

FIFTH SEMESTER

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

ENG5EJ 301(1)- INDIAN LITERATURES : SELECTED READING

2024 ADMISSION

Prepared by

Deepa M

PG Department of English

CPA COLLEGE OF GLOBAL STUDIES, PUTHANATHANI

CALICUT UNIVERSITY – FOUR-YEAR UNDER GRADUATE PROGRAMME (CU-FYUGP)

**ELECTIVE COURSES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
WITH SPECIALISATION**

BASKET 1: LITERATURE AND INDIAN SOCIETY

Programme	BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE HONOURS				
Course Code	ENG5EJ301(1)				
Course Title	INDIAN LITERATURES: SELECTED READING				
Type of Course	ELECTIVE				
Semester	V				
Academic Level	300-399				
Course Details	Credit	Lecture per week	Tutorial per week	Practical per week	Total Hours
	4	4	-	-	60
Pre-requisites	The learners are expected to have a basic idea about different genres of Indian literature.				
Course Summary	The course aims to acquaint learners with the origin and development of Indian Writing in English within the colonial, post-colonial contemporary and regional framework. It will explore various aspects of Indian Writing in English, including the portrayal of culture, identity, history, cross-cultural and multicultural Indian Society and gender politics.				

Course Outcome (CO):

CO	CO Statement	Cognitive Level	Knowledge Category	Evaluation Tools Used
CO 1	To provide an overview of the various phases of history and evolution of Indian Literature	U	F, C	Assignments/Test Paper/ Quiz
CO 2	To analyze how the social, cultural and political context of each period influenced Indian literature.	An	C, M	Questionnaire/Survey
CO 3	To examine Indian literary texts written in/ translated to English through the lenses of colonialism, post-colonialism, regionalism and nationalism.	Ap	C, P, M	Debate/ Group Discussion.
CO 4	To appreciate the richness and beauty of regional writing in English.	Ap, An	P, M	Read and analyse.
CO5	To analyze and appreciate Indian Ethos found in literary expressions.	E, An	P	Seminar presentation

Detailed Syllabus:

Module	Unit	Content	Hrs	Marks
				70
I		Pre- Independent Indian Writings	12	18
	1	Lihaaf (The Quilt) -Ismath Chughtai(1942)	4	
	2	In Praise of Tamil - Subrahmanya Bharti	2	
	3	Tribal Verse- Ganesh N Devy	4	
	4	I Have Fallen in Love- Akka Mahadevi	2	
		Suggested Activities: 1. Identify two poems from any tribal language in India. Write a short note on themes in the poems. 2. What is oral literature? Prepare a seminar on the oral literature of Kerala. 3. Prepare a presentation on the women writers of pre- independent India. 4. Identify a poem from Malayalam which has a resemblance with “In Praise of Tamil”. Compare the two poems.		
II		Post Independent Indian Writings	12	18
	5	Isn't That Shameful for us?- Ayyappa Paniker:	2	
	6	Documentary on Arun Kolatkar- Dir. Dilip Chitre	2	
	7	Tamas - Dir. Govind Nihalani	4	
	8	Dopdi- Mahashweta Devi	4	

		Suggested Activities: 1. Prepare a Poster of the movie- Tamas 2. Prepare an analysis of a short story from the subaltern point of view 3. Prepare a presentation on Partition Literature and identify the major writers 4. Make a comparison of Dopdi with some of the women characters in contemporary movies.	
--	--	--	--

III	Contemporary Indian Literature Part I		12	17
	9	Legends of Pensam - Mamang Dai	4	
	10	Fish Monger- S Joseph	2	
	11	Sairat- Dir. Nagraj Manjule	2	
	12	Mohanaswamy- E S Vasundhera	4	
	Suggested Activities: 1. Identify two women poets from the North East region of India and discuss their narrative techniques. 2. Prepare a script based on any Indian short story 3. Prepare a presentation on the contemporary Indian English Poets. 4. Prepare a note on the ideas about North Eastern literature as shared by Mamang Dai in any of her interviews. 5. Write a note on contemporary Kannada literature and its trends.			
IV	Contemporary Indian Literature Part II		12	17
	13	Father May Be an Elephant and Mother Only a Small Basket, But...- Gogu Shyamala	4	
	14	Water Play- Perumal Murugan	2	
	15	Temsula Ao- Lament for an Earth	2	
	16	Excerpt: Hangwoman: Everyone Loves A Good Hanging - K.R.Meera	4	

		Suggested Activities: 1. Attempt a Graphic Narrative on <i>Hangwoman</i>. 2. Prepare a poster for 'Water Play'. 3. Debate on gender discrimination in India.		
V		Open Ended Module	12	

MODULE 1: PRE- INDEPENDENT INDIAN WRITINGS

1. LIHAAF (THE QUILT) – ISMAT CHUGHTAI (1942)

- Ismat Chughtai (1915–1991), known as the “Grande Dame of Urdu fiction,” was an influential feminist Urdu writer who boldly explored female sexuality, class, gender, patriarchy and freedom of expression. Her major works include *Gainda*, *Terhi Lakeer* and *Garam Hawa*. Her short story *Lihaaf (The Quilt)* was published in 1942 and led to an obscenity trial in Lahore in 1944, where she refused to apologize and was eventually acquitted.
- The story has four central characters: the young narrator, a sensitive and curious girl who observes the events without fully understanding adult sexuality; Begum Jaan, the beautiful but lonely and neglected wife of the Nawab; Nawab Saheb, her wealthy husband who shows little interest in her and is described as being attracted to young men; and Rabbu, Begum Jaan’s devoted maid and constant companion whose close relationship with Begum Jaan becomes the subject of gossip.
- The story begins with the narrator remembering Begum Jaan’s quilt, whose strange shadow once appeared like an elephant; this childhood memory introduces the mysterious events that occurred when she stayed at Begum Jaan’s house for about a week.
- Begum Jaan was married to the old Nawab by her poor parents, gaining wealth and status but receiving neither affection nor companionship. The Nawab remains emotionally distant and is more interested in young men, while Begum Jaan is confined to the domestic sphere and suffers from loneliness, neglect and emotional deprivation.
- Begum Jaan tries various methods, including black magic, amulets, religious practices and romantic novels, to overcome her unhappiness, but eventually loses interest in her appearance and becomes depressed. Her life changes when Rabbu, her devoted maid, begins giving her constant companionship and oil massages, after which Begum Jaan becomes more energetic, healthy and physically vibrant.

- The young narrator is sent to Begum Jaan's house as a punishment and stays there for about a week, during which she begins observing the unusual closeness between Begum Jaan and Rabbu without understanding its adult implications.
- At night, Begum Jaan's quilt moves and shakes strangely, sometimes resembling an elephant or a frog, while the narrator hears whispering and unusual sounds from beneath it. The quilt appears perfectly normal in the morning, while the servants' gossip about Begum Jaan and Rabbu suggests that they understand the secret relationship better than the innocent narrator.
- When Rabbu leaves to visit her son, Begum Jaan becomes restless, irritable and physically uncomfortable, complaining of body aches and repeatedly drinking tea; her distress reveals her strong emotional and physical dependence on Rabbu.
- Begum Jaan later asks the narrator to rub her back, but the situation becomes uncomfortable when Begum Jaan holds her tightly. Frightened by the intimacy, the narrator escapes from the room, and the incident increases the story's atmosphere of fear, mystery and ambiguity.
- After Rabbu returns, the quilt again begins to move violently. The frightened narrator finally switches on the light, and the quilt suddenly collapses after a strange movement, allowing her to see what is happening beneath it. Chughtai deliberately does not describe the scene explicitly, leaving its meaning to the reader. The story ends abruptly, with the narrator carrying the disturbing memory into adulthood.

MAJOR THEMES

- Female Sexuality and Loneliness : Begum Jaan's unhappy marriage provides her with social status but neither emotional nor physical fulfilment, allowing Chughtai to explore women's suppressed desires and the consequences of loneliness within a patriarchal marriage.
- Neglect and Emotional Deprivation: Begum Jaan suffers from prolonged neglect, isolation and emotional starvation despite living in a wealthy household, showing that material comfort cannot replace affection and companionship.
- Female Agency and Alternative Companionship: Begum Jaan's relationship with Rabbu can be understood as her search for intimacy and companionship outside a

marriage that denies her emotional and physical needs, challenging conventional assumptions about women's desires.

- **Social Hypocrisy and Double Standards :** The story exposes patriarchal double standards by contrasting the Nawab's socially tolerated behaviour with the secrecy and stigma surrounding Begum Jaan's desires.
- **Class and Power :** The relationship between the wealthy Begum Jaan and her servant Rabbu complicates the usual master-servant hierarchy because, although Rabbu is socially subordinate, she exercises considerable emotional and physical influence over Begum Jaan.
- **Childhood Innocence and Adult Sexuality :** The story is narrated through the eyes of a child who cannot fully understand adult sexuality, making ordinary sounds and movements mysterious and frightening and creating a contrast between childhood innocence and adult experience.
- **Purdah and Women's Confinement :** Begum Jaan's restricted domestic life reflects purdah, gender segregation and patriarchal control, with her physical confinement symbolizing her broader emotional and sexual repression.
- **Through Begum Jaan's hidden life,** Chughtai examines patriarchy, marriage, sexuality, social hypocrisy, class and women's confinement, while questioning the gap between outward respectability and concealed reality.

SYMBOLISM

- **The Quilt (Lihaaf):** The quilt is the central symbol of secrecy, repression and hidden desire; its ordinary appearance during the day and strange movements at night represent the contrast between social respectability and concealed reality.
- **The Itch:** Begum Jaan's persistent itch symbolizes her unfulfilled emotional and physical desires, which cannot be satisfied within her neglected marriage.
- **Winter and Cold:** The winter and cold symbolize Begum Jaan's loneliness, emotional isolation and lack of affection, contrasting with the warmth and companionship she experiences with Rabbu.
- **Elephant and Frog:** The elephant- and frog-like movements of the quilt reflect the narrator's childish imagination and inability to understand what is happening, symbolizing her innocence, fear and confusion about adult sexuality.

- Overall Symbolic Meaning: Together, the symbols reinforce the story's central idea of concealed desire and repression: the quilt hides, the itch expresses unfulfilled desire, the cold represents loneliness, and the animal images reveal the child's inability to understand the adult world.

WHY *LIHAAF (THE QUILT)* WAS CONTROVERSIAL

- Open Treatment of Female Same-Sex Desire : Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* was controversial because it dealt with female same-sex desire and intimacy at a time when such subjects were rarely represented openly in South Asian literature. The relationship between Begum Jaan and Rabbu challenged conventional ideas about women's sexuality and respectable femininity.
- Challenging the Idea of Female Sexual Silence : The story challenged the traditional assumption that women were passive and without sexual desires. Begum Jaan's loneliness and physical needs are placed at the centre of the narrative rather than being ignored.
- Obscenity Trial : The story became the subject of an obscenity case after its publication. Chughtai defended the work by arguing that it was concerned with women's loneliness, deprivation, and social circumstances, rather than being written simply to provoke or titillate readers. The story's indirect and suggestive treatment of sexuality was central to the controversy.
- A Landmark in Feminist Literary Discourse : *Lihaaf* is widely discussed as an important text in South Asian feminist literary studies because it questions patriarchal marriage, female confinement, social hypocrisy, and the suppression of women's desires. Its focus on a woman's experiences and desires made it an influential work in discussions of gender, sexuality, and women's agency.
- The controversy surrounding *Lihaaf* demonstrates how literature can challenge social taboos and conventional ideas about gender and sexuality. Chughtai uses suggestion, symbolism, and a child narrator rather than explicit description, allowing the story to expose what society attempts to keep hidden.

2. IN PRAISE OF TAMIL – SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

- **Subramania Bharati (1882–1921)**, popularly known as Bharatiyar or Mahakavi Bharati, was a renowned Tamil poet, journalist, freedom fighter and social reformer, and a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry. His writings focused on patriotism, nationalism, social equality, women's freedom, Tamil language and cultural identity. He worked with newspapers such as *Swadesamitran*, *India*, *Vijaya* and *Bala Bharata*, spent several years in Pondicherry to escape British arrest, and wrote major works such as *Panchali Sabatham*, *Kannan Paatu*, *Kuyil Paatu* and *Paapa Paatu*. He died in 1921 after being injured by an elephant at the Parthasarathy Temple, Thiruvallikeni.
- “**In Praise of Tamil**”, the English translation of Bharati's famous poem *Senthamizh Naadu*, is a passionate celebration of the Tamil language, Tamil Nadu and Tamil people, expressing the poet's deep love, pride and emotional attachment to Tamil and presenting the language as an essential part of life, identity and culture.
- Bharati compares Tamil to **nectar (Amudham)** to emphasize its sweetness, beauty and preciousness and connects it with life itself, suggesting that the language preserves the history, culture, traditions and collective memory of Tamil people and therefore forms an essential part of their identity and existence.
- Bharati describes Tamil Nadu as a **golden land**, using gold as a symbol of its beauty, richness, prosperity and cultural value, while portraying it as a land blessed with wealth, courage and heroism and celebrating both its cultural richness and the qualities of its people.
- The poem establishes a strong connection between **Tamil language and Tamil identity**, presenting Tamil as a carrier of heritage, history, traditions and collective memory and encouraging people to value, preserve and celebrate their linguistic and cultural heritage.
- The repeated expression “**Long live Tamil!**” creates rhythm, musicality, emphasis and emotional intensity, strengthens the sense of unity and enthusiasm, and gives the poem the character of a patriotic anthem.

- The major themes are **love for Tamil, linguistic pride, cultural identity, patriotism, unity and heritage**, with Tamil presented as a source of belonging and as an important means of preserving the history, traditions and collective memory of its people.
- The poem uses **metaphor, repetition, imagery, personification and exclamation** effectively, especially through the comparison of Tamil with nectar and Tamil Nadu with a golden land, while images of wealth and courage and repeated expressions of praise strengthen its emotional and patriotic effect.
- The poem has a **patriotic, celebratory, affectionate, proud and inspirational tone**, creating a joyful, enthusiastic and uplifting mood that reflects Bharati's deep admiration for Tamil and Tamil culture.
- The central message is that **Tamil represents life, identity, culture, history and heritage**, and Bharati celebrates Tamil Nadu as a rich, beautiful and courageous land while emphasizing the importance of preserving and taking pride in one's language and cultural identity.

3. TRIBAL VERSE – G. N. DEVY

- “**Tribal Verse**” is an extract based on the ideas of **G. N. Devy**, a noted Indian literary scholar and cultural critic, who emphasizes the importance of **tribal oral literature** as an essential part of India's literary and cultural heritage.
- The roots of India's literary traditions can be traced to the **rich oral literatures of tribal/Adivasi communities**, which usually take the form of **songs, chants and performances** and express the close relationship between **nature and tribal life**. These traditions have been transmitted orally from generation to generation for centuries.
- Because tribal literature is primarily **oral**, a large part of it has already disappeared, while **urbanisation, print culture and commercialisation** have further marginalised tribal communities, their languages and their literary traditions.
- Devy argues that **concerted and accelerated efforts** are necessary to collect, document, preserve and study tribal languages and literatures; otherwise, India risks losing an **invaluable part of its history and literary heritage**.

- Devy calls for a space for **tribal literature within the established literary canon**, arguing that literature should not be defined only as **written texts** because oral traditions are equally important forms of literary expression.
- Tribal arts are primarily expressions of **community life and cultural identity rather than commodities for sale**; therefore, excessive commercialisation may affect their authentic cultural character, although appropriate recognition and support can help their preservation.
- Since many tribal communities are **bilingual**, their languages are sometimes wrongly dismissed as dialects of dominant Indian languages. Devy emphasizes the need to recognise them as **independent linguistic and cultural systems**.
- Tribal communities possess valuable knowledge derived from their close relationship with **nature, environment and traditional practices**. Even when their ways of thinking differ from modern scientific approaches, some of their ideas and practices can contribute meaningfully to contemporary society.
- The tribal worldview is **closely connected with nature, community, ancestors, spirituality and everyday life**. Their literature reflects a cohesive and organically unified relationship between human beings and their surroundings.
- “**A Munda Song**” presents a distinctive tribal attitude towards the **girl child**, showing that tribal communities may view children through ideas of affection, social value, continuity and community relationships that differ from certain mainstream social attitudes.
- “**A Kondh Song**” reflects the tribal desire to overcome the limitations of **time and death** through communication with deceased ancestors, showing the continuing relationship between the living and the dead.
- The use of **Miri Agom**, the literary or ritual language, instead of **Adi Agom**, the language of everyday conversation, demonstrates the Adi community's **high sensitivity to different linguistic registers and contexts**, similar to the distinction between literary and colloquial forms in modern languages.

- The symbols in “**A Munda Song**” reflect the tribal worldview in which **nature, human life, family, community and spiritual forces are interconnected**, showing that the tribal imagination does not sharply separate human beings from the natural world.
- The line “**I tie this Ridin creeper / To fasten your soul to your body**” expresses the speaker's desire to **restore the connection between the person's soul and body** and thereby recover lost health; it reflects the tribal belief in the relationship between **physical well-being, spiritual forces and nature**.
- The central argument of Devy's essay is that **Indian literature cannot be understood completely through written and canonical texts alone**; tribal oral traditions, languages, songs and cultural practices must also be recognised, documented and preserved as an essential part of India's **literary heritage, cultural diversity and collective history**.

4. I HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE – AKKA MAHADEVI

- **Akka Mahadevi** was a renowned **12th-century Kannada poet, mystic and saint of the Bhakti movement** who expressed her intense devotion to **Chennamallikarjuna**, a form of Lord Shiva, whom she considered her divine husband. Her poetry challenges worldly attachments and celebrates spiritual love and union with God.
- “**I Have Fallen in Love**” is a devotional poem in which Akka Mahadevi declares her complete spiritual love for **Chennamallikarjuna**, describing him as the “**Beautiful One**” who is beyond birth, death, decay, physical form and worldly limitations.
- The poet repeatedly describes Shiva as the **Beautiful One**, who **knows neither death nor decay, has no form, beginning, end, parts, features, birth or fear**, presenting him as an eternal and formless divine reality beyond ordinary human existence.
- The repeated statement “**I have fallen in love, O mother**” expresses the intensity and certainty of Mahadevi's spiritual devotion; her love is not ordinary romantic love but a **mystical union between the individual soul and the divine**.

- Mahadevi declares **Chennamallikarjuna as her husband**, replacing the conventional idea of marriage with a spiritual relationship in which God becomes her **eternal and perfect companion**.
- The poet rejects mortal husbands because they are subject to **birth, decay and death**, while her divine husband is eternal; therefore, worldly marriage and physical relationships have little value compared with her spiritual union with Shiva.
- The poem creates a strong contrast between **mortal men and the immortal God**: human beings are temporary, subject to death and decay, whereas Chennamallikarjuna is eternal, formless and beyond fear, making divine love superior to worldly attachment.
- The poem reflects the central ideas of **Bhakti**, particularly complete surrender, intense personal devotion and the desire for direct union with God. Mahadevi's devotion transcends social conventions and presents spiritual love as the highest form of existence.
- **Important Literary Features**

Repetition: The phrase “**I have fallen in love, O mother**” emphasizes the intensity of her devotion.

Metaphor: Shiva is presented as her **husband**, representing the soul's intimate relationship with God.

Contrast: Mortal husbands are contrasted with the eternal divine husband.

Paradox: The “Beautiful One” is described through qualities such as having **no form, no features, no beginning and no end**, emphasizing the formless nature of the divine.

Symbolism: **Fire** represents the destruction or rejection of worldly attachments.

- The poem has a **devotional, passionate, assertive and mystical tone**, expressing complete confidence in divine love and freedom from worldly attachments.
- The central message is that **divine love is eternal and superior to temporary worldly relationships**. Akka Mahadevi rejects mortal attachments and completely surrenders

herself to **Chennamallikarjuna**, presenting spiritual union with the divine as the ultimate purpose of life.

- “**Fling into the fire the husbands who are subject / To death and decay**” is a strong metaphorical rejection of worldly marriage and mortal attachment; the **fire** symbolizes the destruction of temporary relationships, while the statement emphasizes Mahadevi's complete preference for her **immortal divine husband**.

MODULE 2 : POST INDEPENDENT INDIAN WRITINGS

5. ISN'T THAT SHAMEFUL FOR US? – AYYAPPA PANIKER

- **Kavalam Ayyappa Paniker (1930–2006)** was a renowned Malayalam poet, literary critic, academic and scholar who played a pioneering role in **modernism in Malayalam literature**. His poetry and criticism introduced new literary and intellectual perspectives, while his influence extended to **theatre, cinema and visual arts**. His major works include *Kurukshetram* (1960), considered a turning point in Malayalam poetry, and poems such as *Kadevide Makkale*.
- “**Isn't That Shameful for Us?**” is a short, ironic poem that presents an unusual situation in which people should **leave some food in the kitchen every night for a hungry thief**, because if the thief finds nothing to eat, he may become angry and leave without stealing anything.
- The speaker humorously suggests that a little food should always be kept in the kitchen for a possible thief, because **hunger may prevent him from committing the theft**; the absurd situation makes the reader question the condition of a society in which even a thief's hunger becomes a moral concern.
- The poem uses **irony and dark humour** by treating the feeding of a thief as a social responsibility. The unexpected situation makes the reader laugh initially but gradually reveals the **serious issue of poverty, hunger and social inequality**.
- Hunger is the central social concern of the poem. The hungry thief represents people who may be driven towards crime by **poverty and deprivation**, suggesting that social conditions can influence human behaviour.

- The poem indirectly asks whether society has a responsibility to ensure that **no person remains hungry**, even if that person is a thief. The final question, “**Isn’t that shameful for us?**”, shifts attention from the thief to society itself.
- The poem creates a striking **moral reversal**: instead of focusing only on the thief’s wrongdoing, it asks readers to consider the social conditions that produce hunger. The real shame may therefore lie in a society where a person is hungry enough to steal.
- The major themes are **hunger, poverty, social inequality, compassion, social responsibility and moral hypocrisy**, with the poet using the apparently humorous situation of a hungry thief to expose deeper problems in society.

- **Literary Devices**

Irony: Feeding a thief instead of protecting food creates an ironic situation.

Humour: The absurd idea of keeping food for a thief creates dark humour.

Repetition: Short, broken lines emphasize the simplicity and absurdity of the situation.

Rhetorical Question: “**Isn’t that shameful for us?**” forces the reader to examine society’s moral responsibility.

Symbolism: The **thief** can represent the hungry and deprived sections of society.

- The poem has a **simple, conversational, humorous and ironic tone**, but beneath its simplicity lies a serious criticism of **poverty, hunger and social injustice**.
- The poem suggests that **hunger and poverty are social problems rather than merely individual failures**. By asking whether it is shameful for us to let even a thief go hungry, Paniker forces readers to examine their own **social responsibility and humanity**.

6. DOCUMENTARY ON ARUN KOLATKAR – DIRECTED BY DILIP CHITRE

- **Arun Balkrishna Kolatkar (1932–2004)** was a major Indian poet who wrote in **Marathi and English** and was known for modernist poetry, irony, dark humour, minimalism, visual imagery, and close observation of ordinary life; his famous collection ***Jejuri*** (1976) won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1977.

- **Dilip Chitre (1938–2009)** was an important Marathi poet, writer, translator, artist, and filmmaker who directed the documentary on Arun Kolatkar, offering a visual and personal exploration of Kolatkar's life, personality, artistic interests, and poetic imagination.
- The documentary presents Arun Kolatkar not merely as a literary figure but as an **artist and creative personality**, exploring his life, surroundings, artistic vision, relationship with poetry, and distinctive way of observing ordinary people, objects, places, and experiences.
- Kolatkar represents an important phase of **modern Indian poetry**, moving away from romantic and idealized representations of India and focusing instead on everyday realities, urban and rural experiences, social contradictions, religious practices, ordinary people, and neglected objects.
- Writing in both **Marathi and English**, Kolatkar occupies an important position in Indian multilingual literature; his work demonstrates how Indian experiences can be expressed in English while retaining a distinctly Indian cultural and linguistic sensibility.
- **Jejuri** is Kolatkar's best-known English poetic work, consisting of poems inspired by the pilgrimage town of Jejuri in Maharashtra; it explores temples, pilgrims, priests, landscapes, ordinary people, and religious practices through irony, observation, humour, doubt, and ambiguity.
- A major feature of Kolatkar's poetry is the combination of the **sacred and the mundane**, where temples, religious rituals, gods, pilgrims, beggars, animals, broken objects, and ordinary surroundings exist together, questioning the clear separation between spiritual experience and everyday life.
- Kolatkar neither simply celebrates nor rejects religion; instead, he examines **faith, ritual, tradition, and religious experience with irony and scepticism**, allowing the reader to question conventional ideas about holiness and spirituality.
- Kolatkar's background as an **artist and graphic designer** influenced his poetry, which often works through vivid images, precise observation, visual details, unusual perspectives, and carefully arranged scenes, making his poems almost photographic or cinematic.

- His poetic style is characterized by **simple and conversational language, short lines, economy of expression, irony, humour, understatement, precise imagery, and unexpected observations**, creating poems that appear simple but contain complex cultural and philosophical meanings.
- The major themes of Kolatkar's poetry include **modernity, religion and doubt, everyday life, Indian identity, alienation, cultural tradition, death and decay, social reality, and the relationship between the sacred and the secular**, often presented through irony and ambiguity.
- Chitre's documentary is significant because it helps viewers understand Kolatkar **beyond his printed poems**, connecting his literary work with his personality, artistic interests, cultural background, visual imagination, and creative process.
- Kolatkar expanded the possibilities of **Indian English poetry** by combining Indian cultural experience with modernist techniques, while his multilingual writing, visual sensibility, irony, humour, and unconventional treatment of religion made him an important figure in modern Indian literature.
- The documentary presents Kolatkar as a **distinctive modern Indian poet and artist** whose work transforms ordinary experiences into poetry and challenges conventional boundaries between **tradition and modernity, sacred and secular, faith and doubt, literature and visual art**.

7.TAMAS – DIRECTED BY GOVIND NIHALANI

- **Govind Nihalani (born 1940)** is an acclaimed Indian filmmaker, cinematographer, and screenwriter associated with **parallel cinema**; his films often explore social injustice, political conflict, violence, and human suffering, and his notable works include *Aakrosh*, *Ardh Satya*, *Party*, and *Tamas*.
- ***Tamas* (1988)** is a landmark Hindi television film/mini-series directed by Govind Nihalani and adapted from **Bhisham Sahni's 1974 Hindi novel of the same name**; set against the **Partition of India in 1947**, it portrays communal violence, fear, displacement, political manipulation, and the suffering of ordinary people.

- The narrative is set during the turbulent period surrounding the **Partition of British India**, when political tensions between communities escalated into widespread communal violence, migration, displacement, and loss of life; the film focuses on how ordinary people become victims of forces beyond their control.
- The word “**Tamas**” means **darkness**, and the title symbolically represents the darkness of communal hatred, ignorance, violence, political manipulation, fear, and moral confusion that surrounds the characters during the Partition.
- The story begins with **Nathu**, a poor tanner, being asked by **Murad Ali** to kill a pig on the pretext of using its meat for a veterinary purpose; Nathu performs the task for payment, but the dead pig is later placed near a mosque, triggering communal tension and violence.
- **Nathu** is an ordinary working-class man who becomes unknowingly involved in a larger political conspiracy; his poverty and vulnerability show how marginalized people can be manipulated by powerful individuals and become victims of communal politics.
- **Murad Ali** represents the manipulation of ordinary people for political purposes; by employing Nathu to kill the pig and using the resulting incident to provoke communal tension, he demonstrates how seemingly small actions can be exploited to create larger conflicts.
- The film depicts the devastating consequences of **Hindu-Muslim communal conflict**, showing how rumours, religious hatred, political provocation, and retaliation rapidly transform neighbourhoods into spaces of fear, destruction, and violence.
- *Tamas* focuses on ordinary men, women, children, workers, refugees, and families rather than presenting Partition only through political leaders; their experiences reveal the **human cost of communal violence and displacement**.
- A major concern of the film is the way **political interests exploit religious differences**; communal identity becomes a tool for mobilizing people, while those who create or benefit from conflict are often separated from the suffering experienced by ordinary citizens.

- Fear becomes a powerful force in the film as rumours and uncertainty spread among communities; people begin to suspect their neighbours, and ordinary social relationships are damaged by an atmosphere of insecurity and mistrust.
- The film presents Partition as a traumatic experience involving **migration, separation, loss of homes, refugee camps, insecurity, and psychological suffering**, emphasizing that political borders can profoundly disrupt individual lives and communities.
- Despite the darkness of the narrative, *Tamas* also presents moments of **compassion, courage, cooperation, and human solidarity**, suggesting that humanity can survive even under extreme conditions of communal conflict.
- Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of communal violence and displacement; their experiences reveal the **domestic and psychological dimensions of Partition**, extending the film's focus beyond political events to family and personal suffering.
- **Darkness** is the central symbol of the film, representing not only physical violence but also **ignorance, hatred, prejudice, fear, moral blindness, and the loss of humanity**; the title therefore reflects both the historical situation and the psychological condition of society.
- The major themes of *Tamas* include **Partition, communalism, religious hatred, political manipulation, poverty, displacement, violence, fear, human suffering, moral responsibility, survival, and communal harmony**, with particular emphasis on the effects of political conflict on ordinary people.
- Nihalani uses **realistic cinematography, dark lighting, naturalistic performances, restrained dialogue, disturbing visual imagery, silence, and carefully constructed scenes of violence** to create a powerful sense of historical realism and emotional intensity.
- *Tamas* reflects the principles of **Indian parallel cinema** through its realistic representation of social and political problems, focus on marginalized communities, rejection of romanticized narratives, and emphasis on the complex relationship between individuals and historical forces.

- The film examines how **communal identities can be manipulated for political purposes** and how ordinary people suffer when social divisions are intensified; its treatment of Partition therefore becomes a broader reflection on communalism and social harmony.
- *Tamas* presents Partition not simply as a political event but as a **human tragedy**, showing how hatred, manipulation, poverty, fear, and religious prejudice can destroy communities; at the same time, its moments of compassion emphasize the continuing possibility of **human solidarity and communal harmony**.

8. DRAUPADI – MAHASWETA DEVI

- **Mahasweta Devi (1926–2016)** was an influential Bengali writer, social activist, and intellectual whose writings focus strongly on **tribal communities, peasants, marginalized groups, exploitation, poverty, gender oppression, and political violence**; her works combine literary creativity with social and political awareness.
- **“Draupadi”** is one of Mahasweta Devi’s most powerful political stories, originally written in Bengali and later translated into English by **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**; the story is set against the background of the **Naxalite movement and state repression in West Bengal**, particularly the violence surrounding tribal and peasant communities.
- The story is situated in the context of the **Naxalbari uprising of 1967**, a peasant rebellion in West Bengal that challenged the exploitation of landless peasants and tribal cultivators; the subsequent suppression of Naxalite movements created an atmosphere of political violence, military operations, arrests, torture, and deaths, forming the historical setting of “Draupadi.”
- **Dopdi Mejhen**, whose name is rendered as **Draupadi**, is a young Santal tribal woman and revolutionary activist; she becomes a symbol of resistance because, despite imprisonment, sexual violence, humiliation, and physical brutality, she refuses to surrender her dignity or submit to the authority of her captors.
- **Dulna Majhi**, Dopdi’s husband and fellow revolutionary, participates with her in resistance activities against landlords and oppressive structures; his death leaves Dopdi alone but does not end her political commitment or determination to resist.

- Dopdi and Dulna work as agricultural labourers and participate in struggles against exploitation, including actions against **Surja Sahu**, an upper-caste landlord; they challenge unequal access to wells and other resources and become wanted by the authorities because of their involvement in the resistance movement.
- **Operation Bakuli** represents the violent state response to the peasant and tribal rebellion; villages are surrounded and attacked, and the authorities attempt to eliminate revolutionary groups, forcing Dopdi and Dulna to go underground and live in constant fear of arrest.
- **Senanayak**, the military/intelligence officer responsible for the operation, represents the machinery of **state power and counter-insurgency**; he approaches the rebellion strategically and views Dopdi as a political target, but he ultimately fails to understand the psychological and moral strength of the woman he captures.
- Dopdi is eventually captured after being pursued by the security forces; she is taken to the military camp, questioned, and sexually assaulted under the orders of the authorities, turning her body into a site of **political violence and state-controlled humiliation**.
- The sexual assault of Dopdi is not presented merely as individual violence but as an instrument of **political domination, punishment, humiliation, and control**; the story exposes how the female body can become a battlefield in situations of militarized and political conflict.
- The phrase “**Make her up**” is a chilling euphemism for the sexual violence committed against Dopdi; Mahasweta Devi exposes the brutality hidden behind bureaucratic and military language, showing how official language can conceal the reality of torture and abuse.
- After the assault, Dopdi refuses to wear the cloth offered to her and deliberately walks **naked before Senanayak**; her nakedness, which was intended by her captors as an instrument of humiliation, becomes instead a powerful symbol of **defiance, resistance, and refusal to be controlled**.
- The final encounter creates a dramatic **reversal of power**: although Dopdi is physically wounded and unarmed, Senanayak becomes frightened when she confronts him fearlessly; the prisoner therefore gains moral and psychological power over the military authority.

- Dopdi's statement that she can be stripped but cannot be clothed again challenges the logic of her oppressors; it suggests that they have destroyed the social meaning of modesty and shame, but they cannot restore their control over her identity, courage, or agency.
- The name **Draupadi** deliberately recalls the heroine of the *Mahabharata*, who is publicly disrobed and humiliated; Mahasweta Devi reworks this mythological association by presenting a modern tribal woman who, after being sexually violated, **refuses to be humiliated and confronts her oppressor directly**.
- The story transforms the mythological Draupadi into a modern tribal woman, connecting **ancient narratives of female humiliation with contemporary political violence**; the parallel also challenges traditional representations of women by giving the modern Draupadi a powerful voice and rebellious agency.
- Dopdi represents the marginalized **Santal tribal community**, whose land, labour, resources, and rights are threatened by landlords and state power; the story draws attention to the historical marginalization of tribal people and their struggle for dignity and justice.
- The story presents the state through its military and bureaucratic institutions as a force capable of surveillance, imprisonment, torture, and sexual violence; official procedures and military language contrast sharply with the physical suffering experienced by marginalized people.
- Mahasweta Devi's prose combines **literary Bengali, colloquial Bengali, bureaucratic language, tribal expressions, and the language of marginalized communities**; this linguistic mixture reflects the social diversity of the story and creates a sharp contrast between official discourse and lived experience.
- "Draupadi" is a powerful **feminist text** because it exposes sexual violence, patriarchal power, and the use of women's bodies as instruments of political control; at the same time, Dopdi refuses the expected role of a helpless victim and transforms her violated body into a source of resistance.
- Dopdi's wounded and naked body becomes a **political symbol**: the same body that the authorities attempt to control becomes the means through which she challenges them; her refusal to cover herself denies her captors the satisfaction of seeing her ashamed.

- The story is deeply ironic because the authorities believe they have defeated Dopdi by capturing and assaulting her, but the final scene shows the opposite: **her physical defeat becomes a psychological defeat for Senanayak**, who is unable to control or understand her fearless resistance.
- The major themes include **state violence, tribal oppression, political resistance, feminism, sexual violence, patriarchy, exploitation, class conflict, marginalization, identity, dignity, and the transformation of victimhood into resistance.**
- **Nakedness** symbolizes freedom from imposed shame and social control; **blood and wounds** represent the violence inflicted by the state; **darkness/forest** represents both danger and the space of revolutionary resistance; and the name **Draupadi** symbolizes the continuing history of women's humiliation and resistance.
- The ending is the most powerful part of the story because Dopdi refuses to behave like a defeated prisoner and instead **confronts Senanayak physically and verbally**; his fear reveals that institutional power is not absolute and that courage and resistance can undermine the authority of the oppressor.
- **“Draupadi” exposes the oppression of tribal people, the brutality of state power, and the gendered nature of political violence, while presenting Dopdi as a figure of extraordinary resistance**; her final confrontation transforms her from a hunted revolutionary into a powerful symbol of dignity, agency, and defiance.

MODULE 3 : CONTEMPORARY INDIAN LITERATURE PART I

9. LEGENDS OF PENSAM – MAMANG DAI

- **Mamang Dai (born 1957)** is an acclaimed Indian poet, novelist, journalist, and former civil servant from **Arunachal Pradesh**; her writings explore tribal identity, indigenous traditions, nature, memory, oral history, displacement, and the relationship between human beings and the natural world.
- ***Legends of Pensam* (2006)** is a collection of interconnected stories set in the fictional region of **Pensing-Pensam** in Arunachal Pradesh; the work combines tribal legends,

oral traditions, folklore, history, memory, and contemporary experiences to portray the cultural world of the Adi people.

- **“Pensam”** refers to the **“in-between”** or **“between two worlds”**, suggesting the space between the visible and invisible, the past and present, humans and spirits, and history and legend; this idea becomes central to the novel’s exploration of tribal consciousness.
- The narrative is set in the **mountainous landscape of Arunachal Pradesh**, where forests, rivers, mountains, villages, and valleys are not merely physical surroundings but integral parts of the characters’ lives, beliefs, memories, and cultural identity.
- The novel provides a rich representation of **Adi tribal culture**, including customs, rituals, myths, beliefs, festivals, oral traditions, community relationships, marriage practices, and traditional ways of understanding the natural and spiritual worlds.
- Storytelling is central to the work because tribal knowledge and history are transmitted through **legends, songs, memories, myths, and oral narratives**; Mamang Dai uses storytelling to preserve cultural memory and give literary form to indigenous traditions.
- The legends in the novel connect the present with the ancestral past and explain the relationship between people, nature, spirits, and supernatural forces; folklore therefore functions as a **repository of collective memory and cultural knowledge**.
- Nature is presented as a **living presence rather than a passive background**, with mountains, rivers, forests, animals, and changing seasons closely connected to human existence; the characters understand themselves through their relationship with the natural world.
- The novel presents an indigenous worldview in which humans are part of a larger ecological and spiritual network; disturbing the balance between humans and nature can have social, moral, and spiritual consequences.
- Spirits, mysterious forces, omens, dreams, and supernatural experiences coexist naturally with everyday life; the novel does not always separate the real from the supernatural, reflecting the indigenous belief that **visible and invisible worlds are interconnected**.

- Women occupy an important place in the narratives, and their experiences reveal aspects of **family, marriage, love, loss, social expectations, resilience, and changing cultural practices**; female characters also help preserve and transmit cultural memory.
- A major concern of the novel is the tension between **traditional tribal life and modernisation**; education, roads, administration, technology, Christianity, and changing social structures gradually transform indigenous communities and their relationship with traditional beliefs.
- Memory connects individuals with their ancestors and community history; the past survives through stories and recollections, suggesting that **remembering is essential to preserving cultural identity** in a rapidly changing world.
- The novel explores **tribal identity, cultural belonging, ancestry, and collective memory**, showing how identity is shaped by language, landscape, community, traditions, and stories handed down through generations.
- The work reflects the historical and cultural changes experienced by indigenous communities through **colonial administration and later modern political and social institutions**; it raises questions about whose history is recorded and whose cultural knowledge remains outside dominant narratives.
- Social and economic changes create a sense of displacement as traditional ways of life gradually disappear; the novel records this transformation while attempting to preserve the **memories, voices, and cultural practices of an indigenous community**.
- Mamang Dai combines **simple prose, poetic descriptions, folklore, oral storytelling, symbolism, memory, and magical or mythical elements**; the narrative style reflects the rhythms of oral tradition while presenting indigenous experience in English.
- **Mountains** symbolize permanence, ancestry, and cultural continuity; **rivers** represent movement, time, memory, and change; **forests** suggest mystery and the spiritual world; and **stories/legends** symbolize the preservation of collective identity and cultural memory.

- The major themes include **tribal identity, indigenous culture, oral tradition, nature, spirituality, folklore, memory, ancestry, tradition and modernity, cultural change, displacement, community, and the relationship between humans and the natural world.**
- The title *Legends of Pensam* emphasizes the importance of **legend, memory, and the space between different worlds**; “Pensam” becomes both a geographical-cultural space and a symbolic realm where history, myth, nature, memory, and spirituality intersect.
- The work is significant for bringing **North-East Indian and indigenous experiences into mainstream Indian English literature**; it challenges dominant ways of representing tribal communities by allowing their traditions, memories, landscapes, and worldview to shape the narrative.
- *Legends of Pensam* presents indigenous culture as a living relationship between **people, nature, ancestors, stories, and spiritual beliefs**; by preserving legends and memories, Mamang Dai highlights the importance of protecting cultural identity while acknowledging the inevitable changes brought by modernity.

10.THE FISHMONGER – S. JOSEPH

- **S. Joseph (born 1965)** is a prominent contemporary Malayalam poet from Kerala known for his simple, direct, conversational poetry that gives voice to **ordinary people and marginalized communities**; his major concerns include poverty, caste, labour, identity, social inequality, memory, and everyday life, and his important works include *Karutha Kallu, Meenakaran, Identity Card, Uppante Kooval Varakkunnu, Vellam Ethra Lalithamanu, and Chandranodoppam.*
- **“The Fishmonger”** is a short, powerful poem that describes the accidental death of a fishmonger who suffers an epileptic seizure while washing his vessel in a small stream; the poem remembers his unnoticed death and contrasts the natural landscape of the past with the transformed commercial landscape of the present.
- The fishmonger is presented as an ordinary working person performing his daily task of washing his vessel; his sudden death makes him a symbol of the **invisible and**

neglected lives of working-class people whose existence can disappear from public memory.

- The children are the only ones who actually see the fishmonger's body lying face down in the shallow stream, making them witnesses to an event that adults and the surrounding world seem to ignore; their observation preserves the memory of his otherwise forgotten death.
- The **tiny stream** becomes the central setting of the poem, initially appearing as a quiet natural space where the fishmonger works and dies; the flowing water also becomes a symbol of **time, memory, and the passage of life**.
- The **screw pines, water, water-bugs, and trees** surround the dead body without reacting to the tragedy, creating a striking contrast between the seriousness of human death and the indifferent continuity of nature.
- The fishmonger suffers an **epileptic seizure** and falls into the shallow stream, where he dies unnoticed; the simple description of his body, vessel, scale, and weights emphasizes the ordinary circumstances of his life and death.
- The **vessel, scale, and weights** symbolize the fishmonger's occupation and livelihood; their presence beside his dead body connects his identity with his labour and shows how his entire life is represented through the simple tools of his trade.
- The poem's use of the children's perspective creates a sense of **innocence and direct observation**; instead of providing an elaborate emotional response, the children simply witness the scene, allowing the stark details of the death to speak for themselves.
- A central concern of the poem is the contrast between **remembering and forgetting**; the children remember the fishmonger, but when the speaker returns to the same place years later, there is no physical sign that he ever existed.
- The natural landscape has changed into a more developed and commercial environment: the stream-side area now contains a **chicken shop, plastered workshop walls, and a paddy field**, showing the effects of social and economic change.
- The final statement is emotionally powerful because the complete disappearance of the fishmonger from the transformed landscape suggests how **ordinary human lives can vanish from collective memory**; only the poem itself preserves his existence.

- The poem contrasts the **past and present**, showing how places change while memories disappear; physical development does not necessarily preserve the stories of the people who once lived and worked there.
- The fishmonger represents a section of society whose labour is essential but whose lives often remain unnoticed; his death and subsequent disappearance reflect the poet's continuing concern with **working-class and marginalized people**.
- The contrast between the natural stream of the past and the altered landscape of the present suggests the tension between **nature, development, and modernization**; the transformation of the place also erases traces of its earlier human history.
- The major themes of the poem include **death, memory, forgetting, poverty, labour, marginalization, nature, time, social change, modernization, and the disappearance of ordinary lives from collective memory**.
- The poem uses **imagery, symbolism, contrast, personification, repetition, visual description, and understatement**; the screw-pine leaf, flowing water, fishmonger's tools, and shallow stream create vivid visual images, while the contrast between the past and present strengthens the poem's theme of loss and forgetting.
- The tone is **simple, quiet, detached, and reflective**, but beneath this apparent simplicity lies a deep sense of sadness and social awareness; S. Joseph's conversational style avoids excessive emotional language and allows the ordinary details to communicate the tragedy.
- The ending, **"There is no sign of the fishmonger,"** transforms the poem from a description of an accidental death into a meditation on **human mortality and social memory**; although the physical world has erased him, the poem itself becomes a memorial to his forgotten life.
- **"The Fishmonger"** reminds us that the lives of ordinary working people can easily disappear from social memory, even though they form an important part of everyday society; through the memory of one forgotten fishmonger, S. Joseph explores death, labour, time, social change, and the fragile nature of human remembrance.

11.SAIRAT – DIRECTED BY NAGRAJ MANJULE

- Nagraj Manjule (born 1977) is an acclaimed Marathi filmmaker, writer, poet, and actor known for exploring caste, class, poverty, social inequality, and marginalized lives; his films often challenge entrenched social hierarchies and portray the experiences of communities excluded from mainstream society.
- *Sairat* (2016) is a Marathi romantic drama directed by Nagraj Manjule, written by Manjule with contributions from others, and produced by Zee Studios and Nagraj Manjule; the film combines a love story with a powerful critique of caste hierarchy, social prejudice, honour, and violence.
- The Marathi word “**Sairat**” suggests being wild, free, or uninhibited; the title reflects the young lovers’ desire to live and love freely despite the restrictions imposed by caste, family, and society.
- **Parshya** is a young man from a socially disadvantaged/lower-caste background, while **Archi** belongs to a wealthy and socially powerful upper-caste family; their relationship crosses the caste boundaries maintained by their families and community.
- The central conflict develops when Parshya and Archi fall in love despite their different caste and class positions; their relationship exposes the continuing power of caste in determining marriage, family honour, social status, and individual freedom.
- Archi is confident, outspoken, independent, and determined to make her own choices; she challenges patriarchal expectations by openly expressing her love and refusing to accept marriage arranged according to family and caste interests.
- Parshya’s social position becomes important to the film’s critique of inequality; although he is educated, talented, and ambitious, caste remains a powerful social barrier that affects his relationship, opportunities, and acceptance.
- Archi’s family represents a patriarchal social structure in which family honour and caste status are valued above individual choice; the film shows how young people, particularly women, can be controlled through family authority and social expectations.
- The film critically examines **honour-based violence**, showing how the idea of protecting family reputation can become a justification for controlling or violently punishing relationships that challenge caste boundaries.

- Parshya and Archi leave their village and move to another city in search of safety and independence; their experience reveals that escaping geographical surroundings does not automatically mean escaping caste and social inequality.
- In the city, the couple struggles with poverty, housing, employment, language, and social adjustment; their difficulties contrast with the romantic freedom they initially imagine and reveal the economic realities faced by marginalized young people.
- The second half of the film moves beyond romance to depict everyday survival, showing how education and dreams are affected by poverty, insecure employment, and lack of social support.
- Caste in *Sairat* is not presented merely as an individual prejudice but as a deeply embedded social system influencing family relationships, marriage, economic opportunities, community identity, and violence.
- Caste is closely connected with economic and political power; Archi's privileged family has resources and influence that Parshya and his family do not possess, creating an unequal relationship between the two social worlds.
- The rural setting is significant because village life is strongly shaped by community relationships, caste identities, family reputation, and social surveillance; the landscape therefore becomes an important part of the film's social commentary.
- Music plays a major role in *Sairat*, particularly through Ajay-Atul's popular soundtrack; songs express youthful love, freedom, longing, celebration, and emotional transformation while also contributing to the film's cultural identity.
- Manjule uses realistic locations, colloquial Marathi, natural performances, everyday situations, and detailed social environments to create a strong sense of authenticity; the film combines the conventions of romance with the realism of social cinema.
- The first part of the film creates an energetic and joyful romantic atmosphere, while the later part becomes darker and more realistic; this structural contrast demonstrates how social structures can disrupt youthful dreams and personal freedom.
- Like Manjule's other works, *Sairat* gives significant attention to people whose experiences are often marginalized in mainstream cinema; caste and class are represented through everyday life rather than treated only as abstract political issues.

- **Caste discrimination, inter-caste love, social inequality, patriarchy, honour, violence, class difference, youth and freedom, migration, poverty, family authority, social identity, and individual choice** are the major themes of the film.
- The film uses realistic locations, handheld and observational camerawork, natural lighting, long sequences, expressive close-ups, music, contrasting colour and mood, and restrained performances to create both emotional intimacy and social realism.
- The ending radically changes the emotional meaning of the romantic narrative and reveals the devastating consequences of caste-based violence; the final moment forces the viewer to reconsider the earlier celebration of love in the context of deeply rooted social structures.
- *Sairat* uses the framework of a popular love story to question caste hierarchy, honour culture, patriarchy, and social exclusion; its significance lies in bringing these issues into mainstream Marathi cinema through an emotionally accessible narrative.
- *Sairat* demonstrates that individual love and freedom can come into conflict with deeply established systems of caste, class, patriarchy, and family honour. The film ultimately exposes the human cost of a society in which social status and caste identity can be valued above individual choice and dignity.

12. MOHANASWAMY – VASUDHENDRA

- **Vasudhendra** is a prominent contemporary Kannada writer known for fiction that explores sexuality, identity, relationships, social prejudice, family, and the experiences of marginalized individuals; he writes with psychological insight and a strong awareness of contemporary social realities.
- *Mohan Swamy* (2013) is a collection of interconnected stories by Vasudhendra focusing on the life and experiences of **Mohan Swamy, a gay man** in contemporary India; the work examines love, desire, loneliness, friendship, family, social prejudice, and the struggle for dignity and acceptance.
- Mohan Swamy is an educated, sensitive, emotionally complex man who comes to understand and live with his homosexual identity; his experiences reveal the personal

difficulties created by social expectations, prejudice, secrecy, and the pressure to conform to heterosexual norms.

- The central concern of the work is Mohan Swamy's experience of **same-sex desire and sexual identity**; the stories explore how he negotiates his sexuality within a society where heterosexual marriage is often treated as the social norm.
- Mohan Swamy experiences different forms of love, attraction, intimacy, disappointment, and emotional attachment; his relationships demonstrate both the possibilities of genuine companionship and the vulnerability created by secrecy and social prejudice.
- Although Mohan Swamy has friends and relationships, he frequently experiences emotional loneliness because he cannot always openly express his identity or desires; the work therefore presents loneliness as both a personal and socially produced condition.
- The stories expose the stigma faced by homosexual individuals through family expectations, gossip, discrimination, moral judgement, and social exclusion; Mohan's experiences demonstrate how society can make private identity a source of public anxiety.
- Family becomes an important source of pressure because heterosexual marriage is often presented as an expected stage of adult life; the conflict between individual desire and family expectations reveals the limitations imposed by conventional ideas of masculinity and marriage.
- *Mohan Swamy* questions conventional definitions of masculinity by presenting a male protagonist whose emotional and sexual identity does not conform to dominant heterosexual expectations; the work therefore challenges rigid ideas about what a man should desire or how he should behave.
- Mohan frequently has to decide when and with whom he can reveal his sexuality; secrecy protects him from immediate social consequences but also produces anxiety, loneliness, and emotional strain, making disclosure a complex personal choice.

- The body becomes an important site of desire, pleasure, vulnerability, and social control; the work treats sexuality as a natural part of human experience while showing how society attaches shame and moral judgement to non-normative desire.
- The work portrays the consequences of homophobia through rejection, misunderstanding, ridicule, emotional hurt, and social pressure; rather than presenting homosexuality as a problem, it draws attention to the social structures that make queer lives difficult.
- The stories are rooted in contemporary Indian society, where traditional family structures, cultural expectations, religion, morality, and changing attitudes toward sexuality intersect; Mohan's experiences therefore reflect wider tensions between individual freedom and social conformity.
- The work presents love and sexual desire as deeply human experiences but also shows their vulnerability when relationships are hidden or socially unacceptable; affection can provide intimacy and happiness, yet separation, rejection, betrayal, and unequal emotional commitment can cause pain.
- Vasudhendra frequently uses humour, irony, and everyday situations to approach difficult subjects; these techniques make the narratives accessible while also exposing the absurdity and contradictions of social attitudes toward sexuality.
- The stories are written in a relatively simple, conversational, and accessible style, combining personal experiences with emotional reflection; the interconnected narratives allow different episodes from Mohan's life to reveal the complexity of his identity and relationships.
- **Sexual identity, homosexuality, love, desire, loneliness, social prejudice, homophobia, family pressure, marriage, masculinity, secrecy, self-acceptance, individual freedom, dignity, and social conformity** are the major themes.
- *Mohan Swamy* is significant for bringing a **queer male perspective** into contemporary Indian literature; it gives narrative space to experiences that have often been marginalized or represented through stereotypes.

- Mohan's journey can be understood as a movement toward greater self-awareness and acceptance; despite social pressures and emotional difficulties, acknowledging his own identity becomes an important form of personal freedom.
- The work expands the representation of LGBTQ+ experiences in Indian literature by presenting homosexuality through ordinary human experiences of love, friendship, family, desire, disappointment, and survival rather than reducing queer identity to a single social issue.
- *Mohan Swamy* emphasizes that **sexual identity is an important part of human individuality and dignity** and questions social systems that force people to hide or deny themselves; through Mohan's experiences, Vasudhendra highlights the need for empathy, acceptance, personal freedom, and respect for diverse identities.

MODULE 4 : CONTEMPORARY INDIAN LITERATURE PART II

13. FATHER MAY BE AN ELEPHANT AND MOTHER ONLY A SMALL BASKET, BUT... GOGU SHYAMALA

- **Gogu Shyamala** is a prominent Telugu Dalit writer, feminist, and activist whose writings focus on the lives, struggles, dignity, and resilience of Dalit women and marginalized rural communities; her work brings subaltern experiences and oral histories into contemporary Indian literature.
- **“Father May Be an Elephant and Mother Only a Small Basket, But...”** is a short story that presents the life of a poor Dalit family and particularly highlights the experiences of women, children, caste oppression, poverty, labour, and social dignity; the story challenges dominant representations of rural India by foregrounding the voice of a marginalized community.
- The unusual title contrasts the **“elephant”** with the **“small basket”**, suggesting differences in social power, status, strength, and economic position; at the same time, the title emphasizes that a person's worth cannot be measured by material wealth or social status.
- The story portrays the everyday realities of Dalit life, including poverty, caste discrimination, insecure livelihoods, social exclusion, and dependence on dominant

social groups; however, the characters are represented not merely as victims but as people possessing dignity, courage, intelligence, and emotional strength.

- **Caste** forms an important social context of the story, shaping relationships, occupations, access to resources, and social status; the narrative exposes how caste hierarchy operates through ordinary interactions and everyday practices rather than only through openly violent acts.
- Poverty affects the family's choices and opportunities, making survival a constant concern; the story connects economic deprivation with caste oppression and demonstrates how marginalized communities can be trapped in cycles of poverty because of unequal social structures.
- Dalit women occupy a central position in the story and experience the combined pressures of **caste, poverty, gender, and labour**; nevertheless, they are portrayed as active individuals who contribute to family survival and possess their own forms of strength and agency.
- The mother represents care, resilience, labour, and emotional strength; although the title apparently describes her as a "**small basket**," the image can be read ironically because her social position may appear insignificant while her contribution to family and community life is substantial.
- The father figure is associated with strength and authority through the image of the **elephant**, but the story complicates conventional ideas of masculine power by placing greater emphasis on the everyday labour and resilience of women.
- The child's perspective is important because it presents social realities through observation and experience rather than through abstract political argument; innocence and directness make the realities of poverty, caste, family, and inequality especially powerful.
- Physical labour is central to the lives of marginalized characters; work is not simply an economic necessity but also a source of identity, dignity, and survival, revealing the dependence of society on forms of labour that are often socially undervalued.
- Shyamala's narrative style draws strongly on **Dalit oral traditions**, using conversational language, local cultural references, memories, and storytelling

techniques; this gives literary value to voices and experiences that have traditionally remained outside dominant literary narratives.

- The use of everyday speech and culturally rooted expressions gives authenticity to the narrative; language becomes a means of reclaiming identity and challenging the dominance of standardized literary and elite forms of representation.
- Despite poverty and discrimination, the characters retain a strong sense of dignity and self-respect; the story challenges the assumption that economic poverty or low caste makes people culturally or morally inferior.
- Resistance in the story is often expressed through everyday actions rather than dramatic rebellion; survival, self-respect, speaking out, protecting family, and refusing humiliation become important forms of resistance against oppressive social structures.
- The story can be read through a **Dalit feminist perspective** because it shows how caste and gender oppression intersect; Dalit women experience discrimination both as members of an oppressed caste and as women within patriarchal structures.
- The **elephant** can symbolize strength, size, authority, and social power; its presence in the title draws attention to conventional ideas of power while creating a contrast with the apparently insignificant basket.
- The **small basket** symbolizes modesty, everyday labour, domestic responsibility, and the apparently limited social position assigned to the mother; yet the basket can also represent usefulness, endurance, and the essential contribution of women's labour.
- **Caste oppression, Dalit identity, poverty, gender inequality, Dalit feminism, women's labour, family, dignity, self-respect, resistance, oral tradition, social exclusion, and survival** are the major themes of the story.
- The story is significant because it brings the experiences of **Dalit rural communities, particularly Dalit women**, into mainstream literary discussion; it challenges caste-based stereotypes and demonstrates how marginalized people can become subjects and narrators of their own histories.
- The story emphasizes that **social status, caste, wealth, and outward power do not determine human worth**. Through the lives of marginalized characters, Gogu

Shyamala celebrates the strength, dignity, labour, resilience, and agency of Dalit communities, especially women.

14. WATER PLAY – PERUMAL MURUGAN

- **Perumal Murugan** is a major contemporary Tamil writer, scholar, and literary chronicler known for novels, short stories, poetry, and writings on rural Tamil society; his works often focus on marginalized people, caste, sexuality, poverty, tradition, and individuals who struggle to live within restrictive social norms.
- **“Water Play” (Neer Vilayattu)** is a Tamil short story first published in *Kalachavudu* in January 1999 and later translated into English; the story begins as an innocent swimming episode involving a man and three children but gradually transforms into a disturbing psychological experience in which the well becomes a mysterious and threatening force.
- The unnamed man is a close relative of the children and is initially hesitant to join their water play because of shyness and uncertainty; once he enters the well, however, he experiences a deep emotional and almost spiritual connection with it before the playful situation gradually becomes frightening and life-threatening.
- The three children—a girl and two boys—are energetic, playful, fearless, and fascinated by the well; they initially invite the man to join their game but later prevent him from leaving, transforming innocent play into an increasingly aggressive struggle.
- The **well is the central symbol and almost a character in the story**; it is described as mysterious, beautiful, inviting, lonely, dangerous, and eventually monstrous, shifting from a place of pleasure and discovery into a threatening space that seems to possess its own will.
- The man initially hesitates to accept the children’s invitation because he is shy, but he finally enters the well; once he jumps in, the children follow him and the previously silent well becomes filled with waves, laughter, movement, and excitement.
- Unlike the children, who treat the well simply as a place for energetic play, the man experiences it deeply and imaginatively; he notices its irregular walls, steps, corners, water, sunlight, frogs, and hidden spaces and begins to feel affection for the well.

- The well is repeatedly personified as if it possesses emotions, desires, and intentions; it appears to welcome the children, enjoy their company after a long period of loneliness, and later deliberately entice the man back into the water.
- The man's experience of swimming becomes almost meditative as he explores the well and feels that he has briefly encountered his **"innermost being"**; the well therefore represents not merely a physical location but also a space of self-discovery and psychological experience.
- When the little girl asks how many times he can swim around the well without stopping, the man accepts the children's challenge; his inability to complete even two full rounds becomes a moment of embarrassment and signals the beginning of his loss of control over the situation.
- Exhausted after swimming, the man decides to leave the well, but the children become upset because they are not permitted to remain there without an adult; their pleas reveal that they depend on him as protection from the dangers hidden within the well.
- The little girl clings to his legs and pushes him back into the water, followed by the two boys; what began as playful affection becomes increasingly forceful, and the man realizes that the children are no longer allowing him to leave.
- The game changes from innocent entertainment into a terrifying struggle for survival; the children appear to coordinate their actions, with one attacking him in the water, another blocking the steps, and another preventing him from escaping from above.
- The man begins to imagine that the well itself has created the children as its **messengers or "devils"** to capture him; its walls become dark caves, the water becomes threatening, and ordinary objects and creatures appear to participate in a supernatural conspiracy against him.
- Fear gradually overwhelms the man's rational perception; his imagination transforms familiar surroundings into sources of danger, and he begins to hear the approaching sound of death, showing how extreme fear can alter one's perception of reality.
- One of the story's major features is the uncertainty between **what is actually happening and what the frightened man imagines**; the children may simply be

playing an unusually rough game, but from his perspective they become supernatural agents of the well.

- The well can be interpreted psychologically as a representation of the **deep unconscious mind**; its dark depths, hidden spaces, mysterious water, and frightening creatures reflect the protagonist's buried fears, desires, anxieties, and loss of control.
- Water initially represents pleasure, refreshment, freedom, discovery, and connection with nature, but gradually becomes a symbol of danger and death; this transformation reflects the changing psychological state of the protagonist.
- The children may be understood literally as playful children, but their transformation into frightening "devils" also represents the protagonist's growing fear; their innocent actions become terrifying because his perception of the situation changes.
- Nature is presented as both beautiful and threatening; sunlight, palm trees, water, frogs, breeze, and greenery create an enchanting atmosphere, while snakes, hidden currents, dark corners, and the depth of the well reveal nature's unpredictable dangers.
- The man's failure to complete the swimming challenge affects his pride and self-confidence; the children's teasing creates a situation in which he feels compelled to prove his physical ability, showing how ideas of masculine strength can influence behaviour.
- The man repeatedly interprets physical exhaustion as defeat, first by the well and later by the children; his desire to maintain dignity and avoid humiliation contributes to his continued struggle instead of allowing him to calmly assess the situation.
- Although the man is surrounded by three children, he becomes psychologically isolated as fear takes over; the well becomes an enclosed world from which escape seems impossible, symbolizing helplessness and entrapment.
- As the story progresses, the well changes from a source of pleasure into an image of death; the protagonist imagines himself as prey caught in its "gluttonous mouth," suggesting the fragility of human control when confronted with fear and mortality.
- The motor pump and its pipe briefly offer the man a possible escape route; he climbs it desperately, but one of the children descends against him and causes him to fall back into the water, intensifying his sense of inevitable defeat.

- The final cry of **“Snake, Snake!”** destroys the protagonist’s remaining sense of security; whether an actual snake is present or the cry is part of the children’s game is left ambiguous, and the man loses his grip and falls backward into the water.
- The ending is deliberately disturbing and ambiguous: the man falls into the well unable to understand where safety lies, suggesting psychological collapse, physical danger, and the complete reversal of the joyful water play with which the story began.
- **Nature and human vulnerability, fear, psychological transformation, childhood innocence, illusion and reality, masculinity, pride, entrapment, death, self-discovery, human–nature relationship, and the unpredictability of experience** are the major themes.
- The story makes extensive use of **personification, symbolism, imagery, simile, metaphor, psychological narration, contrast, suspense, and irony**; the well is personified as a living force, while repeated images of water, darkness, frogs, snakes, walls, and depths create an atmosphere of mystery and fear.
- Murugan gradually changes the narrative mood from **hesitation → excitement → wonder → challenge → anxiety → terror**; this carefully controlled progression makes the reader experience the protagonist’s psychological transformation alongside him.
- The children experience the well as a playground, while the adult increasingly sees it as a dangerous and supernatural space; this contrast highlights the difference between childhood fearlessness and adult consciousness of danger, responsibility, and mortality.
- The title initially suggests a simple and joyful childhood activity, but its meaning becomes increasingly ironic as the “play” develops into a struggle for survival; the title therefore captures the story’s movement from innocence and pleasure to fear and danger.
- **“Water Play” explores how an ordinary experience can become psychologically terrifying when fear, pride, imagination, and a sense of entrapment take control.** Through the transformation of the well from a beautiful place of play into a threatening space, Perumal Murugan examines the fragile boundary between pleasure and danger, reality and imagination, and human confidence and vulnerability.

15. LAMENT FOR THE EARTH – TEMSÜLA AO

- **Temsüla Ao (1945–2022)** was an eminent Naga poet, fiction writer, ethnographer, and academic from Nagaland; she served as a professor of English at North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) and directed the North East Zone Cultural Centre from 1992 to 1997; her writings frequently explore nature, indigenous culture, memory, conflict, identity, and the relationship between human beings and the environment.
- **“Lament for the Earth”** is an environmental poem that mourns the destruction of forests, rivers, wildlife, and the natural ecosystem through human exploitation; by presenting the Earth as a wounded and violated female body, Ao exposes the destructive consequences of uncontrolled development and human greed.
- The Earth is personified throughout the poem as a living woman with a body, breasts, countenance, substance, and wounds; this personification emphasizes that environmental destruction is not simply damage to resources but an assault on a living ecological system.
- The poem begins by imagining a once **“verdant, virgin, vibrant”** forest filled with tall majestic trees, dense canopies, birds, and small creatures; the forest is presented as peaceful, fertile, beautiful, and capable of surviving storms, rain, and wind.
- The peaceful forest is transformed by human exploitation: elephants and lorries enter the landscape, trees are cut down, and timber is transported to mills; the once-living forest becomes **“silent,” “stunned,” and “stumped,”** suggesting ecological devastation and loss of biodiversity.
- The description of the forest as bearing the evidence of **“rape”** creates a powerful metaphor for environmental destruction; human beings become aggressors who violate the Earth for commercial gain, while the damaged forest becomes a victim unable to defend itself.
- The river is initially presented as clear, lively, and abundant with fish; deer drink its pure water at the riverbank, creating an image of ecological harmony in which animals and water coexist peacefully.

- The river later becomes muddy and polluted because of human activities; the poem refers to the use of **bombs and bleaching powder** to catch fish, showing how greed for natural resources destroys aquatic life and damages the entire ecosystem.
- Like the forest, the river is personified as a suffering female body; its muddy and distorted appearance reflects ecological injury, while the absence of life in its “belly” suggests the destruction of aquatic biodiversity and the loss of its future.
- Human beings are ironically referred to as the “**two-legged animal**,” reducing humans from their supposedly superior position to one species among many; the phrase criticizes human arrogance and destructive behaviour toward other forms of life.
- The central cause of environmental destruction is human greed: forests are cut for timber, rivers are exploited for fish, and natural resources are transported to mills and industries; economic activity becomes destructive when it ignores ecological balance.
- The forest and river are closely connected, and the destruction of one affects the other; the river is described as choking with the remains of her “**sister**” **the forest**, demonstrating that ecosystems are interconnected and environmental damage spreads across natural systems.
- The Earth is compared to a once-beautiful woman whose body has been damaged by age and violence; her furrowed countenance, exposed substance, and crumbling body symbolize deforestation, soil erosion, pollution, and ecological degradation.
- The damaged earth is exposed to rain and wind and gradually breaks down into **silt and sand**; this imagery refers to soil erosion and the loss of fertile land caused by the destruction of vegetation and natural ecological protection.
- The poem moves from a landscape filled with birds, trees, fish, deer, and small creatures to one in which “**No life stirs**”; this contrast emphasizes the disappearance of biodiversity caused by human interference.
- The poem contrasts the harmonious natural world with human activities such as logging, transportation, industrial production, bleaching, and bombing; civilization is presented critically when its development occurs through the destruction of the environment.

- The repeated comparison between the Earth and a violated woman allows the poem to be read through an **ecofeminist perspective**, connecting the exploitation of nature with the domination and violation of female bodies; both nature and women become objects of control under systems of power and exploitation.
- The repeated phrase **“Once upon an earth”** creates a sense of memory and nostalgia for a lost ecological paradise; the poem remembers what the forest and river once were and contrasts that past with their damaged present.
- Expressions such as **“Alas for the forest,” “Alas for the river,” “Cry for the river,”** and **“Grieve for the rape of an earth”** create the rhythm of a lament; repetition intensifies the poet’s grief and transforms environmental destruction into a collective mourning.
- The poem uses **personification, metaphor, imagery, repetition, contrast, symbolism, irony, alliteration, and rhetorical/emotional exclamation**; the Earth, forest, and river are personified, while images of wounds, rape, pollution, erosion, and death communicate ecological suffering.
- The tone is **mournful, sorrowful, accusatory, and warning**, while the mood changes from peaceful and nostalgic in the descriptions of the original landscape to disturbing and tragic as environmental destruction is revealed.
- **Environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution, loss of biodiversity, human greed, industrial exploitation, ecological interconnectedness, destruction of natural resources, ecofeminism, nostalgia, environmental responsibility, and the vulnerability of nature** are the major themes.
- The word **“Lament”** means an expression of grief or mourning, and the title accurately captures the poem’s central purpose: mourning the destruction of an Earth that was once **“verdant, vibrant, virgin.”** The poem functions as both ecological mourning and a warning to humanity.
- **“Lament for the Earth” warns that uncontrolled human exploitation destroys not only forests, rivers, animals, and soil but also the ecological balance necessary for human survival.** Temsula Ao calls for recognition of the Earth as a living, interconnected system and urges humanity to respect and protect nature before irreversible damage leaves the planet without a future.

16.HANGWOMAN: EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD HANGING – K. R. MEERA

- **K. R. Meera** is a prominent contemporary Malayalam writer and journalist known for her powerful exploration of gender, violence, power, politics, desire, memory, and the psychological experiences of women. Her major works include **Aarachaar (Hangwoman)**, *Yellow Is the Colour of Longing*, *The Gospel of Yudas*, *The Poison of Desire*, and *The Angel's Beauty Spots*. *Aarachaar* won the **Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award** and the **Odakkuzhal Award**, among other honours.
- *Hangwoman (Aarachaar)* is a major Malayalam novel centred on **Chetna Grddha Mularkar**, a young woman from a hereditary family of executioners. The novel examines the relationship between **power, violence, patriarchy, death, media, and spectacle**, while following Chetna's struggle to establish her identity and exercise control over her own life.
- The phrase **"Everyone Loves a Good Hanging"** points to society's fascination with public punishment and death. A hanging becomes more than a legal execution—it becomes a **spectacle consumed by the public and the media**, revealing the disturbing human attraction to violence and punishment.
- **Chetna** is the central character and the daughter of a long line of executioners. Although execution is traditionally associated with men, she enters this profession and becomes a powerful challenge to conventional gender roles. Her journey is also a struggle for **independence, recognition, dignity, and control over her own identity**.
- The family has inherited the profession of execution from generation to generation. Their history demonstrates how **violence can become institutionalized as a profession and a family tradition**. Chetna inherits not only the profession but also the psychological and social burden associated with it.
- The novel presents execution as a disturbing occupation carried out in the name of law and justice. It raises questions about the **death penalty, morality, state power, and the responsibility of the individual who performs an execution**.
- Chetna's position as a woman in a traditionally male profession challenges patriarchal assumptions. However, her struggle shows that entering a male-dominated space does not automatically free a woman from **male control, social judgement, objectification, and exploitation**.

- The media plays an important role in transforming Chetna and the execution into a public spectacle. Her personal life becomes a subject of public curiosity. The novel therefore critiques the way the media can **commercialize suffering, violence, sexuality, and death.**
- Power operates at several levels: the **state has the power to execute**, the executioner has power over the condemned person's final moment, the media exercises power over public perception, and patriarchal society attempts to control Chetna's choices.
- The novel does not treat capital punishment simply as a legal procedure. It raises deeper ethical questions: **Who has the right to take a life? Can killing be justified when it is authorized by law? What happens psychologically to the person who performs the execution?**
- Violence is both physical and psychological. The execution represents institutional violence, while Chetna experiences different forms of **gender-based, emotional, social, and psychological violence.** The novel demonstrates that violence can exist even outside the execution chamber.
- Chetna is frequently viewed and interpreted by men and the media. Her body, profession, sexuality, and personal life become objects of public attention. The novel exposes how women can be **reduced to objects of male curiosity and desire.**
- Chetna's central struggle is to define herself independently of her family profession, gender, and public image. She wants to be recognized as an **individual human being rather than merely “the hangwoman.”**
- The inherited profession represents an old social tradition, while television, journalism, celebrity culture, and modern political institutions represent contemporary society. The novel brings these worlds together to show the tensions between **tradition, modernity, technology, and changing social values.**
- Death is an omnipresent reality in the novel. The executioner's profession makes death part of everyday life, while the condemned person's final moments force readers to confront human mortality and the value placed on life.

- Personal relationships in the novel are complicated by power, sexuality, possessiveness, and social expectations. Love is not presented as purely romantic; it can involve **desire, manipulation, vulnerability, dependence, and power**.
- Chetna can be interpreted as a symbol of the **modern Indian woman confronting patriarchal institutions**. By occupying the traditionally masculine position of executioner, she challenges assumptions about femininity, authority, strength, and violence.
- **“Everyone Loves a Good Hanging”** is deeply ironic. Society officially condemns violence in many circumstances, yet people may gather around, watch, discuss, and even sensationalize an execution. The title therefore exposes the contradiction between **moral condemnation of violence and fascination with violent spectacle**.
- **Major Themes**
 - **Patriarchy and female identity**
 - **Death penalty and morality**
 - **Violence and state power**
 - **Media sensationalism**
 - **Gender discrimination**
 - **Power and control**
 - **Sexuality and desire**
 - **Tradition and modernity**
 - **Death and mortality**
 - **Identity and selfhood**
 - **Public spectacle**
 - **Social hypocrisy**
- **Irony:** The title contrasts society's fascination with hanging with the moral seriousness of taking a life.

- **Symbolism:** The noose represents death, state authority, violence, and inherited family identity.
- **Imagery:** Detailed descriptions of execution, bodies, crowds, and media create a disturbing atmosphere.
- **Contrast:** Chetna's private identity is contrasted with her public image as a hangwoman.
- **Psychological narration:** The narrative explores fear, desire, memory, trauma, and emotional conflict.
- **Dark humour:** Moments of irony and humour intensify the novel's critique of social attitudes toward death and violence.
- *Hangwoman* uses the life of **Chetna Grddha Mularkar** to examine how individuals are caught within powerful structures such as **patriarchy, law, family tradition, media, and the state**. The work questions society's fascination with death and punishment while presenting a woman's struggle to claim **agency, identity, dignity, and control over her own life**.