

2nd SEM BA ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

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ZEITGEIST

2019 ADMISSION

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ZEITGEIST

COURSE CODE	ENG2 A04
TITLE OF THE COURSE	ZEITGEIST: READINGS ON CONTEMPORARY CULTURE
SEMESTER IN WHICH THE COURSE IS TO BE TAUGHT	2
NO. OF CREDITS	4
NO. OF CONTACT HOURS	90 (5hrs/wk.)

1. OBJECTIVE OF THE COURSE

- To inculcate the values enshrined in the constitution of India and to provide an insight on the secular framework of the country.
- To familiarise the learners with concepts such as conservation, sustainability and the life of the marginalised and their interconnectedness.
- To foster among learners an awareness of the diverse problems faced by women and the sexual minorities and to promote the culture of inclusion and mutual respect.
- To understand the “human” as articulated among the various cultures and promote a multicultural and plural understanding of rights.

11. COURSE DETAILS:

Module 1: Indian Constitution and Secularism

- 1 Should Gandhi’s Assassin be Killed? Pearl S Buck
- 2 Preamble to the Constitution of India
- 3 Toba Tek Singh: Saadat Hassan Manto
- 4 Freedom: Rabindranath Tagore

Module 2: Sustainable Environment

- 1.The End of Living and the Beginning of Survival: Chief Seattle

2. On Killing a Tree: Gieve Patel

3. Zlate the Goat: Issac Bashevis Singer

Module 3: Gender

1. Claiming an Education: Adrienne Rich

2. The story of an Hour: Kate Chopin

3. What It's like to Be Transgender: Lee Mokobe

Module 4 : Human Rights

1. Refugee Blues: WH Auden

2. Amnesty: Nadine Godimer

3. The Out Cast: Sharan Kumar Limbale

4. Chemical Happiness and the Meaning of Life: Yuval Noah Harari



MODULE 1-INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND SECULARISM

LESSON 1: SHOULD THE ASSASSIN OF GANDHI BE KILLED?

About The Author

- **Pearl Sydenstricker Buck** (1892-1973), a prolific American novelist who spent a major part of her life in China, as the daughter of missionaries.
- Born on June 26, 1892, in the USA.
- Parents- Absalom and Caroline Sydenstricker.
- In 1917, she marries John Lossing Buck.
- Writing helped her overcome the psychological depression and the financial crisis of the family.
- First novel-“East wind, West wind”(1930)
- Second Novel - "The Good Earth", earned her a Pulitzer Prize in 1932.
- 1938 - First American Woman Nobel Laureate.
- Started an adoption agency (WELCOME HOUSE - 1948).
- Died of Lung Cancer.

About The Text

- Mahathma Gandhi (1869-1948), the father of the nation, the world perceived his weapons of Ahimsa and Satyagraha as alternatives to the ideologies of violence and war.
- On 30th January 1948 India witnessed the tragic assassination of Mahatma Gandhi at the Birla House in New Delhi. Naram Vinayak Godse was his assassin.
- Jawaharlal Nehru mourned, “the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere”
- The obituary is written in the context of her having never met Gandhiji. The extract reveals how and why the charismatic leader touched the heart and soul of the world.
- Gandhi is dead. The shot of a gun and only silence is left.
- The lovers of violence are the ignorant, the stupid, the inventors of atom bomb, the generals, the captains, the sergeants and the little soldiers.

- Today millions of the people can be killed easily.



- Gandhi was only one. His voice was single, gentle, and reasoning. He was right and all knew it. Non-violence is the only common sense for human beings. At all costs, Gandhi said to refuse the violence but without the violence.
- Pearl S.Buck presents with a non- violent punishment for the assassin of Gandhi. She says he should be released from the prison.
- According to Gandhi, he meant that man should not die by violence, even as punishment for a crime.
- Nobody will accept him. He could never escape what he has done. In fact, there is no escape from one’s own conscience. Women and children would despise to go near him and none would want to shake hands with him for those hands are the hands that killed Gandhi. He would be an outcast everywhere, even among his friends. He would be haunted by Gandhi’s own spirit.
- All these would be mental torture for him and lead to his destruction.
- The world longs for goodness. India will live and become great in our world. In Gandhi's personal example, he did what he told others to do. When people saw that this was true, they believed in him.
- Gandhi has done his part. Now it is our turn to make India a nonviolent country. We long for the peacemakers. No war brings peace, for violence only brings more violence.
- Pearl S Buck, ends with a message that “Oh, India, dare be worthy of your Gandhi!”

LESSON 2: PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

- Preamble means introduction.
- Tradition of the preamble began with the American Constitution.
- Preamble to the constitution of India refers to the “THE IDENTITY CARD OF THE CONSTITUTION”
- The drafting committee consists of 7 members, was chaired by Dr.B.R Ambedkar.
- The final draft of the constitution was presented before the constitution assembly on 3rd November 1947.

- It comprised 395 articles and 22 parts and 8 Schedules.
- On 26 January 1950 it came into force.
- Indian constitution is the most comprehensive and longest written constitution of the world.
- The preamble was amended by the 42nd constitutional amendment act 1976 which add three words-socialist, secular and Integrity.
- The terms sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic in the Preamble suggest the nature of the state. The ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity reflect the objectives of the Constitution. It also contains November 26, 1949 as the date of adoption of the Indian Constitution.
- The Gandhian ideals are aimed to be secured by the incorporation of the word 'Socialist' in the Preamble by the 42nd Amendment.
- The word 'Republic' indicates that India has an elected head, though indirectly elected, the Indian President is the choice of the people of India.
- The word 'Democratic' in the Preamble emphasize these values the Constitution framers have resorted to the use of the concepts like justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Social, economic and political justice are to be secured through the provisions of Fundamental Rights.
- Liberty is guaranteed to the individuals through the provision of Fundamental Rights, which are enforceable in the court of law.
- The unity and integrity of the nation is sought to be secured by the use of the word 'Fraternity' in the Preamble and by the provisions of fundamental duties and single citizenship in the Constitution.
- The first sentence of the preamble declares India to be a Sovereign Socialist Democratic Republic.
- The term 'sovereign' implies India is internally supreme and externally free.
- The terms socialist and secular were added to the Preamble by 42nd amendment in 1976.
- In India popular elections give legitimacy to our rulers.
- To build up an ideal democracy, the Preamble emphasizes justice, liberty, equality and fraternity as political ideals.

- The idea of equality stands for eradicating discriminations between citizens by caste system and untouchability. But here again one should remember that equality in the
- Fraternity as an ideal is bought to ensure the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation.

LESSON 3- TOBA TEK SINGH BY SAADAT HASAN MANTO

About the Author

- Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) was a prolific writer of essays, plays, film scripts, and a novel, he was best known for his short stories.
- Born in Punjab, his writing career really took off in Bombay; he then moved to Lahore in Pakistan in January 1948.
- His stories largely focused on the theme of partition, exploring its human consequences from different angles.

About the Text

- Toba Tek Singh," written in 1954, describing the exchange of inmates of a Lahore mental asylum after partition.
- The story is set in the background of India-Pakistan partition of 1947. In the aftermath of political separation, many people had to relocate and uproot their lives.
- Manto uses the madness of the asylum as a metonym for the madness that wreaks havoc in the nation at the time of partition.
- The story is about Bishan Sing and some other lunatics in the asylum.
- The governments of Pakistan and India decided to exchange lunatics in the same way that they had exchanged civilian prisoners.
- Muslim lunatics in Indian madhouses would be sent to Pakistan, while Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani madhouses would be handed over to India.
- The Main situations in the story:
 1. There was one Muslim lunatic who had read the newspaper *Zamindar* every day for twelve years. One of his friends asked him: "What is Pakistan?" he replied: "It's a place in India where they make razors."

2. One Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh: why are they sending them to India? We don't even speak the language. But he replied that he can understand the Indian language," the other replied, "Indians are devilish people who strut around haughtily,"
3. While bathing, a Muslim lunatic shouted "Long live Pakistan!" but he slipped on the floor and knocked himself out.
4. All the inmates knew that there was a man named Mohammed Ali Jinnah, whom people called the Qaid-e-Azem. He had made a separate country for the Muslims, called Pakistan.
5. One lunatic climbed a tree and sat on one of its branches for two hours, lecturing without pause on the complex issues of Partition. When the guards told him to come down, he climbed higher. When they tried to frighten him with threats, he replied: "I will live neither in India nor in Pakistan. I'll live in this tree right here! "When he reached the ground, he wept and embraced his Hindu and Sikh friends, distraught at the idea that they would leave him and go to India.
6. One lunatic, he had been a radio engineer. He kept apart from the other inmates, and spent all his time walking silently up and down a particular footpath in the garden. After hearing about the exchange, he turned in his clothes and ran naked all over the grounds.
7. There was one fat Muslim lunatic from Chiniot who had been an enthusiastic Muslim League activist. He used to wash fifteen or sixteen times a day, but abandoned the habit overnight. His name was Mohammed Ali. One day he announced that he was the Qaid-e-Azem, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Seeing this, a Sikh lunatic declared himself to be Master Tara Singh.
8. Young Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had gone mad over an unhappy love affair. His beloved was a Hindu girl from Amritsar. Although she had rejected him, he had not forgotten her after losing his mind. For this reason, he cursed the Muslim leaders who had split India into two parts, so that his beloved remained Indian while he became Pakistani.
9. In the European Ward there were two Anglo-Indian lunatics. They were very worried the breakfast and chapatti in Hindustan.

10. Bishan Sing is one among the lunatics of Lahore Asylum: He is the protagonist of this story. Toba Tek Singh is his hometown where he had some land and property. His relatives visited once in month. Bishan Singh had a fifteen-year-old daughter Roopa Kaur. He wanted to know that whether Toba Tek Singh was in Pakistan or India.

11. There was another lunatic in that madhouse who thought he was God. Bishan Singh asked him whether Toba Tek Singh was in Pakistan or India. He replied: "Neither, because I haven't yet decided where to put it!"

12. Fazal Din, One of Bishan Singh's Muslim friends came to visit from Toba Tek Singh. He says that Bishan Singh's family left for India and were safe there.

13. Finally, the day of exchange came and lunatics were taken to the Wagha border. The lunatics were out of control, they were screaming, laughing, crying, and running here and there making the task more complex.

14. At that time Bishan Sing asked one officer "where Toba Tek was? When he learns that his homeland is in Pakistan he refused to budge. Many officers tried him to move him but failed. After few second all heard a sudden scream from Bishan Sing, who was lying on the ground after fifteen years. And the piece of land where he fell belong to neither India nor Pakistan.

- Manto wanted to show real madness is not within the lunatic asylum but with those who trouble the innocents in the name of communalism.
- Satire used to expose and criticize people's stupidity of vices. Through the innocent protests and gibberish of the inmates of the asylum, Manto makes us realize real lunacy is with the government who pluck out these people from their rootedness. Madness is used as a metaphor to express the absurdity of the whole exercise of Partition

LESSON 4: FREEDOM BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

About the Poet

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) Bengali poet, short-story writer, song composer, playwright, essayist, and painter who introduced new prose and verse forms.

- In 1913 he became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- Gitanjali (Song Offerings), Gora (Fair-Faced) and Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World) are his best-known works.

About the Poem

- In this poem, the famous Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore expresses his wishes and vision for his motherland, India.
- The first wish: the wish of freedom from fear. He believes fear of his countrymen is responsible for her plight of slavery.
- The second wish: for his motherland is the freedom from the burden of sense-less, illogical, and orthodox beliefs and traditions which don't let her see the future.
- His third wish: for India is to break free of her fear of taking risks; he wants her motherland to dare to walk on the adventurous path; he also wants her not to trust so much in the uncertain destiny; nor allow the control of her forward movement in the hands of narrow-minded and heartless people.
- His last wish: for her motherland is the freedom from humiliation of living as slave in the hands of foreign invaders. He wants her to stop living like a puppet whose each and every movement is governed and controlled by the master of the show. He wishes for her motherland to live freely, taking her own decisions and creating her own future.

MODULE- II- Sustainable Environment

LESSON 1: The End of Living and the Beginning of Survival by Chief Seattle

Chief Seattle (1786- 1866)

- He was born on the black river, near Blake Island, Washington.
- A prominent figure among his people with remarkable leadership skills.
- A noted orator in his native language.
- He was a well build man and had a powerful voice.

- He had the ability to understand the white settlers' real intention for land grab.
- He wanted to live in peace with them.
- The city of Seattle is named after him.

About the Text

- Chief Seattle delivered the speech 'The end of Living and the Beginning of Survival' on March 11, 1854.
- A meeting with him called by the White Governor to discuss surrender or sale of native land to white settlers.
- The speech has been widely cited as a "powerful, bittersweet plea for respect of Native American rights and environmental values".
- It has gained much popularity because it stresses the independence and interconnections of the world of the living and non-living.
- The speech places all forms of life in a network of interdependence.
- The idea of buying and selling land and cruelty to animals was strange to the Native Americans.
- He says every part of the earth is sacred to him and his people.
- Seattle is right in saying: "The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like blood which unites one family. All things are connected."
- The idea of buying and selling the sky and warmth of the land is strange.
- We are part of the earth and it is part of us.
- There is only one God and He does not discriminate between people.
- Destiny is a mystery to the Native Americans too, but they do realize that the changed environment marks the end of living and the beginning of Survival.

LESSON 2: ON KILLING A TREE by Gieve Patel

Gieve Patel

- Born in 190, Gieve Patel is an important presence in the history of modern Indian poetry in English.
- He is a poet, playwright and painter.
- He has written three books of poetry (Poems, how do You Withstand, Body and Mirrored Mirroring); three plays (Princes, Savaksa and Mr Behram); and held several exhibitions of his paintings in India and abroad.
- He lives in Mumbai.

About the Text

- Gieve Patel sarcastically explains the process of cutting a tree as a voice against cutting trees in his poem 'On Killing a Tree'.
- Though the poet employs skillful process of killing a tree, he is actually showing his resentment against those who kill nature.
- His style is ironic and detached.
- It is a graphic picture of man's cruelty towards Nature which is symbolized by the tree.
- He gives a total description of the annihilation of a tree.
- Man's greed is not quenched by the mere physical process of killing a tree.
- The tree which symbolizes Nature has grown slowly consuming the earth and rising out of its crust.
 - It takes much time to kill a tree.
 - It is not enough to give a sharp cut with a knife to kill it.
 - It has absorbed years of sunlight, air and water.
 - The bleeding bark of the tree will heal and from near the ground it will bring out small twigs with leaves on them.
 - To really kill a tree, its root is to be pulled out of the anchoring earth.

- The roots are white, wet and most sensitive.
- Once the tree is pulled out with its root, then it is a matter of scorching and choking it in the air.
- Now the killing process is complete.
- The poem speaks of the resilience of nature in spite of the violence inflicted on it.
- The poem also tells us that we should be persistent if we want to eradicate a problem.
- The roots of the problem too should be eradicated.

LESSON 3: ZLATEH THE GOAT by Issac Bashevis Singer

I.B. Singer

- He is a Polish born Jewish American novelist and short story writer.
- He was born in Warsaw.
- His father was a rabbi and during his adolescence he was also trained for some time to become a rabbi. But he preferred to be a writer.
- He got Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978.
- He died in Florida.

About the Text

- “Zlateh the Goat” is a poignant story about the bond between human beings and animals.
- It is set around Hanukkah (a Jewish festival) time.
- Zlateh is the pet goat of the family.
- Reuven is a furrier.
- His wife is Leah. He has a son Aaron and two daughters Anna and Miriam.

- The family is in bad times as the winter is mild.
- Reuven decides to sell Zlateh to the town butcher Feyvel as it has become old and gave little milk because the family wanted money to celebrate for Hanukkah which is nearby.
- The job is entrusted to Aaron.
- On the way weather becomes bad.
- Aaron and Zlateh are caught in a hailstorm.
- They lose their way and are trapped in a blizzard.
- They find shelter in a haystack.
- Aaron drinks the goat's milk.
- During the three days spent inside the haystack, they develop a special bond.
- It shows how human beings and animals are linked in the web of life.

MODULE –III: GENDER

LESSON 1: Claiming an Education by Adrienne Rich

Adrienne Rich

- Born in Baltimore, USA in 1929
- The renowned poet, essayist and political activist for women.
- Famously defined herself as a “woman lesbian and feminist”.
- She won the prestigious Yale Series of Younger Poets Award for her book *A Change of World* in 1951.
- Identifying herself as a lesbian, she left her husband in 1970 which led him to shoot him and kill himself.
- Rich won the 1974 National Book Award, for *Diving into the Wreck*
- She began living with a Jamaican born Novelist Michelle Cliff in 1976.

- The questioning of patriarchal assumptions, the need for change and power of the will were the major themes of her writings.
- She died in 2012.

About the Text

- In Adrienne Rich's essay, she speaks to a group of female students at Douglass college.
- She starts out by saying that University education implies an ethical and intellectual contract between teacher and student.
- She defines 'taking responsibility towards yourselves', from the feminist perspective by saying that women are often told that this should come second to their relationships and responsibilities to other people.
- To claim means to take as the rightful owner; to assert in the face of possible contradiction.
- To receive means to come into possession of; to act as a receptacle or container for; to accept as authoritative or true.
- The difference is that between acting and being acted upon.
- Women students and teachers demanded the introduction of Women' Studies courses to claim women-directed education.
- One of the devastating weaknesses of university learning has been its almost total erasure of women's experience and thought from the curriculum and its exclusion of women as members of the academic community.
- Douglass college itself is a women's college in a university administered by mainly men.
- Black and other minority people have recognized that their racial and ethnic experience is often out from studies.
- The Books we study have names like The Descent of Man; Man, and His Symbols; Irrational Man; The Phenomenon of Man etc.
- These books describe a Science and Society; or one-dimensional Man.
- Less than a decade ago, women and teachers in a number of universities began to demand women's studies courses.

- Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking and naming for you.
- It means learning to respect and use your brains and instincts.
- Responsibility to yourself means you don't fall for shallow and easy solutions.
- The education of women has been a debate over centuries.
- Many male professors still feel that teaching in a women's college is a second-rate career.
- We should take to heart the words of Elizabeth Barret Browning, a poet, who, in 1845, wrote against the "passive reciprocity" in the mind.
- She said that "women want to be made to think actively: their apprehension is quicker than that of men, but their defect lies for the most part in the logical faculty and in the higher mental activities".
- To take yourself seriously, you should seek criticism.
- The inborn potentialities of so many women's minds should no longer be wasted, raveled away, paralyzed or denied.

LESSON 2: THE STORY OF AN HOUR by Kate Chopin

Kate Chopin

- Kate Chopin (1851- 1904) is considered as one of the pioneers of American feminist writing.
- Her life style was unconventional.
- In her writing she showed how women would act and feel their lives not dictated by societal norms and male expectations.
- She began her career with short fictions and essays.
- The examination of unhappy marriages, the question of divorce in a rational, unemotional manner and the theme of love outside marriage concerns ahead of the times- formed some of the major themes of her novels.
- Works- At Fault, The Awakening etc.
- She died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

- It was only posthumously that she was recognized as an important writer and a champion of the rights of women.

About the Text

- The Story of an Hour was originally published in Vogue in December 1894 as “The Dream of an Hour”.
- The story is about a woman, Mrs. Mallard, whose husband unexpectedly dies in a railroad disaster.
- Her sister and her husband’s friend break the news gently to her because Mrs. Mallard has a heart disease, and they concerned that shock may be too much for her.
- Mrs. Mallard immediately falls to weeping and goes up to her room.
- Once there and sitting in her comfortable chair and looking out the open window at the patch of blue sky showing through the opening in the clouds, she suddenly realizes that she is not entirely sad, that, in fact she finally feels free for the first time in her life.
- When she opens the door to her sister and begins down the stairs, her husband Brently, shows up.
- He hadn’t been in the accident after all.
- Up on seeing him, Louise Mallard (who never had a name of her own before her husband’s “death”) drops dead.
- The doctor says she died from too much joy.

LESSON 3: WHAT'S LIKE TO BE A TRANSGENDER By Lee Mokobe

Lee Mokobe

- Born in 1966 in Cape Town, South Africa.
- Award winning slam poet.
- Founder of Vocal Revolutionaries.
- Lee came out as a transgender male.
- He is a political activist who criticizes the lack of freedom of expression in South Africa.
- Lee Mokobe has been a TED fellow since 2015.
- “What is like to be transgender” is a soul baring poem.
- The poem is an autobiographical poem.
- The poem captures the identity crisis of transgender.

About the Text

- The narrator was kneeling long after the congregation on his feet, by dipping both hands into holy water and he traced the trinity crossed his chest and uttered prayer for the first time in a glass-stained cathedral.
- His tiny body drooping like a question mark and asked Jesus to fix it, but didn't get answer.
- To reintroduce him to sanctity, his mother told him that he was the miracle.
- Then he decided to be a boy.
- He was the mystery of an anatomy, because he was neither fully a boy or a girl.
- So, he tried to balance between awkward boy and apologetic girl, and when he turned 12, the boy phase wasn't deemed cute anymore.
- So, he wore skirts because his nostalgic aunts reminded that if he went on with boys' kind of attitude, he would never bring a husband home.
- He swallowed their insults along with their slurs.
- The kids in his school found some truth and called him lesbian.
- He did not hate his body.

- He just loved his body.
- He is considered his body as a house and did not want to evacuate.
- His mother fears he would fade away like Mya Hall, Leelah Alcorn, Blake Brockington- who either committed suicide or were short dead.
- People like him are left out when the societies discuss about equality of gender, as he belongs to neither group.
- No one ever thinks of them as human.
- He wonders how long it will be before the trans suicide notes start to feel redundant.
- They are transgender not because of their sin and so should love their body.
- His prayers are now getting stuck in his throat.
- He accepts whatever God has decided and don't have any complaint.

MODULE- IV HUMAN RIGHTS

LESSON 1: REFUGEE BLUES By Wystan Hugh Auden

About The Author:

- **Wystan Hugh Auden** (1907-1973) was born in York as the son of George Augustus Auden, a doctor and Constance Rosalie Auden, a missionary nurse.
- During the course of his graduation in English at Oxford, he was influenced by the poetry of T. S. Eliot, one of the icons of Modernist poet then.
- In 1930, Auden's first collection of poetry entitled Poems was published and thus started the movement known as 'The Auden's Generation.'
- In 1937 he married Erika Mann, daughter of the famous German novelist Thomas Mann. Auden was involved in the Spanish civil war in 1937.
- He was a prolific writer and won the Pulitzer Prize for "The Age of Anxiety" 1947 and in 1955 the National Book Award for "The Shield of Achilles".

- In 1958 he moved to Austria and settled in a village near Vienna. There he died of heart attack in 1973. He is buried in poet's corner of Westminster Abbey.

About The Poem:

- The poem dramatizes the condition of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in the years before World War II, especially the indifference and antagonism they faced when seeking asylum in the democracies of the period.
- “Refugee blues” is one of the poems about a sad and terrible plight of being a Jew in the wrong place at the wrong time. Obviously, as a refugee, the couple has lost their home, their country and their identity.
- Though the poem is about two people at a particular time in the past the thoughts and feelings of the poem’s narrator might be similar to situations in any part of the world today.
- This poem is set in Germany in 1930s when the Jewish people were being persecuted by the Nazi regime.
- 'Blues' is a slow, sad song, traditionally with 3-line stanzas with 4 beats to each line. The music features 'blue notes': mainly flattened thirds and sevenths.
- The Blues were first sung by African Americans working on slave plantations in the southern states of the USA; these melancholy ballads expressed the unhappiness of the slaves' lives.
- The poem begins by introducing a city with 10 million people in it. Some have the luxury of living in a mansion; this is directly contrasted with the rest who are living in most disgusting conditions, 'holes'.
- There is not even a 'hole' for this couple - they are beneath the usual poverty line, the repetition of the sentiment, of having no room for 'us', makes it sadder.
- “Yet there’s no place for us, my dear, the poem shows how they are exiled from their own country and cannot return. They can see it in a map, can look at it in an atlas - but cannot return.
- They are resigned to this fate when they say 'We cannot go there now'. The tree can go through nature's cycle and seem dead at certain times of the year but can be re-born, can grow again.

- It's natural for things to be given a new chance every year in nature, to bloom again. However, this is contrasted with man-made documents that, once lost, can never be recovered.
- They then go to three places where they need help. The consul, presumably at an Embassy, treats them badly and violently bangs the table and makes a ridiculous statement: 'If you have no passport, you're officially dead!'.
- The speaker and his beloved have no place to go and they have no freedom. The poem ends by saying a dream of the speaker, he dreamed of a building with thousand floors, windows and doors but actually they are standing on the great plain in the falling snow, where ten thousands of soldiers marched to and fro looking for the couple.

Literary Technique

- **Foreshadowing** Each stanza has two rhyming lines that relate in some way to the plight of Jewish European refugees during the Second World War such as lack of housing, shelter, expired and non-renewable paperwork, unhelpful bureaucrats etc.
- The refrain of each stanza is essentially the German refugee personalizing these woes.
- The tone of each stanza hints at the desperation of the refugees as all doors are closed to them and all their rights gradually removed. This tension is gradually built up foreshadowing the events of the final stanza where the refugees are pursued by 'ten thousand soldiers' references to the Nazi death squads who pursued the Jews relentlessly to their deaths.

Imagery and symbolism

- The images of a vast building with seemingly many rooms, doors and windows implies a place that could shelter many people yet has no space for the refugees. Much like Europe at the time, there was 'no room' for the Jews in Nazi controlled territory even though there was enough physical space.
- It is also a metaphor for the other countries of the world that had room to take in refugees yet restricted their entry citing lack of room and resources.
- Through his use of the term 'thunder rumbling', storm clouds symbolise dark times and trouble which directly relates to the situation European Jews found themselves in during the Second World War.

- The term also symbolizes the Luftwaffe – Nazi Germany’s air force. The noise generated by these warplanes and their bombs would have resembled a severe thunder storm.
- **Rhyme scheme** of aab the poet has used two lines that end with a rhyme followed by a refrain. This refrain personalizes each stanza to the plight of the refugee, almost a realization of their eventual fate.

LESSON 2: AMNESTY by Nadine Gordimer

About The Author:

- Nadine Gordimer (20 November 1923 – 13 July 2014) was a South African writer, political activist and recipient of the 1991 Nobel Prize in Literature.
- Gordimer's writing dealt with themes of love, politics, moral and racial issues, particularly apartheid in South Africa.
- Her works always question power relations and truth, she tells stories of ordinary people, revealing moral ambiguities and choices.
- Her characterization is nuanced, revealed more through the choices her characters make than through their claimed identities and beliefs.
- She also weaves in subtle details within the characters' names.
- She was active in the anti-apartheid movement, joining the African National Congress during the days when the organization was banned, and gave Nelson Mandela advice on his famous 1964 defence speech at the trial which led to his conviction for life.
- She was also active in HIV/AIDS causes.

About the work

- “Amnesty” describes the miserable conditions black people in her country had to cope with for several years.
- The story is at the same time both sad and encouraging, because it describes the enormous courage and will of the blacks to fight against apartheid, the inhuman practice of racial segregation practiced in South Africa since the beginning of the last century.
- The story takes place in South Africa during the time of apartheid.

- A young woman narrates the story of her potential husband's freedom from imprisonment.
- The man, never named, had left their village on the grassy plains of South Africa nine years earlier to work as a construction worker among the unfinished tops of skyscrapers in an obscure but not too distant city.
- The woman had little contact with his urban life (for 2 years he sent home money and visited one weekend each month) but she learned he had joined a union.
- A bright man, he began making speeches and marching for the causes of workers and civil rights in general.
- In the third year she learned that he was in prison. During the trial that followed a baby daughter, which he named Inkululeka, was born.
- He was sentenced to 6 years on the "Island." She attempted to visit him once: she and his parents saved for 2 years and made the journey to Cape Town, but they got as far as the ferry because they had no permit.
- After 5 years, he has returned, changed. His young daughter doesn't recognize him from the old photo she has grown up with; the narrator finds herself as distanced from this man maybe less sure of where his thoughts are as when he was away from her.
- Now, carrying a second child, she finishes the story, thinking figuratively that she's still waiting for him to come home.

LESSON 3: THE OUTCASTE by Sharankumar Limbale

About the Author:

- Sharankumar Limbale was born in 1956, is a Marathi language author, poet and literary critic.
- He has penned more than 40 books, but is best known for his autobiographical novel Akkarmashi. Akkarmashi is translated in several other Indian languages and in English. The English translation is published by the Oxford University Press with the title The Outcaste.
- His critical work Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature (2004) is considered amongst the most important works on Dalit literature.

- Sharankumar Limbale is regarded as the most prolific writers of contemporary literature whose literature aimed to expose the brutality of the upper class in Maharashtra. Limbale is a socially committed novelist who has produced a good deal of literature. He has written articles and essays on a number of subjects.
- His novels fall into two categories namely social and autobiographical novels. He focused his attention on the sufferings and misery of the Dalits of the Indian society. Caste discrimination, hypocrisy, caste system, the place of Dalits in the society, poverty, hunger, exploitation and protest are his common themes.

About the work:

- Akkarmashi, a landmark in Marathi Dalit literature, is an autobiography written by Sharankumar Limbale in 1984.
- It is a Marathi version which is translated as The Outcaste in English by Santosh Bhoomkar in 2003.
- It is first Marathi Dalit autobiography, which is translated into Hindi, Kannada, Panjabi, Tamil, Malyalam, and Gujrathi. Sharankumar Limbale's the Outcaste is about an untouchable family in general and community struggles in particular.
- Limbale portrays the pathetic situation of the life of a Dalit school boy. In fact, the school boy represents the entire Dalit communities. The extract is all about the picnic and food.
- Once the teachers took the students for an outing, all children were happy. Mahar children were not informed about the picnic when they reach the school, they are told to run home and bring some tiffin to be eaten during the picnic. They came back with jowar bhakari (which was made by grain collected from dung paste) and chutney. They joined the group of boys and girls standing in rows.
- Bhiwarabai came holding the stalk of a dry jowar plant. She pulled Parshya from the row and told him, that his father had gone to dig pits without eating anything.
- She instructed him to take food for his father or he will starve the whole day.
- All boys and girls moved in a single row with all their teachers. They all were happy. As they passed the way they saw Harya, sitting on a buffalo, who had been taken away from school and put him to work in Girmallya's farm by his father.

- Harya looked restless when he saw the boys and girls in a row. When they reached the destination, the tough boys went up the trees and other boys and girls ran all over the place. But the narrator watched them from distance.
- Wani and Brahmin boys played Kabbadi since the Mahar boys could not join them. So, they played touch and go.
- After the play they settled down to eat. The high caste boys and girls and all teachers, nearly a 100, sat in a circle under a banyan tree. The Mahar boys and girls were asked to sit under another tree. They opened their bundles. The high caste children offered their food to their teachers.
- The narrator wondered what would happen if he offered his chutney to his teacher. Finally, the high caste children gave the leftovers of their food to the Mahar children and they greedily ate it. He is rebuked sourly by his mother for not bringing some of the leftovers for the rest of the family to taste.
- On the next day after the picnic, the narrator goes to school. The teacher tells him to write an essay about the picnic of the previous day. As he sat thinking what to write, the teacher was angry with him.
- He shouted, “You, son of a bitch, start writing. You like eating an ox, don't you?” Then the narrator took his slate and pencil, spat on the slate, smeared it and wiped the slate with his shirt which was already dirty. He did not know how and what to write. He kept thinking how they had sat in a circle under a tree, eating.
- He remembers the hands of high caste boys and girls offering them, their leftovers, the withered tree under which they sat, the bundle of leftovers, the question his mother asked, and the teacher calling him a son of bitch and a beef eater. How could he start writing the essay his teacher had asked for? It was the real dilemma of the Dalits.

LESSON 4: CHEMICAL HAPPINESS AND THE MEANING OF LIFE by Yuval Noah Harari

About the Author:

- Yuval Noah Harari (born 24 February 1976) is an Israeli historian and a tenured professor in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

- He is the author of the international best sellers, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (2014) and *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (2015).
- His writings examine concepts of free will, consciousness and definitions of intelligence. The present extract “chemical happiness and meaning of life” is a discourse on the meaning of life, and his argument against the traditional spiritual perception, that happiness is the result of chemical processes taking place in the human brain.

About the Work:

- Harari thinks that human happiness is the result of chemical processes taking place in the human brain. Most biologists maintain that happiness is determined mainly by biochemistry. But they agree that psychological and sociological factors also had a place.
- Our mental air conditioning system has some freedom of movement. So, the conditioning system of happiness varies from person to person. He explains the level of happiness on a scale from one to ten.
- Some have the level between six and ten, stabilizing with scale of eight- they were born with a cheerful biochemistry system, this person is quite happy even if he/she lives in an alienating city with no money or with diseases.
- Some people have the level between three and seven, stabilizing with scale at five- they were cursed with gloomy biochemistry system, this person is quite unhappy even if she/he enjoys the support of a tight-knit community with lot of money or with all blessing.
- Happiness is a state of mind. Money, social status, plastic surgery, beautiful houses, powerful position, etc, don't bring happiness but serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin do. It means we do not have to look outside for our happiness.
- Only the circumstances are needed to stimulate biochemicals in our bodies. To show this Harari compares a medieval French peasant to a Parisian banker. The peasant lived in an unheated hut near pigsty. He says that the banker was not one iota happier than his ancestor the peasant. So, the biological assumption is that happiness equals pleasure.
- Harari defines meaning of human life and basic human rights by giving some examples. The present age is far more powerful than our ancestors, but are we much happier? But for some reason, we don't know how to feel the happiness. So, to feel the real happiness one should bring meaning to their lives.

- Basic human rights are a necessary condition to bring meaning to one's lives. Even though happiness is an elusive term, to be happy one needs conducive circumstances.
- Some get meanings to their lives by finding happiness in various ways. The scientist gets meaning to his life by increasing the store of knowledge. The soldier gets it while he fights for his home land, entrepreneurs by building a new company. All find happiness in what they do in different way.
- When they do what they think is right their chemical levels that bring happiness go up and they feel happy. All these people are as delusional as the medieval people who found meaning in reading scriptures, going on a crusade or building a new cathedral.
- Happiness is synchronizing one's personal delusions with the prevailing collective delusions. In the absence of basic human rights nobody can think of giving any meaning to his life.
- A meaningful life can be very satisfying even amidst hardships, while a meaningless life will be a punishment even if it is comfortable. People in all cultures and eras have felt the same type of pleasures and pains but the meaning they have given to them can be different. The life for medieval people was rough. But they believed in the promise of bliss in heaven and so they found meaning in their lives.
- A meaningful life can be extremely satisfying even in the midst of hardship, whereas a meaningless life is a terrible ordeal no matter how comfortable it is. Because all ages of people in all culture have felt the same type of pleasures and pains.







