized as of now.

The divorce laws in India for women are diverse and vary based on personal laws applicable to different religions. While these laws provide grounds and procedures for divorce, the process can sometimes be lengthy and complex. Women's rights to maintenance and alimony are generally recognized across all personal laws, although the specific details may vary. It's important for women seeking divorce to understand their rights under the relevant personal law and seek legal advice to navigate the process effectively.

3.5 INHERITANCE LAWS IN INDIA

In India, inheritance laws for women are governed by a combination of personal laws based on religion and the secular laws applicable to all citizens. These laws have evolved over time, influenced by societal changes, legal reforms, and constitutional principles of equality.

Hindu Succession Act, 1956:

Under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, which applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs, women have the right to inherit ancestral property and self-acquired property on an equal basis with male relatives. Key provisions include:

- **Equal Rights:** Daughters have equal rights as sons in the ancestral property. They are coparceners from birth and have a share in the ancestral property.
- **Self-Acquired Property:** Women have rights in the self-acquired property of their parents equally with their brothers.
- **Married Daughters:** Even after marriage, daughters retain their right in the parental property.

Muslim Personal Law:

Muslim inheritance laws are governed by Sharia principles and are largely uncodified in India. Key points include:

- **Dower:** Women are entitled to receive a dower (Mahr) at the time of marriage, which is her exclusive property.
- **Inheritance Shares:** Daughters generally inherit half the share of sons. However, they are guaranteed a share in the inheritance.
- **Customary Practices:** In some communities, customary practices may affect women's inheritance rights.

Christian and Parsi Laws:

- **Christian Law:** Inheritance among Christians is governed by the Indian Succession Act, 1925, which ensures equal rights for daughters and sons.
- **Parsi Law:** Parsi women have equal inheritance rights under the Parsi Personal Law, 1936.

Special Provisions:

- **Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes:** Special laws apply to these communities, which may have provisions ensuring inheritance rights for women.
- **Customary Laws:** In some regions, customary laws and practices may prevail, affecting women's inheritance rights differently.

Legal Reforms and Challenges:

- **Reforms:** Legal reforms have aimed to strengthen women's inheritance rights, including amendments to existing laws to ensure gender equality.

- **Challenges:** Despite legal reforms, societal attitudes and practices often hinder the effective enforcement of women's inheritance rights. Awareness and implementation remain key challenges.

Inheritance laws for women in India are shaped by a complex interplay of personal laws based on religion, secular laws, and customary practices. While significant strides have been made towards gender equality in inheritance rights, disparities persist, necessitating ongoing legal reforms, awareness campaigns, and societal changes to ensure women's full and equal participation in inheritance matters.

3.6 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Explain the significance of Article 14 of the Indian Constitution in the context of gender equality.
2. How does Article 15(3) of the Indian Constitution empower the state to make special provisions for women?
3. Discuss the role of Article 21 in protecting the rights of women against crimes and discrimination.
4. Explain the key provisions of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
5. Discuss the main features of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
6. What are the major amendments brought about by the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 in relation to crimes against women?
7. Discuss the landmark judgment of Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan and its impact on combating sexual harassment at the workplace.
8. Explain the importance of the case Nirbhaya (2012 Delhi gang rape case) in shaping laws against sexual violence.
9. How do government schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao aim to combat discrimination against women?
10. Analyze the impact of reservation for women in local governance on combating discrimination and crimes against women.
11. What role do non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play in supporting women victims of crime and discrimination?
12. Critically analyze the effectiveness of the current legal framework in India in preventing crimes against women.
13. Discuss the role of education and awareness programs in combating gender-based discrimination and violence.
14. Evaluate the impact of social stigma and cultural norms on the enforcement of laws protecting women's rights.

3.7 REFERENCES

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FEMINIST CRITICS ON WOMAN'S ISSUES - I

Unit Structure :

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Views of Western Feminist Critic
- 4.2 Simon De Beauvoir
- 4.3 Views of Western Feminist Critic Simon de Beauvoir on Woman's Issues
- 4.4 Elaine Showalter
- 4.5 Views of Western Feminist Critic Elaine Showalter on Woman's Issues
- 4.6 Virginia Woolf
- 4.7 Views of Western Feminist Critic Virginia Woolf on Woman's Issues
- 4.8 Conclusion

4.0 OBJECTIVE

To objective of this unit is to familiarize the reader with the appropriate understanding of notions such as sex and gender, female and feminine, women oriented and feminist ideas, in the setup of patriarchy. To enable an understanding of the construction of gender with biological and psychological contexts. To challenge existing power dynamics, promote gender equality, and create a more just and inclusive society for people of all genders.

4.1 VIEWS OF WESTERN FEMINIST CRITIC

Introduction - Feminist critics offer insightful perspectives on a wide array of issues that affect women across the globe. Their analyses delve deep into the complexities of gender dynamics, societal structures, and cultural norms, aiming to challenge oppression and advocate for gender equality. From pioneering figures like Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf to contemporary voices such as Meghna Pant and Kamala Bhasin, feminist critics have shaped discourse on women's issues and paved the way for transformative change.

At the heart of feminist criticism lies a commitment to dismantling patriarchal systems that perpetuate inequality and limit women's

opportunities and freedoms. Through interdisciplinary lenses and intersectional approaches, feminist critics examine the multifaceted nature of women's experiences, considering factors such as race, class, sexuality, and nationality. They recognize that women's struggles cannot be understood in isolation but are interconnected with broader social, economic, and political contexts.

Feminist critics interrogate representations of women in literature, media, and popular culture, challenging stereotypes and advocating for more diverse and empowering portrayals. They also scrutinize institutional practices and policies that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and violence, advocating for legislative reforms and systemic changes to promote women's rights and autonomy. Moreover, feminist critics highlight the importance of amplifying marginalized voices and centering the experiences of women from diverse backgrounds. They emphasize the significance of solidarity and coalition-building in the fight for gender justice, recognizing that true liberation requires collective action and inclusivity.

In this unit, we will explore the views and perspectives of feminist critics such as Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Meghna Pant, Kamala Bhasin, and others, shedding light on their contributions to understanding and addressing the complexities of women's issues in contemporary society. Through their intellectual attainment, activism, and advocacy, feminist critics continue to challenge oppressive norms, inspire critical dialogue, and envision a more equitable and fair world for women everywhere.

4.2 SIMON DE BEAUVOIR

Simone de Beauvoir was a French existentialist philosopher, writer, and feminist theorist, born on January 9, 1908, in Paris, France, and passed away on April 14, 1986. She played a crucial role in shaping modern feminist discourse through her groundbreaking work, *"The Second Sex,"* published in 1949. Beauvoir was deeply influenced by existentialist philosophy, particularly the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre, whom she had a lifelong personal and intellectual partnership with. She applied existentialist principles to her analysis of gender and society, emphasizing individual freedom, responsibility, and the construction of identity through lived experience.

Beauvoir's most famous work, *"The Second Sex,"* is a comprehensive examination of the status of women throughout history and in contemporary society. In it, she argues that women have been historically oppressed by men and subjected to a patriarchal system that defines them as the *"Other."* The book is widely regarded as a foundational text of modern feminist theory. Beauvoir introduced the concept of *"Otherness"* to describe the way women are positioned as the subordinate or secondary sex in relation to men. She explored how this societal construction of gender roles limits women's freedom and perpetuates their marginalization.

Beauvoir's writings are rich with memorable quotes that encapsulate her feminist philosophy. One of her most famous quotes is, "*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,*" which underscores her belief that gender identity is not biologically predetermined but socially constructed. Throughout her life, Beauvoir was actively involved in political and social causes, including the women's liberation movement, anti-colonial struggles, and various left-wing movements. She used her platform as a writer and intellectual to advocate for gender equality and social justice.

While Beauvoir's work has had a profound impact on feminist thought, it has also faced criticism, particularly regarding essentialist assumptions about gender and the lack of intersectional analysis. Nevertheless, her contributions to feminist theory and existentialist philosophy continue to be studied and debated by scholars and activists around the world. Overall, Simone de Beauvoir's intellectual legacy lies in her pioneering exploration of women's oppression and her advocacy for women's autonomy and equality. She remains a towering figure in feminist history, whose insights continue to shape contemporary discussions about gender, identity, and liberation.

4.3 VIEWS OF WESTERN FEMINIST CRITIC SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR ON WOMAN'S ISSUES

Simone de Beauvoir, a French existentialist philosopher, writer, and feminist thinker, made significant contributions to Western feminist discourse through her seminal work, "*The Second Sex.*" Published in 1949, this groundbreaking text explores a wide range of women's issues from a philosophical and sociological perspective. Beauvoir's views on women's issues reflect her existentialist philosophy and her deep engagement with questions of freedom, identity, and social justice. Here are some key areas in which Beauvoir's views on women's issues are particularly noteworthy:

- **The Social Construction of Gender:** Central to Beauvoir's analysis is the idea that gender is not biologically determined but socially constructed. She argues that throughout history, women have been defined and oppressed by the patriarchal structures of society, which have relegated them to the status of the "*Other*" in relation to men. Beauvoir challenges essentialist notions of femininity, asserting that women's roles and identities are shaped by social and cultural factors rather than inherent biological traits.
- **Women's Oppression and Liberation:** Beauvoir meticulously examines the ways in which women have been oppressed and marginalized in various spheres of life, including politics, economics, and the family. She critiques the relegation of women to subordinate roles and argues for the importance of women's autonomy and agency. Beauvoir contends that women must actively assert their freedom and challenge the constraints of patriarchy in order to achieve true liberation.

- **Sexuality and Reproduction:** Beauvoir explores the complex relationship between women's sexuality and their social status. She criticizes the objectification of women's bodies and the societal double standards that govern sexual behaviour. Beauvoir also interrogates the institution of marriage and traditional gender roles within the family, arguing that women's reproductive functions have been used to justify their subordination and confinement to domestic roles.
- **Education and Work:** Beauvoir highlights the importance of education and economic independence in empowering women. She advocates for equal access to education and employment opportunities, arguing that women's economic dependence on men perpetuates their subordinate status. Beauvoir calls for the dismantling of barriers to women's participation in the workforce and the creation of social structures that enable women to pursue their own goals and aspirations.
- **The Myth of Womanhood:** De Beauvoir critiqued the notion of essential femininity, arguing that it is a myth constructed by patriarchal societies to maintain male dominance. She emphasized the diversity of women's experiences and rejected the idea of a universal female essence.
- **Legacy:** Simone de Beauvoir's views on women's issues continue to be influential in Western feminist discourse. Her insistence on the social and historical construction of gender, her advocacy for women's autonomy and liberation, and her critique of patriarchal institutions have inspired generations of feminist thinkers and activists. While some aspects of Beauvoir's work have been challenged and revised in light of contemporary feminist scholarship, her contributions to feminist theory remain foundational to understanding the complexities of women's lives and struggles.

To conclude, Simone de Beauvoir's views on women's issues were revolutionary in their critique of patriarchy, gender essentialism, and the call for women's liberation and autonomy. Her contributions continue to shape feminist discourse and activism to this day.

4.4 ELAINE SHOWALTER

Elaine Showalter is a prominent American literary critic, feminist scholar, and writer, known for her influential contributions to the fields of feminist literary theory, cultural studies, and the study of literature by women. Elaine Showalter was born on January 21, 1941, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Bryn Mawr College and her Ph.D. from the University of California, Davis. Showalter has had a distinguished career as a literary critic and academic. She has held teaching positions at various prestigious institutions, including Rutgers University and Princeton University. Throughout her career, she

has published numerous influential books and essays on feminist theory, literary criticism, and cultural studies.

Showalter is best known for her pioneering work in feminist literary criticism. In her groundbreaking book *"A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing"* (1977), she explored the ways in which women writers have been marginalized and excluded from the literary canon. Showalter argued for the importance of recognizing and studying literature by women as a distinct and valuable literary tradition. Another significant contribution of Showalter's is her concept of the female bildungsroman, which she introduced in her essay *"Towards a Feminist Poetics"* (1979). Showalter examined the development of female identity in women's coming-of-age narratives, challenging traditional notions of the bildungsroman as a genre primarily focused on male protagonists.

Showalter's work also contributed to the development of gynocriticism, a feminist approach to literary analysis that focuses on the study of women's writing and women's experiences. Through gynocriticism, Showalter aimed to highlight the diversity and richness of women's literary voices and narratives. In addition to her contributions to feminist literary theory, Showalter has written extensively on a wide range of topics, including hysteria, illness narratives, and the history of psychiatry. Her later work reflects a broader engagement with cultural studies and interdisciplinary approaches to literature and society. Elaine Showalter's scholarship has had a lasting impact on the fields of feminist theory, literary criticism, and women's studies. Her pioneering research and advocacy for the inclusion of women writers in the literary canon have helped reshape the way literature is studied and understood. Showalter's work continues to inspire scholars and students interested in gender, literature, and culture.

4.5 VIEWS OF WESTERN FEMINIST CRITIC ELAINE SHOWALTER ON WOMAN'S ISSUES

Elaine Showalter, a prominent American literary critic and feminist scholar, has made significant contributions to the understanding of women's issues, particularly within the context of literature, culture, and society. Throughout her career, Showalter has explored a wide range of topics related to women's experiences, identities, and struggles, shedding light on the complexities of gender dynamics and advocating for women's rights and empowerment. Here are some of the significant areas in which Elaine Showalter's views on women's issues are particularly notable:

- **Representation and Marginalization:** One of Elaine Showalter's central concerns is the representation of women in literature and culture. She has drawn attention to the ways in which women have been historically marginalized, stereotyped, and silenced within literary and artistic traditions. Showalter's work emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing women's voices and perspectives, both within the canon of literature and in broader cultural discourses.

- **Feminist Literary Criticism:** Showalter has been a leading figure in the development of feminist literary criticism, a field of study that examines how gender shapes literary texts and their interpretation. She has explored themes such as the portrayal of female characters, the construction of gender roles, and the depiction of women's experiences in literature. Showalter's feminist approach to literary analysis has helped illuminate the ways in which literature both reflects and shapes cultural attitudes towards women.
- **Female Bildungsroman:** Showalter is known for her concept of the female bildungsroman, which she introduced in her influential essay "*Towards a Feminist Poetics*" (1979). Drawing on the German literary tradition of the bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, Showalter argued that women's narratives of self-discovery and personal growth differ from those of men due to the constraints of patriarchy. She explored how women's bildungsromans often focus on themes of confinement, rebellion, and the search for identity within a male-dominated society.
- **The Politics of Women's Writing:** Showalter has examined the socio-political context in which women writers produce their work, considering the impact of gender inequality, sexism, and other forms of discrimination on women's creative expression. She has highlighted the ways in which women writers have historically been excluded from literary institutions, publishing opportunities, and critical recognition, and has advocated for greater visibility and support for women's literary achievements.
- **Intersectionality and Diversity:** While Showalter's early work focused primarily on white, middle-class women writers, she has since embraced a more intersectional approach to feminism, acknowledging the diverse experiences and perspectives of women from different backgrounds. Showalter has emphasized the importance of intersectionality in feminist analysis, recognizing the interconnectedness of gender with other social categories such as race, class, sexuality, and nationality.
- **Activism and Advocacy:** In addition to her scholarly contributions, Showalter has been actively involved in feminist activism and advocacy. She has spoken out on issues such as reproductive rights, gender-based violence, and workplace discrimination, using her platform as a public intellectual to raise awareness and promote social change.

Elaine Showalter's views on women's issues reflect a lifelong commitment to challenging gender inequality, amplifying women's voices, and promoting feminist values in academia and beyond. Through her scholarship, activism, and advocacy, Showalter has helped shape

contemporary understandings of feminism, literature, and culture, leaving a lasting impact on the field of women's studies and beyond.

Feminist Critics on
Woman's Issues - I

4.6 VIRGINIA WOOLF

Virginia Woolf, born on January 25, 1882, in London, England, and passing away on March 28, 1941, was a pioneering British writer, modernist thinker, and feminist icon. Her contributions to literature, feminism, and the exploration of human consciousness have left an indelible mark on Western culture. Virginia Woolf is known for her innovative narrative techniques and her groundbreaking contributions to modernist literature. Her novels, including *"Mrs. Dalloway"* (1925), *"To the Lighthouse"* (1927), and *"Orlando"* (1928), pushed the boundaries of narrative form and structure, challenging conventional notions of plot, character, and time.

Woolf's writing is deeply infused with feminist themes and perspectives. In her seminal essay *"A Room of One's Own"* (1929), Woolf argues for women's economic independence and creative freedom as essential prerequisites for achieving equality. She famously asserts that *"a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,"* highlighting the material and social barriers that have historically constrained women's intellectual and artistic endeavours. Woolf is known for her use of the stream-of-consciousness technique, which allows readers to access the inner thoughts and perceptions of her characters in real-time. This literary device enables Woolf to explore the complexities of human consciousness and subjectivity, blurring the boundaries between past and present, memory and experience.

Woolf's work challenges traditional gender roles and binaries, inviting readers to reconsider the fluidity and complexity of gender identity and sexuality. In *"Orlando,"* for example, Woolf traces the journey of a protagonist who changes gender over the course of centuries, offering a playful and provocative exploration of gender as a social construct. Throughout her life, Woolf struggled with mental health issues, including depression and bipolar disorder. Her experiences with mental illness deeply influenced her writing, shaping her exploration of themes such as alienation, despair, and the fragility of human consciousness. Woolf's candid and compassionate depictions of mental illness continue to resonate with readers today.

Virginia Woolf's legacy extends far beyond the realm of literature. Her feminist insights, experimental literary techniques, and advocacy for social and artistic freedom have inspired generations of writers, feminists, and intellectuals. Woolf's work continues to be celebrated for its beauty, complexity, and enduring relevance to contemporary discussions of gender, identity, and creativity. In short, Virginia Woolf was a visionary writer whose work transcended literary conventions and challenged prevailing attitudes towards gender, sexuality, and mental health. Her legacy as a feminist icon and modernist innovator endures, inspiring

readers to rethink the boundaries of literature and the possibilities of human experience.

4.7 VIEWS OF WESTERN FEMINIST CRITIC VIRGINIA WOOLF ON WOMAN'S ISSUES

Virginia Woolf, a prominent figure in Western feminism and modernist literature, brought a profound and nuanced perspective to women's issues through her writings, essays, and public speeches. While Woolf's views evolved over time and were shaped by her own experiences as a woman navigating the patriarchal structures of early 20th-century Britain, several key themes emerge in her work that shed light on her feminist beliefs:

- **Intellectual Equality:** Central to Woolf's feminist worldview was the belief in the intellectual equality of women. In her seminal essay *"A Room of One's Own"* (1929), Woolf argues that women have historically been excluded from education, literature, and the public sphere due to systemic barriers such as poverty, lack of access to resources, and social conventions. She famously asserts that for women to produce great literature, they need both financial independence and a physical space of their own where they can pursue their creative endeavours free from patriarchal constraints.
- **Social and Economic Liberation:** Woolf emphasized the importance of women's economic independence as a means of achieving social and creative freedom. She critiqued the limited opportunities available to women in the workforce and advocated for greater access to education, employment, and financial resources. Woolf recognized that economic empowerment was essential for women to assert their autonomy and challenge traditional gender roles.
- **Critique of Patriarchy:** Woolf's feminist critique extends to the patriarchal structures that govern society and constrain women's lives. She exposes the ways in which patriarchy perpetuates inequality, limits women's opportunities for self-expression and self-determination, and reinforces harmful stereotypes about femininity. Woolf challenges the notion of women as the *"Other"* in relation to men, advocating instead for a vision of gender equality based on mutual respect and recognition of women's inherent worth.
- **Reimagining Gender:** Woolf's writings offer a radical reimagining of gender identity and sexuality. In works such as *"Orlando"* (1928), Woolf explores the fluidity and malleability of gender roles, suggesting that gender is not fixed but can change over time and across cultures. She celebrates the liberating potential of androgyny and the blurring of gender boundaries, challenging conventional binaries and hierarchies.
- **Personal Reflections:** Woolf's own struggles with mental illness and experiences as a woman navigating the constraints of Victorian and

Edwardian society deeply informed her feminist perspective. Her writings reflect a keen sensitivity to the psychological effects of gendered oppression, as well as a commitment to breaking free from the limitations imposed by societal expectations.

In short, Virginia Woolf's views on women's issues were characterized by a commitment to equality, liberation, and the recognition of women's inherent humanity. Her feminist writings continue to inspire contemporary discussions of gender, power, and social change, offering valuable insights into the complexities of women's lives and the ongoing struggle for gender justice.

4.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the views of Western feminist critics Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, and Virginia Woolf collectively contribute to a rich and multifaceted understanding of women's issues within the context of literature, culture, and society. Each of these influential figures offers unique insights and perspectives that have shaped feminist discourse and continue to inform contemporary discussions of gender, equality, and liberation.

Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist philosophy and groundbreaking analysis in *"The Second Sex"* laid the groundwork for much of modern feminist theory. Beauvoir's emphasis on the social construction of gender, women's autonomy, and the intersectionality of oppression remains foundational to understanding women's experiences and struggles.

Elaine Showalter's contributions to feminist literary criticism have been instrumental in highlighting the importance of women's voices within the literary canon. Her advocacy for the recognition of women's creative achievements and her exploration of themes such as representation, gender identity, and intersectionality have expanded the scope of feminist inquiry and deepened our understanding of women's cultural contributions.

Virginia Woolf's feminist vision, expressed through her innovative literature and incisive essays, challenged traditional notions of gender and power. Woolf's emphasis on women's intellectual equality, economic independence, and the fluidity of gender identity continues to inspire feminist thought and activism, offering a radical reimagining of women's roles and possibilities.

Together, the views of Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, and Virginia Woolf underscore the complexities of women's experiences and the ongoing struggle for gender equality. Their insights into the social, economic, and psychological dimensions of women's lives provide a framework for understanding and addressing the myriad forms of oppression and discrimination that women face. As we continue to grapple with the challenges of gender inequality in the 21st century, the perspectives of these pioneering feminist critics serve as guiding lights,

reminding us of the importance of solidarity, activism, and the relentless pursuit of justice for all women.



FEMINIST CRITICS ON WOMEN'S ISSUES - II

Unit Structure :

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Views of Indian Feminist Criticon Woman's Issues

5.1.1 Gayatri Spivak

5.1.2 Views of Indian Feminist Critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on Woman's issues

5.1.3 Kamala Bhasin

5.1.4 Views of Indian Feminist Critic Kamala Bhasin on Woman's Issues

5.1.5 Meghana Pant

5.1.6 Views of Indian Feminist Critic Meghna Pant on Woman's Issues

5.1.7 Conclusion

5.9 Sum up

5.10 Suggested Questions

5.11 References

5.0 OBJECTIVE

To objective of this unit is to familiarize the reader with the appropriate understanding of notions such as sex and gender, female and feminine, women oriented and feminist ideas, in the setup of patriarchy. To enable an understanding of the construction of gender with biological and psychological contexts. To challenge existing power dynamics, promote gender equality, and create a more just and inclusive society for people of all genders.

5.1 VIEWS OF INDIAN FEMINIST CRITICON WOMAN'S ISSUES

5.1.1. Gayatri Spivak

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, born on February 24, 1942, in Calcutta, India, is a leading postcolonial theorist, literary critic, and feminist scholar. She is best known for her groundbreaking work in postcolonial studies, deconstruction, and critical theory, which has had a profound impact on various disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. Spivak's upbringing in India and her experiences as a woman of colour

deeply influenced her intellectual trajectory. She earned her Bachelor's degree from the University of Calcutta before pursuing graduate studies in English literature at Cornell University, where she completed her Ph.D. under the supervision of the noted literary critic Paul de Man.

Spivak is perhaps best known for her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), in which she critically engages with the question of representation and agency within postcolonial contexts. Through close readings of texts by figures such as Frantz Fanon and Mahasweta Devi, Spivak interrogates the complexities of power dynamics, language, and cultural identity in the aftermath of colonialism. Building on the insights of Jacques Derrida and other deconstructionist thinkers, Spivak has applied deconstructive methods to literary texts, philosophical discourse, and political theory. She is known for her rigorous critique of Western philosophical traditions and her efforts to decenter Eurocentric perspectives in academic contributions.

Spivak's work is deeply informed by feminist theory, particularly her engagement with questions of gender, sexuality, and women's rights within global contexts. She has explored the intersecting oppressions faced by women of colour and marginalized communities, challenging mainstream feminist discourses to be more inclusive and attentive to the complexities of lived experience. Throughout her career, Spivak has been actively engaged in political and social activism, advocating for human rights, social justice, and educational equity. She has been a vocal critic of neoliberalism, imperialism, and other forms of systemic injustice, using her platform as an academic to amplify the voices of marginalized communities and promote solidarity across difference.

Gayatri Spivak's intellectual contributions have had a lasting impact on a wide range of fields, including literary studies, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and feminist theory. Her work continues to be widely studied and debated by scholars around the world, inspiring new generations of thinkers to critically engage with issues of power, representation, and social transformation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak occupies a central position within contemporary intellectual discourse, challenging established paradigms and opening up new avenues for critical inquiry. Her commitment to social justice, her interdisciplinary approach to knowledge production, and her insistence on centering the perspectives of the marginalized have made her a transformative figure within academia and beyond.

5.1.2. Views of Indian Feminist Critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on Woman's Issues

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an influential postcolonial theorist, literary critic, and feminist scholar, has made significant contributions to feminist thought, particularly through her analysis of gender, race, and power within the context of colonial and postcolonial societies. Spivak's work challenges conventional understandings of feminism and highlights the

interconnectedness of various forms of oppression. Here are some key aspects of Spivak's views on women's issues:

- **Subaltern Feminism:** Spivak is perhaps best known for her concept of the "subaltern," which refers to marginalized and disenfranchised groups within society, particularly in the context of postcolonial nations. Spivak's approach to feminism emphasizes the importance of centering the voices and experiences of subaltern women, who are often excluded from mainstream feminist discourse. She argues that the struggles of subaltern women are shaped by intersecting factors such as class, caste, ethnicity, and colonialism.
- **Critique of Western Feminism:** Spivak's work offers a critique of Western feminism, particularly its tendency to universalize the experiences and priorities of white, middle-class women. She argues that mainstream feminist movements often overlook the concerns of women from non-Western, marginalized, and postcolonial contexts. Spivak calls for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to feminism that takes into account the complexities of women's lives across diverse social, cultural, and geopolitical contexts.
- **Gender and Globalization:** Spivak's analysis extends to the impact of globalization on women's lives, particularly in the Global South. She explores how economic globalization, neoliberal policies, and transnational capitalism disproportionately affect women, exacerbating inequalities and vulnerabilities. Spivak highlights the ways in which global economic forces intersect with local power dynamics to shape women's access to resources, labour conditions, and political agency.
- **Postcolonial Critique:** As a postcolonial theorist, Spivak examines the legacy of colonialism and imperialism on gender relations and women's experiences. She interrogates the ways in which colonial discourses and practices have constructed and perpetuated gendered stereotypes, racial hierarchies, and systems of domination. Spivak's work emphasizes the importance of decolonizing feminist theory and praxis, centering the voices and agency of formerly colonized peoples.
- **Literary and Cultural Analysis:** Spivak's interdisciplinary approach to feminism draws on literary theory, cultural studies, and poststructuralist philosophy. She examines literary texts, film, and other cultural artifacts as sites where gendered and colonial power dynamics are negotiated and contested. Spivak's close readings of literary works reveal the complex ways in which gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect in shaping individual subjectivities and social structures.

To conclude, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's views on women's issues offer a critical and comprehensive perspective that challenges mainstream feminist thought and highlights the complexities of gendered oppression within the context of colonialism, globalization, and postcoloniality. Her

work underscores the importance of centering the experiences of marginalized and subaltern women in feminist discourse and advocating for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to feminism.

5.1.3 Kamala Bhasin

Kamala Bhasin is an esteemed Indian feminist, social activist, and prolific writer known for her tireless advocacy for gender equality, women's rights, and social justice. Her work has been instrumental in raising awareness about women's issues in India and beyond. Bhasin has been a vocal advocate for gender equality throughout her career. She has worked extensively on issues such as gender-based violence, women's health, education, and economic empowerment. Through her activism, Bhasin has sought to challenge patriarchal norms and promote the rights and dignity of women and girls.

Bhasin has emphasized the importance of education as a tool for women's empowerment. She has been involved in various initiatives aimed at improving access to education for girls, especially in marginalized communities. She believes that education is key to unlocking women's potential and enabling them to participate fully in society. Bhasin has developed innovative approaches to feminist pedagogy, seeking to integrate feminist principles into educational curricula and teaching practices. She has authored numerous educational materials and conducted workshops and training sessions on gender-sensitive education. Bhasin's work in this area has had a significant impact on educators and students across India.

Bhasin has been a staunch critic of gender stereotypes and norms that perpetuate inequality and discrimination. Through her writing and activism, she has called attention to the detrimental impacts of gender-based violence, child marriage, dowry practices, and other forms of gender-based oppression. She advocates for cultural shifts that promote gender equity and respect for diversity. Bhasin recognizes the intersecting nature of oppression and the importance of addressing multiple forms of discrimination, including those based on caste, class, religion, and sexuality. She has been a strong proponent of intersectional feminism, which seeks to center the experiences of marginalized women and address the complex interplay of power dynamics that shape their lives.

Bhasin's activism extends beyond India, as she has been actively involved in global efforts to advance gender equality and women's rights. She has participated in international conferences, seminars, and campaigns aimed at addressing global challenges such as gender-based violence, trafficking, and economic inequality. Kamala Bhasin's contributions to the feminist movement in India and beyond have been immense. Her advocacy, writing, and activism have inspired countless individuals and organizations to join the fight for gender justice. Bhasin's legacy continues to resonate with feminists and social justice activists around the world, as her work remains relevant in the ongoing struggle for a more equitable and inclusive society.

5.1.4 Views of Indian Feminist Critic Kamala Bhasin on Woman's Issues

Kamala Bhasin, a prominent Indian feminist critic, has dedicated her life to advocating for gender equality and women's rights in India. Through her writings, speeches, workshops, and activism, Bhasin has addressed a wide range of women's issues, offering insightful perspectives and advocating for systemic change. Here are some important views of Kamala Bhasin on women's issues:

- **Patriarchy and Gender Discrimination:** Kamala Bhasin identifies patriarchy as a root cause of gender inequality and discrimination against women in Indian society. She highlights how patriarchal norms and structures perpetuate gender-based oppression, limiting women's opportunities and autonomy. Bhasin emphasizes the need to challenge patriarchal attitudes and practices in order to achieve gender justice.
- **Violence Against Women:** Bhasin is a vocal critic of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, dowry-related violence, and female infanticide. She works to raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence and advocates for legal reforms, support services, and cultural shifts to address this pervasive issue.
- **Education and Empowerment:** Bhasin believes that education is key to empowering women and girls. She advocates for equal access to quality education for all, challenging barriers such as gender stereotypes, early marriage, and economic constraints that prevent girls from attending school. Bhasin also promotes gender-sensitive education that challenges traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.
- **Reproductive Rights and Health:** Bhasin is a strong proponent of women's reproductive rights and access to reproductive healthcare. She advocates for comprehensive sexuality education, family planning services, and safe abortion care, while also addressing issues such as maternal health, menstrual hygiene, and reproductive justice.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Bhasin recognizes the importance of economic empowerment in advancing women's rights. She advocates for equal pay, decent working conditions, and opportunities for women to participate in the formal economy. Bhasin also supports initiatives such as microfinance and entrepreneurship training to help women achieve financial independence.
- **Political Participation:** Bhasin believes in the importance of women's political participation and leadership. She advocates for women's representation in decision-making bodies at all levels of government and supports efforts to promote gender-sensitive policies and legislation.

- **Solidarity and Collective Action:** Bhasin emphasizes the power of solidarity and collective action in the struggle for gender equality. She encourages women to come together across differences to challenge oppressive systems and build a more inclusive and equitable society.

To conclude, Kamala Bhasin's views on women's issues reflect a deep commitment to challenging gender inequality, empowering women, and promoting social justice in India. Her advocacy, intellectual, and activism have had a significant impact on the feminist movement in India and beyond, inspiring generations of women to join the fight for gender equality and women's rights.

5.1.5 Meghana Pant

Meghna Pant is a notable Indian author, journalist, and speaker whose work focuses on themes of gender, social justice, and contemporary Indian society. With a unique blend of storytelling prowess and social commentary, Pant has emerged as a prominent voice in the realm of Indian literature and feminist discourse. Meghna Pant has penned several acclaimed works of fiction, including novels, short stories, and essays, which delve into various aspects of women's experiences in India. Her writing is characterized by its insightful exploration of complex social issues, including gender inequality, patriarchy, and violence against women. Through her storytelling, Pant offers readers a nuanced understanding of the challenges and triumphs faced by women in Indian society.

Pant's work often revolves around the lives of women from diverse backgrounds, highlighting their resilience, struggles, and aspirations. She sheds light on the multifaceted identities of Indian women, challenging stereotypes and offering authentic portrayals of female characters who defy societal expectations. Pant's stories delve into the intricacies of relationships, family dynamics, and societal pressures, providing readers with a window into the lived experiences of Indian women.

As a feminist writer, Meghna Pant brings a keen feminist perspective to her writing, interrogating power dynamics and advocating for gender equality. Her work is infused with themes of agency, autonomy, and empowerment, as she champions the rights of women to lead fulfilling lives on their own terms. Pant's narratives often challenge traditional gender roles and norms, encouraging readers to question societal expectations and imagine alternative paths to liberation. Beyond her literary endeavours, Meghna Pant is also known for her incisive social commentary on issues ranging from gender-based violence to workplace discrimination. Through her journalism and public speaking engagements, Pant engages in critical conversations about gender inequality and advocates for systemic change. She amplifies the voices of marginalized communities and calls attention to the structural barriers that hinder progress towards gender justice.

Through her work, Meghna Pant inspires and empowers women to assert their voices and claim their place in society. She encourages women to

embrace their authenticity, pursue their passions, and challenge the status quo. Pant's writing serves as a source of inspiration for readers seeking to navigate the complexities of womanhood in a rapidly changing world. In short, Meghna Pant is a versatile and influential figure in Indian literature and feminist discourse. Through her evocative storytelling, feminist perspective, and commitment to social justice, Pant has made a lasting impact on readers and communities alike, inspiring conversations and driving progress towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

5.1.6 Views of Indian Feminist Critic Meghna Pant on Woman's Issues

Meghna Pant is an Indian writer, journalist, and speaker. She has received several awards for her work in literature, addressing gender issues, and journalism. In 2012, she won the Muse India National Literary Awards Young Writer Award for her first novel, "One-and-a-Half Wife." Her book of short stories, "Happy Birthday and Other Stories," was considered for the Frank O'Connor International Award. Her first novel, "One & a Half Wife," won the national Muse India Young Writer Award in 2014 and was a finalist for the Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award. Pant's first collection of short stories, "Happy Birthday," was nominated for the Frank O'Connor International Award in 2014. Her second collection of short stories, "The Trouble With Women," was published in 2016.

In 2015, she began curating a monthly panel discussion in Mumbai called "Feminist Rani", featuring interviews with a wide range of Indian feminists. After three years of these discussions, she published a book called "Feminist Rani" in 2018. The book contained interviews from the panel discussions and was co-authored with Shaili Chopra. In 2019, she wrote another book titled "How To Get Published in India," which was based on interviews with people in the publishing industry and authors.

Pant has written about many important issues such as consent, rape, domestic violence, miscarriage, surrogacy, and body-shaming for different publications like The Hindustan Times and The Huffington Post. She was also the Features Editor at SheThePeople.TV. In 2018, she received the Laadli Media Award for her writing on gender equality.

As a survivor of domestic violence herself, Pant has spoken on various platforms, including TEDx, about her personal experience and encouraged women to speak out against domestic violence. She has also spoken at literary festivals and conferences such as the Jaipur Literature Festival, Tata Literature Live!, Kala Ghoda Literature Festival, Pune International Literary Festival, Young Makers Conclave, #RiseWithTwitter, and The UN Feminist Conference. In 2018, Pant moderated panel discussions at the #MeToo Conversations event hosted by Firstpost.

Meghna Pant, as an Indian feminist critic, addresses a range of women's issues through her writing, speaking engagements, and activism. Her views can be summarized as follows:

- **Gender-Based Violence:** Pant advocates strongly against gender-based violence, drawing from her own experience as a survivor of domestic violence. She emphasizes the importance of speaking out against abuse and supports initiatives aimed at raising awareness and providing support for victims.
- **Consent and Rape Culture:** Pant addresses issues related to consent and rape culture, highlighting the need for clear understanding and respect for consent in all interactions. She works to challenge societal attitudes that contribute to rape culture and supports efforts to educate and empower individuals to recognize and combat it.
- **Domestic Violence:** Pant is vocal about the prevalence of domestic violence and the need for societal and legal measures to address it effectively. She encourages survivors to seek help and advocates for policies that provide protection and support for victims.
- **Reproductive Rights:** Pant engages with topics such as miscarriage and surrogacy, advocating for women's reproductive rights and bodily autonomy. She supports initiatives aimed at destigmatizing reproductive health issues and ensuring access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare.
- **Body Positivity and Self-Esteem:** Pant addresses issues of body-shaming and promotes body positivity and self-esteem among women. She challenges societal beauty standards and encourages individuals to embrace diverse body types and celebrate their uniqueness.
- **Gender Equality in Media:** As a journalist and writer, Pant actively works towards gender equality in media representation and coverage. She advocates for diverse voices and perspectives to be included in media narratives and calls out sexism and bias in reporting.

Meghna Pant's views on women's issues reflect a commitment to challenging gender inequality, promoting empowerment, and amplifying the voices of women in India and beyond. Through her writing, speaking engagements, and activism, she continues to contribute to feminist discourse and advocacy efforts.

5.1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the views of Indian feminist critics Gayatri Spivak, Kamala Bhasin, and Meghna Pant collectively offer a rich and diverse tapestry of perspectives on women's issues in India and beyond. While each of these influential figures approaches feminism from distinct angles and methodologies, their contributions share a common commitment to challenging gender inequality, promoting women's rights, and advocating for social justice.

Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial feminist theory offers a critical lens through which to examine the intersections of gender, race, class, and colonialism.

Her work emphasizes the importance of deconstructing power structures and amplifying the voices of marginalized women in the Global South.

Kamala Bhasin's grassroots activism and advocacy efforts have played a pivotal role in raising awareness about gender-based violence, economic inequality, and women's empowerment in India. Her work underscores the importance of education, economic autonomy, and intersectional solidarity in the fight for gender justice.

Meghna Pant, through her literary works and journalism, highlights the lived experiences of women in India, shedding light on issues such as patriarchy, gender-based violence, and women's agency. Her storytelling prowess and social commentary contribute to ongoing conversations about gender equality and social change.

Collectively, the views of Spivak, Bhasin, and Pant underscore the complexity and urgency of addressing women's issues in India and the broader global context. Their insights challenge dominant narratives, inspire critical reflection, and advocate for transformative action towards a more equitable and inclusive society. As feminist critics, activists, and writers, they continue to shape the discourse on women's rights and contribute to the ongoing struggle for gender justice worldwide.

5.2 SUM UP

Feminist critics play a crucial role in advocating for gender equality and addressing the myriad of issues that affect women. Through their analyses, activism, and advocacy, feminist critics strive to dismantle patriarchal structures, challenge stereotypes, and promote women's agency and autonomy. Their efforts encompass a broad range of objectives, including promoting intersectional perspectives, influencing policy changes, raising awareness, and supporting women's empowerment. Ultimately, the goal of feminist critics on women's issues is to create a more just, inclusive, and equitable society where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive and live free from discrimination and oppression.

5.3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. What strategies can be employed to challenge patriarchal structures and promote gender equality in diverse cultural contexts?
2. What are the existential implications of women's status as the "other" in patriarchal societies?
3. How can women overcome societal expectations and achieve authentic selfhood?
4. How can feminism be more inclusive of marginalized voices, particularly those of women of colour in the Global South?
5. How can we challenge stereotypical portrayals of women in the media?

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EXPOSITION OF FEMININE SENSIBILITY IN LITERARY STUDIES – I

Unit Structure :

- 6.0 Objective
- 6.1 Introduction to the Poet- Maya Angelou
- 6.2 (A)Poem- “Our Grandmothers”
 - 6.2.1 Summary
 - 6.2.2 Critical Analysis
- 6.3 (B)Poem- “Seven Women’s Blessed Assurance”
 - 6.3.1 Summary
 - 6.3.2 Critical Analysis
- 6.4 (C) Poem- “London”
 - 6.4.1 Summary
 - 6.4.2 Critical Analysis
- 6.5 (i) Introduction to the poet- Deepti Naval
- 6.6 (A)Poem- “I have a Melody in my Pulse”
 - 6.6.1 Summary
 - 6.6.2 Critical Analysis
- 6.7 (B)Poem- “I have a Melody in my Pulse”
 - 6.7.1 Summary
 - 6.7.2 Critical Analysis
- 6.8 (C) Poem- “Black Wind”
 - 6.8.1 Summary
 - 6.8.2 Critical Analysis
- 6.9 (ii)Introduction to the poet- Margaret Atwood
- 6.10 (A)Poem- “This is a Photograph of me”
 - 6.10.1 Summary
 - 6.10.2 Critical Analysis
- 6.11 (B)Poem- “Siren Song”
 - 6.11.1 Summary
 - 6.11.2 Critical Analysis

6.12 (C) Poem- “Spelling”

6.12.1 Summary

6.12.2 Critical Analysis

6.13 Conclusion

6.14 Important Questions

6.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this module is the exploration and analysis of how female authors, characters, and perspectives are portrayed and understood within literature. This approach emphasizes the unique experiences, emotions, and perspectives that women bring to their writing and how these shape literary themes, styles, and narratives. The exposition of feminine sensibility in literary studies enriches our understanding of literature by highlighting the diverse and often underrepresented perspectives of women. It contributes to ongoing dialogues about gender, identity, and representation, fostering greater empathy, awareness, and appreciation for the multifaceted nature of human experience as expressed through literature. By the end of this module students will get acquainted with writers like Maya Angelou, Deepti Naval and Margaret Atwood and their writings.

6.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE POET-MAYA ANGELOU

Maya Angelou was an American poet, storyteller, activist, and autobiographer. She was born in St. Louis, Missouri. Angelou had worked as a singer, dancer, actress, composer, and Hollywood’s first female black director, but became most famous as a writer, editor, essayist, playwright, and poet. She had also worked for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X as a civil right activist. She was also an educator and served as the Reynolds professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University. She served on two presidential committees, for Gerald Ford in 1975 and for Jimmy Carter in 1977. In 2000, Angelou was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Bill Clinton. In 2010, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S., by President Barack Obama. Angelou was awarded over 50 honorary degrees before her death.

During her early years she lived in Long Beach, St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas, with her brother and paternal grandmother. In one of its most evocative (and controversial) moments, Angelou describes how she was first cuddled then raped by her mother’s boyfriend when she was just seven years old. When the man was murdered by her uncles for his crime, Angelou felt responsible, and stopped talking. Angelou remained mute for five years, but developed a love for language. She read Black authors like Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar, as well as canonical works by William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Edgar Allan Poe. When Angelou was twelve and a half, Mrs. Flowers, an educated African American woman, finally got her to speak again. Mrs. Flowers, as Angelou recalled in her children’s book *Mrs. Flowers: A*

Moment of Friendship (1986), emphasized the importance of the spoken word, explained the nature of and importance of education, and instilled in her a love of poetry. Angelou graduated at the top of her eighth-grade class.

When Angelou, just seventeen, graduated from high school and gave birth to a son, Guy, she began to work as the first African American and first female street car conductor in San Francisco. Angelou married a white ex-sailor, Tosh Angelos, in 1950. After they separated, Angelou continued her study of dance in New York City, returning to San Francisco to sing in the Purple Onion cabaret. During the late 1950s, Angelou sang in West Coast and Hawaiian nightclubs, before returning to New York to continue her stage career.

Angelou joined the Harlem Writers Guild in the late 1950s and met James Baldwin and other important writers. She was offered a position as the northern coordinator for Dr. King's SCLC. In the mid-1960s, she was encouraged by author James Baldwin and Robert Loomis, an editor at Random House, to write an autobiography. Initially, Angelou declined the offers, but eventually changed her mind and wrote *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The book chronicles Angelou's childhood and ends with the birth of her son. It won immediate success and was nominated for a National Book Award.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is the first of Angelou's six autobiographies. It is widely taught in schools, though it has faced controversy over its portrayal of race, sexual abuse and violence. Angelou's use of fiction-writing techniques like dialogue and plot in her autobiographies was innovative for its time and helped, in part, to complicate the genre's relationship with truth and memory. One source of Angelou's fame in the early 1990s was President Bill Clinton's invitation to write and read an inaugural poem. Americans all across the country watched as she read "On the Pulse of Morning," which begins "A Rock, a River, a Tree" and calls for peace, racial and religious harmony, and social justice for people of different origins, incomes, genders, and sexual orientations. In 2013 she was the recipient of the Literarian Award, an honorary National Book Award for contributions to the literary community. She died in 2014 at the age of 86.

6.2 (A)POEM "OUR GRANDMOTHERS"

She lay, skin down in the moist dirt,
the canebrake rustling
with the whispers of leaves, and
loud longing of hounds and
the ransack of hunters crackling the near
branches.
She muttered, lifting her head a nod toward
freedom,
I shall not, I shall not be moved.

She gathered her babies,
their tears slick as oil on black faces,
their young eyes canvassing mornings of madness.
Momma, is Master going to sell you
from us tomorrow?

Yes.

Unless you keep walking more
and talking less.

Yes.

Unless the keeper of our lives
releases me from all commandments.

Yes.

And your lives,
never mine to live,
will be executed upon the killing floor of
innocents.

Unless you match my heart and words,
saying with me,
I shall not be moved.

In Virginia tobacco fields,
leaning into the curve
of Steinway
pianos, along Arkansas roads,
in the red hills of Georgia,
into the palms of her chained hands, she
cried against calamity,
You have tried to destroy me
and though I perish daily,
I shall not be moved.

Her universe, often
summarized into one black body
falling finally from the tree to her feet,
made her cry each time into a new voice.
All my past hastens to defeat,
and strangers claim the glory of my love,
Iniquity has bound me to his bed.
yet, I must not be moved.

She heard the names,
swirling ribbons in the wind of history:
nigger, nigger bitch, heifer,
mammy, property, creature, ape, baboon,
whore, hot tail, thing, it.

She said, But my description cannot
fit your tongue, for
I have a certain way of being in this world,
and I shall not, I shall not be moved.

No angel stretched protecting wings
above the heads of her children,
fluttering and urging the winds of reason
into the confusions of their lives.
The sprouted like young weeds,
but she could not shield their growth
from the grinding blades of ignorance, nor
shape them into symbolic topiaries.
She sent them away,
underground, overland, in coaches and
shoeless.

When you learn, teach.
When you get, give.
As for me,
I shall not be moved.

She stood in midocean, seeking dry land.
She searched God's face.
Assured,
she placed her fire of service
on the altar, and though
clothed in the finery of faith,
when she appeared at the temple door,
no sign welcomed
Black Grandmother, Enter here.

Into the crashing sound,
into wickedness, she cried,
No one, no, nor no one million
ones dare deny me God, I go forth
along, and stand as ten thousand.

The Divine upon my right
impels me to pull forever
at the latch on Freedom's gate.

The Holy Spirit upon my left leads my
feet without ceasing into the camp of the
righteous and into the tents of the free.

These momma faces, lemon-yellow, plum-purple,
honey-brown, have grimaced and twisted
down a pyramid for years.
She is Sheba the Sojourner,
Harriet and Zora,
Mary Bethune and Angela,
Annie to Zenobia.

She stands
before the abortion clinic,
confounded by the lack of choices.
In the Welfare line,
reduced to the pity of handouts.
Ordained in the pulpit, shielded
by the mysteries.
In the operating room,
husbanding life.
In the choir loft,
holding God in her throat.
On lonely street corners,
hawking her body.
In the classroom, loving the
children to understanding.

Centered on the world's stage,
she sings to her loves and beloveds,
to her foes and detractors:
However I am perceived and deceived,
however my ignorance and conceits,
lay aside your fears that I will be undone,
For I shall not be moved

6.2.1 Summary

The poem begins by saying that she is lying in the dirt and is being hunted by hounds and hunters. The second stanza gives us an idea that she is an escaped slave running towards her freedom and is not ready to be moved from her idea of freedom even if it has only a small chance. Next lines introduce us to the protagonist's children who have also escaped with her. She gathers her children who are crying early in the morning and the children are terrified. They are asking her if their mother is going to be sold by the master. The mother answers in affirmative and says that if they do not stop talking and keep moving, she would be sold. Unless their master frees them, she would be sold. Her children's life would be executed unless they match her heart and words which crave for freedom and say that they shall not be moved from the idea of freedom.

The next stanza depicts her former life where she worked in Virginia tobacco fields for a wealthy owner, in the red hills of Georgia where she was chained and forced to work. She would be beaten and hurt everyday but still she firmly believes that she would not be moved from her idea of freedom.

She is often reduced to her body (having dark colour and being discriminated because of that). Always defeated because of this and she believes that this is grossly unfair but she refuses to give up. She has heard herself being called lots of derogatory names like “nigger, nigger bitch, heifer, mammy, property, creature, ape, baboon, whore, hot tail, thing, it” but she believes that she cannot be merely reduced to these words. She knows herself to be beyond obscenities and that she will not be moved to believe otherwise.

There were no angels to protect her children, bringing some reason to the confusion of their lives. They grew like weeds and she could not protect them from ignorance. The only thing that she could do was sending them away from their present situation to underground or overland in coaches and sometimes they have to travel shoeless and suffer. Whatever she learned, she tried to teach and whatever she got, she tried to give and firmly believed that she could not be moved from her idea of freedom.

The following stanza shows her belief in faith through adversities. Even when she was in the mid of an ocean of issues, she tried to seek the dry land and searched for God to help her believing that her prayers would be answered. But still there wasn't a sign which welcomed her. But she still believes that faith will continue to be a fiery passion, and that she has the strength of ten thousand people when she is defending herself, her children, and her faith in God. The faith and God compels the speaker to continue to live, to push forward and continue to seek her freedom.

These different coloured mommies could be Sheba the sojourner (leading advocate of women's right), Harriet or Zora, Mary Bethune and Angela or Annie (all were social activist who worked for rights)

The poem takes a leap in time and tells us that the women whom she is talking about now, does not know slavery but she stands in the welfare lines, and considers an abortion clinic, the epitome of the idea of “pro-choice,” and feels completely drained of her capacity to choose her lot in life. These entire verses speak to the idea of feeling lost, consumed by a strange society that is comprised of lonely street corners where it is implied she must turn to prostitution for money. Just before that is an image of her singing in church, and after it, the love of a classroom, of an education that slaves are never granted. There is an enormous emotional struggle within this part of the poem, significant confusion, and many, many contrasting images that all look to the idea of confusion as being newly prevalent in this woman's life — despite the escape from “the confusions of their lives.

In the end, the woman sings for everyone-friends and foes- and lets them know that however we perceive her, however ignorant she might be, she will never be moved from her idea of freedom.

6.2.2 Critical Analysis

The title "Our Grandmothers" immediately sets the tone of collective memory and shared experience among African Americans. It suggests a sense of community and lineage, where grandmothers play a central role in passing down traditions, stories, and values.

The poem starts with a dehumanizing tone where 'she' is not seen as a human being but rather gives us the impression that a property or an animal is being talked about. The poem depicts the resilience of Black women who had suffered slavery and were ignorant of many things in life but they always had faith that they would be able to achieve freedom. And constantly tried to achieve freedom in spite of difficult circumstances and the fear of something worse happening if they are caught. Angelou situates the poem within a historical context, referencing slavery ("broken chains") and the harsh realities faced by African American women throughout history. This contextualization highlights the strength of these women who survived and thrived despite systemic oppression. The poem is narrated in a collective voice, representing a community's perspective rather than an individual's. "Our Grandmothers" emphasizes the empowerment and legacy passed down from generation to generation. It celebrates the wisdom and cultural heritage preserved and transmitted by grandmothers, shaping the identity and strength of their descendants. While celebrating resilience, the poem also critiques the injustices African American women have faced. Angelou challenges societal norms and historical narratives that have marginalized these women, asserting their rightful place in history and society.

6.3 (B) POEM - "SEVEN WOMEN'S BLESSED ASSURANCE"

1
One thing about me,
I'm little and low,
find me a man
wherever I go.

2
They call me string bean
'cause I'm so tall.
Men see me,
they ready to fall.

3

I'm young as morning
and fresh as dew.
Everybody loves me
and so do you.

4

I'm fat as butter
and sweet as cake.
Men start to tremble
each time I shake.

5

I'm little and lean,
sweet to the bone.
They like to pick me up
and carry me home.

6

When I passed forty
I dropped pretense,
'cause men like women
who got some sense.

7

Fifty-five is perfect,
so is fifty-nine,
'cause every man needs
to rest sometime.

6.3.1 Summary

The poem talks about seven women. The first woman is little but still manages to find a man wherever she goes. The second woman is tall and nicknamed 'stringbean' since she is slender but men still fall for her. Her physical appearance does not deter her confidence.

The third woman is young and fresh and everyone including the readers love her. The fourth woman has a fat and sweet personality and her personality intimidates men.

The fifth woman is little, lean and sweet and everyone likes to take her home.

The sixth woman says that when she turned forty, she stopped pretending to please others as she recognised that men do not care about appearances but want women who have some sense. The last stanza talks about acceptance of aging as after a point, whether it be fifty five or fifty nine, men need rest more than anything else.

6.3.2 Critical Analysis

This poem is a reflective piece that celebrates the strength and resilience of African American women. The title itself suggests a sense of certainty and confidence in their identity and purpose.

In the poem, Angelou pays tribute to seven women who have influenced her life and the lives of others. Each woman embodies qualities of perseverance, wisdom, and grace. They are portrayed as pillars of their community, carrying the weight of history and heritage with dignity.

Angelou's language is rich with imagery and symbolism, painting a vivid picture of these women and their impact. Through their stories and experiences, she reflects on the broader struggles and triumphs of African American women throughout history.

Overall, "Seven Women's Blessed Assurance" is a tribute to the strength and resilience of African American women, celebrating their contributions and affirming their place in history. It is a powerful testament to the endurance and spirit of these women who have shaped Angelou's own journey and continue to inspire others.

The poem is structured into seven stanzas each dedicated to a woman. The central themes of the poem include strength, resilience, faith and empowerment. Angelou's voice in this poem is reverential and introspective. She makes use of vivid imagery and evocative language to bring each woman's story to life. Through this poem, Angelou also highlights the importance of recognising and honoring the contributions of these women.

6.4 (C) POEM "LONDON"

If I remember correctly,
London is a very queer place.
Mighty queer.
A million miles from
jungle, and the British
lion roars in the stone of
Trafalgar Square.
Mighty queer.
At least a condition
removed from Calcutta,
but old men in Islington and in
too-large sweaters dream
of the sunrise days
of the British Raj.

Awfully queer.
Centuries of hate divide St. George's
channel and the Gaels,
but plum-cheeked English boys drink
sweet tea and grow to fight
for their Queen.
Mighty queer.

6.4.1 Summary

The speaker says that London is a quite strange place with complexities. You could hear the British lions roar in Trafalgar Square which means the remnants of colonialism can still be seen. "At least a condition removed from Calcutta" suggests that London sees itself as somewhat detached from its former colony in India. The stanza paints a picture of "old men in Islington and in too-large sweaters" who nostalgically dream of the "sunrise days of the British Raj." This imagery evokes a sense of longing and romanticization for the era of British colonial rule in India.

The deep-seated animosity and historical tensions that have divided England (represented by St. George's Channel) and Ireland (represented by the Gaels). But the image of "plum-cheeked English boys drink[ing] sweet tea and grow[ing] to fight for their Queen" suggests a blending of cultures and identities within the British Isles. The stanza juxtaposes the bitterness of historical conflicts with a portrayal of English boys who are raised within a certain cultural framework and national narrative. It highlights the complexities of national identity and allegiance amidst historical divisions and animosities. The poem ends with the observation that London is quite complex and strange.

6.4.2 Critical Analysis

The poem explores themes of diversity, contrasts in cultures, and reflections on colonial history. The speaker reflects on London as a city of contrasts and complexities. The mention of the British lion roaring in Trafalgar Square invokes a sense of imperial pride and dominance, symbolizing the legacy of the British Empire. The poem juxtaposes London with places like Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Ireland (St. George's Channel and the Gaels), highlighting the historical and cultural divides shaped by colonialism and the subsequent complexities of identity and belonging. The reference to old men in Islington dreaming of the "sunrise days of the British Raj" suggests a nostalgic longing for a perceived golden age of imperial rule, contrasting sharply with contemporary London. The stanza also touches on the assimilation of English boys who drink sweet tea and grow up to fight for their Queen, reflecting how cultural identities can evolve and blend over time. The repeated use of "queer" emphasizes the speaker's fascination with the contradictions and ironies inherent in London's multicultural and historical tapestry, where

pride, nostalgia, and cultural diversity intersect. The poem captures a complex portrait of the city, exploring its layers of history, cultural diversity, and the legacy of British imperialism through vivid imagery and contrasting perspectives.

(i) INTRODUCTION TO THE POET -DEEPTI NAVAL

Deepthi Naval is a multifaceted Indian artist known for her contributions to cinema, writing, and painting. Deepthi Naval gained prominence as an actress in Indian cinema during the 1980s. She is known for her roles in critically acclaimed films such as "ChashmeBuddoor" (1981), "SaathSaath" (1982), "Katha" (1983), and "Mirch Masala" (1987). Her performances were often noted for their sensitivity and depth, making her a respected figure in parallel cinema. Deepthi Naval has directed and written several films. Her directorial debut was with the film "Do Paise Ki Dhoop, Chaar Aane Ki Baarish" (2009), which she also wrote. The film was well-received for its artistic approach and storytelling. Deepthi Naval is also known for her literary contributions.

She has authored a collection of poems titled "LamhaLamha" (1989) and a novel called "The Mad Tibetan: Stories from Then and Now" (2016). Her writing often explores themes of introspection, relationships, and the human condition. She is also a skilled painter. Her artwork has been exhibited in India and abroad, showcasing her talent and versatility as an artist beyond the realms of cinema and literature. Deepthi Naval is actively involved in humanitarian causes, particularly focusing on environmental conservation and women's rights. She has been a vocal advocate for social issues and has participated in various initiatives aimed at promoting awareness and positive change.

6.6 (A) POEM "I HAVE A MELODY IN MY PULSE"

I have a melody in my pulse
The rhythm of the cosmos
Runs down here

You could hear it, if you would hear
With your fingertips

Do you look at the stars, and see them?
Without eyes?

There are sounds here, hear them?
When you touch stone or gravel
Leaf or wind

Do you feel the
Translucence of your soul?

Do you touch earth, when you walk?
Touch life, as you live
Are you?
When you are...

6.6.1 Summary

The speaker suggests a deep connection between her own being and the universe. She describes having a "melody in my pulse," implying a rhythmic connection to the cosmos that resonates within her. And this pulse can be heard with fingertips. Its vibrations could be felt that way. She goes on to ask if we have seen stars without our perception of sight. She asks if we have heard sounds. She asks if we have felt connected with the soul with a simple action of touching a stone, gravel, leaf or wind. Do we actually touch earth when we walk and touch life when we live. The closing lines "Are you? / When you are..." prompt existential introspection about one's existence and presence in the world. It encourages contemplation of being fully present and engaged with life, suggesting that true existence involves a deep, sensory connection to the environment and the universe.

6.6.2 Critical analysis

The poem is taken from the collection "Black Wind and Other Poems". The poem explores themes of interconnectedness, sensory perception, and existential awareness, inviting readers to consider their relationship with the cosmos and the profound nature of sensory experience in understanding oneself and the world. The poem encourages a more profound engagement with the world through sensory experiences.

6.7 (B) POEM- "I HAVE A MELODY IN MY PULSE"

Always on the run
Chasing our dreams
We met each time

At baggage claims
VIP lounges
Check- in counters

Stood a while together
Among gaping crowds
Spoke, unspoken words

Yearning to share
Yet afraid, afraid
Of ourselves

All around us
People cheering, leering
And we, like spectacles
Amidst all the madness

Trying to live a moment
Of truth
A glance, a touch
A feeling to hold on to
And move on...

The last time we sat together
Waiting for a flight
I remember I'd said,

'There must be another way
Of living this life!'

For a long time
You remained silent

Then,

Without blinking
Without turning
Said,

'There isn't'

Today
You are gone, and
I'm still running...

Still trying
To prove you wrong

6.7.1 Summary

Smita and the speaker (they are friends) often crossed paths with each other while leading busy lives chasing their dreams at places like baggage claims, VIP lounges or check in counters. They would stand amidst the crowd without talking, still their emotions would be communicated with each other. These unspoken words were a yearning to get connected. The crowd around them would be cheering and leering at them. And the speaker and Smita would be trying to find a moment of truth through touch or glance and move on.

The speaker remembers her last meeting with Smitha where she reflects and asks her that there must be a different way of living. As a reply to this, Smita tells her that there isn't another way of living without blinking. This day, the speaker realizes that Smita is long gone but she is still struggling for a way to prove Smita wrong.

6.7.2 Critical Analysis

Deepti Naval's poem captures the bittersweet essence of friendship, the existential quest for meaning, and the enduring impact of loss. The poem starts by setting a tone of dynamic and fast-paced lifestyle filled with ambition and aspiration. Despite their busy lives, the speaker and Smita frequently cross paths and attempt to connect amidst the chaos of their respective journeys. The poem concludes with a poignant reflection on Smita's absence, implying her departure from life ("Today you are gone"). The speaker acknowledges their continuing quest to prove Smita wrong, suggesting a lingering quest for meaning and fulfillment despite the loss.

6.8 (C) POEM "BLACK WIND"

6.8.1 Summary

Black wind feels like an uneasy feeling which can be felt in the speaker's eyes, hair and mouth. The speaker waits for this feeling to disappear. But it never really disappears. It remains in a corner quiet and still and the speaker can still feel it moving as it has the power to bend the speaker to its will. It continuously pesters the speaker by whispering in her ears and tells her things she does not want to hear. It has complete control over her and the speaker is fearful of its power to make her do things which she does not want to do.

6.8.2 Critical Analysis

"Black Wind" uses vivid imagery and metaphor to evoke a sense of unease and vulnerability in the face of unseen forces. It explores themes of psychological turmoil, inner conflict, and the struggle to resist or overcome external influences that threaten one's peace of mind. The repeated mention of the "black wind" suggests a metaphorical force that brings darkness and discomfort. The presence of the black wind is unsettling but initially subtle. Despite its quiet demeanor, the wind exerts a powerful effect, subtly shaping the speaker's thoughts and emotions. An inner turmoil or conflict is brought about by the external or internal forces represented by the wind. The speaker expresses a longing for the black wind to "Disappear," indicating a desire to rid themselves of this oppressive presence and regain a sense of peace or clarity.

6.9 (ii) INTRODUCTION TO THE POET- MARGARET ATWOOD

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet, novelist, essayist, short story writer and an environmental activist. She is known for her feminist perspective in her writings. She began writing at age five and resumed her efforts, more seriously, a decade later. She has received numerous literary awards, including the Booker Prize, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and the Governor General's Award, twice. Her books are regularly bestsellers and her novels have been adapted into popular movies and television series.

Atwood was born in Ottawa and earned her BA from Victoria College at the University of Toronto and MA from Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She first came to public attention as a poet in the 1960s with her collections *Double Persephone* (1961), winner of the E.J. Pratt Medal, and *The Circle Game* (1964), winner of a Governor General's award. Suffering is common for the female characters in Atwood's poems, although they are never passive victims. Atwood's interest in female experience also emerges clearly in her novels, particularly in *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Life before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1981), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985).

Her Booker Prize-winning *The Blind Assassin* (2000) is an intricately constructed narrative centring on the memoir of an elderly Canadian woman ostensibly writing in order to dispel confusion about both her sister's suicide and her own role in the posthumous publication of a novel supposedly written by her sister.

In 2019 *The Testaments*, a sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*, was published to critical acclaim and was a cowinner (with Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*) of the Booker Prize.

In addition to writing, Atwood teaches English literature at several Canadian and American universities. She won the PEN Pinter Prize in 2016 for the spirit of political activism threading her life and works.

6.10 (A) POEM "THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF ME"

It was taken some time ago.
At first it seems to be
a smeared
print: blurred lines and grey flecks
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan
it, you see in the left-hand corner
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
(balsam or spruce) emerging
and, to the right, halfway up
what ought to be a gentle
slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,
and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where
precisely, or to say
how large or small I am:
the effect of water
on light is a distortion

but if you look long enough,
eventually
you will be able to see me.)

6.10.1 Summary

The speaker describes an old photo taken long back. Upon the initial glance, the photograph appears to be a smeared print as there are blurred lines and grey spots entirely blended with the paper. But if you pay attention and look closely, there are certain things that can be seen. At the left hand corner a branch of a tree (could be balsam or spruce but cannot be made out clearly) could be seen and on the right hand side, a small frame house on a gentle slope can be seen. In the background a lake and beyond that some low hills can also be seen. The rest of the poem is in parentheses and the speaker lets us know that the photograph was taken the day after the speaker was drowned. And if you look closely at the lake, the speaker can be seen just under the surface of the lake. Although it is difficult to determine the exact location or size of the speaker as the water distorts the image of the body, we can see the speaker if you look long enough at the lake in the photograph.

6.10.2 Critical analysis

“This is a Photograph of Me” is the first poem of Margaret Atwood’s collection of poetry, *The Circle Game*, published in 1964 and it won the Governor General’s Award in 1966. She focuses on the theme of appearances versus reality as initially it feels like just a description of a photograph but if we delve a bit deeper, we understand that the speaker’s dead body can be found in the photograph. The poem initially begins as a simple description of an old blurry photo. As the poem progresses, the speaker invites the attention of the readers to various details in the photograph. As this is done, the narrative starts becoming increasingly dark and complex. The poem exemplifies the limitations of recording history and truth through this poem. As the poem progresses, the photograph comes to represent those who have been overlooked throughout history, marginalized people (often women). A blurred photograph (warped history) cannot be expected to be accurate. It appears initially that the photograph is the subject of the poem but slowly we realize that the subject of the poem is the speaker although displaced and invisible (as the speaker is under water and it takes some time to notice the speaker). The speaker converses directly with the reader throughout the poem. The poem is spoken from beyond the grave and it gives a voice to the voiceless. The poem is a lyric written in free verse.

It can be believed that the body in water is presumably that of a woman. When the speaker starts talking about herself, it is enclosed in parentheses.

Parentheses are usually used to add some additional information and whatever is written in parentheses could be usually omitted without altering the meaning of the text. In the same way, in history, women are always relegated to the margin, they and their contributions are sometimes conveniently forgotten/ not represented in the male dominated world. Nature (branches of tree, hill, lake) and man made objects (the frame house) gain predominance over her and she is constricted to parentheses.

6.11 (B) POEM "SIREN SONG"

This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song
that is irresistible:

the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows
because anyone who has heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?

I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time.

6.11.1 Summary

Sirens are creatures referred to in Greek mythology who were part human and part bird. They are known for their irresistible singing and mariners who hear their song while passing their island are lured and killed. The most famous story of the sirens is found in Homer's Odyssey. The initial stanzas of the poem begins by telling us the irresistible power of the song

of a siren. The luring power of the song is strong that it forces men to jump overboard in groups even after seeing the beached skulls of those who have done the same before them. Even the fear of death does not have the capacity to stop them from jumping overboard. Such is the strength of the siren's song. The speaker(siren) goes on to mention that this is a song that no one knows as those who have heard the siren's song are either dead or have forgotten it(might be a reference to Odysseus, who resisted the Sirens by having his crew tie him to his ship's mast)

In the next stanza the siren proceeds to ask the readers if she can confide in them and tell them a secret, and if she tells that secret would the reader rescue it from its bird suit. The siren says that she does not enjoy what she does sitting on the island looking all charming and mythical with her two colleagues. Their singing is associated with fatality and valuableness.

The siren calls the listener closer and says that she will tell a secret only to the listener because he is special and the secret is that the luring song is actually a call for help and only the listener can help since he is unique. Although the siren is fed up with her role and its song, it cannot get rid of it. The last line sees a change of tone and we see the siren mentioning that her song is boring but its seductive power always succeeds in tricking men and making them jump into the sea.

6.11.2 Critical Analysis

The poem "Siren Song" was published in Atwood's poetry collection "You are Happy" published by Oxford University Press in 1974. The poem is taken from a section titled "Songs of the Transformed" Lies, deception, vanity, seduction and isolation are important themes of this poem. The poem is inspired by Greek mythology and tells about the power of the siren's song which is used to manipulate its listeners/sailors and lure them to death. Initially it seems that the siren is tired of its song and does not want to kill anyone but in the end it becomes clear that the siren uses its song to trick people into dying and she is disappointed that everytime her song works. Although the loneliness of the siren is real, her cry for help is a ploy to trick men. Everytime her song kills someone, she becomes alone on the island with the other two sirens. Thus the siren is trapped in an endless cycle of longing (of escaping from bird suit) and disappointment(in men who die listening to her song and are not able to help her).

6.12 (C) POEM "SPELLING"

My daughter plays on the floor
with plastic letters,
red, blue & hard yellow,
learning how to spell,
spelling,
how to make spells.

I wonder how many women
denied themselves daughters,
closed themselves in rooms,
drew the curtains
so they could mainline words.

A child is not a poem,
a poem is not a child.
there is no either/or.
However.

I return to the story
of the woman caught in the war
& in labour, her thighs tied
together by the enemy
so she could not give birth.

Ancestress: the burning witch,
her mouth covered by leather
to strangle words.

A word after a word
after a word is power.

At the point where language falls away
from the hot bones, at the point
where the rock breaks open and darkness

flows out of it like blood, at
the melting point of granite
when the bones know
they are hollow & the word
splits & doubles & speaks
the truth & the body
itself becomes a mouth.

This is a metaphor.

How do you learn to spell?
Blood, sky & the sun,
your own name first,
your first naming, your first name,
your first word.

6.12.1 Summary

The poem begins with a simple description of the speaker mentioning that she sees her daughter play with plastic letters of primary colour and learn

how to spell. And by learning to spell, she is also actually learning to cast a spell (magic words or action that cause somebody to be in a particular state or condition). In the next stanza the speaker wonders how many women have had to sacrifice motherhood and close themselves in rooms so that they could make a career (the career mentioned here might be that of becoming a writer). And being a writer is like taking drugs. She further goes on to say that a child and a career are not a replacement for each other. You cannot choose between them by using the terms like “either/or”. The stanza ends with the transitory word ‘however’ left hanging. The speaker returns to the story of how women have to suffer in war and labour. During war, when women are raped by enemies, they tie their legs together so that they cannot give birth. She remembers the ancestress who were burned for telling the truth as they were tagged as witches and their voices were suppressed by leather. The reference made here would be to Joan of Arc. Being able to speak words after words or rather being able to say what's there in one's mind is considered to be the power of freedom.

The speaker tries to depict the harsh realities of women by telling us that the words of the witches were also burned along with their words. Their imaginations had flowed like blood when their bodies had erupted like volcano. When the bones become hollow, the bones themselves become mouths and speak words. Language itself is personified here.

Finally, the speaker says that it is a metaphor. The woman giving birth and the woman writing for self-expression are juxtaposed and merged. The poem ends with the question how can we learn to spell (and express our identity) blood, sun and sky and our own name. It is our name which gives us an identity. But how can it be done without expressing ourselves.

6.12.2 Critical Analysis

The poem appears in “True Stories”. Atwood talks about constraints placed against a woman’s identity. Women are always made to choose between having a family life and personal growth/career. The speaker also makes references to history that lets women know the consequences of not abiding by the rules of society and trying to express oneself freely (being called a witch and burned alive). The poem starts with the description of a scene and moves on to be a philosophical reflection regarding education of women by the end of it. The poem is a testament to the power of words and how women are powerless without the use of words.

6.13 CONCLUSION

The poems by Maya Angelou, discuss themes of racial identity, cultural heritage, and the complexities of belonging in a society marked by prejudice and discrimination. Her work is a celebration of resilience and empowerment. Her poems frequently highlight the strength of the human spirit in overcoming adversity, drawing inspiration from her own experiences and the struggles of marginalized communities. Her poetic style is characterized by its rhythmic cadence, vivid imagery, and lyrical

quality. She often employs free verse but also incorporates elements of traditional poetic forms and techniques.

The poems of Deepti Naval reflect a deep introspective style that often explore themes of love, life's transient nature, personal reflections, and societal observations. She often delves into introspection, examining inner emotions, personal journeys, and philosophical musings. Her verses capture moments of contemplation and self-discovery, inviting readers into her inner world. Deepti Naval's poetry frequently employs vivid imagery and sensory details. She uses nature as a backdrop to evoke emotions and explore themes of beauty, transience, and the interconnectedness of life. Naval's poetry often touches upon societal issues and cultural observations. She offers subtle critiques of societal norms, gender roles, and the human condition, reflecting her keen awareness of the world around her.

The poems of Margaret Atwood delve into themes of identity, feminism, politics, and the environment. Her poetry frequently examines issues of gender identity, women's roles in society, and the complexities of female experience. She challenges traditional gender norms and explores the power dynamics between men and women in her poems. Atwood's poetry is also renowned for its vivid imagery and powerful symbolism.

6.14 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the themes of race and resilience in Maya Angelou's poem "Our Grandmothers".
2. How are the themes of interconnectedness, sensory perception, and existential awareness represented in the poem "I Have a Melody in my Pulse"?
3. Discuss the theme of sense of unease and vulnerability as presented in the poem "Black Wind".
4. "This is a Photograph of me" is a feminist poem. Elucidate.
5. What is the significance of the title of the poem "Spelling"?



CRITICAL STUDY OF OSCAR WILDE'S SALOME- I

Unit Structure :

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 About Salome
- 7.3 Major Characters
- 7.4 Plot Summary
- 7.5 Important Themes in the Play

7.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the students to the writer Oscar Wilde
- To make them aware of his contribution to literature
- To make the students understand the Summary, Plot, Characterization and Setting of the play

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Oscar Wilde, born Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde on October 16, 1854, in Dublin, Ireland, was a renowned playwright, poet, and author of the late Victorian era. He was the second child of Sir William Wilde, a prominent eye and ear surgeon, and Jane Wilde, a poet and nationalist.

Wilde's early education took place at home, where his mother fostered his love for literature and the arts. He later attended Portora Royal School in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, and Trinity College, Dublin, where he excelled in his studies and distinguished himself as a brilliant student. After graduating, he moved to London and continued his studies at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he became known for his wit, flamboyant personality, and aestheticism.

In the 1880s, Wilde gained recognition for his essays, lectures, and poetry, becoming a prominent figure in London's literary and social circles. His sharp wit, distinctive dress, and flamboyant lifestyle made him a celebrated personality of the time. He became known for his advocacy of aestheticism, a philosophy that emphasized art for art's sake and the pursuit of beauty above all else.

Wilde's literary career reached its peak in the early 1890s with the success of his plays, including "Lady Windermere's Fan" (1892), "A Woman of No Importance" (1893), "An Ideal Husband" (1895), and his most famous

work, "The Importance of Being Earnest" (1895). These plays were noted for their sparkling dialogue, satirical wit, and social commentary on the hypocrisies and conventions of Victorian society.

However, Wilde's personal life took a dramatic turn in 1895 when he was publicly accused of homosexual relationships, which was illegal in Victorian England. His subsequent trial and conviction for "gross indecency" led to his imprisonment for two years of hard labor. The scandal marked the downfall of his career and reputation.

After his release from prison in 1897, Wilde lived in France under the pseudonym "Sebastian Melmoth." He spent his final years in poverty and obscurity, writing little but maintaining correspondence with close friends. He died of meningitis on November 30, 1900, at the age of 46, in Paris.

Oscar Wilde's legacy endures as one of the most brilliant and tragic figures in literary history. His works continue to be celebrated for their wit, satire, and exploration of societal norms and human nature. Wilde's life and writings have inspired numerous adaptations, biographies, and studies, cementing his status as an icon of wit and aestheticism in English literature.

7.2 ABOUT SALOME

"Salome" is a one-act play written by Oscar Wilde, first performed in 1896 in Paris. It is a retelling of the biblical story of Salome, the stepdaughter of King Herod, who becomes infatuated with John the Baptist and demands his head on a silver platter as a reward for performing the "Dance of the Seven Veils" for Herod. The play is known for its lush language, sensuality, and exploration of themes such as lust, power, and the destructive nature of desire.

Wilde's "Salome" is set in the palace of King Herod in Judea, capturing the opulence and decadence of the ancient court. The narrative unfolds through a series of dialogues and monologues, revealing the motivations and inner thoughts of its characters, particularly Salome herself. Her character is portrayed as both innocent and manipulative, driven by a morbid fascination with the imprisoned prophet, John the Baptist.

The play is notable for its use of symbolism and imagery, with the moon, blood, and various elements of nature serving as powerful motifs throughout the narrative. Wilde's prose style in "Salome" is richly poetic, drawing on biblical and mythological references to create a haunting and atmospheric work that challenges conventional morality and explores the darker aspects of human desire.

"Salome" was initially banned in Britain due to its controversial themes and depiction of biblical characters. However, it has since become recognized as a classic of decadent literature and has inspired numerous adaptations in various art forms, including opera, film, and dance.

Oscar Wilde's "Salome" remains a compelling exploration of forbidden desires, power dynamics, and the consequences of obsession, showcasing Wilde's distinctive style and his ability to provoke thought and controversy through his art.

7.3 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Salome

Salome is the central character of the play, depicted as a beautiful and seductive young princess. She is infatuated with John the Baptist (Jokanaan), a prophet held captive by her stepfather, King Herod. Salome becomes increasingly obsessed with Jokanaan throughout the play, eventually demanding his head on a silver platter as a reward for dancing for Herod.

Herod Antipas

Herod Antipas is the tetrarch of Judea and Galilee, and he is Salome's stepfather. He is portrayed as a weak and lustful ruler who becomes captivated by Salome's dancing. Herod is torn between his fear of Jokanaan and his desire for Salome, leading to the tragic climax of the play.

Herodias

Herodias is the wife of Herod Antipas and also Salome's mother. She is depicted as a manipulative and vengeful character who encourages Salome's dance to fulfill her own desires for revenge against Jokanaan. Herodias plays a significant role in influencing Salome's actions throughout the play.

John the Baptist (Jokanaan)

John the Baptist, known as Jokanaan in the play, is a prophet who has been imprisoned by Herod. He preaches against the corruption and immorality of the ruling class, including Herod and Herodias. Jokanaan becomes the object of Salome's desire and fascination, despite his rejection of her advances.

Narraboth

Narraboth is a young Syrian guard who is infatuated with Salome. He becomes increasingly distraught as Salome's obsession with Jokanaan grows, ultimately taking his own life out of despair when Salome rejects his advances.

Page of Herodias

The Page of Herodias is a young Ethiopian slave who serves Herodias. She appears briefly in the play, conveying messages and observing the unfolding events involving Salome, Herod, and Jokanaan.

Soldiers, Nazarenes, Jews, and Guests

Various other characters appear in the play as part of the court and entourage of Herod Antipas. They comment on the actions of the main characters and provide context for the events unfolding in the palace.

Each character in "Salome" plays a distinct role in exploring themes of desire, power, corruption, and the consequences of obsession and revenge. Wilde's portrayal of these characters reflects his exploration of decadence and the darker aspects of human nature within the context of biblical and mythological themes.

7.4 PLOT SUMMARY

The play unfolds in the palace of King Herod in Judea. Herod is celebrating his birthday with his wife, Herodias, and courtiers, including the young Syrian captain, Narraboth, who is infatuated with Salome. As the festivities continue, Narraboth becomes increasingly obsessed with Salome, despite her rejection of his advances.

Salome, meanwhile, is fixated on the imprisoned prophet, Jokanaan (John the Baptist), who is held in a cistern below the palace. Jokanaan is revered by the people, and Salome is intrigued by his wild and prophetic words. Narraboth, driven by his desire for Salome, eventually allows her to speak to Jokanaan. Salome is both repulsed and fascinated by Jokanaan's words and his refusal to look at her.

Herod becomes increasingly infatuated with Salome during the course of the evening and offers her a reward of anything she desires, even half his kingdom. Salome, urged on by Herodias, demands the head of Jokanaan on a silver platter. Despite Herod's attempts to dissuade her and offer her other gifts, Salome remains resolute in her demand.

Reluctantly, Herod orders the execution of Jokanaan, and his head is brought to Salome on the silver platter. In a final moment of macabre fascination, Salome kisses the lips of the severed head, to the horror and revulsion of Herod and his courtiers. Herod, in his disgust and fear, orders Salome to be killed, and she is crushed beneath the shields of the soldiers.

"Salome" explores themes of desire, power, and the destructive nature of obsession. Wilde's play delves into the psychological complexities of its characters, particularly Salome, who is portrayed as a complex figure driven by both attraction to and repulsion from Jokanaan. Herod's infatuation with Salome and the unfolding tragedy underscore the dangers of unchecked desire and the consequences of objectification and manipulation.

Wilde's language in "Salome" is rich and poetic, reflecting his fascination with beauty, decadence, and the darker aspects of human nature. The play's exploration of religious and sexual themes was controversial in its time, contributing to its notoriety and enduring fascination.

"Salome" remains a significant work in Wilde's oeuvre, showcasing his mastery of language, symbolism, and dramatic tension. It continues to be adapted and interpreted in various forms, from opera and dance to film and literature, highlighting its enduring appeal and relevance in exploring timeless themes of passion, power, and tragedy.

7.5 IMPORTANT THEMES IN THE PLAY

1. Desires and Longing:

- The play delves into the theme of desire and longing, particularly through the character of Salome. Her obsessive desire for John the Baptist drives the narrative, showcasing the destructive power of unattainable desires.

2. Sexuality and Eroticism:

- Wilde explores themes of sexuality and eroticism through the provocative depiction of Salome's infatuation with John the Baptist. The play's sensuous language and imagery highlight the allure and danger of unchecked sexual desire.

3. Perversion of Religion:

- "Salome" critiques religious hypocrisy and the manipulation of faith for personal and political gain. King Herod's blasphemous desire for his stepdaughter and the grotesque request for John the Baptist's head reflect Wilde's skepticism towards institutionalized religion.

4. Power and Control:

- The play examines power dynamics and the abuse of authority. Characters like Herod and Salome exert control over others, leading to destructive consequences. Salome's manipulation of Herod demonstrates how power can corrupt individuals and relationships.

5. Beauty and Aestheticism:

- Wilde's aesthetic sensibilities are evident in the play's lush descriptions and emphasis on visual and sensory pleasures. The moonlit setting, Salome's dance, and the severed head of John the Baptist are depicted with a focus on beauty, challenging conventional notions of morality.

6. Death and Decay:

- Themes of death and decay permeate the play, symbolized by the decaying moon, the cistern, and ultimately the severed head of John the Baptist. These motifs underscore Wilde's exploration of the darker aspects of human existence and mortality.

7. The Femme Fatale:

- Salome embodies the archetype of the femme fatale, a seductive and dangerous woman whose beauty and allure lead to the downfall of

men. Wilde portrays Salome not merely as a victim of her desires but also as a figure of power who disrupts societal norms.

8. Art and Performance:

- The play blurs the lines between art and reality, particularly through Salome's dance. Her performance becomes a spectacle that both mesmerizes and disturbs the characters, highlighting the transformative and manipulative power of artistic expression.

9. Isolation and Alienation:

- Characters in "Salome" often experience isolation and alienation, driven by their desires and obsessions. John the Baptist's solitary confinement in the cistern and Salome's emotional detachment underscore the play's exploration of loneliness and existential despair.

10. Transgression and Taboo:

- Wilde challenges societal taboos and norms, particularly regarding sexuality and morality. The depiction of Salome's desire for John the Baptist and Herod's incestuous feelings towards his stepdaughter confronts Victorian sensibilities, provoking controversy and condemnation.

Overall, "Salome" stands as a provocative and multifaceted work that explores complex themes through its vivid characters, poetic language, and symbolic imagery. Wilde's exploration of desire, power, beauty, and mortality continues to resonate with audiences, making "Salome" a timeless and enduring piece of literature.



CRITICAL STUDY OF OSCAR WILDE’S SALOME– II

Unit Structure :

8.0 Objective

8.1 Tragic Elements in Wilde’s Salome

8.2 The character of Salome and other female characters in Wilde's works

8.3 Herod as a character torn between desire and fear

8.4 Importance of the setting (the palace of Herod) in setting the atmosphere of the play

8.5 The narrative structure of “Salome”

8.6 The influence of the biblical story of Salome on the play

8.7 The controversy surrounding the original production of “Salome”

8.8 Suggested Questions

8.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the students to the writer Oscar Wilde
- To make them aware of his contribution to literature
- To make the students understand the Summary, Plot, Characterization and Setting of the play

Analysis of the Play

8.1 TRAGIC ELEMENTS IN WILDE’S SALOME

First, let us consider Aristotle's perspective on artistic imitation. According to Aristotle, for an audience to experience excruciating delight, mimicry must be both natural and agonizing to see. Given that the entire drama *Salome* imitates action and every object and person in a realistic manner, Oscar Wilde did indeed heed the advice of his inspiration.

However, there is a certain slight shift from strictly realistic *mimêsis*. It is the moonlight visibility that creates a very dreamy, even a mysterious atmosphere, and thus evokes a transcendental feeling in a viewer. Such an atmosphere is produced by the contrast between a ‘pure and innocent’ moonlight and the horrid scene it illuminates: “The stage directions tells us that Salomé speaks these words [“I have kissed thy mouth Jokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth” *Salome*, 124] on a set first darkened by the

passing of a great cloud across the moon and then suddenly lit by a shaft of moonlight that exposes her to Herod, who promptly orders her killed” (Heffernan 204).

Furthermore, the painful delight viewers experience from *mimêsis* present in *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act* is stretched to the point of being amoral or even obscene. It is safe to say that Oscar Wilde extended the ‘painful delight’ coming from artistic imitation of drama to the idea of *lartpouarlartism* meaning that even amoral or dangerous things can evoke tragic delight in the audience. This point can be illustrated by a short excerpt from the same scene of the book that was used to demonstrate the slightly unrealistic *mimêsis* of the play. Salome claims her love, or rather lust, for Jokanaan over his severed head brought to her in a silver charger and at this moment viewers experience the junction of horror, beauty and strong romantic feelings at the same time: “Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood? . . . But perchance it is the taste of love. . . They say that love hath a bitter taste. . . But what of that? What of that? I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan (A moonbeam falls on Salome covering her with light.)” (Wilde 124).

From the outset, Salome is portrayed as a character destined for a tragic end. Her obsession with John the Baptist drives her to make demands that are not only shocking but also symbolic of her descent into darkness. Her fate seems sealed from the moment she becomes fixated on possessing the head of John.

Salome's demand for John's head reflects a tragic flaw akin to *hubris* in classical tragedy. Her desires exceed what is socially acceptable and morally permissible, leading to her downfall. Her insistence on the head of John, despite warnings and pleas, illustrates her inability to control her desires, ultimately leading to catastrophic consequences.

Throughout the play, Salome becomes increasingly isolated. Her interactions with others, including Herod and Herodias, highlight her detachment from conventional morality and social norms. This isolation intensifies her tragic trajectory, as she becomes more consumed by her obsession with John and detached from reality.

The climax of the play, where Salome receives the head of John the Baptist, serves as a moment of catharsis. It is a culmination of her desires and a realization of the consequences of her actions. This moment not only shocks the audience but also underscores the tragic nature of Salome's character and her journey towards destruction.

Wilde's use of language and imagery in "Salome" contributes to its tragic impact. The play is infused with lush, decadent descriptions and poetic dialogues that heighten the sense of impending doom. The Dance of the Seven Veils, a central element of the play, symbolizes both Salome's allure and her descent into darkness, blurring the lines between beauty and tragedy.

"Salome" by Oscar Wilde can be seen as a tragedy due to its exploration of themes such as fate, hubris, isolation, and the consequences of desire. Salome's journey from infatuation to destruction mirrors the classical trajectory of tragic heroes, albeit within Wilde's distinctive aesthetic and literary style. The play's impact lies not only in its shocking narrative but also in its profound exploration of human nature and the complexities of desire and fate. Thus, "Salome" stands as a unique contribution to the genre of tragedy, offering a rich tapestry of themes and characters that continue to resonate with audiences today.

8.2 THE CHARACTER OF SALOME AND OTHER FEMALE CHARACTERS IN WILDE'S WORKS

Salome, as portrayed by Oscar Wilde, stands out distinctly among his female characters due to her complex and multifaceted nature. Unlike many of Wilde's other female characters who often embody either innocence and purity or societal cunning and wit, Salome combines elements of both allure and danger, making her a uniquely enigmatic figure.

In contrast to characters like Gwendolen Fairfax from "The Importance of Being Earnest," who embodies conventional Victorian femininity with her charm and wit within the boundaries of societal norms, Salome defies these norms. She is portrayed as a femme fatale, driven by desire and a morbid fascination with Jokanaan (John the Baptist). This contrasts sharply with characters such as Cecily Cardew from the same play, who is characterized by her innocence and romantic fantasies.

Moreover, Salome's portrayal in Wilde's play emphasizes her agency and assertiveness in pursuing what she desires, even if it leads to disturbing consequences. This is unlike characters such as Lady Windermere from "Lady Windermere's Fan," who initially adheres strictly to moral principles but ultimately reconciles with societal expectations.

Salome's uniqueness also lies in Wilde's exploration of her psychological depth and motivations. Unlike characters such as Mrs. Arbuthnot from "A Woman of No Importance," whose suffering is portrayed as a consequence of societal injustices, Salome's actions are driven by her own desires and a desire for power.

In summary, Salome stands out in Wilde's works as a character who defies the conventional portrayals of women in literature. She combines allure and danger with agency and psychological complexity, making her a uniquely compelling figure in Wilde's exploration of human nature.

8.3 HEROD AS A CHARACTER TORN BETWEEN DESIRE AND FEAR

In Oscar Wilde's play "Salome," Herod is portrayed as a character deeply conflicted between desire and fear, particularly in his interactions with Salome. Throughout the play, Wilde depicts Herod's intense fascination

with Salome's beauty and his simultaneous dread of the consequences of his desires.

Herod's desire for Salome is evident from the beginning when he praises her beauty and offers her anything she desires, including half of his kingdom. His language is filled with admiration and longing, showing his infatuation with her physical appearance: "Ah! thou art fairer than all the daughters of Judaea. There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Suffer me to touch thy body."

However, alongside this desire, Herod is also portrayed as fearful of Salome's power over him and the potential consequences of his actions. He repeatedly tries to dissuade her from requesting the head of John the Baptist, knowing the act would have severe repercussions. His fear intensifies as Salome becomes more insistent and his advisors warn him about the implications of denying her request.

This conflict between desire and fear reaches its climax during Herod's internal struggle as Salome dances for him. He vacillates between his fascination with her and his dread of what she might ask for as a reward for her dance. Herod's fear grows as Salome's dance captivates him, and he becomes increasingly anxious about the impending request that will force him to confront his deepest fears and desires.

Ultimately, Wilde portrays Herod as a complex character whose inner turmoil between desire and fear drives much of the dramatic tension in the play. His inability to resist Salome's allure despite knowing the consequences underscores his tragic flaw and contributes to the play's exploration of power, desire, and the consequences of obsession. Herod's portrayal exemplifies Wilde's adeptness at depicting the human psyche and the complexities of moral and emotional conflict.

8.4 IMPORTANCE OF THE SETTING (THE PALACE OF HEROD) IN SETTING THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE PLAY

The setting of the palace of Herod plays a crucial role in setting the atmosphere and tone of Oscar Wilde's play "Salome." It serves as a backdrop against which the themes of decadence, power, and moral corruption are vividly portrayed.

Firstly, the palace setting reflects the opulence and extravagance typical of the decadent aesthetic that Wilde often explored in his works. The descriptions of the palace emphasize its luxuriousness — the rich fabrics, the exotic perfumes, the decadent banquet, all contribute to a sense of excess and hedonism. This opulence mirrors the moral decadence of the characters inhabiting the palace, particularly Herod and his courtiers.

Secondly, the palace setting creates a tense and claustrophobic atmosphere, reflecting the inner turmoil and conflicts of the characters. The enclosed space of the palace chambers intensifies the psychological

drama unfolding among Herod, Salome, and the other characters. Wilde utilizes the setting to amplify the emotional and moral tensions simmering beneath the surface.

Moreover, the setting of the palace serves as a symbolic representation of power and control. Herod's authority is asserted through the grandeur of his palace, where he holds court and exerts his influence over others. The hierarchical structure of the palace reflects the social order of the time, where Herod's power is unquestioned yet fragile, as evidenced by his fear of the consequences of denying Salome's request.

Wilde also uses contrasts within the setting to heighten the dramatic effect. For instance, the juxtaposition of the sumptuous banquet scene with the macabre events that follow (Salome's demand for the head of John the Baptist) creates a stark contrast between indulgence and brutality, highlighting the moral decay at the heart of the palace.

Overall, the setting of the palace of Herod in Wilde's "Salome" is integral to the play's atmosphere and thematic exploration. It serves as a canvas upon which Wilde paints a portrait of decadence, power dynamics, and the consequences of unchecked desire. Through detailed descriptions and careful staging, Wilde creates a world that not only reflects the external trappings of wealth and power but also delves into the darker recesses of human ambition and moral corruption.

8.5 THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF "SALOME"

Oscar Wilde's play "Salome" employs a distinctive narrative structure that incorporates elements of Greek tragedy and symbolism, while also introducing innovative dramatic techniques for its time.

The narrative structure of "Salome" is non-linear and unfolds through a series of dramatic interactions and monologues rather than a traditional plot progression. It is divided into several key scenes, each focusing on different characters and their perspectives, which collectively build towards the climactic resolution.

Central to the narrative structure is the use of the chorus of the Jews. The chorus serves multiple functions in the play:

- 1. Commentary on Action and Themes:** The chorus of the Jews functions akin to a Greek chorus, providing commentary on the unfolding events and themes of the play. They often express the collective voice of the people, offering opinions, moral judgments, and reactions to the actions of the characters, particularly Salome and Herod. For example, in Act I, the chorus expresses their fear and suspicion of Herodias and Herod's troubled reign, foreshadowing the impending tragedy.
- 2. Foreshadowing and Prophecy:** The chorus also serves a prophetic role, predicting the consequences of the characters' actions. They warn Herod of the dangers of denying Salome's request and foresee the

doom that awaits him. This adds a sense of inevitability and fate to the narrative, reinforcing the tragic elements of the story.

3. **Symbolic Function:** Beyond their narrative role, the chorus of the Jews symbolizes the collective consciousness and societal norms of the time. Their reactions and judgments reflect the moral and social attitudes prevalent in Judean society, contrasting with the individual desires and actions of the main characters.

Wilde uses the chorus of the Jews strategically to enhance the dramatic tension and thematic depth of the play. By juxtaposing their commentary with the actions of the characters, Wilde underscores the conflict between personal desires and societal expectations, as well as the consequences of hubris and moral corruption.

The narrative structure of "Salome" is enriched by Wilde's innovative use of the chorus of the Jews. They serve not only as commentators on the action but also as vehicles for foreshadowing and symbolic representation of broader societal themes. Their presence enhances the dramatic impact of the play and reinforces its exploration of power dynamics, desire, and the tragic consequences of human folly.

8.6 THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLICAL STORY OF SALOME ON THE PLAY

Oscar Wilde's play "Salome" draws upon the biblical narrative found in the New Testament and historical accounts, particularly the story of Salome's dance and the beheading of John the Baptist. However, Wilde's interpretation of the biblical story is distinct and tailored for a Victorian audience, reflecting his own artistic vision and the cultural context of the late 19th century.

Wilde reinterprets the biblical narrative by emphasizing the psychological motivations and inner conflicts of the characters, particularly Salome and Herod. Unlike the brief mention in the Bible, Wilde expands upon Salome's character, portraying her as a complex and sensual figure driven by desire and curiosity. Her dance, depicted as mesmerizing and provocative, becomes a pivotal moment that symbolizes her power over men and her manipulation of their desires.

Moreover, Wilde explores themes of decadence, obsession, and the consequences of unchecked desire, which resonate with the Victorian fascination with morality and the dangers of indulgence. The play's portrayal of Herod's lust for Salome and the tragic consequences of his inability to control his desires reflect Wilde's critique of Victorian society's hypocrisy and repression.

Wilde also infuses the biblical story with symbolism and aestheticism, elements that were central to his artistic philosophy. The moon, mentioned prominently in the play, symbolizes Salome's beauty and allure, as well as the shifting emotions and motivations of the characters. The use of rich, poetic language and imagery enhances the theatricality of the narrative,

capturing the audience's imagination and drawing them into a world of heightened emotion and drama.

Wilde's reinterpretation of the biblical story of Salome in his play reflects his artistic sensibilities and addresses the cultural and moral concerns of the Victorian era. By delving into the psychological depths of his characters and imbuing the narrative with symbolism and aestheticism, Wilde creates a compelling and provocative work that both honors and reinterprets its biblical source material for a modern audience.

8.7 THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF "SALOME"

The original production of Oscar Wilde's play "Salome" in Victorian society sparked significant controversy due to its exploration of themes considered taboo at the time, particularly decadence and sexuality. The play premiered in 1896 in Paris, as it was initially banned in Britain due to its depiction of biblical characters in a scandalous light.

Victorian society, known for its strict moral and social norms, reacted with shock and condemnation to "Salome." The portrayal of Salome as a seductive and morally ambiguous figure, coupled with her dance for Herod and subsequent demand for the head of John the Baptist, challenged conventional interpretations of biblical stories. Wilde's interpretation emphasized Salome's agency and desire, which clashed with the Victorian ideal of women as pure and virtuous.

The theme of decadence, evident in the luxurious setting of Herod's palace and the hedonistic behavior of its inhabitants, further scandalized audiences. Wilde's aestheticism, which celebrated art for art's sake and prioritized beauty and sensuality, clashed with Victorian notions of morality and propriety. The play's dialogue, rich with poetic language and sensual imagery, reinforced its decadent tone and contributed to its controversial reception.

Critics and moralists condemned "Salome" for its perceived immorality and blasphemy. The play's exploration of taboo subjects such as lust, power dynamics, and the clash between religious piety and human desire challenged Victorian sensibilities and sparked debates about the limits of artistic freedom and expression.

Despite the controversy, "Salome" also intrigued and fascinated audiences with its boldness and originality. Its exploration of psychological depths and moral ambiguity marked a departure from traditional Victorian drama, paving the way for later playwrights and artists to explore similar themes with greater freedom.

The controversy surrounding the original production of "Salome" underscores its significance as a provocative work that challenged Victorian norms and pushed the boundaries of artistic expression. Wilde's exploration of decadence and sexuality in the play continues to resonate with audiences, highlighting the enduring impact of his daring artistic vision.

8.8 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Describe the main themes present in "Salome." How does Wilde use symbolism to convey these themes?
2. Analyze the significance of the moon as a symbol in the play. How does it reflect Salome's character and motivations?
3. Compare and contrast the character of Salome with other female characters in Wilde's works. What makes Salome unique?
4. How does Wilde portray Herod as a character torn between desire and fear? Provide examples from the text to support your analysis.
5. Discuss the importance of the setting (the palace of Herod) in setting the atmosphere of the play. How does Wilde create a sense of decadence and tension through the setting?
6. How does the use of language and dialogue contribute to the overall atmosphere and mood of "Salome"?
7. Examine the narrative structure of "Salome." How does Wilde use the chorus of the Jews to comment on the action and themes of the play?
8. Analyze Wilde's use of repetition and imagery in the play. How do these literary devices enhance the dramatic effect of the story?
9. Explore the influence of the biblical story of Salome on Wilde's play. How does Wilde reinterpret the biblical narrative for a Victorian audience?
10. Discuss the controversy surrounding the original production of "Salome." How did Victorian society react to the themes of decadence and sexuality in the play?



CRITICAL STUDY OF LYAN NOTTAGE'S RUINED

Unit Structure :

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction to Lyan Nottage as a dramatist

9.2 Synopsis of the play

9.3 Plot

9.4 Characterization

9.5 Themes

9.6 Suggested Questions

9.7 Bibliography/ References.

9.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the students to the writer Lyan Nottage
- To make them aware of his contribution to literature
- To make the students understand the Summary, Plot, Characterization and Setting of the play

9.1 INTRODUCTION TO LYAN NOTTAGE AS A DRAMATIST

Lynn Nottage is a playwright and a screenwriter. She is the first, and remains the only, woman to have won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama twice. Her plays have been produced widely in the United States and throughout the world.

Most recently, Nottage premiered *MJ the Musical*, directed by Christopher Wheeldon and featuring the music of Michael Jackson, at the Neil Simon Theater on Broadway, *Clyde's* directed by Kate Whoriskey at Second Stage Theater on Broadway and an opera adaptation of her play *Intimate Apparel* composed by Ricky Ian Gordon and directed by Bart Sher, commissioned by The Met/Lincoln Center Theater.

Her other work includes, *Floyd's* (retitled- *Clyde's*) (Guthrie Theater), the musical adaptation of Sue Monk Kidd's novel *The Secret Life of Bees*, with music by Duncan Sheik and lyrics by Susan Birkenhead (The Almeida Theatre/The Atlantic Theater), *Mlima's Tale* (Public Theater), *By The Way*, *Meet Vera Stark* (Lilly Award, Drama Desk Nomination-

Second Stage/Signature Theater), Ruined (Pulitzer Prize, OBIE, Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics' Circle, Audelco, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Award- MTC/Goodman Theater); Intimate Apparel (American Theatre Critics and New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for Best Play Center Stage/SCR/ Roundabout Theater); Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine (OBIE Award - Playwrights Horizons/Signature Theater); Crumbs from the Table of Joy; Las Meninas; Mud, River, Stone; Por'knockers; and POOF!

Her play Sweat (Pulitzer Prize, Evening Standard Award, Obie Award, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Tony Nomination, Drama Desk Nomination) moved to Broadway after a sold-out run at The Public Theater. It premiered and was commissioned by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival American Revolutions History Cycle/Arena Stage. Inspired by her research on Sweat, Nottage developed This is Reading, a performance installation based on two years of interviews, at the Franklin Street, Reading Railroad Station in Reading, PA in July 2017.

She is the co-founder of the production company, Market Road Films, whose most recent projects include the award winning documentary Takeover (NY times, Op-doc) by Emma Francis Francis-Snyder, the Peabody nominated podcast Unfinished: Deep South (Stitcher) by Taylor Hom and Neil Shea, The Notorious Mr. Bout directed by Tony Gerber and Maxim Pozdorovkin (Premiere/Sundance 2014), First to Fall directed by Rachel Beth Anderson (Premiere/ IDFA, 2013) and Remote Control (Premiere/Busan 2013- New Currents Award). Market Road Films currently has a first look deal with SISTER. Over the years, she has developed original projects for Amazon, HBO, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, Showtime, This is That and Harpo. She was a writer and producer on the Netflix series She's Gotta Have It, directed by Spike Lee and a consulting producer on the third season of Dickinson (Apple +).

Nottage is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, Steinberg "Mimi" Distinguished Playwright Award, PEN/Laura Pels Master Playwright Award, William Inge Festival Distinguished Playwright, TIME 100 (2019), Signature One Playwright, Merit and Literature Award from The Academy of Arts and Letters, Columbia University Provost Grant, Doris Duke Artist Award, The Joyce Foundation Commission Project & Grant, Madge Evans-Sidney Kingsley Award, Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for Creativity, The Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award, the inaugural Horton Foote Prize, Helen Hayes Award, the Lee Reynolds Award, and the Jewish World Watch iWitness Award. Her other honors include the National Black Theatre Fest's August Wilson Playwriting Award, a Guggenheim Grant, Lucille Lortel Fellowship and Visiting Research Fellowship at Princeton University. She is a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama. She is also a Professor of Theatre Arts in the Theatre Department at Columbia School of the Arts.

Nottage is a Doris Duke Artist, a board member for BRIC Arts Media Bklyn, Donor Direct Action, Dramatist Play Service, Second Stage and

the Dramatists Guild. She recently completed a three-year term as an Artist Trustee on the Board of the Sundance Institute. She is member of the The Dramatists Guild, WGAE, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is currently an artist-in-residence at the Park Avenue Armory.

Critical Study of Lynn
Nottage's Ruined

9.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

Set in a small mining town in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lynn Nottage's *Ruined* follows Mama Nadi, a businesswoman who is trying to stay afloat in a world torn apart by civil war. The war has ravaged her country, and especially the young girls who have literally been torn to pieces by soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Mama Nadi takes "damaged" girls into her brothel/bar and profits from them, but also protects them from the brutality of the world outside her doors. Amongst Mama Nadi's charges are Josephine, the daughter of a chief whose town was destroyed and who was raped by rebel soldiers; Salima, who was taken by rebel soldiers, who killed her baby and took her as a prisoner-of-war before making her pregnant; and Sophie, a young girl who has been "ruined" by sexual violence. We also meet soldiers and commanders on both sides of the conflict, all frequent customers at Mama's bar. *Ruined* was developed during playwright Lynn Nottage's pilgrimage to Africa, where she interviewed girls and women who themselves were, and continue to be, the battleground upon which war is fought.

11.3 PLOT

Act 1

Mama Nadi, who owns a bar and brothel in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo, discusses an order with Christian, a traveling salesman. Christian brings in two young women, Salima and Sophie, for Mama to purchase as employees. Mama insists that she only wishes to purchase one woman, but Christian convinces her to take both when he gives her chocolate and tells her about their backgrounds. Salima has been rescued from rebel soldiers who raped her repeatedly for five months; Sophie has also been raped and has suffered mutilation to her genitals, becoming "ruined." Sympathetic to her pain, Mama gives Sophie chocolate and alcohol.

A month later, Sophie sings to entertain the rebel soldiers at the bar. After one drunken soldier tries to purchase her with a piece of ore he took from a miner, Sophie is unnerved. Mama intervenes, accepting the ore as payment for Salima. She shows Mr. Harari, a diamond merchant, the raw diamond she keeps in a lockbox; he confirms that the gem is valuable. Mama tells Mr. Harari the story of how her father was tricked by a white man into losing his farm: the man had a piece of paper stating that he owned the farm and that her family had to leave.

In the women's living quarters, Salima angrily complains about a soldier who bragged about killing miners and worries that one of the miners could

have been her brother. She misses her family but cannot return home; her village cast her out after she was raped. She especially misses her baby, Beatrice. Salima compares Sophie to a bird who could fly away if she chose and tells her she is fortunate that she does not have to sleep with the customers. Sophie explains that although she sings beautifully for the patrons, she is always in pain.

Salima reveals she is pregnant, a secret she does not want Mama to know. Sophie shows her money she has been secretly saving, promising to take Salima with her to Bunia when she has saved enough.

Josephine enters and accuses Salima of stealing her food and her fashion magazine, mocking her for not knowing how to read. Salima becomes angry when Josephine insults her family. When Sophie defends Salima, Josephine lashes out by reminding her that they live in a brothel and mocks her as worthless because so many men have used her. Josephine angrily describes her own rape by soldiers; no one helped her even though her father was the village chief. She sneers that if she is not special, neither is Sophie.

Later, Christian reports the disappearance of Pastor Robbins, a white missionary who is rumored to have been helping rebel soldiers. Christian is concerned about the growing tension between the rebels and government soldiers over controlling the mining area and tries unsuccessfully to convince Mama to leave with him.

Commander Osembenga, a government military leader, strides into the bar, and Mama wins him over by standing up to him. Osembenga warns her that Kitembe, the rebel leader, is dangerous and that they shouldn't serve him. Osembenga claims he wants democracy for the people, while Kitembe only wants to use them for his own profit. Meanwhile, Mama sees Sophie hide money in her shirt.

Christian catches the commander's attention when he demands a government soldier thank him for giving him a cigarette. Osembenga buys Christian a drink, which Christian—a recovering alcoholic—attempts to refuse. To keep the peace, Mama convinces him to drink.

In the morning, Mama reclaims her lost cash from Sophie. Angry at the girl's theft, she threatens to put Sophie on the street. Sophie reveals that she has been saving for an operation to repair the physical damage that has been done to her.

Christian returns, terrified by the news that Pastor Robbins has been found brutally murdered. He believes it's not safe for them to stay in the area, but Mama again refuses to leave with him.

Two soldiers, Fortune and Simon, enter the bar, looking for Salima. Fortune claims to be Salima's husband. Mama tells him that Salima is not there and suggests that his wife may be dead. Fortune is enraged, and when he overturns a table, Mama and Christian are ready to defend the bar. The soldiers leave, with Fortune promising to be back for Salima.

Act 2

Fortune stands guard outside the bar, refusing to leave until he sees Salima. Sophie urges Salima to speak to Fortune, but Mama does not trust him and says that Fortune will not love Salima once he hears about her profession. She reminds Salima of Fortune's prior reaction to her kidnapping and rape, and her entire village's hatred of her.

When Mama leaves the room, Salima tells Sophie about the horrors she underwent at the hands of the soldiers: they attacked her and killed her baby, Beatrice, then kidnapped Salima and kept her tied to a tree for five months, raping her repeatedly. When Salima returned to her village, she was shamed and shunned by her husband and family. Salima cannot forgive Fortune for not standing up for her, and she worries about his reaction when he discovers that she is pregnant by one of the soldiers. Sophie assures Salima that she did not deserve such horrific treatment.

Night falls, and Fortune continues to stand guard in the rain, despite Simon's pleas for him to give up.

Christian returns to the bar, and Mama stops him from drunkenly criticizing Osembenga and the government soldiers, since she has customers from both sides of the war. Christian warns her that she will have to take sides one day. Mama, however, intends her business to remain open to everyone.

Kisembe enters and notices that there are few customers at Mama's. He blames Osembenga for driving everyone away and promises revenge. His violent rant makes everyone uneasy, and they are grateful when he exits the bar.

Osembenga enters next, claiming that Kisembe attacked a hospital and killed patients. He vows to stop Kisembe's militia.

Osembenga seizes Sophie and, when she struggles, announces the soldiers will bring her to the back room to "teach her a lesson." Sophie spits on his shoes, shouting that she is already dead. Osembenga is shocked, and Mama steps in to placate him; she takes him to the back room and convinces him to give Sophie another chance. She then instructs Sophie to go to the back room and make the commander happy.

Mama believes her business has been jeopardized by Sophie's uncooperative attitude. Christian comments that her use of the word "business" sounds "vulgar." Mama calls him a drunk and tells him not to judge her, describing how she built her business and her identity from nothing. Christian storms out with no intention of ever returning.

Later, outside the bar, Fortune informs Osembenga that Kisembe was at Mama's and that she is hiding Salima from him.

At dawn, Mr. Harari nervously discusses the war with Mama, complaining that he does not know whom to befriend. He urges her to leave, saying that a good businessperson quits when it's time. Mama ignores his advice but

asks that he take Sophie to Bunia for the operation she needs, giving him the raw diamond to pay the doctor. He agrees, but after Mama leaves the room to call Sophie, he is compelled to flee when gunfire sounds and an aid worker tells him they are in immediate danger.

Osembenga, Fortune, and Simon storm the bar with a group of government soldiers. Mama, Sophie, and Josephine are thrown to the floor while the soldiers rob Mama's lockbox. Osembenga demands to know where Kisembe is, and when Mama tells him she doesn't know, the commander instructs a soldier to rape Josephine. Before the soldier can do so, Salima enters the room; she is bleeding and screams for everyone to stop fighting. Although Mama and Fortune try to help her, she dies after telling the soldiers, "You will not fight your battles on my body anymore."

Some time later, Christian returns. He is sober, well-dressed, and determined to win over Mama. She is afraid that if they were to pursue a relationship, it would be doomed to fail. He loves her but says he is willing to leave if she truly doesn't wish to be with him. As he turns to go, Mama confesses that she is "ruined." Christian apologizes for what men have done to Mama and asserts that he can do better. He takes her in his arms, and as Sophie and Josephine look on, Christian and Mama begin to dance together.

9.4 CHARACTERIZATION

Mama Nadi- Mama Nadi is a madam and bar owner. She is strong and opinionated but knows how to navigate the various types of men who come to her establishment. She purchases Salima and Sophie, giving them a safe and warm environment even though they have to work for their money. A strong and fiercely-independent woman, Mama Nadi is described as "[a] madam, a businesswoman, attractive, early forties." Mama Nadi's past experiences, before she became the proprietor of the bar and brothel, are not described in detail, but by the end of the play, Mama Nadi is revealed to be as much a victim of sexual violence as the girls in her employment. She is at times cruel and selfish, seemingly obsessed with money and the success of her business, and yet, at other times, she displays extraordinary generosity and genuine vulnerability. Mama Nadi is desired by both Christian, the travelling salesman, who truly loves her, and by Commander Osembenga, the government leader who seems to admire Mama Nadi's strength and natural confidence in the face of powerful figures like himself.

Josephine- A daughter of a tribal chief, Josephine thinks she should have been treated better. She is bitter that she has to use her beauty and seductive qualities for money. She thinks Mr. Harari, with his promises of a better future, is her ticket out of the brother. She is especially jealous of Sophie's beauty.

Salima- A peasant woman, Salima was held in captivity for five months by rebel soldiers; she is pregnant. She dies by self-inflicted wounds because she does not want the baby.

Sophie- Sophie is Christian's niece. She has been ruined due to a violent sexual assault. She is beautiful, has a lovely singing voice, and is smart. She often intervenes when Josephine and Salima argue. She steals from Mama Nadi to save up for an operation.

Christian- A recovering alcoholic, Christian loves Mama Nadi. He is handsome and works as a traveling salesman.

Mr. Harari- Mr. Harari, a married Lebanese diamond merchant, visits Josephine frequently. He warns Mama Nadi that she and her girls are in danger and tries to help get Sophie to Uganda for her operation.

Osembega- A military leader for the government, he looks for Kisembe. When he finds out Mama Nadi has been lying to him, he destroys her business, only stopping when Salima commits suicide.

Kisembe- A rebel leader, he brings his soldiers to Mama Nadi's bar, where they treat the girls harshly.

Fortune- A government soldier and Salima's husband, Fortune, comes looking for his wife, Salima. He reports to Osembega that Kisembe frequents Mama Nadi's bar.

9.5 THEMES

The main themes in Ruined are the strength and resilience of women, the lasting impact of trauma, the brutality of war, and the struggle to survive.

- The Strength and Resilience of Women: The female characters in Ruined refuse to give in to the violence that surrounds them.
- The Lasting Impact of Trauma: Mama Nadi, Sophie, Salima, and Josephine all deal with the aftereffects of having been assaulted.
- The Brutality of War: The region around Mama's bar is plagued by civil war, which has led to the rape, mutilation, and displacement of the female characters.
- The Struggle to Survive: Characters must sacrifice their personal wishes in order to survive in a war-torn region.

The Strength and Resilience of Women :

Although they have endured unspeakable tragedies, the female characters in Ruined know they must continue making a life for themselves. Mama Nadi builds up a business from nothing and maintains it even in the midst of a brutal civil war, stubbornly refusing to leave her bar behind to escape the conflict. She would rather stand by the space she has carved out for herself, even when she loses customers to the war, than start over somewhere new. Salima lives each day missing her family—especially her daughter, Beatrice, who was killed—and wishing she could change what happened on the day she was attacked by rebel soldiers. Despite her

painful memories and lasting trauma, she does what she must to survive, taking on the job of pleasing angry, arrogant men who feel entitled to her body. Ultimately, she gives up the battle, sacrificing herself when government soldiers attack the bar. She knows that her husband, Fortune, will never give up looking for her and that, in his rage, Commander Osembenga will not spare Mama, Sophie, or Josephine. Sophie, although in constant emotional pain herself, works toward her goal of undergoing an operation instead of succumbing to self-pity, as Josephine seems to when she protests that no one came to her aid when she was attacked, even though she was the daughter of the village chief. The contrast between Josephine, Salima, Sophie, and Mama Nadi ultimately underscores each woman's strength and determination to reclaim their lives from the violence that has been inflicted upon them by men.

The Lasting Impact of Trauma :

Ruined explores the reality that sexual violence continues its assault throughout a person's life. The women in the play who have been assaulted carry a heavy burden of emotional pain; although the assault itself is in the past, it is ever-present in the survivors' psyches. Sophie lives with both physical mutilation and inner agony; her method of coping with Osembenga's rough groping is to enter a dissociated, trance-like state. Josephine bears a disfiguring scar on her abdomen, and her memories of being raped and offered no aid by her neighbors lead her to angrily ridicule others, Sophie in particular. Salima is heartbroken by memories of the home and family she lost when rebel soldiers attacked her, and she ultimately takes her own life after acknowledging that men have used her body as a battlefield. Mama Nadi is unable to accept the possibility of love until the end of the play, believing herself to be unworthy because she has been "ruined." The trauma the female characters have endured continues to haunt their daily lives, leaving them unable to completely escape its legacy—though Mama's tentative dance with Christian in the final scene offers a glimpse of hope.

The Brutality of War :

The civil war engulfing the area around Mama Nadi's bar is a destructive, chaotic force. It has torn apart villages, victimized civilians, and left only devastation behind. Most notably, it has led to the rape and mutilation of the central female characters by soldiers. Kitembe and his rebel militia, who claim to be fighting against an unjust government, hate the government soldiers; Commander Osembenga, who claims to be fighting for democracy, despises the rebels. The violence increases over the course of the play, until gunfire replaces the sounds of the rainforest that normally surround Mama's bar. Even a white pastor is brutally murdered by government troops for aiding rebel soldiers—a sign, in Christian's view, that none of them are safe.

Ensuring Survival :

Much, if not most, of the action of the play is grounded in the work's primary thematic interest – an exploration of what people in a time of war

are prepared to do in order to survive. This exploration plays out in the experiences and actions of virtually all the principal characters, but perhaps most notably in the experiences and actions of the play's protagonist, Mama Nadi.

From the beginning, the play seems designed to portray Mama Nadi as doing, or being prepared to do, almost anything in order to not only stay alive, but to preserve what is most important to her: her business, which she indicates several times throughout the action is the one earthly possession she has managed to obtain and hold onto. In spite of several well-reasoned arguments against doing so, she maintains friendly relationships with individuals on both sides

9.6 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. What themes does Lynn Nottage develop in *Ruined* and how does she do so?
2. What aspects of Sophie and Salima's relationship in *Ruined* help them cope with sexual abuse?
3. What are the main objectives of the characters in *Ruined*?
4. What is the main message in *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage?
5. What are three examples of rising action in the play *Ruined*?
6. Is the play *Ruined* a melodrama or a tragedy? Why?

9.7 BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES

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