



Department of Distance Education Punjabi University, Patiala

Class : B.A.III (English Literature) Elective Semester : 6
Paper : Literary Masterpieces : Study of Classics-II
Medium : English Unit : 2

Lesson No.

Albert Camus : *The Outsider*

- 2.1 : Albert Camus : An Introduction
- 2.2 : *The Outsider* : A Critical Analysis of the Text
- 2.3 : *The Outsider* : A Critical Analysis of the Text (contd.)
- 2.4 : *The Outsider* : Some Important Topics :
 - a. Camus's Philosophy of the Absurd
 - b. *The Outsider* as a Philosophical novelOr
The Theme of the novel

***Kanyadaan* : Vijay Tendulkar**

- 2.5 : Vijay Tendulkar : Life and Works
- 2.6 : *Kanyadaan* : A Critical Study of the Text
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- 2.8 : *Kanyadaan* : Some Important Aspects
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AN INTRODUCTION

Structure

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- 11.1 Introduction to the Author : Life of Albert Camus
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11.0 Objectives :

- * to introduce the student to life and works of Albert Camus
- * to highlight the contribution of the author so as to make the student assess his place in the field of literature
- * to evaluate the student's comprehension

11.1 Introduction to the Author : Life of Albert Camus

Albert Camus, the great French philosopher, novelist and playwright was born on November 7, 1913 in the village of Mondovi, near Constantine in Algeria, into a family of working class European settlers. He was the second son of Lucien Camus, an agricultural worker of Alsatian origin and Catherine Sintès, a woman of Majorcan ancestry whose family had settled in Algeria since before 1870. Lucien Camus was killed a year after Camus's birth in the battle of Marne, and Catherine Sintès went back to live with her own widowed mother in the working class district of Belcourt in Algiers. Here with her two infant sons and other relatives she had a difficult existence. She had to work as a charwoman to provide for her family. In his first book of essays entitled *Between Two Worlds*, Camus has given a touching portrait of his mother -a gentle uncomplaining woman, whom a neglected ear infection had left partially deaf and who never learned to read or write. Although there was little display of affection or communication between Camus and his mother yet his relationship with his mother exercised a lasting influence on his works. The mother-son relationship is essential to understand two of his best known works i.e. *The Outsider* and

Cross Purpose and recurs in a possibly idealised form in the description of Dr. Rieux's relationship with his mother in *The Plague*.

Living in the poverty stricken area of Belcourt, brought up by a tyrannical grand mother and a deaf widowed mother who seldom spoke and who was too exhausted to manifest the affection that her son needed, Camus no doubt had a rough childhood and life was not easy for him. But the stark poverty and brutal suffering were amply compensated by the beauty and grandeur of the land. The beauty of the Algerian land drenched in sunlight, the sea, the beaches, the golden yellow light of the rising and setting sun enriching the landscape enraptured Camus. Germaine Breer rightly points out, "At the heart of Camus's sensitivity, imagination and thought and at the heart of his work, are the beauty of African coast and the glory of an inexhaustible sun." Camus himself has explained what the sun of Algiers and the extreme poverty of Belcourt meant to him : "Poverty prevented me from thinking that all is well under the sun and in history; the sun taught me that history is not everything." So, if Camus was brought up in destitution, he was no prisoner of poverty. He was conscious both of pain and poverty of life and of the beauty and bounty of the land and he tried to strike a balance between the man and the earth. The misery of masses living in poverty pained him but the beauty of nature pleased him.

From 1918 to 1923 Camus attended a primary school at Belcourt where his first teacher Louis Germain immediately saw in him an exceptionally intelligent pupil. He helped Camus to prepare for the scholarship examination that enabled Camus to continue his studies. During school days, football and swimming were his principal occupations and in college also his greatest passion was athletics. But in 1930 he fell ill with tuberculosis. The experience of the disease made him aware of the dark side of human life. The personal agony made him realise the uncertainty of life and taught him to look at the never-ending spectacle of human suffering.

The illness also compelled him to give up his original intention of pursuing an academic career. He could not take up a teaching job because he was disqualified in the medical examination. He then turned to journalism. His journalism mainly deals with political and social problems of his times and shows him as a keen critic of the society in which he lived. These political articles show him as a rebel against the injustices and abuses which existed in French Algeria. These articles also make it clear that he was a practical reformer and not as a doctrinaire revolutionary that he approached the problems of his age.

Camus joined the Communist party in 1934 but left it in 1935 in disgust with its cynical political opportunism. When World War II came, Camus like all

other artists and intellectuals was in great despair. With the collapse of many hopes and beliefs, the whole world was shaken. Camus could not actively fight against the aberration of times as a soldier because of his ill health yet he was a combatant who fought against injustice and cruelty through his articles. He joined the French Resistance movement during the occupation of France and even after the liberation of France, as editor of *Combat*, he continued to write articles on social and political themes.

During War days, Camus observed the breakdown of humanism by violent forces of War and saw the whole world caught in the web of violence. All this made him experience a sense of disillusionment, alienation, estrangement and spiritual vacuum. His sense of despair at a certain extreme point made him aware of the absurdity and irrationality of human existence. As a result Camus in his works presents what has been described as his philosophy of absurd. But if experience of war made him describe life in terms of its absurdity, his experience of the Resistance Movement taught him to adopt an attitude of protest and revolt. Thus absurdity of human situation and the revolt of man against this absurd condition become the major themes of Camus's works.

Camus was awarded Nobel Prize in 1957 for his important literary production which with clear sighted earnestness illuminates the problem of human conscience of our time. On January 4, 1960 Camus was killed in a car accident. The man has died but the creative artist still lives.

11.2 Self Check Exercise -I

Q.1 When was Camus born ?

Q.2 Write about Camus's mother.

Q.3 What was the effect of Algerian land on Camus ?

Q.4 Why did Camus leave the communist party ?

Q.5 How did Camus become aware of the absurdity of human existence ?

11.3 Works of Albert Camus

Books of Essays :

Between and Between : Camus's first volume of essays entitled *Between and Between* was published in 1937. The five essays of this book are both a praise to the physical existence and a sombre meditation on its transitoriness. Germaine Bree rightly points out that these essays "combine brief vignettes of Algerian working class milieu with an orchestration of two fundamental and contradictory themes: the nothingness that lies at the heart of human life and the glory of that life itself." The very title of the book suggests the contrast of related opposites i.e. the joy and despair of life. Towards the end of the book, Camus makes a statement: "There is no love of life without despair about life" and this statement sums up the theme of these essays.

Noces: Camus's second publication *Noces* (1939) contains four essays which are personal in expression and feelings. Here he seems to be more enthusiastic about the physical life and its pleasures. In fact, the rich, colourful life in Algeria, with its appeal to all senses is the major theme here. Camus in these essays writes with lyrical intensity about the beautiful face of the world and about his own Sun drenched youth amid 'the vast libertinage of nature.' But in this volume of essays also there are hints of Camus's consciousness of transitoriness of life and certainty of death. Camus emphasizes the mathematical certainty of death and man's desperate efforts to find deliverance from the idea that death is final and complete. A tension and an effort to strike a balance between the painful reality of human existence and the radiant glory of nature is clearly visible in these essays.

These two volumes of essays belong to pre-war years. Then came World War II and the experience of these war years made him shift his emphasis to the fate of living man rather than contemplate 'the eternal sky.' The acute awareness of human agony and death experienced against a background of plentitude offering no spiritual consolation made him aware of what he later called 'the absurd'. This absurdity of human condition, this state of opposition between man and universe is the theme of Camus's philosophical book *The Myth of Sisyphus*, his novel *The Outsider* and his plays *Caligula* and *Cross Purpose*. All these works belong to what Camus himself has termed in his Note books 'Sisyphus : the Cycle of the Absurd.'

The Myth of Sisyphus : Published in 1942, the book is an analytical study of Camus's concept of the absurd. Camus here probes human situation, i.e., the predicament of man in quest of rational meaning in an irrational world and concludes that what is absurd is this "confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart." It is the insoluble opposition between what is and what man desires which gives rise to the absurd. Camus then discusses suicide-both physical and philosophical-as a probable means of ending this absurd but rejects it vehemently. Finally he comes to the conclusion that if "the absurd is true, we must preserve it, it can only be preserved as a constant act of revolt". Then Camus gives the myth of Sisyphus. Sisyphus was condemned by gods to futile and hopeless labour. Yet because he was conscious he could retain dignity. "The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

The Outsider : As this novel is prescribed for you, we shall discuss it in detail in the proceeding lessons.

Caligula : Written in 1938 and first performed in 1945, it is a play in four acts. Camus in this play has used many details of historical Caligula's life but his

motive is not to write a historical play. He takes the situation of Caligula after his sister's death and with its help dramatises the absurd and the disastrous nihilism to which one may be led after one's awareness of the absurd. Caligula after his sister's death realises that there is too much pain and suffering in this world. All of a sudden he realises the miserable truth. "Men die and they are not happy." He is disturbed not by the personal loss of Drusilla but by the implications of this fear that men are destined to die. Drusilla's death is only a symbol of human condition. Once he realises the truth of human condition, i.e., the limitation of earthly happiness and the certainty of death, he wants to force this truth on his subjects. The result is that he creates a nightmarish world of violence and terror. In fact, Camus in this play investigates the consequences of a nihilistic response to the absurd.

Cross Purpose : This play also deals with the absurdity of existence and helplessness of human beings to achieve happiness in the face of this absurdity. In this play Camus creates a modern tragedy and contemporary myth about the nature of man's existence in this world. This play is considered to be the most pessimistic and the blackest work of Camus but Camus declared that it was not proper to consider the play as a piece of despair. Here Camus makes use of the folk tale of the son who comes back home after years abroad, hides his identity from his mother and sister and is finally murdered by them. This folk tale appealed to Camus because of the image it presents of the men caught in the web of absurdity. In a universe controlled by the absurd, misunderstandings, injustices, exile and death are inevitable. In the play both Martha and Jan have their intimations of the absurd through their sense of exile and alienation.

Thus we have seen that in the above mentioned works Camus deals with the theme of absurdity. But description of absurdity for Camus is not an end in itself. When faced with the absurdity, one has to choose between collaboration and resistance and Camus chose to rebel and protest. It is this revolt against human condition which is the theme of Camus's novel *The Plague*, his essay *The Rebel* and his plays, *The Just* and *The State of Siege*. These works are grouped by Camus under the heading, 'Prometheus : The cycle of revolt'.

The Plague : In this novel, published in June 1947, Plague is a symbol -a multi- dimensional' symbol. It symbolizes the Nazi occupation of France and Europe, and when Nazi occupation is put into wider historical context, plague becomes the symbol of all social and political tyrannies. Its symbolism extends further and it becomes the symbol of evil in general. It is also a symbol of the absurd human condition. But in this novel emphasis is not on

plague or on occupation or the absurdity of human situation but on fight against it or on resistance and rebellion. Dr. Rieux who organises the fight against the plague symbolizes one positive way of meeting the absurd. It is the sense of revolt against sickness and death or we can say war and absurdity that gives courage to Dr. Rieux and his men to carry on the struggle.

The Rebel : In this essay Camus points out that confronted with this irrational, unjust and uncomprehensible situation, what man can do is to rise in rebellion and thus try to bring about order and unity. A rebel for Camus is a man who says 'Yes to justice and at the same time No to injustice'. The rebel by his act of protest comes out of his solitude and establishes solidarity with all men. Camus also makes a distinction between the rebel and the revolutionary and his sympathies are with the rebel who fights against injustice which follows the path of absolutism. The revolt undertaken in the name of absolute freedom or absolute justice is not an authentic revolt but a perversion of it. True rebellion has limited aims. Camus also gives a history of modern revolutions and finally asserts that a rebellion based on limits and moderation and carried out in the name of sanctity of all life will definitely take us beyond the tunnel of darkness i.e. nihilism.

The Stage of Siege : In this play using the symbol of the plague, Camus presents the incorporation of the absurd into social and political action. Here again emphasis is on revolt and non-acceptance as solution to the absurd.

The Just : Based on an actual instance of Russian terrorism that took place in 1906, this play is the story of 'fastidious assassins'. Kaliayev and his comrades are idealistic revolutionaries who hate violence and murder. In their fight against tyranny, sometimes they are forced to consent to murder but in such cases they are willing to offer their lives for the lives they have taken. Against the terrorism of limits, we have also the absolute terrorism represented by Stephen. Camus in this play makes it clear that he is in favour of a revolt based on the idea of moderation and not of absolutism.

The Fall : Camus believed, "In the absurd experience, suffering is individual. From the first moment of revolt it is adventure of all." Thus, beyond the absurd, the points emphasized by Camus are solidarity, love, respect for mankind, compassion and sympathy. But Camus hated self satisfied virtue. So in his third novel, *The Fall*, published in 1956, Camus points out that a man can be corrupted by too much virtue as well as by too much vice. In its six parts, this novel describes the life and attitude of Jean-Baptist Clamence, 'Judge penitent.' He is relating the story of his fall to an unnamed shadowy listener who finally turns out to be an eminent Parisian lawyer. He falls from his 'rodent perfection' and lofty role in the Parisian world and comes to the

dark streets, dingy bars and black rooms in Amsterdam where he now exercises the self imposed function of 'judge penitent' and in accusing himself, he accuses all men.

Exile and Kingdom : The volume of short stories entitled **Exile and Kingdom** published in 1957 is Camus's last creative work. All the stories of this volume deal with the theme of separation or exile, but Camus also points out that exile and kingdom are inseparable-both exist as two sides of the same coin. The kingdom is the exile and exile is a path towards kingdom.

Thus we have seen that there is in Camus's work a pattern of thought and evolution. Camus himself noted that his work was evolving around certain successive themes-at the beginning the Theme of Sisyphus: absurdity, then the theme of Prometheus: revolt, later the theme of Nemesis : measure and the theme of love which Camus left underdeveloped because of his sudden death. Secondly, though all his works are rooted in French soil of a particular time yet they transcend their historical period. This is because Camus in all his work is as timeless as the earth itself. That is why Germaine Breer has grouped all his works under the "Cautionary Tales for our Time and All Time."

11.4 Self-Check Exercise -II

- Q.No.1 What is the theme of Camus's book of essays *Betwixt and Between* ?
- Q.No.2 What is the theme of Camus's second book of essays *Noces* ?
- Q.No.3 What has Camus analysed in *The Myth of Sisyphus* ?
- Q.No.4 Is Camus's *Caligula* a historical play ?
- Q.No.5 What does plague symbolize in Camus's novel, *The Plague* ?

11.5 Answers to Self-Check Exercises

11.5.1 Answers to Self-Check Exercise-I

1. Camus was born on November 7, 1913.
2. Camus's mother, Catherine Sintès was a gentle, uneducated, partially deaf, uncomplaining woman. Her circumstances forced her to work as a charwoman to provide for the family.
3. The land of Algeria with its beauty and grandeur taught Camus that poverty, suffering and pain are not the whole truth about life. It is just one half-the other half is the beauty and bounty of the earth.
4. Camus left communist party in 1935 because he could not tolerate the political opportunism of the party.
5. Camus became aware of the absurdity of human existence when he gained experience of human agony and death (specially during war years) and felt that even beauty of earth could offer no consolation in face of suffering and pain.

11.5.2 Answers to Self-Check Exercise - II

1. The theme of Camus's book *Betwixt and Between* is the transitoriness of human life and the glory of physical existence.
2. The theme of *Noces* is physical life and its pleasures, though at places Camus shows his consciousness of the pain of life.
3. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus has analysed his concept of the absurd.
4. Camus's *Caligula* is not a historical play. Here he has used a few details of historical *Caligula*'s life to dramatise his philosophy of the absurd.
5. In Camus's novel *The Plague*, Plague symbolizes Nazi occupation of France and Europe, all social and political tyrannies, evil in general and the absurd human condition.

LESSON NO. 2.2

**ALBERT CAMUS : *THE OUTSIDER*
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT PART-I**

Structure

12.0	Objectives
12.1	Introduction to the novel <i>The Outsider</i>
12.2	A Critical Analysis of the text Part-I
	12.2.1 Part I, Division I
	12.2.1.1 Some comments
	12.2.2 Part I, Division 2
	12.2.2.1 Some comments
12.2.3	Part I, Division 3
	12.2.3.1 Some comments
12.2.4	Part I, Division 4
	12.2.4.1 Some comments
12.2.5	Part I, Division 5
	12.2.5.1 Some comments
12.2.6	Part I, Division 6
	12.2.6.1 Some comments
12.3	Self-Check Exercise : Activity for the Student
12.4	Answers to Self-Check Exercise
12.5	Summing Up

12.0 Objectives :

- * to introduce the student to the novel *The Outsider*.
- * to critically analyze Part I of the novel.
- * to evaluate the student's comprehension.

12.1 Introduction to the Novel : *The Outsider*

Camus's first novel, *The Outsider* written in 1939-41, was first published in Paris in 1942. In his critical article on Sartre's *Nausea*, Camus writes, "A novel is never anything but a philosophy put into images" and in his own first novel, he has described his philosophy of the absurd in non-conceptual terms. What he has described in philosophical terms in his *The Myth of Sisyphus* is described in terms of narrative in *The Outsider*. The hero, who is also the narrator, is a

young Algerian named Meursault. The whole novel deals with Meursault's attitude to life and things around him. It is this attitude, an attitude of complete indifference to everything except immediate physical sensations, that makes him a stranger or an outsider.

This novel which is so "well written" and which raises profoundly disturbing questions about man's situation in the universe is considered by critics to be a great book- "an exciting, uncomfortable and queerly impressive."

12.2 A Critical Analysis of the Novel : Part-I

(The novel is divided into two parts and each part is further divided into sections which are numbered) :

12.2.1 Part-I Division I

The novel opens with the words : "Mother died today or, may be yesterday: I can't be sure. The Telegram from the Home says : Your mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow, Deep Sympathy."

So Meursault has received the news of his mother's death. His mother was staying in the Home for Aged Persons at Marengo, some fifty miles from Algiers. Taking leave for two days and wearing a black tie and a mourning band, he goes to attend the funeral of his mother. Reaching the Home, he asks the door porter to allow him to see his mother but the porter directs him to the warden. The warden keeps talking to him for sometime and finally says, "I suppose you'd like to see your mother ?" Meursault gets up without replying and follows the warden. The warden stops outside the entrance of a small low building which is the mortuary. Meursault goes inside and the porter too comes there to unscrew the lid of the coffin so that Meursault can see his mother. Meursault asks the porter not to do so. The porter naturally is surprised at his behaviour and eyes him with suspicion. The porter brings coffee for him. Meursault wants to smoke but he is not sure whether he should smoke or not in the presence of the dead body. "I thought it over, really it didn't seem to matter" and so he smokes. Soon the other inmates of the Home, his mother's friends come to keep vigil with him beside the body. In the morning when it is time for them to leave, they all shake hands with Meursault. The funeral procession starts. It is very hot and the sky is so dazzling that Meursault can not even raise his eyes. At the funeral, everything is done with a rush and also with 'precision and matter of factness'.

12.2.1.1 Some Comments :

In the first division of Part I, we meet Meursault. The way he reacts to the news of his mother's death shocks the people with conventional values. At the funeral he shows no sadness or regret and feels only the physical

inconveniences of watching over her body and following the hearse to the cemetery under the burning sun. He fails to realise that according to the established norms of the bourgeois society he is expected to express certain sentiments and emotions at his mother's death. But he remains indifferent- he can maintain his attitude of indifference even when faced with the death of his dear mother as towards the conventional attitude of mourning which no doubt is unauthentic.

12.2.2 Part I, Division 2

A day after the funeral (which is Saturday) back in Algiers, Meursault goes for swimming. There he meets a girl, Marie Cardona whom he knows slightly. In the evening he takes her to see a Fernandel film and at night they both go to Meursault's flat. Meursault goes to bed with her that night. When he wakes up, Marie has already left. He stays in bed till noon, gets up and takes his lunch. Then for want of anything to do, he just picks up an old newspaper and reads it. He spends the rest of the day watching people moving on in the street. When it is dark and the street lamps are on, he feels tired of watching people and vehicles moving in the streets. He goes down to buy something for his dinner. When he comes back it occurs to him, "somehow I'd got through another Sunday, that mother now was buried and tomorrow I'd be going to work as usual. Really, nothing in my life had changed."

12.2.2.1 Some Comments :

The way Meursault behaves on just a day after the funeral seems shocking. He fails to understand that according to the norms of the society, he must let some time pass after the death of his mother before establishing a relationship with a girl. But his indulgence in sex a day after his mother's funeral can not be taken as his gross animalism. It is also not a typical human failure. What Camus wants to emphasize here is his indifference to everything except physical sensations.

12.2.3 Part-I, Division 3

The next day, he goes to his office. He clears the pile of bills waiting on his desk. Before leaving for lunch, he washes his hands. He enjoys doing this at midday. In the evening, it is less pleasant because the roller-towel because of being used by so many people becomes sopping wet. After his usual routine work in the office, he goes home. In the hall, he meets old Salamano, a man who lives on his floor. The man has his dog with him. In fact, this man and his dog are inseparable, Salamano takes the dog out for a walk twice a day at eleven and at six. "You can see them in the rue de Lyon, the dog pulling his master along as hard as he can, till finally the old chap misses a step and nearly falls. Then he beats his dog and calls it names." (p.34). It has been going like this for eight years and people in the neighbourhood

considering it to be 'crying shame' want to do something about it. But so far nothing has been done and Salamano and his dog, so much alike, continue to detest each other and to torture each other.

Meursault also meets another man who lives on his floor. His name is Raymond Sintes. "The general idea here about is that he is a pimp. But if one asks him what his job is, he says he's a warehouse man" (p.35). Raymond invites Meursault for dinner and together in Raymond's room, they eat and drink. Raymond talks about his problem and wants Meursault to help him. Actually he suspects his Arab mistress of infidelity and wants 'a real stinker' that will get her on the row and at the same time make her repent. Then when she comes back, he will spit on her face and throw her out. Raymond wants Meursault to write the letter for him and Meursault does so. This pleases Raymond. Taking leave of Raymond, Meursault comes back to his room.

12.2.3.1 Some Comments :

In this division of Part I, we see Meursault getting involved in the affairs of his fellow lodger Raymond who wants to punish his prostitute mistress. Meursault, to whom all actions are equivalent, immediately agrees to help him and writes the letter. Though he becomes involved in the sordid affair of Raymond yet he shows himself indifferent to friendship and to the social convention of truthfulness as he is to love. Tied to his dull routine, where there is nothing remarkable, Meursault is conscious of the fact that neither life nor anything in it has any meaning and in such a mood, naturally the absurd hero moves towards indifference. So Meursault's indifference to everything in life is highlighted here.

12.2.4 Part-I, Division 4

Meursault has a busy routine in the office throughout the week. He goes to the picture twice with Emmanuel and on Saturday Marie comes to meet him dressed up in a very pretty dress. Together they board the bus and go to a beach some miles out of Algiers. They enjoy their swim in the pleasantly tepid water. Then they come back to his flat and go to bed. As Marie is free next morning, she agrees to have her lunch with Meursault. He goes down to buy some meat. On his way back he hears a woman's voice in Raymond's room and also finds Salamano grumbling at his dog. He tells Marie about Salamano's habits and she laughs. Meursault kisses her and a moment later when she asks him if he loves her he remarks that sort of question has no meaning for him and perhaps his answer to her question is in the negative.

Just then in Raymond's room the row starts and outside they can hear the woman screaming and Raymond bawling at her. In a moment there is a crowd on the landing. Soon a policeman comes there and makes Raymond open the door. The woman is allowed to go away and Raymond is ordered to stay

in his room till summoned to the police station.

Marie leaves after lunch. Raymond comes to Meursault's room and they talk about the way he had punished his mistress. Together they go for a walk. Raymond wants Meursault to act as his witness. Meursault agrees to be his witness and tell the police that the girl had let him (Raymond) down. When they are coming back they see Salamano searching for his dog. The old man is worried that the police may not kill his dog. Meursault tells him that stray dogs are kept at a pound at the police station for three days and owners can get their dogs back on some payment. Salamano goes to his room and Meursault hears him weeping. Without eating anything Meursault goes to bed.

12.2.4.1 Some Comments :

In this division, we find that Meursault's life is nothing more than a humdrum routine of Rising tram, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm." (*The Myth of Sisyphus* p. 18). The whole week, Meursault thinks, passes in a mechanical way. Nothing unique or remarkable happens and on Sunday when he meets Marie, she asks him if he loves her. He considers this question to be meaningless. He shows no more affection or feeling for her than he had shown for his dead mother. He indicates his indifference to love. An average man no doubt sheds tears at the death of his mother, and does not feel happy at the thought of romantic love. But Meursault is different -different because of his indifference to these things.

12.2.5 Part-I, Division 5

Raymond rings Meursault up at his office and invites him to spend the next Sunday at the little seaside bungalow of his friend. When Meursault tells him that he has already promised to spend Sunday with his girl friend, Raymond invites her also. He also informs Meursault that he has been followed by some Arabs, one of them being the brother of the girl he had the row with. He wants Meursault to pass him the word if he (Meursault) happens to see someone hanging round the house.

Meursault is called by his employer and he is offered a promotion and transfer to Paris. But Meursault's reply is "I don't care much one way or the other." (p.48). His employer calls the transfer 'a change of life' but Meursault's belief is that one never changes one's real life and "one life was as good as another." Meursault sees no reason to change his life. As a student he had plenty of ambition but when he had to drop his studies, he realized that "all that was pretty futile."

In the evening Marie comes and asks if he would marry her. He agrees to do so if she is keen on it. But he tells her that he doesn't love her and as far as marriage is concerned, he does not consider it to be a serious matter or a thing

of any importance. He simply agrees to marry her if she wants. At this Marie calls him 'queer fellow'.

When Marie leaves, he goes to dine at Celeste's restaurant. There a woman comes and sits at his table. The way she behaves makes Meursault think of her as the 'little robot'. He feels attracted by her and follows her for a short distance.

When Meursault comes back, he meets Salamano. Salamano comes with him to his room and tells him how after his wife's death, feeling lonely he had taken a pup as a companion. Now when he has lost his dog, he again is feeling lonely. Salamano also talks about Meursault's mother and tells him that people in the street say nasty things about him (Meursault) for he had sent his mother to the Home. All that Meursault says is that since he could not keep her with him he had sent her to a Home.

12.2.5.1 Some Comments :

In this part again Meursault's indifference to the so called important things of life is mentioned. He is not delighted at the prospect of a possible promotion and transfer to Paris. Such minor things as the pleasant dryness of a hand towel at midday and its clamminess in the evening attract his attention but a possible promotion and transfer do not excite him. Similarly when Marie asks him to marry her, he accepts with the calm remarks that it is all same to him. Usually we measure the meaningfulness of a man's life from his success in love, marriage and vocation. But Meursault is indifferent to all these three things. In a way by rejecting love, marriage and success in vocation, the three major social categories of affirmation, he opts out of society. The refusal to conform does not make him a rebel-it simply makes him an ordinary, commonplace routine-bound entity or non-entity. Yet in a way he is representative of mankind. Meursault, a stranger to the world, points to the fate of everyman as an exile in the indifferent world. Meursault, a stranger among men, shows that man is essentially alone though he lives in society.

The 'little robot' woman whom he meets at Celeste's restaurant appears to be an extreme version of Meursault's own self. That's why he is attracted towards her and follows her for some distance. She is the pure embodiment of that mechanical world in which he lives.

Salamano's relationship with his dog also highlights the absurdity of human situation. He loves and hates his dog at the same time. He beats and abuses the dog when it is with him but sheds tears when it is lost. He had taken it as a companion when it was a pup to escape his loneliness and now that it has been lost, he again feels lonely. There is no escape from loneliness -it is existential reality.

It is Sunday. Marie wakes Meursault up and both go down in the street and wait for Raymond to join them as all of them have to go to the sea-side bungalow of Raymond's friend. On the previous evening Meursault had gone to the police station in order to give evidence for Raymond about his mistress's having been false to him. The police without checking Meursault's statement let Raymond off with a warning.

Though the beach is within easy walking distance they plan to take the bus. Just as they are starting for the bus-stop, they see some Arabs lounging against the tobacconist's window. Raymond observes that one of them is the brother of the girl whom he had beaten.

Meursault, Marie and Raymond get down the bus just outside Algiers from where the beach is not far off. They go to the house of Raymond's friend named Masson. Meursault, Marie and Masson go for swimming. Meursault and Marie swim side by side enjoying every moment. They go back to Masson's house to have their lunch. After lunch Marie stays with Mme Masson while Raymond, Masson and Meursault again come to the beach for a short walk. There they notice two Arabs, in blue dungarees coming in their direction. There is a fight on the beach in which one of the Arabs draws a knife and Raymond is cut on the arm and face. He is taken to a doctor and his wounds are bandaged.

Meursault and Raymond again go to the beach and the two Arabs are still there. Raymond has his revolver and he and Meursault discuss whether to shoot the Arab who had wounded Raymond. Meursault advises against shooting in cold blood and Raymond gives his revolver to Meursault.

Then all of a sudden the Arabs disappear and Raymond goes back and Meursault alone walks on the beach in the noon day glare and heat. He again spots the Arab on the beach and the Arab draws his knife. Meursault becomes conscious "only of the cymbals of the sun" lashing on his skull and of "the keen blade of light flashing up from the knife" scarring his eyelashes and going into his eyeballs. His grip on the revolver tightens and finally the 'trigger gave.' The Arab dies and Meursault feels "I know I'd shattered the balance of the day, the spacious calm of this beach on which I had been happy." (p.64). But he fires four more shots into the inert body and each shot is 'another loud, fateful rap' on the door of his undoing. Here Part I of the novel comes to an end.

12.2.6.1 Some Comments :

In this division of Part I, we again find Meursault giving importance to physical sensations. He, accompanied by Marie, goes for swimming and both of them like natural pagans find delight playing games in the water. The colours, lights and sensations of the external world provide joy to Meursault.

Meursault kills the Arab but he does not say that he pulled the trigger. Rather

he says, "the trigger gave way." The sun and sea strongly personified as living creatures exercise an overwhelming influence on him. The sun strikes with cymbals on his forehead and the sea engulfs him in its hot breath. The sea and the sun, the objects of his enthusiasm, now compel Meursault to commit the crime. So the murder is not preplanned. Rather it is a chance murder - irrational, inexplicable and gratuitous. In this absurd world where sensations and objects are important, they are also ambivalent.

The first shot may be the result of solar agony or climatic and physiological conditions but the other four shots that he fires into the inert body cannot be called involuntary. Perhaps the first shot which is a chance happening brings Meursault out of the slumber and he becomes aware of the absurd and other four shots symbolise both his acceptance of the absurd and a revolt against it. We see in him the absolute indifference which is essential in an absurd hero but till this moment, he lacks the absurd hero's full awareness of the absurdity.

12.3 Self Check Exercise : Activity for the Student

1. Who is the hero of the novel ?
2. Where was Meursault's mother staying ?
3. How does Meursault react to the news of his mother's death ?
4. Why does Raymond want to punish his mistress ?
5. What is Meursault's response when he is offered a promotion and transfer to Paris ?
6. Why does Marie call Meursault a 'queer fellow' ?
7. What are the four major events that are described in Part I of the novel ?
8. What happens at the end of Part I ?

12.4 Answers to Self-Check Exercise

1. Meursault, a young Algerian, is the hero of the novel.
2. Meursault's mother was staying in the Home for Aged Persons at Marengo, some fifty miles from Algiers.
3. On receiving the news of his mother's death, Meursault does not express any sentiments or emotions. He takes leave for two days, wears black tie and a mourning band and goes to attend the funeral of his mother. Even when faced with the fact of his mother's death, he maintains his attitude of indifference.
4. Raymond wants to punish his mistress because he suspects her of infidelity.
5. When Meursault is offered a promotion and transfer to Paris by his employer, he calmly declares that he does not care for such things. This 'change of life' does not attract Meursault, for he believes that one never changes one's real life and secondly he doesn't care much

- one way or the other.
6. Merusault declares that he does not love Marie and doesn't consider marriage to be a thing of importance. Yet he is ready to marry her if she wants. At this Marie calls him 'a queer fellow'.
 7. The four major events described in Part I of the novel are, the death of Meursault's mother, his relationship with Marie, his meeting with his employer and his involvement in the affairs of his neighbour Raymond.
 8. At the end of Part-I of the novel, Meursault kills the Arab with the revolver of Raymond that he has in his hand. He fires four more shots into the inert body of the Arab.

12.5 Summing up

Dear Student,

We have seen that in Part I of the novel, Camus presents the everyday and commonplace existence of his young Algerian hero, Meursault, an office clerk. His mother's death, his affair with Marie, his meeting with his employer about a new assignment in Paris and his relationship with his neighbour Raymond are the four major incidents given in this part of the book. It is the fourth incident i.e. Meursault's involvement in the affairs of Raymond that finally leads to the murder of the Arab by Meursault. So Meursault is the absurd hero, who is caught up in the everyday existence and breaks the harmony of nature. The second part of the novel is just a follow up of the murder that Meursault commits.

LESSON NO. 2.3

**ALBERT CAMUS : *THE OUTSIDER*
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT (contd.)**

Structure

13.0	Objectives
13.1	A Critical Analysis of the text Part-II
13.1.1	Introduction to Part II
13.1.2	Part II, Division I
13.1.2.1	Some comments
13.1.3	Part II, Division 2
13.1.3.1	Some comments
13.1.4	Part II, Division 3
13.1.4.1	Some comments
13.1.5	Part II, Division 4
13.1.5.1	Some comments
13.1.6	Part II, Division 5
13.1.6.1	Some comments
13.2	Self-Check Exercise : Activity for the Student
13.3	Summing Up
13.4	Answers to Self-Check Exercise
13.5	Short-Answer questions (solved examples)

13.0 Objectives :

- * to critically analyse Part II of the novel.
- * to give some examples of the text based short-answer questions.
- * to evaluate the student's comprehension of Part II of the novel.

13.1 A Critical Analysis of the Text Part-II

13.1.1 Introduction to Part-II

The second part of the novel is subdivided into five parts. As we have already seen, at the end of Part I, Meursault shoots the Arab and then fires four more shots into his inert body. Now when Part II begins, he is under arrest. Let us see how he takes up his arrest and how he behaves during his trial.

13.1.2 Part II, Division I

In the first division of the Part II of the novel, Meursault tells us that while under-arrest, he is questioned several times. In the beginning these examinations take place at the police station and nobody seems to be taking these very seriously. But after a week, he is brought before the examining Magistrate who wants to know if he has engaged some lawyer to defend him. When Meursault replies in the negative, the Magistrate tells him that in that case the court will have to appoint one for him. Meursault does not take the Magistrate seriously. It all appears to him like a game.

Next day, a lawyer comes to his cell and tells him that his case needs a cautious handling and assures him that there is every prospect of his getting off if Meursault follows his advice. The lawyer has already made some investigations regarding Meursault's private life and knows about his mother's death and how he behaved at his mother's funeral. The lawyer warns him that such reports of his apparent indifference or callousness at his mother's funeral might prejudice the jury against him. The lawyer wants to know if Meursault had felt grief on the 'sad occasion' of his mother's death. Meursault considers this question to be an odd one. All that he can truthfully say is that he had been 'quite fond of mother' but then adds, "but really it did not mean much. All normal people... had more or less desired the death of those they loved at some time or another." These words shock the lawyer and he asks Meursault not to say anything of that kind at his trial. Rather he wants Meursault to say that on the day of the funeral he had kept his feelings under control. But Meursault refuses to do so as 'it wouldn't be true'. So he refuses to lie or to allow lies to be told on his behalf.

Later in the day Meursault is again taken to the examining Magistrate who asks him bluntly if he had loved his mother. 'Yes' replies Meursault, 'Like everybody else.' The Magistrate also wants to know why Meursault had continued to fire at a prostrate man but Meursault remains silent. When Meursault tells him that he doesn't believe in God, the Magistrate who is a Christian becomes angry. All that Meursault wants is to get rid of him as this conversation bores him.

Meursault is brought before the Magistrate many times more and each time the same questions are repeated and Meursault is asked to simplify his statements. His case continues and because of these repeated interviews, the Magistrate too becomes friendly with him.

13.1.2.1 Some Comments :

In this section of Part II, we find Meursault maintaining his attitude of

detachment and indifference even after he is arrested on the charge of murdering the Arab. He is still preoccupied with his own sensations and is reluctant to pretend the feelings which he does not have. He never thinks of pleading self-defence when accused of the murder of the Arab, expresses no remorse or feeling of guilt about his victim. When he is warned by his lawyer that the reports of his indifference at his mother's funeral might spoil his case, he refuses to say that on the day of the funeral he had dominated his natural feelings simply because 'that would not be true.' So he has the honesty not to pretend to the feelings which he does not at that moment have. His honesty even worries those who have to deal with him.

We also come to know that Meursault does not believe in God. The examining Magistrate after having waved a crucifix in Meursault's face in an attempt to bully him into repentance is really thrown off balance by Meursault's calm refusal to express his belief in God. In fact, it is Meursault's refusal to disguise what he feels and thinks in hypocritical phrases that leads to his condemnation.

13.1.3 Part II, Division 2

Meursault is in prison and Marie comes to meet him. Because of the distance between the prisoners and the visitors, he has to raise his voice while talking to Marie. Marie keeps on smiling and tells him that they mustn't lose hope and everything will come right and then they shall get married and they will go bathing again on Sundays. Before leaving, she even throws him a kiss.

Later on, he receives a letter from Marie and he comes to know that she is not allowed to meet him as she is not his wife. This makes him realize that his prison cell is his "last home, a dead end". Though he suffers less than others but his habit of thinking like a free man proves irksome. The very thought of beach, the sound of ripples, the smooth feel of water on his body and the wonderful sensation that it gives makes him realize the cruel narrowness of his prison cell.

This phase lasts for a few months only. Afterwards he starts thinking like a prisoner i.e. he has 'prisoner's thoughts.' He also remembers one of his mother's pet ideas that "in the long run one gets used to everything". (p.50) Meursault also slowly adapts himself to his new life. He learns to kill time through his trick of remembering things and secondly by sleeping for long hours. He learns how to remember and becomes capable of spending hours simply making a mental list of all the objects in the room where he used to live. He asserts that if he had been made to live imprisoned in a tree trunk, the sight of the sky above him would have been sufficient reason for remaining alive.

So with his memories, long hours of sleep and readings of the scrap of newspaper that he finds underneath his mattress, somehow his days slip by.

He also develops the habit of self-talk. Perhaps that's what a lonely man can do - there is no other way to escape loneliness.

13.1.3.1 Some Comments:

In this division of Part II, we see how Meursault gets used to his life in the prison and recovers from his initial unhappiness caused by his loss of liberty. He comes to realize that were a man to have lived for only a day, the memories he acquired would be sufficient to enable him to live a hundred years in prison without ever getting bored. Like the absurd artist he tries to repeat and mime reality that he can not conquer. So we find the absurd hero adapting himself to his condition - for him there is neither flight nor recourse. Meursault's imprisonment symbolises man caught in a hostile world.

13.1.4 Part II, Division 3

Meursault's trial starts. It is a sunny day, and the court room, where he is taken in the police van, there is a crowd of people in addition to the members of Jury, lawyers and journalists. When Judges enter the room, it is announced that the hearing would now begin. The names of the persons who are to appear as witnesses are announced. From among the court rise one after the other, Raymond, Masson, Salamano, the door keeper from the Home, Old Perez, Marie and Celeste. On the basis of what Meursault says during his examination and what these people who appear as witnesses say, it is revealed that Meursault had declined to see his mother's body, that he had not wept on her death, that he had smoked cigarettes and slept and drunk coffee in the presence of the body, and that he and Marie had gone to bed together on the day after the funeral. The whole court is indignant at all such revelation and the prosecutor emphasizes that all these things show Meursault's callousness. Meursault's lawyer says, "Is my client on trial for having buried his mother or for killing a man?" But prosecutor finds a vital link between these two things and with vehemence declares, "I accuse the prisoner of behaving at his mother's funeral in a way that showed he was already a criminal at heart" (p.97). These words have their effect on the jury and the public and Meursault's lawyer feels nervous and from this Meursault gathers that the things are not going well for him.

After this incident the court rises and as Meursault is being brought back to his cell, he thinks of the evening hour, the hour that he always loved in the past. During this hour what awaited him was a night of easy dreamless sleep but now when he is returning to his cell what awaits him is a night haunted by the fears of the coming day.

13.1.4.1 Some Comments :

Here we come to know about Meursault's attitude of indifference and

detachment during his trial. The Courtroom is over-crowded and he sees the crowd only as 'a mere blur of faces'. He fails to recognize the faces of Raymond, Celeste, Salamano and even Marie who all form a part of that crowd. When chargesheet is read, all that he makes out of it is some familiar names of the people and places.' During his examination, he keeps on repeating that his killing of the Arab was a mere chance happening 'a matter of pure chance.' When the prosecutor on the basis of what witnesses say, tries to prove that the way Meursault behaved at his mother's funeral indicates that he was already 'a criminal at heart' and that he killed the Arab 'coldbloodedly', Meursault does not make any protest. At no time is he sufficiently interested in the proceedings in the courtroom to make more than a very perfunctory attempt at self justification. What attracts his attention are the different colours of the fans used by the members of Jury and Judges to keep themselves cool, the sunlight and the sounds coming in from the street and the subtle changes which reflect the progress of the day outside. When he is being taken out of the court room, he becomes conscious of the feel of summer evening out of doors, that he once loved and enjoyed but immediately he realises that though the hour is the same, 'the evening hour' but now he is prisoner condemned to pass a night haunted by the fears of the coming day.

13.1.5 Part II, Division 4

In the court room, in the speeches of Meursault's lawyer and the prosecutor, more is said about Meursault's personally than about his crime. Meursault finds no great difference between two speeches. Counsel for defence pleads homicide but with 'extenuating circumstances' whereas the prosecutor agrees that Meursault is guilty but he denies 'extenuating circumstances'. In the beginning Meursault is tempted to say something but he controls himself because his lawyer has advised him not to say any thing.

The prosecutor refers to Meursault's heartlessness at his mother's funeral, his inability to state his mother's age, his visit to the beach and his relationship with Marie. Then he comes to the subject of Meursault's relation with Raymond and insists that Meursault had provoked the brawl with Raymond's enemies and had finally killed the Arab. He particularly stresses that Meursault had killed the man, "fully aware of what he was doing" (p.100) and that he has, in the course of the court proceedings, not uttered any word of regret. Thus, according to the prosecutor, the accused has no soul and nothing human about him. He finally concludes, "This man has, I repeat, no place in a community whose basic principles he flouts without compunction. Nor, heartless as he is, has he any claim to mercy." (p.102)

Meursault tries to explain that there is no doubt that he has killed a man but the only explanation that he is prepared to give of his act is that he killed the Arab 'because of the sun' and that he fired in a desperate attempt to escape the heat that was pouring down on him from the sky.

The court for defence argues that for 'one tragic moment he lost his self control' should not earn Meursault the death sentence, but Meursault is finally sentenced to death.

13.1.5.1 Some Comments :

We find Meursault maintaining his attitude of detachment throughout his trial refusing all opportunities to weep over his mother's death and express histrionic remorse for the man he has killed, and consequently he is sentenced to death. He makes no attempt to defend himself and the only explanation that he gives for his act is that he killed because of the sun. This explanation for him represents the absolute truth of why he acted as he did. When Meursault is finally sentenced to death, we feel that this death punishment is given not so much for the crime of murder that he has committed but because he refuses to follow the pseudo values of bourgeois society. He refuses to make pretensions, exaggeration, illusions of his values and for this society considers him to be monster or menace. The murder of the Arab gives society an excuse to condemn Meursault to death for his denial of love, marriage and motherhood, institutions vital for the survival of society. His death by guillotine becomes necessary not because he has killed a man but because the society is affronted by his nakedness. Society rejects and sentences him to death because he is a stranger, who threatens to awaken humanity to the awareness of its reality. If Meursault had made the usual insincere noises of contrition over his mother's death and of repentance over the wanton murder, he might not have been sentenced.

13.1.6 Part II, Division 5

Meursault is shifted to another prison cell. In this cell, lying on his back, he can see the sky. So he spends his time watching the slowly changing colours of the sky as the day moves on to night. All that he does is to 'gaze up and wait'.

His days in the prison sharpen his thoughtfulness and he comes to take refuge in a hope of some escape from the legal machinery. The only thing that interests him now is "the problem of circumventing the machine, learning if the inevitable admits a loophole" (p.107). Meursault pictures himself as a free man who goes to see the 'show' (execution) and comes home and vomits. Another fancy of Meursault in the prison is to frame new laws, altering the penalties. He thinks that the criminal must be given a chance if only 'a dog's chance.' But finally he comes to the conclusion that for the man condemned to death by guillotine, there is no chance at all, absolutely none.

Meursault spends his night waiting for the dawn-the usual hour when 'they' come. For him the worst period of the night is that vague hour and he spends this hour listening intently to the tiny sounds. But when he doesn't hear any footsteps, he considers himself lucky. This makes him remember his mother's words, "however miserable one is, there's always something to be thankful for." Each morning when the sky brightens and light comes to his cell, he agrees with his mother. Then during the day he thinks about his appeal. First he assumes that his appeal is dismissed and this makes little difference whether one dies at thirty or three-score ten, he prepares himself for dismissal of his appeal. Then he considers the other alternative i.e. that his appeal is successful. This thought gives rise to a rush of joy which is hard to control.

Meursault refuses to see the prison Chaplain who 'comes' to console him with a hope of life after death and the salvation which religion promises. But when Chaplain walks in unannounced, Meursault feels irritated. He tells the Chaplain that he doesn't believe in God. "Your heart is hardened. But I shall pray for you," the Chaplain tells Meursault. Suddenly something in Meursault snaps and he yells at the top of his voice and insults the Chaplain. "I'd taken him by the neckband of his cassock and in a sort of ecstasy of joy and rage, I poured out on him all the thoughts that were simmering in my brain... Actually I was sure of myself... sure of my present life and of the death that was coming." (p.118). Meursault also tells the Chaplain that none of his certainties was worth "one strand of a woman's hair."

The Chaplain leaves and Meursault becomes calm again. Somehow he feels exhausted and goes to sleep. When he wakes up, it is already night. He thinks of his mother and now it seems to him that he understands why she had played with the idea of taking a fiance and seemed ready to start life all over again while on the brink of death. Meursault too feels ready to start life all over again. "It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope and... for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe" (p.20). He passionately defends the life that he has led, a life with no transcendent value, absurd in itself, but which is the only value to which he can cling. He realises that he had been happy and that he would like to live it all over again. He hopes 'for all to be accomplished and for me to feel less lonely' there will be many people at his funeral and they will greet him with cries of hatred.

13.1.6.1 Some Comments :

In this last section of the second part of the novel, we see imprisoned Meursault awaiting his execution. Certainty and inevitability of death and the hollowness and meaninglessness of the hope for immortality and heavenly refuge offered by the Chaplain awaken Meursault to an awareness of the absurd. With his full

awareness of the absurdity, he refuses to escape reality. He realises that his execution is the fate awaiting all men—all human beings are condemned to death. Such details and phrases in this last section of the novel call to mind Camus's description of the 'absurd universe' in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. They suggest that Meursault's real enemy is not the bourgeois society of Algiers but the inevitable force of death in the universe. At the end Meursault attains a harmony with the universe that has condemned him. We see him arriving at a point from which he can look back on his life as a completed entity. He accepts his life as a value in itself, in accepting this value he accepts his death as the culmination of his own individually. Accepting the natural world as the source of all happiness necessitates accepting death. Man rebels but he reaches a final consent.

13.2 Self Check Exercise : Activity for the Student

- Q.1 Does Meursault engage a lawyer ?
- Q.2 How, according to the police, did Meursault behave at his mother's funeral ?
- Q.3 What does the lawyer want Meursault to say in the court regarding his behaviour on his mother's funeral ?
- Q.4 Why does the Magistrate get angry with Meursault on their first meeting ?
- Q.5 Why is Marie not allowed to meet Meursault in the prison ?
- Q.6 Give names of the persons who appear as witnesses.
- Q.7 How does Meursault spend his nights in the prison ?
- Q.8 How does Meursault spend the day in the prison?
- Q.9 How does Meursault feel when he gains full awareness of absurdity ?
- Q.10 Is Meursault happy at the end of the novel ?

13.3 Summing Up:

Dear Student,

We have analysed the Part II of the novel. We have seen that the whole of it deals with Meursault's imprisonment and his trial. Meursault imprisoned, symbolises man caught in a hostile world. In prison Meursault becomes less self assured and less able to communicate with others. His only protest against his imprisonment is his sterile effort to remember every detail of his room. So we find him trying hard to repeat and mime an external reality that he cannot otherwise conquer. In prison, he sees himself as a Sisyphus condemned to a never ending futile task. When finally he is condemned to death, he thinks of the loopholes-possibility of eluding the wheels of justice either through escape or through pardon. But for Meursault, who is the incarnation of the absurd man, there is no escape. The prison Chaplain's offer of a hope of life after death and salvation through religion do not attract him. Finally it is only by refusing hope, any kind of hope, that Meursault gains his freedom and can enjoy life in his cell. He is able to

experience the sheer intoxication of being alive simply because he accepts death and total indifference of the world around him. "He is saved by that which destroys him."

13.4 Answers to Self Check Exercise

- Q.1 No, Meursault does not engage any lawyer. So the court appoints a lawyer for him.
- Q.2 According to the police, Meursault had shown 'great callousness' at his mother's funeral.
- Q.3 Meursault's lawyer wants him to say in the court that on the day of his mother's funeral, he had kept his emotions and feelings under control.
- Q.4 When Meursault says that he doesn't believe in God, the Magistrate who is a Christian, becomes angry.
- Q.5 Marie is not allowed to meet Meursault in the prison as she is not his wife.
- Q.6 Raymond, Salamano, Perez, Marie and Celeste appear as witnesses in the court.
- Q.7 During his imprisonment, Meursault spends the nights waiting for the dawn that he considers to be the worst hour.
- Q.8 Meursault spends his days in the prison thinking about his appeal, considering the consequences of two possibilities i.e. the dismissal and acceptance of his appeal.
- Q.9 When he gains awareness of the absurd, Meursault accepts life with all its meaninglessness and the certainty and inevitability of death.
- Q.10 Yes, Meursault is happy at the end of the novel because by accepting the absurd he gains harmony with the universe.

13.5 Short Answer Questions : Some Solved Examples

- Q.1 How does Meursault adapt himself to his new life in the prison ?
- Ans. In the beginning Meursault is unhappy at the loss of his liberty. When his desire for woman or for cigarettes is not fulfilled, he feels miserable but soon the craving for these things disappear and he no longer feels irksome. Now the problem is how to kill time. This problem too is solved when he learns the trick of remembering things. He becomes capable of spending hours simply making a mental list of all the objects in his room, visualizing every piece of furniture and each article upon or in it and the every detail of each article and finally the details of the details. He comes to realise that memories of a single day are sufficient for a man to enable him to live a hundred years in prison. Then his long hours of sleep also help him to pass time. He sleeps for sixteen to eighteen hours and the rest of time he 'fills' with his memories or by reading the scrap of newspaper that he finds stuck on the underside of his mattress. The concrete

experience that the prison offers also helps him to fill time. The daily walk and the visits of his counsel whose vari-coloured ties are a diversion in the routine, are the things he waits for. By adapting himself to his condition in prison, Meursault refuses to suffer.

Q.2 What is Meursault's attitude during his trial ?

Ans. Throughout his trial, Meursault maintains the attitude of detachment and indifference. In the beginning he finds it interesting to hear himself being talked about but soon he loses all interest in it. The court proceedings, the speeches of the prosecutor and of the counsel for defence occasionally interest him as a stage production but after some time, he feels bored wishing only to return to his cell to sleep. During his trial he makes no attempt at self justification and refuses to lie about his feelings. He refuses to play the game that everyone else plays and he is all the more irritating because he keeps on repeating, "I'm just like everyone else"- which is true as regards his feelings but not his words. He refuses all opportunities to weep over his mother and express remorse for the man he has killed and it is for this attitude of indifference to conventional reactions that everyone - lawyer, prosecutor and judge alike see him as a 'stranger'.

Q.3 How does Meursault react to the prison Chaplain's offer of the hope for an after-life ?

Ans. Meursault refuses to meet the prison Chaplain but one day the Chaplain comes to his cell unannounced. The Chaplain comes with his suggestion of heavenly refuge and consolation of religion. These things sting Meursault into violent affirmation that this life alone is certain and that in it the inevitability of death obliterates all significance. He yells at the priest telling him that none of his certainties was worth one strand of a woman's hair. The Prison Chaplain appears to serve chiefly as a means of awakening Meursault to an awareness of the absurd and its consequences. As a result of his confrontation with the Chaplain he becomes sure of his present life and of the death that awaits him.

LESSON NO. 2.4

**ALBERT CAMUS : *THE OUTSIDER*
SOME IMPORTANT TOPICS**

- A. Camus's Philosophy of the Absurd**
- B. *The Outsider* as a Philosophical Novel**
or
The Theme of the Novel
- C. Title of the Novel**

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Some Important Topics
 - 14.1.1 Camus's Philosophy of the Absurd
 - 14.1.2 Self-Check Exercise : Activity for the Student-I
 - 14.1.3 *The Outsider* as a Philosophical novel
 - Or
 - The Theme of the Novel
 - 14.1.4 Title of the Novel
 - 14.1.5 Self-Check Exercise : Activity for the Student-II
 - 14.1.6 Answers to Self-Check Exercises
 - 14.1.6.1 Answers to Self-Check Exercise-I
 - 14.1.6.2 Answers to Self-Check Exercise-II

14.0 Objectives :

- * to discuss Camus's philosophy of the absurd.
- * to discuss some important philosophical issues given in terms of the narrative in the novel *The Outsider*.
- * to discuss the theme of the novel so as to enable the student to critically analyse the novel.
- * to discuss the title
- * to evaluate the student's comprehension

14.1 Some Important Topics

14.1.1 Camus's Philosophy of the Absurd

In the twentieth century, writers with an urge to diagnose the human predicament, present the world as devoid of all values and man's existence in

it as meaningless. It is this view that has produced the feeling and concept of absurdity portrayed by Camus. It is true that the idea of absurdity is not new. It has not been discovered or established by Camus or Sartre or for that matter by any of the writers writing about the absurdity of life in twentieth century. One can turn to Sophocles, or Shakespearean's tragedies to find a sense of wholeness, completeness and coherence represented as an ideal but unattainable condition. Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* raises questions about human existence in the universe and Shakespeare's *King Lear* is an inquiry into the meaning of existence - a presentation of man's loneliness in a storm-tossed universe. The basic concerns of the writers of the absurd such as Camus, Kafka and Sartre are loneliness, exile, alienation and meaninglessness but these concerns were taken into consideration by the writers in the past also. All we can say is that these concerns have become basic to the writers of the absurd in the twentieth century.

In all the writings of Camus, we find two basic convictions. The first is that the world is foreign to the understanding and the desires of man but it is at the same time his home. The second is that death is the final inescapable reality of human life. Out of the realisation of the irrationality of the world and certainty of death comes the awareness of the absurd, for these two facts of human condition provide the irrefutable proof of the absurdity of human life. It is this concept of the absurd that Camus has discussed at length in *The Myth of Sisyphus* from a theoretical point of view and has presented imaginatively in *The Outsider*, *Caligula*, *Cross Purpose* and *The Plague*.

In the preface to *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus writes, "The fundamental subject of *The Myth of Sisyphus* is this: "It is legitimate and necessary to wonder whether life has meaning; therefore, it is legitimate to meet the problem of suicide face to face." The book declares that, "even within the limits of nihilism, it is possible to find the means to proceed beyond nihilism." Camus makes a distinction between the feeling of the absurd and conviction of the absurd. The feeling of the absurd forms the basis of the conviction of the absurd.

The term 'absurd' as defined by **The Random House Dictionary of the English Language** (1972) has been derived from the Latin word 'absurdus' which means dissonance. In usage, the word has come to assume meanings such as "contrary to all reasons or commonsense, illogical, ridiculous or untrue." The word has musical connotations as well where it means 'out of harmony'. But this is not the only sense in which Camus uses the word. He defines the absurd as the 'divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting'. The man and the world, though in close contact with each other, stand diagonally opposed to each other. Man has desire for unity, an appetite for absolute, a wish for clarity and

is in search of truth. But the world is opaque and defies all rational explanation. So, man's longing for happiness and reason gets no response from the irrational world. It is this confrontation of the rational man and the irrational world that is absurd for Camus.

Human beings become conscious of the absurdity while going through their normal routine life. There are certain situations in life such as when asked by someone what we are thinking about, our answer is 'nothing', and this immediately pushes us into an awareness of 'that odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent, i.e., we have our first revelation of the absurd. Most of us keep on living for years together without thinking about the meaning or motive of life. But sometimes, the chain of our mechanical life is suddenly broken by the simple word 'why' and we come to realise the reality of existence. So, the awareness of the mechanical nature of life gives rise to the feeling of the absurd.

The vision of the absurd is also gained from the realisation of the passage of time and its destructive nature. The feeling of the strangeness of the world is another manifestation of the absurd. Not only does the outer world and other people seem alien but our own image in the looking-glass itself becomes a stranger to us and this alienation from our own self provides an intimation of the absurd. Lastly, one experiences the absurd in the awareness of one's mortality and inescapability of death.

Thus, we can see that mechanical nature of our day-to-day existence, a bitter sense of time passing, the alienation felt through loss of illusions, the feeling of separation from others and our own self and finally, the certainty of death are different aspects of the feeling of the absurd.

In fact, absurdity for Camus is the exile of man in the era of the death of God, and once man is assailed by the feeling of the absurd he is disturbed by such questions, why this mechanical life ? What is the use of this daily routine ? What is the worth of living ? And to ask these questions is to ask for meaning, unity and coherence and this desire of man is bound to be frustrated. Man yearns for unity but finds chaos, man longs to comprehend the world but is faced with essential mystery of the world, man is in love with life but finds death to be inevitable and "it is from the clash between our desire for complete explanation and the essential opacity of the world that the absurd is born."

Now, the question arises-what is the rational way open for a man out of his predicament of rational and authentic human life. In the midst of irrational and meaningless world, Camus considers two solutions. First is suicide, Camus rejects it because it is only a way of escaping the absurdity, not a solution to it. With the death of a single individual, the absurd is

destroyed for that particular individual but the feeling of the absurdity continues to live. Moreover, if we contemplate suicide, we are put in the absurd situation of sacrificing our only concrete value i.e. our life. The second solution is philosophical suicide, i.e., man can attribute reason, purpose or meaning to the world which, in reality, are non-existent. But such a false solution would reject man's rationality. We cannot get rid of the absurd by an ignorant leap of faith, and so, Camus rejects it.

Refusing to resort to false solutions such as physical suicide or philosophical suicide, Camus asserts that the real question is, how to live in this absurd world. Instead of escaping the absurd, man must live authentically with it as it is the truth of human situation. "What I believe to be true, I must, therefore, preserve." Life is to be lived even if it has no meaning. The meaninglessness of life should not lead us to believe that it is not worth-living. Man must revolt against the absurd, and revolt is not refusal to accept the absurd but a decision to live keeping it constantly before us. It is the revolt which gives life its value. It is the first consequence of man's confrontation with the absurd. Other consequences of the absurd discussed by Camus are freedom and passion.

Camus then describes his hero of the absurd, Don Juan, the actor, the conqueror and the artist. At the end of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus gives his own version of the myth of Sisyphus. Sisyphus hates gods and death but is passionately in love with life. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death and his passion of life become the cause of his penalty in which his whole-being is exerted accomplishing nothing. The burden of Sisyphus's task, his suffering is matched by happiness. "The struggle towards the height is, itself, enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (**The Myth**, p.111).

Camus's absurd heroes are attached to life in spite of all the odds-and so, we cannot call them nihilistic. A nihilist is indifferent to life, whereas, Camus' heroes opt for life. In fact, Camus has given a message to the broken, crushed and dejected man of twentieth century to acknowledge the fact of the absurdity of existence without flying into the arms of God since ours is a godless universe and after acknowledging the facts refuse to be paralysed by it. "Man must create happiness in order to protest against unhappiness." Thus, Camus's message is a message of courage in despair.

Dear Student,

We have discussed Camus's philosophy of the absurd as given in *The Myth of Sisyphus* in detail because understanding of this philosophy is essential to understand the theme of *The Outsider* and to measure the real scope of the novel. What is expressed in terms of philosophy in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is

expressed in terms of narrative in the first novel of Camus. Let us now take up the novel and see how this philosophy is depicted there.

14.1.2 Self-check Exercise : Activity for the Student-I

- Q.1 What has Camus discussed in the book **The Myth of Sisyphus** ?
- Q.2 What according to Camus are the two basic facts of human condition ?
- Q.3 How do human beings become conscious of the absurdity of existence ?
- Q.4 What according to Camus is the authentic solution to the problem of absurdity ?

14.1.3 The Outsider -As a Philosophical Novel

Or

The Theme of the Novel

In his critical article on Sartre's *Nausea*, Camus writes, "A novel is never anything but a philosophy put into images," and his own first novel *The Outsider* published in 1942, has been described by critics as a narrative, imaginately depicting his philosophy of the absurd. Andre Maurois describes this novel as "the Myth of Sisyphus lived." The theme of the novel is the experience of the absurd, consciousness of the meaninglessness of existence and heroic response to this. In the beginning of the novel, we see the everyday and common-place existence of a young Algerian, Meursault, an office clerk. His mother dies and he goes for the funeral. At the funeral, he has no sadness or regret, and feels only the physical inconvenience of watching over his mother's dead-body and following the hearse to cemetery under the burning sun. The day after the funeral, he meets Marie, a young typist, takes her to see a comic film and goes to bed with her that night. He goes for work, meets Marie on Saturdays, lies in bed on Sundays, is too lazy to go and buy his bread, eats his eggs straight out of the pan, smokes cigarettes. He experiences neither painful grief nor rapturous love. One can't even say, he is bored, he just lets time pass. He is just frittering his existence. In short, he is an absurd man before rebellion caught up in the net of everyday life.

Meursault gets involved in the affairs of his next-door neighbour, Raymond and as a result of a series of accidents finds himself with a revolver in his hand standing on a beach facing an Arab. Almost unconscious, under the burning sun, he kills the Arab. He is arrested, thrown into prison and put on trial. He remains detached, totally indifferent during his trial. Everyone-the lawyer, the prosecutor and the judge alike-finds him to be a 'stranger' because he refuses to lie. He refuses to pretend to the feelings he does not have. He is not prepared to give to the examining magistrate any motive for his crime except that he shot 'because of the sun', he refuses to repent, admits that he has no belief in

God, and gives an honest account of his activities and feelings during and after his mother's funeral. The society, based on respectable lies, judges him as a 'moral monster' and rejects him because he doesn't want to be one of them. So, he is sentenced to death.

The prison Chaplain comes to meet him and tells him to repent and prepare his soul for immortality. Meursault shouts at the priest and defends the life that he has led - a life with no transcendent values, absurd in itself but which is the only value to which he can cling. With his acceptance of life and death, Meursault finds peace and a sense of harmony with the external world.

Thus, Meursault who has been a slave to the hell of everyday, pushing his rock by refusing hope and the conventional solace of religion gains his freedom and can enjoy life even in his hell. He finds meaningless existence worth-living. Meursault is not an unconscious hero as some critics try to project him, but a consciously absurd man. No doubt, in the beginning, he seems to be an unconscious creature of habit, contented with a banal daily routine totally indifferent to such things as love, marriage and promotion. When he rejects his employer's offer of a job in Paris, he hints at an earlier experience that shaped his attitude, "As a student, I'd had plenty of ambitions of the kind he meant. But when I had to drop my studies, I very soon realised all that was pretty futile." (*The Outsider* p.48). Because he realises that he can not impose a meaningful pattern on life, he consciously rejects economic or social ambition. So, this earlier experience of his life had made him aware of the meaninglessness of existence and this awareness in its turn made him indifferent to things which society values. But full awareness of the all absurd comes at the end of the novel, when the prison Chaplain comes to him and Meursault shouts and yells at him. The preaching of the Chaplain awakens Meursault to the full-awareness of the absurd and its consequences. He is ready to start life all over again. "It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and... for the first time. I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe." (p.127)

Towards the end of the novel, he says, "from the dark horizon of my future a sort of slow persistent breeze had been blowing towards me, all my life-long, from the years that were to come. And on its way that breeze had levelled out all the ideas that people tried to foist on me in the equally unreal years. I then was living though." (p.118). This 'slow persistent breeze' is the sense of the absurd which makes him realise that nothing really has any importance. And when full awareness of the absurdity comes, he refuses to escape reality and believes in facing the certainty and senselessness of death.

So, we see that Meursault living a life of habitual day-to-day action, i.e. a life of dull routine becomes a symbol of the Sisyphus man. Just as Sisyphus is condemned to eternal punishment of futile and hopeless task of pushing the rock and watching it fall down and pushing it again to the summit, modern man is condemned to the deadening routine. In the deadening routine, of course, is the modern image of the absurdity of human condition. In his imprisonment, Meursault symbolises man caught in an inescapable network of an irrational world. When he is condemned to death, he becomes a symbol of every man's ultimate fate since all are to die.

Albert Maquet calls Meursault as 'Mr. Anybody' but we can also say that he is Mr. Everybody, for his fate is the fate of any man and every man. He is the symbol of modern man condemned to a pointless, meaningless and absurd existence and equally absurd death-there is nothing in and beyond this existence that can give any meaning to human actions. But once the rational man in this irrational world becomes fully aware of the reality of existence, i.e. the absurdity and meaninglessness of life, he gains a kind a lucidity-a state which is achieved by Meursault at the end of the novel.

Meursault as presented by Camus is not a 'piece of human wreckage' he is not a representative of contemporary demoralisation'. Rather he is an Algerian in 'love with the sun that leaves no shadows', and at the same time one of the 'absurd men' who are fully described in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. There is a line in *The Myth of Sisyphus* "a temporary employee at the Post-office is the equal of a conqueror if both have the same consciousness of their fate." Meursault who becomes conscious of the absurd, conscious of the futility of hopes and ambitions, and of mathematical certainty of death is a character who in the novel, becomes an embodiment of the absurd.

Thus, we see that the whole novel is first and foremost a statement about the absurdity of human existence. In non-conceptual terms through the experience and attitude of Meursault, its hero, the novel conveys the feeling that can arise from the fact that reason is unable to reduce the world to rational categories, that man is alienated in a world which he cannot truly 'know' and that neither life nor anything in it has any meaning. Though in life, nothing has any importance or everything is equally meaningless, yet for Camus, life with its absurdity, with its certainty and finality of death is the only value worth-preserving. Man must opt for life, must accept both life and death and in this way, he can strike a balance with the external world.

14.1.4 Title of the Novel:

L'Etranger, Camus's first novel, published in 1942, was originally written in

French. Its English translation, published in England, has the title *The Outsider* whereas the American edition bears the title *The Stranger*. The novel is a brief narrative in which the main character Meursault tells us, in first person, the events leading up to his conviction to death for having killed another man. The title of the novel at once highlights the situation and attitude of its narrator. It is Meursault who is an outsider, a stranger, and since the novel is about Meursault, about the events and experiences of his life, it is apt to entitle it as *The Outsider* because the word 'outsider' appears to be the most suitable word to describe Meursault.

When the novel begins, his mother has just died and he goes to attend the funeral. At the funeral, he shows no sadness or grief. He fails to realise that according to the conventional norms of the society, he is expected to express certain sentiments and emotions at his mother's funeral. But he can maintain his attitude of indifference even when faced with the death of his mother. Then he gets involved with Marie but does not love her. When Marie asks him if he loves her, he considers the question as meaningless. To him, even marriage is not a serious matter. When he is offered a chance of promotion by his employer, the change has no appeal for him.

Thus, we see that Meursault is indifferent to love, marriage and success and because of his indifference, he is considered to be an outsider by the society. Because of his indifference to the conventional norms of society, he becomes a stranger.

He maintains the same attitude of indifference and detachment during his trial. His lawyer, the prosecutor and the judge all see him as a 'stranger' because he refuses to lie about his feelings. Meursault refuses to play the game that everyone plays and so, is considered an intruder, an outsider and when this outsider by his indifference, threatens to awaken society to its reality, society rejects him, i.e., condemns him to death.

John Cruckshank is of the opinion that prior to his trial, Meursault is not conscious of his alienation. No doubt, he has a vague feeling of being ill-adjusted in society. He is aware of the fact that both his boss and his girl-friend, Marie find him odd or queer in some ways. So, in the first half of the novel, Meursault appears to be an outsider to society or to the reader and not to himself. But at his trial, when the court of law and the society which it represents cling to concepts and absolutes which have no foundation in reality and which have no meaning in the eyes of Meursault, he feels alienated. Faced with death, when Meursault recognizes the absurdity of existence—he becomes stranger to society and a stranger to himself. But one thing must be pointed out here. Meursault's

indifference is not towards life but only towards those emotions to which society attaches importance. Meursault who refuses to play the game of the society, realising the emptiness of the rules becomes an outsider. And because of his failure to conform to social norms, the society sentences him to death. In his preface to the American University edition, Camus writes: "The hero of my book is condemned because he does not stick to the rules." So his indifference to the moral code and values of society becomes the cause of his condemnation.

In his essay, "An explication of *The Stranger*", Sartre writes, "... the stranger is the man confronting the world... . The stranger is also a man among men. There are days when you find that the person you loved has become a stranger." The stranger is finally, myself in relation to myself, that is, natural man in relation to the mind. The hero of Camus's novel is a stranger to the world, to the society and to himself. So, the title of the novel as *The Outsider* is to sum up the situation and attitude of its main character in one word.

There is something in the style of the novel also that depicts Meursault as an outsider. The novel is written in first person but the narrator - hero Meursault speaks of him and of his experiences as though he were speaking of a stranger and indeed, he is a stranger to himself, or alienated from self. But this outsider at the end, after his affirmation that this life is the only value that we have, experiences a kind of grandeur which was experienced by Christ and Sisyphus in their loneliness. The novel that deals with Meursault's alienation or for that matter with essential loneliness of man or with the theme of man as stranger and to himself is aptly entitled *The Outsider*.

14.1.5 Self-Check Exercise : Activity for the Student-II

- Q.1 What is the theme of the novel ?
- Q.2 Why do people consider Meursault to be a stranger ?
- Q.3 Why is Meursault considered to be a symbol of the Sisyphus man ?
- Q.4 What does the title of the novel highlight ?
- Q.5 How, according to Camus, can man strike a balance with the external world ?

14.1.6 Answers to Self-Check Exercises

14.1.6.1 Answers to Self-Check Exercise-I

- 1. In his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus has discussed his concept of the absurd from a theoretical point of view.
- 2. According to Camus the two basic facts of human condition are the irrationality of the world where man is condemned to live and the certainty of death.
- 3. Human beings become conscious of the absurdity of existence when

they become aware of the mechanical nature of life, of the passage of time and its destructive nature, of the alienation from the world and from self and finally of the certainty of death.

4. According to Camus when faced with the absurdity of existence man must not resort to physical or philosophical suicide. Rather man must accept the absurd as the truth of human condition and must try to preserve it by constantly revolting against it.

14.1.6.2 Answers to Self-Check Exercise - II

1. The theme of *The Outsider* is the experience of the absurd, consciousness of the meaninglessness of existence and response to this.
2. People consider Meursault to be a 'stranger' because he is 'indifferent to conventional norms of society'.
3. Meursault is considered to be a symbol of the Sisyphus man because in the novel he is presented as living a life of dull routine or a life of habitual day-to-day action. Like Sisyphus who was condemned to eternal punishment of futile task of pushing the rock and watch it fall down, Meursault in the novel is condemned to meaningless routine.
4. The title of the novel highlights the situation and attitude of its narrator hero Meursault. He is an outsider, a stranger.
5. According to Camus, man can strike a balance with the external world by accepting both life and death and by opting for life.

Suggested Questions (Long)

1. Comment on the title of the novel *The Outsider*.
2. Describe how Meursault, leading a life of habitual day -to-day actions, finally becomes fully conscious of the absurd.
3. For Meursault the absurd is essentially the result of his awareness of his own mortality. Explain.

Suggested Questions (Short)

1. How does Meursault react to the news of his mother's death ?
2. How does Meursault get involved in the affairs of Raymond ?
3. In what circumstances does Meursault shoot the Arab ?
4. What explanation does Meursault give of his act of killing the Arab ?
5. Comment on the importance of physical sensations in Meursault's life.
6. Why does Meursault want crowds to greet him on the morning of his execution with cries of hatred ?

Vijay Tendulkar : Life and Works

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was born on January 7, 1928 in a Bhalavalikar Saraswat Brahmin family in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. His father held a clerical job and ran a small publishing business. The literary environment at home prompted young Vijay to take up writing. He wrote his first story when he was six. He grew up watching western plays, and felt inspired to write plays himself. When he was eleven, Vijay wrote, directed and acted in his first play. He participated in the 1942 freedom movement, leaving his studies. This alienated him from his family and friends. Writing then became his outlet, though most of his early writings were of a personal nature, and not intended for publication.

15.2 Early Career: Tendulkar began his career with writing for newspapers. He had already written a play, *Amchyavar* Kon. Prem Karnar ("Who Will Love Us?"), and he wrote the play, *Gruhastha* ("The Householder"), in his early 20s. It did not receive much recognition from the audience, and he vowed never to write again. Breaking the vow in 1956 he wrote *Shrimant*, which established him as a good writer. *Shrimant* jolted the conservative audience of the times with its radical storyline, wherein an unmarried young woman decides to keep her unborn child while her rich father tries to "buy" her a husband in an attempt to save his social prestige.

Tendulkar's early struggle for survival and living for some time in tenements (chawls) in Mumbai provided him first-hand experience of the life of urban lower middle class. He thus brought new authenticity to their depiction in Marathi theatre. Tendulkar's writings rapidly changed the story line of modern Marathi theatre in the 1950s and the 60s, with experimental presentations by theatre groups like Rangayan. Actors in these theatre groups like Shreeram Lagoo, Mohan Agashe, and Sulabh Deshpande brought new authenticity and power to Tendulkar's stories while introducing new sensibilities in Marathi theatre.

Tendulkar wrote the play, *Gidhade* ("The Vultures") in 1961, but it was not produced until 1970. The play was set in a normally collapsed family structure and explored the theme of violence. In his subsequent plays, Tendulkar explored violence in its various forms: domestic, sexual, communal, and political. Thus, *Gidhade* proved to be a turning point in Tendulkar's writings with regard to establishment of his own unique writing style.

Based on a 1956 short story, *Die Panne* (Traps) by Friedrich Durrenmatt, Tendulkar wrote the play, *Shanlala ! Court Chalu Aahe* ("Silence! The Court Is In Session"). It was presented on the stage for the first time in 1967, and proved as one of his finest works. Satyadev Dubey presented it in movie form in 1971 with Tendulkar's collaboration as the screenplay writer.

15.3 Later Works: In his 1972 play, *Sakharam Binder*, Tendulkar dealt with the topic of domination of the male gender over the female gender. The main character,

Sakharam, is a man devoid of ethics and morality, and professes not to believe in "outdated" social codes and conventional marriage. He accordingly uses the society for his own pleasure. He regularly gives "shelter" to abandoned wives, and uses them for his sexual gratification while remaining oblivious to the emotional and moral implications of his exploits. He justifies all his acts through claims of modern, unconventional thinking, and comes up with hollow arguments meant in fact to enslave women. Paradoxically, some of the women which Sakharam had enslaved buy into his arguments and simultaneously also badly want freedom from their enslavement.

In 1972, Tendulkar wrote another, even much more acclaimed play, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, which dealt with political violence. The play is a political satire created as a musical drama set in 18th century Pune. It combined traditional Marathi folk music and drama with contemporary theatre techniques, creating a new paradigm for Marathi theatre. The play demonstrates Tendulkar's deep study of group psychology, and it brought him a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship (1974-75) for a project titled, 'An Enquiry Into the Pattern of Growing Violence in Society and Its Relevance to Contemporary Theatre'. With over six thousand performances thus far in its original and translated versions, *Ghashiram Kotwal* remains one of the longest-running plays in the history of theatre.

Tendulkar also wrote screenplays for the movies *Nishant* (1974), *Akrosh* (The Cry) (1980), and *Ardh Satya* (The Half-Truth) (1984), which established him as an important "Chronicler of Violence" of the present times. He wrote script for eleven movies in Hindi and eight movies in Marathi. The latter includes *Samana* (Confrontation) (1975), *Simhassan* (Throne) (1979), and *Umbartha* (The Threshold) (1981). The last one is a groundbreaking feature film on women's activism in India. It was directed by Jabbar Patel, and starred Smita Patil and Girish Karnad.

In 1991, Tendulkar wrote a metaphorical play, "Safar", and in 2001 he wrote "The Masseur". He wrote next, two novels, *Kadambari: Ek* and *Kadambari: Do*, about sexual fantasies of an aging man. In 2004, he wrote a single-act play, *His Fifth Woman* - his first play in English language-as a sequel to his earlier exploration of the plight of women in *Sakharam Binder*. This play was first performed at the Vijay Tendulkar Festival in New York in October 2004.

In the 1990s, Tendulkar wrote an acclaimed TV series, "Swayam Siddha", in which his daughter Priya Tendulkar performed in the lead role. His son Raja and wife Nirmala died in 2001, and Priya succumbed to cancer the next year. Tendulkar died in Pune on May 19, 2008, battling the effects of myasthenia gravis.

15.4 Tendulkar's Legacy: After Independence- since 1950, to be precise- the name of Vijay Tendulkar has been in the forefront of the Marathi drama and stage. His personality both as man and writer is multifaceted. It has often been puzzling and curious with a big question mark on it. In the last more than 55 years he has written stories, novels, one act plays, plays for children as well as adults. Similarly, he has done script-writing and written newspaper columns as well. And in all these fields he has created an image of his own. Thus he is a creative writer with a fine sensibility and at the same time, a contemplative and controversial dramatist. He has made a mark in the field of journalism also. Because of his highly individual outlook and vision of life, and because of his personal style of writing he has made a powerful impression in the field of literature and drama, and has given the post-independence

Marathi drama a new idiom. By doing this he has put Marathi drama on the national and even international map.

In his writing career spanning more than five decades, Tendulkar wrote 27 full-length plays and 25 one-act plays. Several of his plays have proven to be Marathi theatre classics. His plays have been translated and performed in many Indian languages.

By providing insight into major social events and political upheavals during his adult life, Tendulkar became one of the strongest radical political voices in Maharashtra in recent times. While contemporary writers were cautiously exploring the limits of social realism, he jumped into the cauldron of political radicalism, and courageously exposed political hegemony of the powerful and the hypocrisies in the Indian social mindset. His powerful expression of human angst has resulted in his simultaneously receiving both wide public acclaim, and high censure from the orthodox and the political bigwigs.

Many of Tendulkar's plays derived inspiration from real-life incidents or social upheavals. Thus, the rise of Shiv Sena in Maharashtra in the 1970s was reflected in Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*. The true story of a journalist who bought a woman from the rural sex industry in order to reveal police and political involvement in this trade, only to abandon the woman once he had no further need for her, is detailed in Tendulkar's *Kamala*. The real-life story of an actress whose acting career got ruined after her same-sex affair became public, inspired Tendulkar to write *Mitrachi Goshta*. Tendulkar also translated nine novels, two biographies, and five plays by other authors into Marathi.

Besides, Tendulkar's oeuvre includes a biography; two novels; five anthologies of short stories; 16 plays for children, including *Bale Miltat* (1960) and *Patlachya Poriche Lagin* (1965); and five volumes of literary essays and social criticism, including *Ratrani* (1971), *Kowali Unhe* (1971), and *Phuge Sobanche* (1974). All in all, Tendulkar's writings have contributed towards a significant transformation of the modern literary landscape in both Marathi and other Indian languages.

In 2005, a documentary titled *Tendulkar Ani Himsa: Kal Ani Aj* (Tendulkar and Violence: Then and Now) with English subtitles (produced by California Arts Association - CalAA - directed by Atul Pethe) was released. In 2007, a short film about Tendulkar, *Ankahin* (Director Santosh Ayachit), was released.

15.5 Awards and Honours: Tendulkar won Maharashtra State Government awards in 1956, 1969 and 1972; and "Maharashtra Gauruw Puraskar" in 1999. He was honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1970, and again in 1998 with the Academy's highest award for "lifetime contribution", the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship ("Ratna Sadasya"). In 1984, he received the Padma Bhushan award for the Government of India for his literary accomplishments.

In 1977, Tendulkar won the National Film Award for Best Screenplay for his screenplay of Shayam Benegal's movie, *Manthan* (1976). He wrote screenplays for many significant art movies, such as *Nishant*, *Akrash*, and *Ardh Satya*.

A comprehensive list of awards is given below:

- 1970 Sangeet Natak Akademi Award
- 1970 Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Award
- 1977 National Film Award for Best Screenplay: *Manthan*
- 1981 Filmfare Best Screenplay Award: *Aakrosh*
- 1981 Filmfare Best Story Award: *Aakrosh*

- 1983 Filmfare Best Screenplay Award: *Ardh Satya*
- 1984 Padma Bhushan
- 1993 Saraswati Samman
- 1998 Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship
- 1999 Kalidas Samman
- 2001 Katha Chudamani Award
- 2006 The Little Magazine SALAM Award.

15.6 *Kanyadaan*: Set in Pune, the play is about a girl born into a political family with progressive views. She marries a *Dalit* young man because she sees angst in his poetry, and sees in him the promise of delivering him from his devilish tendencies. Her father's lofty ideals have inculcated in her a spirit which tries to find good in people, and strives to change them. However, after getting married to him, she soon realizes that the devil and the poet-lover are one and the same person, they cannot be separated, neither can he be cleansed of the vices (drinking, wife-beating) that are a part of him. In fact, there is a strange malice in him, a sadistic desire to punish her for the suffering his ancestors have gone through the ages.

Finally, the father, who has taught her the lofty ideals of humanity and socialism, is defeated- he finds himself powerless before the predicament of his daughter, and has to praise his son-in-law's autobiography, applaud spewing from his mouth and poison dripping from his eyes. His daughter tells him how his great ideals, his hope in human innocence is misplaced, and how she is a victim of his faith in pursuing this promise.

As the title suggests, *Kanyadaan* deals with the theme of marriage. The problem and the consequences of the marriage Tendulkar shows are self-created. In *Kanyadaan* Tendulkar depicts the conflict between the upper-class and the *Dalits*. He criticizes the politicians on the premise that rather than removing the evil of class-distinction, they capitalize on it. He presents this evil as it is. He certainly arouses some questions in our mind but he does not bother to answer them. As a creative genius, Tendulkar does not take sides.

Nath Devlalikar is an MLA, and his wife Seva is a social worker. Their son Jayaprakash is an M.Sc student and their daughter Jyoti is an intelligent girl, influenced by her father's idealism. This upper-class Brahmin family belongs to Pune.

The play is divided into two acts. In the first scene of the first act, Jyoti informs her parents of her decision to marry Arun Athavale, a *Dalit* youth. Seva is shocked but Nath is relaxed and happy inside because he wants to break down the caste-barrier, which is his dream. He consents to the marriage although Jyoti has known Arun only for two months.

Nath wants to experiment with this marriage, which is a sort of a political act. In the second scene, Jyoti brings home Arun, who is dark and rough-looking. He is doing his BA. Jyoti is moved by his poetry; he is also writing his autobiography. Arun feels uncomfortable in "big houses". He is rude to everyone, and finally leaves. What Jayaprakash and Seva dislike most is Arun's intention to brew liquor in order to survive, if nothing else works out.

"It is a first-class profession for two persons. The man bribes the police and the wife serves customers ... this business is highly profitable If there are

children, there's work for them also, to wash glasses and plates to fetch *paan* and cigarettes. And very good income in the tips."

In the first scene of the second act, Jyoti arrives perplexed and looking unhappy. She has been married to Arun for some months. He proves to be an idler, a drunkard and a wife-beater who lives off her. She is followed by Arun, rather drunk. He asks for Jyoti's forgiveness as he has bashed her up. Jyoti leaves with him again to the consternation of her parents and brother. Nath still does not want his dream to be broken though he is aware of the plight of his own daughter.

In the second scene, Arun's autobiography gets published. It deals with the theme of oppression and exploitation of the lower classes. But the irony is that Arun himself exploits Jyoti and lives as a parasite on her. Though Jyoti is pregnant, he makes her work, abuses her parents and beats her. His ill-treatment to Jyoti is a kind of answer-back from the Dalits to the upper-class.

Arun asks Nath to deliver a public speech on his autobiography. Nath refuses, but looking at the plight of their daughter, Seva prevails upon him to agree. Nath gives a hypocritical speech by praising Arun's autobiography against his will, as he wants to prevent Jyoti from further torment and torture at Arun's hands. Jyoti, however, does not approve of her father's action and leaves his home forever. At the end, Nath the idealist is turned into Nath the realist:

"I had this maniacal urge to uproot casteism and class distinctions from our society. As a result I pushed my own daughter into a sea of misery... . If she has committed any crime it is this: she took her father's words for gospel truth. She adopted her father's values. She was guided by her father's humanism and liberalism."

As for Arun, "his visit has polluted this drawing-room, this house, and this day ... It stinks ... why did I have to come into contact with a man like this? A man like this ... why?" The play ends with Jyoti's departure, never to come back to her parents' home. "I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar now, I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don't say Harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values."

The end leaves the question of the future of Jyoti's marriage in the reader's mind. The marriage does not succeed. It is suggested that the class-divide and the conflict between the upper-class and the Dalits would continue to remain, which is very sad.

Kanyadaan is a complex play about the cultural and emotional upheavals of a family. Here Tendulkar considers an act of social upliftment and, unlike other playwrights, sets out clearly the chaotic consequences of disturbing the existing social equations.

15.7 Self Check Exercise:

Q.1 What is the main theme of the Tendulkar's play?

15.8 Answer to self-check exercise:

The writings of Tendulkar are human-centric. Through his works, he tried to bring forward anguish and sorrow of the oppressed of Indian society. It is assumed that an artist willing to produce literature should be sensible to realize human life and its perceptions because literature is blended with social life and social reality. A disproportionate social status of man and woman and the problems in the life of women arising due to the disparity are intensively assessed by Tendulkar through his social vision.

KANYADAAN : A Critical Study of the Text**16.1 A Critical Summary of the Play**

Set in Pune, the play is about a middle class family with political orientations and progressive views. Jyoti, the daughter of this family, marries a Dalit young man because she sees angst in his poetry. She also sees in him the promise of delivering him from his devilish tendencies. Her father's grand ideals have had a great influence on her. She feels that she can change or uproot evil in people and can strive to bring change in them. However, after getting married to him, she soon realizes 'that the devil and the poet-lover are one and the same person, they cannot be separated, and neither can be cleansed of the vices (drinking, wife-beating, using foul and abusive language) that are a part of him. In fact, there is a strange malaise in him, a sadistic streak to punish and take revenge of the untold sufferings of his ancestors who had been the victims of centuries of oppression and exploitation at the hand of upper castes.

Finally, the father, who has taught her the lofty and grand ideals of humanity and socialism, is defeated- all his idealism of creating a casteless society in India is completely thwarted and he finds himself powerless before the predicament of his daughter, and has to praise his son-in-law's autobiography, applause spewing from his mouth and poison dripping from his eyes. His daughter tells him in the end that all his mammoth ideals, that she had ingrained in herself were false and misplaced, but now her position is irretrievable and her stance irrevocable. She is a victim of his faith in pursuing this promise.

16.2 Structure of the play: The play is divided into two acts, each of which is further divided into scenes- Act I has two scenes, and Act II three scenes. Comparatively speaking, it is a shorter play by Tendulkar. Yet, it is the most gripping of all his plays.

16.3 Summary of the Play

Act I Scene I: The scene opens in neat and quiet drawing room of Nath Devlalikar, nearly sixty years of age, a political activist. The pictures of the political and nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Narendra Dev, Yusuf Meherali and Sane guruji give the house an ambience of being inspired by nationalist ideals. Jyoti is about twenty year old and the son Jayaparakash is about twenty three. The initial conversation between the father and the children shows that Nath is too much preoccupied with nationalist ideals and in spite of a perfect cohesion amongst the inmates of the household, there is something lacking. Seva, the mother, is still not back from the rally at Ahmednagar and Nath is in a hurry to go to attend some political meeting. There is perfect respect and love between the parents and the children and it is also apparent that they are reared on some solid human values. At the drop of the hat Nath is quoting great minds and nationalists. In fact, he is so

much caught up in speech mongering that there is a kind of blurring between idealism and reality.

But over all, the impression that one gets from the opening scene is that it is a very open-minded and liberated family. Jyoti wants to confess something, but she wants that both her parents should be there. She is waiting for her mother and when Seva comes, Nath is in a hurry and he wants that Jyoti should hurry up the matter of her confession. Both of them are still preoccupied with their personal chores.

Jyoti tells them that she has decided to marry a dalit named Arun Athavale, who is pursuing B.A., who writes poetry, who works part time in 'Sramit Samachar' and whom she met in socialist's study group. Nath is excited to hear this news of his daughter falling in love with a Dalit. He feels that his life-long commitment to the cause for upliftment of the Dalits and emergence of a casteless society in India has been fulfilled. But Seva's reaction to this is more grounded in reality. When Jyoti tells her that his parents live in a village called Chirdi near Kashad, and that Arun is second among the seven children and that he is the only breadwinner of the family and the entire responsibility of the family lies on his shoulders, Seva feels restless. She tries to advise her daughter against this marriage because of the incompatibility of their lifestyle. "... when a girl thinks of marriage, she has to look for some kind of stability. For some compatibility in life styles. After all, it is a matter of a life long relationship (K. 12) But Nath contradicts everything. Seva is shocked but Nath is relaxed and happy inside because he wants to break down the caste-barrier, which is his dream. He consents to the marriage although Jyoti has known Arun only for two months. Nath, in fact, wants to experiment with this marriage which is a sort of a political act.

16.4 Act I Scene II: In the second scene, Jyoti brings home Arun, who is dark and rough-looking. He is doing B.A. Jyoti is moved by his poetry; he is also writing his autobiography. Arun feels uncomfortable in "big-houses". He confesses "As for me, I feel safe on the street." Jyoti is shocked by his blatant confession. "Our grand fathers and great grandfather used to roam, barefoot, miles and miles, in the heat, in the rain, day and night... till the rags on their butt fell apart... used to wander, shouting 'Johaae, Maayi-baap! Sir -Madam, sweeper! and their calls polluted the brahmins' ears... surely we can't fit into your unwrinkled Tinopal world." (K.17)... Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father's hut? Without vomiting? Tell me, Jyoti, can you shit everyday in our slum's village toilet like my mother." Jyoti is disturbed by these statements (K.17) She cries, but then she pulls herself up and says, she can handle all this because she belongs to the 'seva dal tradition', she is rooted in her father's beliefs and imagines that she can erase the sufferings of this marginalized class. In fact, she is yet immature and wallows in her father's ideals. When her mother Seva and her brother Jayprakash come, they are shocked by the cruelty of his manners and speech. Seva questions him about his future plans and about how he is going to fend for himself and her daughter in future. He answers in a very crude and irresponsible manner when he says that his intention is to brew liquor in order to survive, if nothing else works out.

"It is a first-class profession for two persons. The man bribes the police and the wife serves customers... this business is highly profitable... If there are children there's for them also, to wash glasses and plates to fetch paan and cigarettes and very good income in the tips." (K. 21) Jyoti tries to relax the situation by telling her

brother and mother that he is only joking. But Seva and Jayaprakash are not intrinsically convinced. In the mean while, Nath comes and he is too excited by this prospect of his daughter getting married to a Dalit boy. He tells his wife excitedly "... Break the caste system' was a mere slogan for us. I've attended many intercaste marriages and made speeches. But today I have broken the caste system in the real sense. My home has become Indian in the real sense of the term." (K. 23)

There is a lot of conflict and argument between the husband and the wife on this issue- Seva stubbornly tries to resist, but Nath is too much imaginatively fascinated by this marriage, as he will brag among his political associates about this victory. He tries to convince his wife Seva as well about his so-called experiment.

"Look, Seva, society cannot be transformed through words alone. We have to act as catalyst in his transformation. The old social reformers did not stop with making speeches and writing articles on widow remarriage. Many of them actually married widows.

... That was also an experiment, a difficult experience." (K.28) Seva and Jayaprakash are still doubtful and Seva tries to convince Jyoti to reverse her decision which she feels she has taken in a haste, but Nath firmly endorses Jyoti's decision and tells her that if now she retraces her steps from this commitment, it would amount to 'treachery'.

"... she has given her word. It is we who are responsible for the age old sufferings of these people.... And now if Jyoti breaks her word, if she wriggles out of her responsibilities, it would be a kind of treachery. It would amount to running away from the challenge." (K. 31)

The characters seem to believe in the transformation and refusal of tradition. They are shown struggling against the caste system, the exploitation and social disparity. An artist willing to produce literature should be sensible to realize folk life and their social perception because literature is blended with social life and social reality. Revolt, refutation and expectation of social transformation are the chief features of his stories. In writings of Tendulkar we find a picture of social awareness in the present age. On the subject of untouchability, Arun openly expresses his hatred for the rich upper castes specially Brahmins. He describes their exploitation by the upper castes on the basis of caste. He describes how they live in a hell. He tells:

"Our life is not the socialists' service camp. It is hell, and I mean hell. A hell named life."

Story revolves round the vicissitudes of Human relations. The dramatist has intertwined the story by portraying sentimentality of man-woman of different strata. Using various images, he puts before the reader a stark reality of society based on caste division, exploitation of depressed class as well as woman stress, restlessness, violence making the atmosphere more mysterious and eerie. It makes a psychoanalytical study of characters. He portrays the life and attitude of people living in cities and metros. Arun revolts against the exploitation and refutes the customs and conventions. He does not lose his courage due to torture and injustice, rather he faces the situations bravely. The reality of society to which he belongs is very horrifying and monstrous. Since his birth, he has witnessed and experienced misery, impoverishes slavery, humiliation and deterioration. It was not only the sorrow of his life but his entire people who were yoked ruthlessly under the shame and snobbish

tradition of caste system. He becomes frenzied like a storm and revolts against the inhuman practices. Instead of fondling his sorrows and humiliations, he surmounts them and becomes actuated for struggle. The Drama is a comment on revolt, it also makes us introspect. As it tracks down the inner instincts of Dalit social life, it also touches the anguish and sufferings of women.

16.5 Self Check Exercise:

1. What does the initial conversation between Nath and his children show in the play (Act I, Scene I) ?
2. What does Jyoti want to confess to her parents.?
3. What is Seva's reaction to Jyoti's confession of her decision to marry Arun?
4. What is Nath's reaction to Jyoti's confession of her decision to marry Arun?

16.6 Answer to Self-check Exercise:

- 1) From the initial conversation between Nath and Jyoti, it is obvious that Nath is very much inspired by nationalist ideals. His conversation is littered with the examples of great nationalist leaders.
- 2) Jyoti is waiting for her mother so that she can confess to both her parents about her decision to marry Arun, a Dalit boy, who is doing BA and who writes poetry.
- 3) Seva is not very happy with this decision. She tries to convince Jyoti that marriage is a very big decision and the compatibility of life styles is a must and she feels that incompatibility of their life styles is a big issue which Jyoti should not overlook.
- 4) Nath is very encouraging about this issue. He sees in this his dream of a casteless society turning into reality.

16.7 Long Question:

1. What type of family is Devlalikar's (Act I Scene I)?

KANYADAAN : A Critical Study of the Text (contd.)

17.1 Act II Scene I: In the first scene of the second act, Jyoti arrives perplexed and looking unhappy. She has been married to Arun for some months. He proves to be an idler, a drunkard and a wife-beater who lives off her. Seva, her mother, is very much concerned and worried to see Jyoti's condition which is deteriorating day by day. Even Nath, who was so enthusiastic about this marriage, is sad to see the state of affairs and spends sleepless nights worrying about his daughter. Earlier, he couldn't realize the incompatible nature of this union, but now he is in touch with reality. He feels that perhaps now he can change her mind. He suggests Jyoti to leave him, but she is not ready and says that if she left Arun she would not go back to him. At this critical juncture, Nath does not extend a willing hand and till then he is not fully prepared to forego his so-called experiment and his touch with reality is flimsy. "This dream which is struggling to turn real, let it not crumble into dust before our eyes! ... we must save this marriage. Not necessarily for one Jyoti's sake... This is not just a question of our daughter's life, Seva this has... a far wider significance... this experiment is a very precious experiment." (K. 41)

Arun follows Jyoti. He asks for Jyoti's forgiveness as he has bashed her up. Seva and Jayprakash confront him for beating his wife to which he says: "I am a barbarian by birth. When have I claimed any white collar culture?" (K. 44) Jyoti leaves with him again to the conservation of her parents and brother.

17.2 Act II Scene II: Arun's autobiography gets published. It deals with the theme of oppression and exploitation of the lower classes. But the irony is that Arun himself exploits Jyoti and lives as a parasite on her. Though Jyoti is pregnant, he makes her work, abuses her parents and beats her. His ill-treatment of Jyoti is a kind of answer-back from the Dalits to the upper-class. Jayprakash tries to explain this anomaly to Nath by drawing a comparison between Arun's ill treatment of Jyoti and monstrous violence of Israeli forces against Palestinian guerillas and inhuman decimation of Jews by Hitler's Nazi troops.

"In other words, yesterday's victim is today's victimizer. If he has been shot at yesterday, he shoots today.... Therefore, there is no hope of a man's gaining nobility through experience, he can only become a greater devil." (K. 51)

Arun asks Nath to deliver a public speech on his autobiography. Nath refuses, but in a very subtle and cynical overtone, Arun tries to blackmail Nath in front of his associates who have come with him. In a few, very long speeches, he oozes venom against the upper caste. His speeches even suggest as if his marrying Jyoti has been an act of revenge for the collective plight of his class against Brahmin culture.

"... Your connections are with the elite. Our friends here belong to a low caste, brought up on the flesh of dead animals. Our ancestors trudged around with a load of shit on their heads. It is any great good fortune which made a fair and lovely bird from a well-to-do, high class background, fall to my lot, [To his

friends] My revered mother-in-law has always been angry with me. She would have liked a fair, rich, highly educated son-in-law with his butt glued to a high office chair. But fate wrote my name instead. A poet and a writer! And dalit at that ! With not even a rag to cover my hide' (K. 56)

Ultimately Seva prevails upon Nath to agree, looking at the plight of their daughter. Nath's fortitude cracks. He feels helpless and relents to deliver the speech.

17.3 Act II Scene III: Nath gives a hypocritical speech by praising Arun's autobiography against his will as he wants to prevent Jyoti from further torment at Arun's hands. The same autobiography that he praised in the previous scene appears a false document to him. "... a crafty, sanctimonious, artistic hoax' (p. 60) His ideals of working for the cause of dalits seems to be completely shattered and mere presence of Arun in his house seems to him to have polluted his house. "It stinks-Seva- you know - you see - I feel like taking a bath, like cleaning myself! Clean everything! This furniture, this floor... all this... he has made them filthy, this floor... all this... he has made them filthy, dirty, polluted!" (K. 57).

In the meanwhile, Jyoti comes to meet her father. She is totally disenchanted with the hypocritical speech made by her father in praise of Arun's autobiography. She is disillusioned because till now, she had been enamoured by her father's conduct. She had elevated him on a high pedestal so far, and her decision to marry Arun was partly in belief of her father's ideals of removing the sufferings of this marginalized class. She decides to leave her father's home forever, never to return because she feels that now it is her responsibility to bear the burden of her actions whether good or bad, without any complaint. The play ends with Jyoti's departure and disturbing statement. "I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar now, I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don't say Harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scotch your comfortable values." (K. 70)

The end leaves the question of the future of Jyoti's marriage in the reader's mind. The marriage does not succeed. It is suggested that the class divide and the conflict between the upper class and the Dalits would continue to remain, which is very sad. But, apart from this simplistic issue of the eternal chasm between the classes, the play is also suggestive of many more philosophical and aesthetic issues. It is also perhaps a mild satire on the hollowness and impracticality of the bland rhetoric in which Nath had been indulging throughout. At the end, even Nath realizes this and Nath, the idealist, is turned into Nath the realist.

"I had this maniacal urge to uproot casteism and class distinction from our society. As a result I pushed my daughter into a sea of misery.... If she has committed any crime, it is this: she took her father's words for gospel truth. She adopted her father's values. She was guided by her father's humanism and liberalism."

Kanyadaan and *Ghashiram Kotwal* are the two plays which located family and gender relations in the larger contexts of responsibility, the caste conflict and the corrupt nature of State. These also are the plays, which represent women as passive carriers of familial ideologies without any political will for change. In *Kanyadaan*, Jyoti becomes a site, a battleground on which the clash between the upper caste and the Dalit castes ideologies pour their aspirations for power. The complete submission of the girl's gendered self to the violence perpetrated on her by the caste politics

leaves no scope for even an ideological alternative. That she deliberately chooses to become the model, ideal, Hindu Brahmin housewife to him, that she will call her husband's people and home her own, sacrifice her career for him and mutely suffer all the physical, sexual and psychological violence and humiliation inflicted upon her by him is the problematic of the play.

17.4 Self Check Exercise:

1. Why is Jyoti unhappy?
2. How does Arun behave when he comes to take Jyoti?
3. Is Jyoti ready to go back home?
4. What is Nath's reaction when Arun comes with his friends asking him to chair the session on the release of his autobiography?

17.5 Answers to self-check exercise:

1. Jyoti is unhappy because Arun has proved to be a bad husband. He is a drunkard and he beats her.
2. When Arun comes to take Jyoti back, he behaves as if he is really very repentant for his behaviour and that he would never torture her in future.
3. Jyoti is not ready to go back but her father Nath does not want that the marriage should fail so she has to go back with Arun.
4. By the time when Arun comes with his friends, Nath has realized his mistake and knows that Arun is ill-treating his daughter. He does not want to chair the session and he refuses.

17.6 Long Questions:

1. Give a brief summary of Act II Scene I
2. Comment on the ending of the play.

KANYADAAN : Some Important Aspects**18.1 *Kanyadaan*: A Statement on Class-divide**

The constitution of Independent India has conferred equal rights to men and women. It is unconstitutional to make any type of discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste, colour and sex. However, when we see through practical point of view, we notice that people of lower caste as well as women are not treated with equality. Like ancient period, their life is not protected in this age also. Day by day the incidences of violence and criminality against women and oppressed are rising. The play '*Kanyadaan*' can be considered as a fictionalization of the real life saga of most of the Indian people. Through the character of the Indian people, Tendulkar successfully exposes the masochistic, hypocritical behaviour of the society. This play is an exact document of social, cultural and psychological aspects of human life. This is a multidimensional play in the sense that through this family drama Tendulkar has made an attempt to deal with various issues such as man-woman relationship, issue of the class-divide, the gap between the ideal and reality and the relationship between children and parents.

18.2 *Kanyadaan* : Idealism Vs. Reality

Kanyadaan, is perhaps the most controversial of all the plays written by Vijay Tendulkar. It dwells on an extremely sensitive social and political issue, namely, the conflict between upper castes and Dalits, a phenomenon still rampantly prevalent in perhaps several parts of India. Despite fifty years of independence Dalits continue to suffer abject misery and ill-treatment at the hands of the upper castes. Politicians, instead of trying to uproot this evil, seem to capitalize on it. Tendulkar delves deep into this social evil and presents it as it is. He raises disturbing questions, but never bothers to answer them. This method of his is truly characteristic of a genuine playwright whose foremost concern is to open his reader-audience's eyes to a social problem which continues to evade easy solutions. And as a creative writer, he does not take sides.

As the title suggests, the play centres around 'marriage'. It is an unusual marriage in the sense that it brings in its make complex problems- problems at once self created and unforeseen. Jyoti, a young Brahmin woman, comes from a politically and socially active family. Nath Devlalikar, her father, is an MLA. Seva, her mother, is a busy social worker. Her brother Jayaprakash is an M.Sc. student. Jyoti is an educated working woman. Theirs is an urban middle class family. Brought up in such a progressive family, Jyoti decides to marry Arun Athavale, a Dalit youth from a village, whom she has known only for two months. Arun is poor, but talented. He is a B.A. student. He writes poetry- a factor which seems to have influenced Jyoti in her decision to marry him. Jyoti informs her parents and brother that she has decided to marry Arun. Nath Devlalikar, the idealist who dreams of a casteless society, gives her his consent immediately. Jyoti and Arun get married. What follows is the reversal of

Nath's dreams. The evolution of Jyoti from a soft-spoken highly cultured Brahmin girl into a hardened Dalit girl is really incredible and distressing. One cannot imagine if such a sacrifice, as Jyoti's is possible among modern women. The imperceptible transfer of notions occurring in Nath's attitude to the world is also vividly portrayed by the master playwright.

In the opening scene we witness a happy family gathering. At the same time, we feel a little disturbed at the fact that both Nath and Seva do not spend much time with their children, Jayaprakash and Jyoti. Nath is a busy man who is out almost always to deliver public speeches. Seva is also busy organizing women's rallies and camps. Nath himself is aware of this; and both Jayaprakash and Jyoti are accustomed to their long periods of absence. Jyoti hesitantly tells her father that she wants to tell them something concerning herself. On Seva's arrival, Jyoti discloses to her parents her decision to marry, Arun, a Dalit youth, whom she has met in socialist study group. Seva is shocked to hear her daughter. But Nath is excited and dismisses his wife's question concerning the boy's background and occupation as irrelevant. Seva warns Jyoti of the consequences of her hasty decision, but Jyoti tries to allay her mother's fears by telling her that she will manage. In Scene 2, Act I, Jyoti brings Arun to her house to introduce him to her parents and brother. Arun is dark-complexioned and has a harsh face. Yet he is good looking. On entering the comfortable middle-class house, Arun feels nervous and ill at ease. Gradually, however as the conversation progresses, Arun grows more and more eloquent on the subject of untouchability. His words spit venom and express his hatred for brahmins. Jyoti finds such talk revolting and she covers her face with her hands. She begins to weep uncontrollably on hearing Arun say all this. On seeing her crying, Arun asks Jyoti to forgive him for being rude in speech. Jyoti laughs when Arun sings, "It's he is unable to control his anger and jokingly twists her arm. Seva enters at this juncture and is uncomfortable on seeing this. Both Seva and her son are literally shocked when Arun goes one step further and says that for his living he can go to the extent of "brewing illicit liquor." Unmindful of their shocked reactions, Arun goes on talking in a rather obscene language about the advantages of brewing illicit liquor. On his departure, Seva tells her husband that Arun is someone who cannot fit among them. Though Nath speaks in defence of Arun's vile behaviour, he advises Jyoti to think the matter over. But Jyoti says that she does not want to change her mind and that her decision is final. Nath decides to stand by her, come what may. The darkness that sets in now, as the stage direction indicates, seems to be suggestive of the darkness that is going to descend on them. In Act II Scene I, Jyoti is shown, after marriage. Contrary to our expectations, she is totally crushed and tired and doesn't seem to be happy at all. She is evasive to her mother's queries initially, but later on she reveals that she is not interested in going back. To her father's advice to return to Arun, she blatantly refuses. But Nath is firm not to break the relationship. Because of Arun's embarrassing behaviour, Jyoti leaves the house, but Nath mistakenly assumes that Jyoti is a responsible person. He feels proud of his daughter's decision to go back to lead a happy domestic life with Arun.

In the following scene, Nath is shown to be immersed in Arun's autobiography which has just been published. Seva tells Nath that Jyoti is pregnant and has been advised rest by the doctor. Seva has failed to persuade her to come home. Nath is all praise for his son-in-law who has shown the world (through his autobiography) that

he is a powerful, creative writer. At this juncture, Nath receives a phone call urging him to chair a discussion on his son-in-law's book. But he bluntly refuses to do so, for, by now, he has discovered that Arun is a hypocrite and an avenger. When Nath comes to know about the exploitation and torture that his daughter is undergoing, the issue of the class-divide suddenly surfaces. He is convinced that his son-in-law is not a saviour of society but a canker eating into its very soul. His mere presence now seems to have 'polluted the drawing room'... 'It stinks. For years, Nath has been upholding the cause of the 'untouchables'. In fact he readily agreed to his daughter's marriage with him, because he felt that this was going to prove to be a practical example of the classless society that he had been preaching so far.

So Nath does go to the function and delivers a hypocritical speech, under pressure from his wife who thinks that such a gesture would save their pregnant daughter from any further misery.

In the last scene, we find that Nath's hypocritical action receives a boomerang reaction from his own daughter, who comes to hear him speak on Arun's autobiography. She confronts him with uneasy questions which he had never expected. Nath tries his best to convince her affirming that Arun's autobiography is a very good book. But Jyoti continues to batter him saying that it is all a lie; for she knows:

You attended that meeting and made a speech because you were afraid that if you didn't, Arun would torture me more.... Your speech today was not only lousy, it was hireling's speech. You attended the meeting against your wishes, you praised that book against your wishes.

Jyoti's words sting Nath. He feels helpless and defenceless. He is pained to see his ideals crumbling before him. This daughter of his has been a severe critic of his speeches right from the time when she was eleven years old. When Nath asks her who will take care of her, during delivery, Jyoti harshly replies:

... I have my husband.... I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devalalikar now, I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don't say harijan. I despise the term. I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don't touch me. Fly from my shadows, otherwise my fire will scorch four comfortable values.

Saying these words, she leaves the house, obviously, never to return. Nath breaks down and lies on the sofa, a totally defeated idealist- father. The play ends here. The end is both disturbing as well as thought provoking. Why does Jyoti behave like this? Has she seen the ingrained malaise of her parents against the lower castes? Is she justified in being judgemental? Does Tendulkar feel that the gap between the two castes is too wide to be bridged perhaps. That is why Arun takes a sort of revenge upon the upper caste, by marrying Jyoti, a Brahmin's daughter and tortures her. Jyoti feels that her parents' hollow idealism is responsible for her pathetic condition.

Kanyadaan won the playwright the Saraswati Samman. In the 'Afterward' are given a few excerpts from the speech that Vijay Tendulkar made on the occasion. He tells us that the play, "gives expression to a deep-rooted valaise and its pains."

18.3 Self Check Exercise:

- 1) What do you mean by 'Class-divide' ?
- 2) What type of family is Devalikar's?

- 3) Why does Nath Devalikar easily give consent to his daughter's marriage with Arun?
- 4) Is Seva as keen as Nath in Arun and Jyoti's marriage?

18.4 Answers to Self-check Exercise:

- 1) Indian society is keenly aware of the class-divide. Caste consciousness is deeply embedded in our system. Brahmins are considered upper most in this system, untouchables like Arun form the lowermost rung of this sharply stratified society. Through this play, Tendulkar has tried to draw our attention to the gulf between the two castes, which he perceives will persist, despite our claims to emancipation and modernity. This divide cannot be easily erased and it will take a few more centuries for India to become a casteless society.
- 2) Devalikar's is an educated modern family. Parents, Nath and Seva, are socially and politically active. It is a post independence family and both the parents are influenced by the ideals of nationalist movement and ideals of nationalism. They dream of a classless society. Jyoti, their daughter holds her father in great esteem. She is so much influenced by his idealism that she decides to marry Arun, the untouchable, partly out of sympathy and partly to be a practical example of her father's idealism.
- 3) Nath readily agrees to Arun and Jyoti's marriage because, he feels that it is the best opportunity for him to see his dream take a practical shape.
- 4) Seva is skeptical about Arun and Jyoti's marriage. She is also a social activist, but she is keenly aware of the 'class-divide' that exists between Jyoti and Arun. She tries to convince her daughter about the incompatibility of their situations and upbringing.

18.5 Let Us Sum up:

In this lesson, an attempt has been made to explain the issue of 'class-divide' that becomes the bone of contention between Arun and Jyoti and also a sore point for the parents.

KANYADAAN : Some Important Aspects (contd.)**19.1 An Expose' of Political Progressive:**

Kanyadaan (1985) occupies a unique place in the Tendulkar canon. It is the first major play to be staged after *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1973) and, also, the last major play of Tendulkar to be staged. Apart from the major focus on the unbridgeable gap between the classes, there is another major theme - an expose' of political progressives in the couple Yadunath Devlalikar and his wife Seva. Nath an MLA and his wife Seva are socially conscious and politically active couple. The story is set in 1970s, as can be seen by the reference to the Emergency which Mrs. Gandhi is feared to impose upon the country. At the end of Act II, Scene I, Nath receives a call from one of his political associates, when he says to the caller,

Don't tell me she is going to impose Emergency.

Okay, if you hear anything more let me know, will you.

Mrs. Gandhi declared Emergency on 26th June, 1975. This enables one to locate the action with some precision. The play is, thus, set at a time when progressive politics was the order of the day and also an intellectual fashion. For the Marathi readers the names like Yadunath, the characters mentioned like Nanasahebs and the appellation like Bhai for Nath enable them to identify even the originals of whose composites the dramatis personae are. Nath and Seva in their youth were political workers of the Congress Party with social leaning; they came to know each other in a discussion group and got married. Their political careers have gone on without any obstacle and now Nath is a legislator and Seva an organiser of women's rallies and an activist of some sort. In accordance with their political philosophy both have been championing the cause of eradication of castes from our society. The play depicts an intriguing situation when their own daughter decides to marry Arun Athavale, a boy from Dalit community.

At the outset, we are given a glimpse of the Dervlalikar household. the father and the mother are both seldom at home together because of their preoccupations. If the father is at home, the mother is away organising rallies for women's liberation and when she returns, the father has to go out on a tour to make public speeches. Because of these preoccupations of the parents, both children have to bear the brunt, which is not explicitly stated though, yet one can draw the inference. The children have to be at home and pass on the messages of the father to the mother and vice versa. Jyoti has to discuss the issue of her marriage - a matter of life and death to her- in fifteen minutes, as the father has a bus to catch, which will take him to his speech - and the mother has just returned home after a rally. This, in its own way, is a comment on the quality of the family life these two social reformers have been able to give to their children, despite their observance of democratic norms. Ostensibly, the atmosphere in the house is liberal and democratic. The cruel fact that the parents have really no time for their children, busy as they are in their own self-

centric activities, cannot remain hidden for long. In fact, the children are seen not as individuals with their own aspirations, but as mere extensions of their parents' social experimentations. This fact about the family is the most pivotal one as on the whole they turn upon it.

When Jyoti declares her intention to marry a Dalit boy, the parents naturally are disturbed, but they are too seasoned as politicians to show their inner unease. They realise that now their integrity as public advocates of inter-caste marriages and casteless society is on test. So their reaction is guarded. Seva's response to this news displays a gap between her theory and praxis. She finds one excuse after another to stop the marriage, although she is self righteous enough to say that she is not opposed to inter-caste marriages as such. She tries to convince her that she is acting in haste and then she talks of the incompatibility of their life styles. She says:

My anxiety is not over his being a Dalit. You know very well that Nath and I have been fighting untouchability tooth and nail.... But your life has been patterned in a certain manner. You have been brought up in a specific culture. He is different in every way. You may not be able to handle it.

Even if one grants that her anxiety as a mother is perfectly natural and genuine, her blindness to the fact that the same arguments can be and are made by the critics of inter caste marriages is ironic. In fact, incompatibility of culture and lifestyle is precisely the general argument against inter-caste marriages. In comparison, Nath's reaction is less ruffled, and more in keeping with their professed ideology. He is quite excited about this proposal and is supportive to Jyoti more than necessary. In fact, he side tracks Seva's and Jayaprakash's genuine objections as trash and builds up his argument for this marriage on the romantic pedestal. He imagines they are in love and tries to put such words in Jyoti's mouth who herself is not sure whether she fell in love with Arun or not. In spite of this candid confession by his daughter, who stands in need of some guidance, Nath, as is confirmed later, almost pushes her into the marriage less out of parental affection than out of his perception that it is a great opportunity for an ideological experiment of his to work itself out.

In Act I Scene II, we see Arun who behaves rudely and perhaps is a complete misfit in Jyoti's house. To hide his inferiority complex he becomes more vociferous. He tries to win over Jyoti's attention and sympathy by harping upon the typical tale of suffering and exploitation that his parents and ancestors have undergone. In fact, the incompatibility between the two - Jyoti and Arun - becomes more glaring and obvious. He even tells her quite forthrightly, "surely we can't fit into your unwrinkled Tinopal world." Seva's first encounter with Arun is very unpleasant. She is blunt enough to ask him about his economic position and future plans. This is very frustrating for Arun who deliberately (perhaps) answers in shocking words that if he has nothing better to do then he can at least 'brew illicit liquor' to fend for himself and his family. The answer completely shocks Seva and she is upset by his audacious manner and this outrageous statement. Not all her indoctrination and all her training at the Congress Seva Dal comes to her rescue now. This answer, rather makes her all the more hardened in her opposition to the marriage of Jyoti to Arun. The battle-lines between them are clearly drawn. At this critical juncture Nath enters, completely unmindful of the tensions. In such a situation Nath's loquacity sounds quite comic and ingratiating too. He gives a mini speech on inter-caste marriage, from which it is clear that he is overjoyed by the prospective marriage not because

that his daughter has found a good husband but because it will fulfill his long cherished dream of breaking caste barriers. In other words, he completely misses the human aspect involved in the matters.

The marriage ultimately turns out to be a failure. Tendulkar doesn't leave anything to our imagination - as a reader or an audience- the mismatch between Arun and Jyoti is very obvious. Jyoti comes back with a hope that she'll be rescued from the hell by her doting, loving parents. Reluctantly she retells her tale of woe and suffering at the hands of Arun and announces her decision not to go back to him again. But Nath cannot easily let go off the chance of his ideological victory, which he has achieved because of this marriage. This obsession has made him blind and deaf to his daughter's suffering. He condones Arun's ill-treatment of Jyoti as the result of the harsh environment in which he has been brought up. He doesn't want to see this marriage fail because this marriage is still an ideological experiment for him. It's only after the knowledge that Jyoti is pregnant and Arun beats her, that Nath reverts back to the reality of the situation. It is Seva who unravels the truth and brings Nath out of his ideological stupor.

"He wants his wife to work and with her money he wants to drown himself in drink... he wants to kick his wife in the belly. Why not? Doesn't his wife belong to the high caste? In this way he is returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of higher caste."

The difference between the man who suffers and the mind that creates', when explained in ideological terms, makes Nath realize his folly in agreeing to the match of Jyoti and Arun. From now on, his liberal view of Arun changes to a realistic one- but it is too late now. He declines the invitation for speaking at a Seminar organized on Arun's book. But out of the fear of further exploitation of his daughter, he accepts the invitation and makes a false speech of appreciation of Arun's autobiography. This gesture, with all its benign intentions, becomes responsible for a complete swerving of ties between the daughter and the father. Jyoti goes on to reject Nath as a father by telling him of the permanent psychological damage he has done to his children. While in school, she often used to see a man carrying two twisted creatures in his baskets which looked barely human; such persons were reported to be kidnappers of children who broke their limbs and made them cripples. In Jyoti's eyes now Nath is one such kidnapper of his own children, psychologically mutilating them for ever!

Jyoti is unable to forgive her father. She firmly disassociates herself from the family and forbids them to meddle in her life even out of charity. As a married daughter she reminds her father,

Jyoti: (harshly) I have my husband. I am not a widow. Even if I become one I shan't knock at your door. I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlalikar; I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger.

These last words of the play neatly sum up Jyoti's rejection of Nath as her philosopher and guide, and more painfully as her father. By chairing the session on the release of Arun's autobiography, Nath has shattered his own image as an unflinching idealist in his daughter's eyes. Now she knows that by his hypocritical and insincere participation in the discussion, Nath has compromised on his ideology for the sake of which he prides in him, had accepted despite her suffering. In short, Jyoti now realizes that his ideology and his public image were far more important to her father than his own daughter; that she had been a mere pawn on his ideological chess-board.

Why has this happened? Is this the failure of the progressive movement which failed to instill in her a consciousness of her identity as a woman? Of her civil rights? Of her bonding with the women from the lower castes? Incidentally they remain not only marginalized but plainly and simply invisible in this whole process. Jyoti lacks awareness that the issues of caste and gender are interlinked. The answer to the question of caste domination does not lie in imaging upper caste women as the other of the lower caste men. But Nath, the successful progressive social reformer, puts the entire onus of bringing about the transformation in society on Jyoti. It is the duty of girls like Jyoti, he claims, to bring out the hidden goodness and talent in Dalit men who have suffered humiliation for generations. Jyoti becomes for him the instrument to seek the atonement of the sins the upper caste had committed. Marriage is a solution for this and once it has taken place, girls like Jyoti will have to keep it intact no matter at what cost.

The entire process of posing the problem here seems to raise interesting questions. Inter caste marriage has been offered as a solution to caste problem. Tendulkar claims to have written the play from an actual case he had seen of such a marriage. But this resolution of the problem leads us to believe that finally the institution of marriage is sacrosanct. Jyoti has to tread the path of self-annihilation. No other alternative is possible. No even that of looking at the Dalit women themselves as an agency of political changes.

19.2 Self Check Exercise:

1. What is meant by Political Progressiveness?
2. What are the political activities of Devlalikar couple?
3. Why don't the Devlalikar couple object to their daughter's marriage?
4. Is Jyoti in love with Arun?

19.3 Answer to Self-Check Exercise:

- 1) The play is set at a time when progressive politics in the post-independence India was the order of the day and in fashion with the educated middle-class.
- 2) Devlalikar couple are social activists of sorts – Nath Devlalikar is an MLA and Seva is a social activist engrossed in women issues and also in the eradication of caste barriers in the society.
- 3) Devlalikar couple cannot object to their daughter's decision of marrying a Dalit boy because all their lives they have been upholding the issue of the upliftment of the lower castes and preaching and standing for a casteless society. Moreover, particularly Nath Devlalikar sees this as an opportunity to see his ideological dream getting converted into reality through their daughter's marriage.
- 4) Jyoti is not sure whether she is in love with Arun. She is perhaps impressed by his poetry and also in sympathy with his pathetic situation in life.

19.4 Long Questions:

1. How does the play *Kanyadaan* expose the political progressives like Nath and Seva Devlalikar?