

# **MAA OMWATI DEGREE COLLEGE**

## **HASSANPUR (PALWAL)**

### **NOTES**

**PAPER – LITERATURE AND GENDER (MC)**

**MA (ENGLISH) 1ST SEMESTER**

#### **UNIT - 1**

##### **Virginia Woolf**

Virginia Woolf was an English writer renowned for her contribution to contemporary fiction and for being one of the central figures in Anglo-Saxon literary modernism, which reached its height between 1900 and 1940. Although she mainly wrote novels, she was also the author of short stories, essays, and biographies.

Alongside her husband Leonard Woolf, Virginia was part of the so-called Bloomsbury Group, comprised of several British intellectuals of the interwar period, such as John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) and E. M. Forster (1879-1970), among others.

Her work stands as a literary touchstone for contemporary feminism, most notably her celebrated essay *A Room of One's Own*, where she reflects on the challenges faced by a woman aspiring to an intellectual life.

Finally, her lifelong struggle with bipolar affective disorder, as well as her tragic suicide in the River Ouse, near Lewes, have served as inspiration for novels, films, and plays by various authors.

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Finally, her lifelong struggle with bipolar affective disorder, as well as her tragic suicide in the River Ouse, near Lewes, have served as inspiration for novels, films, and plays by various authors. Adeline Virginia Stephen was born in London on January 25, 1882, into a wealthy family in the Borough of Kensington. Her father was historian, essayist and biographer Leslie Stephen, and her mother, Julia Jackson, was a model for the Pre-Raphaelite painters. Virginia was the second of the couple's four children, with siblings Vanessa, Thoby and Adrian. The family household also included children from their parents' previous marriages: a daughter from Leslie's first wife, and three from Julia and her first husband.

Virginia's parents gave their children a privileged upbringing. The Stephen home, located at Hyde Park Gate, was a frequent gathering place for prominent artists and writers of Victorian society, like Henry James (1843-1916) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). Virginia and her sister Vanessa did not attend traditional schools; instead, their education was entrusted to private tutors and instructors.

From an early age, the creative talent of both sisters became evident. Vanessa, who would eventually become a painter, began sketching her earliest drawings, while Virginia ran a family newspaper entitled *Hyde Park Gate News*. Although the elder sister was motherly and protective towards Virginia, competition between the two was not unfamiliar.

The family used to spend their summers on Cornwall's coast, where they had a country house overlooking Porthminster Beach. It was there that Virginia lived her most cherished childhood moments between 1882 and 1894, and many of these landscapes, like the Godrevy Lighthouse, would appear in her literary works decades later. Family life was disrupted by the sudden death of her mother in 1895, when she was only 49 years old, followed by that of her half-sister Stella, two years later. These events plunged Virginia into the first severe depression of her life. However, it was the death of her father in early 1904 that brought on a nervous breakdown for which she had to be hospitalized. She was 22 years old.

From then on, Virginia's older sister, Vanessa, took charge of the household and the younger siblings, under the control of her older maternal half-brothers, George and Gerald Duckworth. Those were years of suffering for the Stephen sisters, who, in addition to the death of their parents, they had to endure mistreatment and sexual abuse at the hands of their half-brothers. Years later, Virginia referred to this dark chapter of her youth in her autobiographical essays *A Sketch of the Past* and *22 Hyde Park Gate*.

Eventually, the sale of their ancestral home and the move away from their maternal half-brothers allowed the Stephens to lead a more pleasant life. Vanessa and Adrian bought a house in the London neighborhood of Bloomsbury, where they could freely engage in their studies and artistic creation, and host guests from London's intellectual and artistic circles.

In 1905, Virginia set up the "Friday Club", and her brother Thoby started the "Thursday Evenings". With these names they humorously made reference to their gatherings with Thoby's fellow students, and Virginia herself, who in those years had joined King's College in London, to debate, converse, and share ideas.

Among the attendees was, in late 1904, the young Leonard Woolf, Virginia's future husband, who that same year left for Sri Lanka for a position in the colonial service. Another figure was art critic Clive Bell (1881-1964), who Vanessa would marry in 1907.

These gatherings evolved into the so-called "Bloomsbury Group", which brought together some of the most prominent English intellectuals and artists of the early 20th century, including John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), E. M. Forster (1879-1970), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), among other personalities from the exclusive society of the "Cambridge Apostles".

Although its members never explicitly recognized themselves as a group, they shared aesthetic, political, and humanistic principles, as well as a profound rejection of the rigid Victorian morality, religion, and realism of the 19th century. They championed individualism and freedom of thought, allowing for more liberal views on personal relationships and individual pleasure.

The group garnered public attention in England at the time, largely due to an incident that came to be known as the "Dreadnought hoax", a prank the young artists pulled on the British Navy in 1910 that captured the attention of the press. Virginia participated in the hoax, disguised as an African prince. **The Bloomsbury Group was deeply affected by World War I**, though its members continued to develop their successful careers, which for most of them reached their height after 1920 and lasted until the late 1930s.

Virginia formally began writing in 1905, when she published her earliest texts in the Times Literary Supplement. Her relationship with writing soon became her mainstay, especially after the death of her brother Thoby in 1906 and the "loss" of her sister Vanessa in 1907, the year of her marriage to Clive Bell.

Furthermore, the intellectual stimulus of the Bloomsbury Group called for new artistic forms. Thus, in 1908, Virginia set out to reshape the novel genre with a narrative project that would depart from the Victorian conventions of the time. This novel, entitled *Melymbrosia*, was not completed until 1912.

Virginia became notably influenced by the work of post-impressionists Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), which burst in on the London scene in 1910. At the time, Virginia's mental health was fragile, and writing served as her main lifeline. Until, in 1911,

Leonard Woolf returned from the East and began to court her. Despite his precarious financial situation (Virginia refers to him in her diaries as a "penniless Jew"), they married in August 1912, when she was 30 years old. They spent their honeymoon in Spain.

From the beginning, the couple shared a close bond, both romantically and professionally. Leonard himself was a writer and was also critical of the bourgeois lifestyle. In 1913, he published his anti-colonialist novel *The Village in the Jungle*, and after releasing another novel in 1914, he turned to political writing and social activism.

Meanwhile, Virginia fully reworked her debut novel in 1913, published under the title *The Voyage Out* by her half-brother Gerald Duckworth's publishing house. However, the book's release had to be postponed until 1915, as Virginia suffered another nervous breakdown. Convinced she was a failure as a woman and writer, feeling despised by her sister and undervalued by Leonard, Virginia unsuccessfully attempted to take her own life in September 1913.

In April 1915, Virginia experienced further bouts of mental distress and succumbed to delirium for quite some time. However, that same year, she significantly recovered from her "evil imaginations", which she managed to largely keep at bay until the end of her days.

In 1917, **the Woolfs purchased a handpress and started their own publishing venture:** Hogarth Press, named after their suburban London residence, Hogarth House. They published their first joint work, *Two Stories*: a book featuring *Three Jews* by Leonard, and *The Mark on the Wall*, by Virginia, to great success. Of the 150 copies made, 134 were sold.

Being able to publish her own books allowed Virginia to dedicate herself fully to literary experimentation, without concerning for typical publisher preferences. Moreover, **it enabled her to become acquainted with the works of contemporary writers**, not always highly esteemed by Virginia, such as James Joyce (1882-1941), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), and Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923), with whom she shared a relationship of both mutual admiration and dislike.

When Leonard's political activity took him away, Virginia would often retire to her sister's country house in Sussex. Vanessa had separated from her husband to live with British painter Duncan Grant (1885-1978), and their home often hosted numerous artists. During these years, **Virginia resumed writing her diaries, which she had kept intermittently since 1897.**

**Virginia's next novel was *Night and Day* (1919), a response to *The Wise Virgins***, a novel her husband had published in 1914 scandalizing members of his own family. That same year, her essay "Modern Fiction" came out, the result of the weekly readings she reviewed for the *Times Literary Supplement*, and her short story "Kew Gardens", set in London's botanical garden, and illustrated by her sister Vanessa.

That year, **the Woolfs bought a small cottage in Rodmell, in the countryside, where Virginia could get away to write**, take walks, cycle, and even visit her sister. In 1920, Virginia became

part of the "Memoir Club", initiated by some of her fellow members of the Bloomsbury Group, where members gathered to read aloud excerpts from their own autobiographies.

In 1922, *Jacob's Room*, her third novel, was published, inspired by the death of her brother Thoby. **It was an anti-war novel exploring loss through minimalism, sidelining plot and conflict.** As she expressed at the time, a novel should be "an emotion felt".

Shortly after, **Virginia met poet Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962), wife of Harold Nicholson, with whom she had a clandestine relationship that went on for much of the decade.** Both authors dedicated works to each other and maintained intense correspondence. After their romance ended, they remained friends until Virginia's death in 1941.

Major novels of Virginia Woolf

**In 1924, the Woolfs relocated once again in Bloomsbury,** where they could lead a life less isolated from urban dynamics. Over the ensuing years, Virginia wrote what were to become her most notable works.

Many of these writings were part of an attempt by Virginia to create a new genre that emerged from the novel but departed from it to the point that **she even considered presenting them as belonging to a new genre,** but whose name she was never able to specify.

Thus, in 1925 **she revisited a character that had previously appeared in several of her short stories,** and created one of her most celebrated novels: *Mrs Dalloway*. It is an account of the events of a single day in London, narrated in the manner of a post-impressionist painting, shifting seamlessly from one character's consciousness to another's. This technique later became known as "stream of consciousness".

Virginia experimented with this technique once again in 1927 in her next novel, *To the Lighthouse*, **which is divided into three parts,** and does not follow a chronological logic. In it, the author's childhood memories are evoked. At the same time, the novel serves as an elegy mourning her mother's death.

That same year, her essays "The Art of Fiction" and "The New Biography" came out, in which she held that fiction writers should be more concerned with the language and design of the work than with the reality from which it originates.

In 1928, Virginia put theory into practice with *Orlando: A Biography*. **This fantastical novel, inspired by anecdotes of Vita Sackville-West's life,** features a protagonist who travels through five centuries of English history, often changing gender and perspective. This work stands as a tribute to her beloved Vita, with whom her relationship had cooled.

The following year witnessed the publication of "**A Room of One's Own**", one of the most renowned essays by Virginia Woolf. **It is an exploration of the absent role of women in**

**history**, which the author attributes not to their lack of genius, but rather of material resources. Hence her famous statement on what a woman needs in order to venture into the intellectual world: "money and a room of her own".

Inspired by her sister Vanessa's paintings exhibited in 1930, **Virginia embarked on crafting a mystical, impersonal, and abstract novel: *The Waves***. Published in 1931, this novel gives voice to six characters as they recount their life stories, interspersed with poetic interludes that depict the heavens from dawn to dusk.

This important body of work, published almost entirely by Hogarth Press, **solidified Virginia Woolf's stature in Anglo-Saxon modernism**, alongside James Joyce and the American William Faulkner (1897-1962).

As the 1930s drew to a close, concerns over an impending Second World War spurred Virginia to hurry certain projects. Both **Virginia and Leonard had been outspoken critics of Nazism**, most notably in her essay *Three Guineas* (1938), and were on Adolf Hitler's (1889-1945) blacklist.

Among these final undertakings was *The Years* (1937), a reworking of an earlier composition portraying three generations of the Pargiter family. Her last novel, *Between the Acts*, is a sort of memoir set during the staging and performance of a play at a festival in a small English village. **It was published posthumously in 1941.**

## UNIT – 2

### GIRISH KARNAD (Naga-Mandala)

This paper entitled Naga-Mandala a Story of Marriage and love pursuits and analysis the powerful portrait of the agony and anguish faced by both men and women in their development into adult roles and social adjustment in a society where the individual is given little space for self-development awareness and independence as a being. Girish Karnad's plays reflect upon contemporary Indian cultural and social life through the use of folk tales, myths and historical legends. He weaves together timeless truths about human life and emotions contained in ancient Indian stories with the changing social mores and morals of modern life. His plays are particularly concerned with the psychological problems, dilemmas and conflicts experienced by Modern Indian men and women in their different social situations. Keywords : Patriarchy, narcissism, psychological problems, dilemmas Introduction :- Girish Raghunath Karnad born on 19th May 1938, in Mather, Maharashtra has become one of Indian's brightest shining stars, earning International praise as a playwright, poet, actor, director, critic, and translator. His rise as a playwright in 1960s, marked the coming of age of Modern Indian playwriting in kannada. For four decades karnad has been composing plays, often using history and mythology to tackle contemporary issues. He was conferred Padma Shree (1972) and Padma Bhushan (1974) by the Government of India and won four Filmfare Award. He is among seven recipients of Jnanpith Award for Kannada, the highest literary honor conferred in India. Nagamandala ia s folktale

transformed into the metaphor of the married woman. It is a Chinese box story with two folktales transformed into one superstition, fact and fantasy, instinct and reason, the particular and the general blended to produce a drama with universal evocations. The source material of the Nagamandala comes, as Karnad informs the reader in his introduction to the "Three Plays", from a folk tale that he had heard from A.K Ramanujan, who had collected many folk tales and their variants as they existed in different parts of India. The folk tale of a Prince whose extreme mistrust of women prevents him from loving any woman, and whose encounter with a woman's desire for love, has, as Ramanujan writes about this tale, as many as forty variants. The central theme of all these tales is, as Ramanujan remarks, "the narcissism" of the "self-involved hero", who undergoes a test put to him by the wife in order to survive. The psychological inadequacy that the young man is caught in prevents his self-transcendence, causing acute lack of understanding and communicating between him and a woman. Nagamandala is not only about the male difficulty to trust and love women, and transcend his narcissism. It seems to be about the socialization process of both men and women, particularly in the Indian society where marriage is, more often than not, the first experience of sex and love for most of the people. Nagamandala probes into the female and male growth into selfhood, and their mature adjustment with the social roles appointed for them by the traditional society. Myths and folk tales in a patriarchal society represent primarily the male unconscious fears and wishes and are patriarchal constructs and "man-oriented". In these stories the woman's experiences and inner feelings often do not find adequate expression. They do not give much information about the women's fears, anxieties and psychological problems. Nagamandala is the story of a young girl, Rani, newly married to Appanna, and their gradual understanding of the role, function and responsibilities of the institution of marriage. This story is presented in the play by a woman narrator, a "flame" which has come to tell a story. The play begins in the temple on the outskirts of a village, where a passer-by stops at night for a shelter. He then finds many tiny "flames" have come from different households in the village. Each flame is a female, a story-teller, sharing with the others her observations and new experiences. The stranger, a writer himself, enters into their conversation, and listens to a 'new' tale that has just escaped from an old woman's head. The flame begins her story of Rani and Appanna. The dramatization of the tale now begins. Both Rani and Appanna do not know how much they can relate to each other. The young girl misses her parents, feels home-sick and lonely, while Appanna comes home only in the day, asks for food, stays for some time and then goes away. Every night he visits the concubine, which reflects his awareness of the biological aspect of sex. The initial stage is painful for Rani, who is still very attached to her parents. Appanna's behavior reflects his divided emotional and physical selves. In fact the emotional aspect of his personality seems to be underdeveloped, as he treats both Rani and the prostitute in an unfair manner. Neither of the relationships is complete and satisfactory. Appanna treats her with contempt, aggression and mistrust. He locks her in the room, and scolds the old lady Kurudava and her son Kappanna when they attempt to become friendly with Rani. In her isolation Rani begins to build a world of stories around herself. She imagines herself to be a princess locked up by a demon. "So the demon locks her up in the castle. Then it rains for seven days. Then a big whale comes to Rani and says, "Come, Rani, let us go." (35). Her story grows and perhaps it is in her fantasy that she takes a lover. Her story expresses her psychoerotic needs which she does not fully understand. Women's close-knit relationships with the other members of family and their lack of freedom to explore the world on their own is one of the reasons why identity for them is usually a matter of relationships. Sudhir Kakar points out that the "dominant psycho-social realities of a woman's life can be condensed into three stages. First, she is

daughter to her parents; second she is wife to her husband (and daughter-in-law to his parents): and third, she is a mother to her sons (and daughters).” It is through these three important relationships that a woman realizes herself and social significance. The important stage for facing the situation and their roles in it comes as Rani becomes pregnant. It is a moment of acknowledgement of the private and the act. Appanna is aghast at this development and takes his wife to a public trial. Rani finds herself alone in the crisis, for the lover as well as the husband fail to provide moral or emotional support. Rani is asked by the man at night, whom she takes to be her husband, to “speak the truth... what you think is not of a consequence. It must be the truth.” (54) The truth for Rani is that she has been faithful to her husband. This conviction comes into the public. The nervous, frightened, young girl finds within herself a new courage and confidence and gain social respectability. She emerges triumphant from the public trial, as the snake does not bite her. The cold, aggressive and indifferent husband is subdued, mildly tamed and accept the judgement even if he is not fully convinced. This stage of Rani’s social integration brings her a new sense of respect and her own worth. This is another significant aspect of the Indian social and cultural life in its treatment of women. In Sudhir Kakar’s words, “an Indian woman knows the motherhood confers upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her culture can.” (56). As a mother, Rani is seen, in the last part to the story, to be in command of the household, with some authority and decision making power. Appanna even agrees to her rather strange demand that their son should perform an annual “pinda-daan” in the memory of dead snake. Nagamandala depicts the man and woman pass through several stages of doubt, uncertainty and even failure before they become mature and learn to live harmoniously as husband and wife, within the family-fold. Appanna becomes a caring husband, accepting Rani’s decisions which may at times baffle him. This change in Rani’s status comes through her motherhood, and the public trial, where her bold acceptance of the truth gains her public respectability. This transformation of both Appanna and Rani presents the significance of the institution of marriage. It is through adjustment that they gain the status within the life of community. As, individuals, they gain the full selfhood only after going through these roles. Both man and woman accepts the social pressure in putting aside personal feelings about selfhood, fantasies and dreams about love and freedom and learns to surrender to the other for the sake of family and community. Rani’s dream of lover who had awakened her and loved her as a woman, and Appanna’s self-centered and physical relationship with the prostitute, are given up, and they work together in the interest of the family and the community. The public and private selves become connected through the acceptance of socially responsible roles. But does that completely dry up the hidden, suppressed desire for greater love and personal fulfillment? The double ending of the play presents this duality through the structural device. In End One of the story about Rani and Appanna, the Naga enters Rani’s bedroom again and dies for the sake of Rani and her family. Though Rani grieves for her lover, the Naga’s sacrifice paves the way for Rani’s happy married life. In End Two of the story, the snake does not die. He is allowed by Rani to live in her tresses, her “dark, long and cool tresses, like snake-princess” (57). The lover is always present, he lives with her, within the family. The dutiful and loyal wife may observe the social, moral code entirely, yet within her live the memories of the perfect lover who had given her a first emotional and erotic experience. These desires may haunt her or lie dormant within. What matters most to Rani during the period of her relationship with the snake-lover is the awakening of desire and introducing her to love rather than to sex. The woman’s story expresses the female point of view about her needs, problems and experiences within the patriarchal institutions. It provides an understanding into the complex nature of human relations

while also showing women's way of adjusting into their difficult social roles. The snake-lover's story has become a "vrat-katha", a story told as a festival of cobra worship, where women pray to the cobra for granting safety, and progeny to their family. A.K.Ramanujan writes that the "ritual tale itself is a public even told during the Cobra Festival to propitiate snake, to ensure safety and fertility within marriage." (12). More than that, it seems to be public acknowledgement of the dangers to which marriage is always open, and a recognition of the blessings and goodwill of the outsider for bringing together the husband and wife. Karnad uses the folk tale in its feminized form to present the problems faced by both man and woman in marriage and the process of transformation of the immature and emotionally under-developed person into a mature and fully grown adult. At the end of the play, the male, professional playwright takes the responsibility of taking the "story" to a larger audience. This is another instance of the female narrative being assimilated into the "patriarchal, classical" texts. But the structure of this play retains the individuality of the female narrative, centrestaging the women's experiences within marriage.

### UNIT -3

#### **CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE - We Should All Be Feminists**

Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* is a guide to understanding what feminism is. She talks about her own experiences as well as those of her friends and family with gender-based prejudice in Nigeria. The issues brought up in the book are still relevant today and universal. The two aspects of the book are the normalisation process and the stereotypical idea of feminism and the term feminist. The author also discusses issues such as raising boys and girls differently, gender, culture, and the pay gap. Feminism, in contrast to common opinion, advocates for the breakdown of the gender hierarchy rather than the triumph of women over men. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie provides an excellent explanation of the same. She urges us to picture a just society in which everyone is content and she urges us to picture a just society in which all people—men and women alike—are content and loyal to who they are. Keywords; Feminist, feminism, gender, culture, upbringing. Feminism, a word with negative baggage, is misunderstood by both sexes. It is not an insulting word, rather it is a label that can be accepted with pride. In her book review, Lisa Wan comments that being a feminist means establishing and achieving the sexes' political, economic, personal, and social equality. The opponents of feminism believe that feminism is a social movement that focuses on reversing gender roles and making men inferior. (Wikipedia contributors). In her long essay *We Should All Be Feminists*, Adichie attempts to define feminism in layman's words using concrete examples. She does a good job of explaining how we are conditioned to accept the patriarchal system. Her 2012 TEDx talk was reworked and published by Fourth Estate in 2014. Adichie makes a strong case in *We Should All Be Feminists* that gender stereotypes and ingrained ideas that support the gap between men and women have to be challenged. She explains how a cultural shift is necessary to achieve gender equality and how every one of us may play a part in bringing about this transformation. To put it succinctly,

we should all be feminists to support women's emancipation and to encourage males to have discussions with women about roles, looks, sexuality, and success. Advocating for women's rights and working to improve the world for women are hallmarks of being a feminist. Feminism's primary goals are to improve the world for women, provide opportunities for them, and address social inequalities that affect them rather than question biological roles. Adichie's childhood friend Okoloma mockingly referred to her as a feminist after a heated debate. She was not aware of the definition of a feminist at the time. A journalist told her not to identify as a feminist after reading her book *Purple Hibiscus*, arguing that feminists are just unsatisfied single women. Feminists are stereotyped as being negative and detesting men. Of course, much of this was tongue-in-cheek, but what it shows is how that word feminist is so heavy with baggage, negative baggage: you hate men, you hate bras, you hate African culture, you think women should always be in charge, you don't wear make-up, you don't shave, you're always angry, you don't have a sense of humour, you don't use deodorant. (07) Adichie remembers another instance from her time in school. Even though she met the requirements for being a monitor—getting the best grades—she was not allowed to oversee the class. Her teacher said that girls cannot be appointed as monitors; only boys are eligible for such positions. Whether we realise it or not, our mentality is built up to tolerate male dominance. Adichie remarks, "It starts to seem 'natural' that only men should be heads of corporations if we keep seeing only men in that role." (08) There are a lot of people in the world who support gender equality. They believe that since both sexes are equal, feminism is no longer unnecessary. They grant women the same freedoms that males do. Louis, one of Adichie's close friends, was an advocate for gender equality. Until he saw it for himself, he could not comprehend the precise differences in treatment between men and women. Louis is an intelligent, forward-thinking individual. Adichie and Louis went out to dinner one day in Lagos. A young man in the parking lot assisted them in finding a spot and parked the car. Adichie was impressed with the particular theatrics of the man and offered him money as a tip. After giving Adichie the money, the appreciative and joyful man turned to face her companion and said, "Thank you, sah!" (08). Because Louis was a man, the man assumed that any money she had ultimately came from him. Men and women differ from one another in terms of hormones, sexual organs, and biological capacities. Physical strength was once thought to be a crucial component of survival. Physically, men are generally stronger than women. Physical strength is not the only quality in the modern era to establish superiority. Rather, becoming outstanding requires, having knowledge, creativity, and innovative ideas are required for survival. Even though humans developed, gender norms have not. Hotels, clubs and bars do not allow women to enter alone. When a woman walks into a hotel alone, she is assumed as a sex worker. Men are acknowledged and women are neglected in public places. Women cannot express their anger against social injustice because anger is not good for women: "Anger, the tone said, is particularly not good for a woman. If you are a woman, you are not supposed to express anger, because it is threatening." (09) Aggression from women at work is intolerable to men. They anticipate her working with a "woman's touch." Compared to men, women receive less recognition and attention during team meetings. Teaching girls that they can't be as angry or aggressive as boys is a widespread practice. The majority of books written centre on the actions that women must take to please men. Less advice exists for guys on how to win over women. Gender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we should begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently. (10) Adichie thinks that this kind of

definition of masculinity is affecting humanity in boys. It is expected that boys should be free from fear, weakness and vulnerability. They need to be a hard man. It is our thinking that if a boy goes out for a date, he must pay the bills and, in this way, prove his masculinity. Adichie is of the view that only boys should pay to prove themselves they are men. She cries about why masculinity is attached to paying the bills. Masculinity and money are two different things. The boys are loaded with the pressure of proving their masculinity through monetary gains. This kind of pressure makes them fragile and handicapped. Not only girls but also boys, consciously or unconsciously, get pressured by irrational thinking. Marriage is an important stage in the life of a girl and a boy. Marriage is a source of joy, love and mutual understanding. The girls are taught to be familiar with the notion, but not the boys. The woman, without a ring symbolising she is unmarried, is not respected in society. The wedding ring is immediately a symbol of respect. To put it in Adichie's words, "I know an unmarried woman in Nigeria who, when she goes to conferences, wears a wedding ring because she wants her colleagues to – according to her – 'give her respect' (11)". It is expected to build a social atmosphere for women that may ensure safety for them. If a girl is not married in a particular age, she is considered as a failure. Respect is the right of both men and women and not only the men. The language of a marriage is often a language of ownership and not of partnership. This scenario must be changed. Women are expected to make more compromises in their lives. They have been taught to wear good clothes, to cover them, to be homely, to cook food for male members and to be good wife material. Adichie strongly objects to this kind of mindset: The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations. (12) Feminism is also related to human rights in general. It would be a means of maintaining the illusion that women have not been marginalised for ages. It would be a means of negating the fact that women are the target of the gender issue. Humanity was split into two groups for centuries, with one group being excluded and subjected to oppression. The concept of feminism intimidates some men. In the guise of culture, they treat women like objects to be taken for granted and ignore the fact that culture is a dynamic process that is constantly evolving. In the end, culture serves to guarantee a people's survival and continuance. "Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture." (15) We Should All Be Feminists as a starting point to learn about feminism. Adichie discusses the experiences she had with gender-based discrimination in Nigeria, as well as those of her friends and family. The problems raised in the book are still universal. The stereotyped notion of feminism and the term feminist, as well as the normalisation process, are the two facets of the books. The author also touches on topics like gender, culture, pay gap and raising boys and girls differently. Contrary to popular belief, feminism calls for the destruction of the gender hierarchy, not the supremacy of women over men. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie does a fantastic job of explaining the same. She exhorts us to imagine a just society where everyone is happy and true to themselves, both men and women. To sum up, Adiche's article is a potent call to action that is deftly written to encourage readers to support gender equality and embrace feminism. She does a good job of explaining the importance and urgency of the feminist movement. Her essay acts as a powerful call to action, inspiring readers to consider their values and join the effort to create a more egalitarian society. Her capacity to engage a wide range audience, break down barriers, and promote a common commitment to gender equality is what makes her so persuasive in addition to her eloquence.

## UNIT - 4

### IMITIAZ DHARKER (Purdah I and Purdah II)

Purdah, an instrument of masculine effort for restricting and limiting the role of women in society is a violation of the basic rights, freedom and dignity of women. Imtiaz Dharker considers Purdah not only a concealing garment but a state of mind which works as suppression and deadlock to the intellectual awakening and growth of women. Although Dharker's poetry is a confluence of three cultures, but her roots being in Muslim culture her collection of poems Purdah I and Purdah II comes out as a revolt against Purdah which has socio-cultural and social religious associations mainly for Muslim women and also for some Hindu women in the Northern part of India. Dharker considers Purdah system making women feel alienated from their true self. Her poems enable us realise the tragic story behind and beyond the veils. I composed this poem after reading Imtiaz Dharker's poems in her collection of poems Purdah I and Purdah II. The pain and poignancy endured in suffocation and suppression by the subjugated women under patriarchy have found a justifiable outlet in the creative instinct of Imtiaz Dharker. Her poetry is a confluence of three cultures as she regards herself a Scottish Calvinist Muslim. Her undaunted spirit, the intensity and eloquence of her life and her poetic accomplishment have left her female counterparts in soaring spirits not only inside the Islamic social, cultural and religious set-up but also outside it. Reflecting feminist perspective her poetry depicts deeply sensitive and keenly insightful understanding and poignant reactions to the wrongs and songs of the daily life of women under the norms, rules and sanctions laid down by the patriarchal society for them. Although her poetry is a confluence of three cultures, but her roots being in Muslim culture her first collection of poems Purdah (a volume of twenty five poems in five sections) comes out as a revolt against purdah which has greater socio-cultural and social religious association for Muslim woman. Purdah, a symbol of repression on women devastatingly ruinous to woman's personality is a violation of the basic rights, freedom and dignity of women. Imtiaz Dharker regards purdah not just as a concealing garment but as slate of mind which works as suppression and deadlock to the intellectual awakening and growth of women. In words of A.K Tiwari, "The purdah is an instrument of masculine effort to keep low the spirit of indendence in women.....The conformance to the norms of purdah restricts and limits the role of women, keeping them within the confines of the Jenana apartments and keeps their status low." Purdah, nothing more than woman's prison house, makes her a puppet in the hands of social power mongers, makes her devoid of choices and works as a terrible weapon for her seclusion from society. Imtiaz Dharker, with her social cultural growth and lived experiences, has exhibited her subtle artistry in exposing the Purdah system in her title poems and poems contained in her early collections Purdah I and Purdah .

Muslim families start training their girl children of five to nine years to wear purdah with the conviction that it protects her from the penetrating gaze of public eyes. At an age group of twelve to fifteen, they are forced into a rigorous kind of seclusion from men folk. At the same time a girl is made conscious of her sexual growth as perhaps others are more conscious about it. All other

types of consciousness which is necessary for her overall personality development is ignored downrightly. This idea is expressed in the beginning lines of "Purdah" by Imtiaz Dharker:

One day they said She was old enough to learn some shame

The conservative society is cautious and conscious enough to think it its duty to teach an adolescent girl some manner, decorum and dignity. As Dharker says in the same poem from

Purda I: carefully carrying what we do not own between the thighs, a sense of sin

A woman has been taught to be ashamed of her body (which is a gift of Nature itself) and to accept it as sin. As Pandey puts it "The body-culture and its degrading fleshy enterprise, inflicts a guilty conscious.". This biological growth is associated only with sexuality which is a part of man's mental state. People around are the same but their looks are changed with a purpose. Imtiaz Dharker makes the idea clear in the self same poem in the following lines:

People she has known Stand up, sit down as they have always done. But they make different angles in the light, their eyes aslant, a little sly.

Not only they themselves make different angles, but also make the young girls wear burkha and thus build a cocoon around herself. Imtiaz Dharker calls this seclusion as a kind of "the interior colonization" which reduces the woman to a walking corpse. A Purdahnaseen is decimated to a clod of earth, a dying tree whose roots desperately struggle to balance and withstand. This miserable plight of women has aptly been highlighted in the lines:

She stands outside herself, Sometimes in all four corners of a room. Wherever, she goes, she is always inching past herself, as if she were a clod of earth. and the roots as well, Scratching for a hold Between the first and second rib.

The discrimination against women and their alienation from many human activities around them is highlighted in the poem, "The Prayer". Standing outside the mosque the female protagonist wishes to appeal to the almighty for mental comfort, but to her utter horror finds that religion offers no solace as she is not allowed to enter the mosque. She wishfully looks at the worshippers thronged inside hopefully praying and feels as if God has also yielded to man's dictate and man's writ runs large in the house of God who himself is a male in a phallogocentric world. The protagonist puts ahead questions out of sheer curiosity:

"what prayers are they whispering?" And "what are they whispering?"

The questions contain a subtle touch of irony. In another long poem, "purdah II", Imtiaz Dharker presents the tenets of religion unresponsive to woman's suffering. She discovers all basic tenets of religion favouring man and suppressing woman. This kind of alienation makes her realize as if the prayer-call "allah-U-akbar" is only a piercing note; the pages of Koran are like

old bones; the words of the Moulvi sound unsympathetic, the prayers are nothing more than a rhythm on the tongue to which the body mechanically sways and all these provide hopefulness to the men but offers no solace to the agonized women. Her mind visualizes the myriad women before her who prayed and still suffered miserably. Imtiaz considers this kind of religion as a farce created by a patriarchal system under the weight of which woman is cracking. This poem, "Purdah II" tells the woeful tales of many women who try to break the shackles with the hope and dream of a free new world. The poem is an undaunted criticism of the way the society works against the freedom, dignity, will and choice of woman. The woman finds least comfort being bought and sold in the name of marriage. What is more, these atrocities are committed against her by her own parents- the very hands that nurtured, nourished and brought her up. They are treated like animals as Imtiaz says:

They have all been sold and bought, The girls I knew. The virgins are taught to bind and are fated to live and die with no choice of their own: Unwilling virgins who had been taught especially in this strangers land to bind their brightness tightly round, whatever they might wear, in the purdah of the mind.

They are taught to feel a sense of pride in having the name of man and surrender gladly to their passionate delights:

Night after virtuous night You performed for them. They warmed your bed.

The speaker in the poem endeavours to waken the humanity to the degrading and dehumanizing effect of social, cultural and religious norms on women by citing the examples of individual characters Saleema and Naseem. Saleema married, divorced, remarried, produced children annually to each husband; when she could bear this all no more, she sought refuge in her mother's lap:

At last a sign, behind the veil of life; found another man, became another wife, and sank, sank into the mould of her mother's flesh and mind, begging approval from the rest.

Unlike Saleema, Naseem eloped with an Englishman, hoping a release from the man made bondage of her culture, society and religion. She manages to get out of her purdah, but in or out, her condition remains the same. She is faced with the stark reality and learns that "a man is a man", no matter where he is and to whatever community he belongs to. Her condition is described in these lines:

There you are, I can see you all now in the tenements up north. In or out of purdah. Tied or bound. Shaking your box to hear how freedom rattles--- one coin, one sound

Thus by referring the Muslim tradition of Purdah, Imtiaz Dharker overtly hits hard on the wide spread male domination irrespective of boundaries of countries, religion or community. Where as section one of the volume Purdah focuses on the internal suffering of secluded woman who is tied and bound with the shackles of cultural, religious and social tenets, section two exposes the

external suffering of woman fraught within the coils of the conventional society. She is presented as a social outcaste, symbolically one with a hunch on her back due to constant stooping. She is made to consider herself as an unclear and tarnished figure in the eyes of others and not allowed to raise her eyes or head. In the poem, "Pariah", the victim utters:

When I must speak to them their words take and tie my tongue I rarely raise my head

Ezekiel rightly opines that the images in Dharker's poems, "are not merely images created for poetic effect, they are like blazing fires compelling the readers to take notice." ("Imtiaz Dharker" India poetry:online). Section three of Purdah intensifies the same tale of helplessness and lack luster life of women in a society where woman is raised to be sacrificed. In the poem, "The Child Sings", the woman is presented as analogous to a helpless infant making unsuccessful attempts to sing but ends up only in babbles:

The child is thinking Nothing. Sometimes she sings notes that cannot find an aim. \* \* \* \* Years pass And yet it is the same. She comes back. A door opens. Light spills out around her body draped in black. She is nothing but a crack where the light forgot to shine.

Another poem, "A Woman's Place", describes the position of women and how she is treated as the "Other". As Simone De Beauvoir states, "One is not born a woman: one becomes one....." Women's helplessness to accept male ascendancy politely and timidly is pointed out poignantly:

Mouths must be watched, especially if you're a woman. A smile should be stifled with the sari end. No one must see your serenity cracked, even with delight.

And the concluding lines define the women's place in man-made society: .....how close we are, Fear, you tell me, is a woman's place.

Imtiaz Dharker shows concern with the exploration of the various intricacies and conflicts of the man-woman relationship as well as talks of the borderline between 'freedom' and 'struggle' in the section four and five of Purdah poems titled 'Borderlines: Battlefields I & II'. Here Imtiaz endeavours to offer solutions to the problems of women, she explains that prejudiced notions of human beings transform the world in battlefield envenoming their minds with raciest/ sexiest/ colour discriminations. In the poem, "Battle line", the demarcation lines are raised between man-woman, but they behave the same after the battle lines are drawn. As it is explained:

When the body becomes a territory Shifting across uneasy sheets When you retreat behind The borderline of skin Turning, turning, barbed wire sinking in Forgetful of hostilities until, in the quiet dawn, the next attacks.

At the altar of these borderlines is the woman who is sacrificed and it is she who experiences the pain more than the man. Woman reaches a stage where the flesh dies on the bone, freezing her into stone bereft of love, desire or pain. The poem, "Stone", exhibits the agonized figure of woman:

It won't be long before you reach that place where flesh dies gently,

### **IMITIAZ DHARKER (*Minority*)**

This is another wonderful poem by Imtiaz Dharker. I think Dharker is one of the most exciting poets writing in English today; her work is so fresh and relevant, and I love the way she doesn't shy away from subject matter that is politically taboo. I particularly love the way she explores identity in her poems.

*Minority* gives a very insightful depiction of what it feels like to be "foreign" in many places. The poem begins with the line, "I was born a foreigner". How can you be born a foreigner? Well, sadly today in many of our Western societies (including in the UK and in my adopted country, France) the children of immigrants can be made to feel this way. The poem says, "I was born a foreigner... and "carried on from there/ to become a foreigner everywhere/ I went". The speaker in the poem seems to belong nowhere – "even in the place/ planted with my relatives". On returning to the country of her parents, this speaker feels like a foreigner, too. In this situation, many people understandably feel incredibly displaced and victimised, as they find themselves facing prejudice from both the country they were born in, as well as the country of their parents and relatives.

The speaker tells us "I don't fit". She compares herself to "food cooked in milk of coconut/ where you expected ghee or cream" or an "unexpected aftertaste/ of cardamom or neem". I love this use of taste to describe a feeling of being foreign; it's so evocative. A country's cuisine is essential to its culture and so I think this is a very clever inclusion here. I also find it very interesting that Dharker imports flavours from her own very multicultural identities, which are (as well as British) Pakistani and Indian.

The subject of the next stanza is language, and this is something that I can relate to personally, having lived, studied and worked abroad for several years now. The speaker talks about "that point where/ the language flips/ into an unfamiliar taste", and words become a "tripwire". Is she talking about accent here, where the language might "taste" differently on the tongue? Or is she talking about being unable to find the words for something? I have heard many people say this about being bilingual; it is incredibly frustrating when you cannot think of a word in the language you are trying to speak, because you are afraid that you might be better at one language than another. This only adds to the feeling of *not-belonging* that runs all the way through this poem.

The penultimate stanza explores the act of writing, and its role in the creation of identity. Dharker uses beautiful language to describe herself (or the speaker) going "scratch, scratch" at the "growing scab on black and white". I just love this description of writing as a "scab". She is writing to make sense of a wound, or even to heal it. Dharker encourages the notion of the transformative and healing power of literature here, and then she remarks upon its democracy. "Everyone has the right/ to infiltrate a piece of paper", she writes; the page is not prejudiced; it "doesn't fight back". Poetry becomes a medium through which the speaker can freely express herself — a way she can communicate. And perhaps the message will get through to people; literature is a great teacher of empathy. "Who knows", writes Dharker, perhaps these lines will "scratch their way/ into your head" — break through the prejudices that "community" and "family" can breed.

Perhaps one day, she writes in the final verse, you (the reader) will meet “the stranger sidling down your street” and recognise that face “as your own”. I just love the way the poem suddenly turns on the reader, near the end, with that very direct “you”. Dharker is putting the reader on the spot; these questions are now directly put to us. This poem beautifully displays its author’s belief in the power of literature to transform, educate and create understanding, and I think it’s a wonderful piece.

### **IMITIAZ DHARKER (prayers)**

**prayer**, an act of communication by humans with the sacred or holy—God, the gods, the transcendent realm, or supernatural powers. Found in all religions in all times, prayer may be a corporate or personal act utilizing various forms and techniques. Prayer has been described in its sublimity as “an intimate friendship, a frequent conversation held alone with the Beloved” by St. Teresa of Ávila, a 16th-century Spanish mystic.

Prayer is a significant and universal aspect of religion, whether of primitive peoples or of modern mystics, that expresses the broad range of religious feelings and attitudes that command human relations with the sacred or holy. Described by some scholars as religion’s primary mode of expression, prayer is said to be to religion what rational thought is to philosophy; it is the very expression of living religion. Prayer distinguishes the phenomenon of religion from those phenomena that approach it or resemble it, such as religious and aesthetic feelings.

Historians of religions, theologians, and believers of all faiths agree in recognizing the central position that prayer occupies in religion. According to the American philosopher William James, without prayer there can be no question of religion. An Islamic proverb states that to pray and to be Muslim are synonymous, and Sadhu Sundar Singh, a modern Christian mystic of India, stated that praying is as important as breathing.

St. Augustine, fresco by Sandro Botticelli, 1480; in the Church of Ognissanti, Florence.(more)

Of the various forms of religious literature, prayer is considered by many to be the purest in expressing the essential elements of a religion. The Islamic Qur’ān is regarded as a book of prayers, and the book of Psalms of the Bible is viewed as a meditation on biblical history turned into prayer. The Confessions of the great Christian thinker St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) are, in the final analysis, a long prayer with the Creator. Thus, because religion is culturally and historically ubiquitous, if prayer were removed from the literary heritage of a culture, that culture would be deprived of a particularly rich and uplifting aspect.

From its primitive to its mystical expression, prayer expresses a human desire to enter into contact with the sacred or holy. As a part of that desire, prayer is linked to a feeling of presence (of the sacred or holy), which is neither an abstract conviction nor an instinctive intuition but rather a volitional movement conscious of realizing its higher end. Thus, prayer is described not only as meditation about God but as a step, a “going out of one’s self,” a pilgrimage of the spirit “in the presence of God.” It has, therefore, a personal and experiential character that goes beyond critical analysis.

Prayer is also linked to sacrifice, which seems to support prayer as a cultic—as well as a personal—act and as a supplement to the bare word in human attempts to relate to the sacred or holy. In any case, the sacrificial act generally precedes the verbal act of prayer. Thus, the presentation of an offering often prolongs prayer and is viewed as a recognition of the sovereignty and beneficence of the deity or supernatural powers. The word of a human being (in prayer), however, apart from a concomitant sacrificial act, is itself viewed as the embodiment of sacred action and power.

During the 19th century, when various evolutionary theories were in vogue, prayer was viewed as a stage in the development of religion from a magical to a “higher” stage. Such theories, which saw in prayer no more than a development of magic or incantation, failed to recognize the strictly personal characteristics of prayer. Even if a scholar could prove the chronological precedence of magical incantations to prayer—which has thus far not been done—he would be derelict in his scholarly duty if he saw in such a precedence the only explanation of prayer. The origin of prayer is to be found—essentially and existentially—in the recognition and invocation of the creator-god, the god of heaven.

Though some scholars, such as Costa Guimaraens, a French psychologist in the early 20th century, have attempted to trace prayer back to a biological need, the attempt, on the whole, has been unsuccessful. If sometimes—especially with exceptional subjects or those with fragile nervous systems—the act of prayer is accompanied by corporal phenomena (e.g., bleeding, shaking), such phenomena can accompany it without having provoked it and without explaining its deep inspiration. In order to analyze normal prayer psychologically, it is especially important to choose normal subjects. Affective sources such as fear, joy, and sadness doubtless play a role in prayer. Such affectations are expressed in prayers recorded in various religions and particularly in the book of Psalms in the Bible, but they do not explain the recourse to prayer itself, which is explained by a motivation deeper than affective elements. The cause and occasion of prayer must not be confused.

Moral sentiments also are integrating elements, but they are accidental to the development of prayer; virtue is not necessarily expressed in the act of praying, because there exist atheists of incontestable morality. Morality is more a consequence than a cause of prayer; and it follows more than it prepares for the development of the religious person.

William James and psychologists such as Joseph Segond describe prayer as a “subconscious” and “emotional effusion,” an outburst of the mind that desires to enter into communication with the invisible. Experiences of prayer very often, in fact, do include “cries from the heart,” “inexpressible laments,” and “spiritual outbursts.” The psychological explanation has the advantage of probing the subconscious, of describing the various forces that act within the psyche, but the emergence of the subconscious in the act of prayer is not the essence of prayer, since it minimizes the role of intelligence and the will. Among what are called the higher religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism), divine action, which is the object of the human action of prayer, violates neither human consciousness nor human freedom.

Sociologists often explain prayer in terms of the religious environment, which plays an indubitable role in spiritual behaviour. Though prayer supposes a personal belief, that belief

is, to a great extent, provided by society. Society creates and regulates social and religious rites and liturgies to express its beliefs, but to explain the origin of prayer solely in terms of an environmental context would be to neglect the inner, personal origins of prayer. That belief is transmitted by society is incontestable, but the channel is not to be viewed as the source. Society itself is, so to speak, a tributary of beliefs that are both received from and given to the collective whole and also from and to each of its members. The collective forms may influence personal prayer, but they do not explain it.

The vertical (divine–human) as well as the horizontal (social) dimension of prayer is also expressed in the alternation between speech and silence. Whereas magical formulas are used to coerce the supernatural, liturgical language, even when incomprehensible to the congregation, seeks to lead the participants into an apprehension of the mystery of the divine. In the presence of the mystery of the divine, human beings often discover that they can only stammer or that their speech often falters. When this occurs, they frequently express their “fear and love” (Luther) or *tremendum et fascinans*—i.e., fear and attraction (according to Rudolf Otto, a modern German historian of religion), in apophatic (negative) formulas. Speech with the divine is, in such cases, followed by silence before other people, as one apprehends the inexpressible (i.e., the sacred or holy). Religious language, like silence, thus expresses the distance and inadequacy of the human being in relation to the divine mystery.

#### Types of prayer

Because the various types of prayer are connected and permit a flow from one type to another, it is difficult to conceive of them in terms of rigid classifications. They are enumerated here more on the basis of psychology than on history.

#### Petition

The role of the request in religion has played such a central part that by metonymy (using a word for another expected word) it has given its name to prayer. However contestable this may sometimes be, it is impossible to refuse to recognize the importance of request, whether it be for a material or spiritual gift or accomplishment.

#### Confession

The term *confession* expresses at the same time an affirmation of faith and a recognition of the state of sin. In Zoroastrianism, as in ancient Christianity, the confession of faith accompanies the renunciation of demons. The Confessions of St. Augustine also illustrate this dual theme. In a similar fashion, the ancient and primitive recognized that their sins unleash the anger of the gods.

#### Intercession

Members of primitive societies have a clear sense of their solidarity in the framework of the family, the clan, and the tribe. This solidarity is often expressed in intercessory prayer, in which the needs of others are expressed. In such societies, the head of the family prays for the other members of the family, but his prayers also are extended to the whole tribe, especially to its chief; the primitive may pray even for those who are not members of his tribe (e.g., strangers or Europeans).

## **Praise and thanksgiving**

Praise, in the prayer of primitive peoples, can be traced to salutations, such as in the prayer of the Khoekhoe (of South Africa) to the New Moon—"Welcome." Praise among most of the ancient peoples was expressed in the hymn, which was primarily a prayer of praise (whether ritual or personal) for the gift of the created world. Israel praises its Creator for "his handiwork," as does the Qur'ān. Contemplation of the majesty of the universe thus often gives rise to a prayer that is not always completely free from pantheism (the divine in all things) and that can be found all the way from the nature hymns of some East and South Asian religions to the effusions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the 18th-century French moralist, embracing the trees and contemplating the sunrise.

## **Adoration**

Adoration is generally considered the most noble form of prayer, a kind of prostration of the whole being before God. Among adherents of indigenous religions, even if the prayer of request is predominant, they are seized with the feeling of fear and trembling before the numen (spiritual power) of all that is *mana* (endowed with the power of the sacred or holy) or taboo (forbidden because of association with the sacred). Names given to the divinity in prayers of adoration express dependency and submission, as, for example, in the prayer of the Kekchí Indians of Central America: "O God, you are my lord, you are my mother, you are my father, the lord of the mountains and the valleys." To express their adoration, people often fall to the ground and prostrate themselves. The feeling of submissive reverence also is expressed by body movements: raising the hands, touching or kissing a sacred object, deep bowing of the body, kneeling with the right hand on the mouth, prostration, or touching the forehead to the ground. The gesture often is accompanied by cries of fear, amazement, or joy; e.g., *has* (Judaism), *hū* (Islam), or *svaha* (Hinduism).

## **Mystical union or ecstasy**

Ecstasy is literally a departure from, a tearing away from, or a surpassing of human limitations and also a meeting with and embracing of the divine. It is a fusion of being with being in which the mystic experiences a union, characterized as a nuptial union: "God is in me and I am in him." The mystic experiences God in an inexpressible encounter that is beyond mundane human experiences. The mystical union may be a lucid and conscious progression of contemplative prayer, or it may take a more passive form of a "seizing" by God of the one who is praying.

### Forms of prayer in the religions of the world

Great bronze Amida (Daibutsu), the Buddha of the Pure Land, 1252; at Kamakura, Japan.(more)

The forms that prayer takes in the religions of the world, though varied, generally follow certain fixed patterns. These include benedictions (blessings), litanies (alternate statements, titles of the deity or deities, or petitions and responses), ceremonial and ritualistic prayers, free prayers (in intent following no fixed form), repetition or formula prayers (e.g., the repetition of the name of Jesus in Eastern Orthodox Hesychasm, a quietistic monastic movement, or the repetition of the name of Amida Buddha in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism), hymns, doxologies (statements of praise or glory), and other forms.

## Religions of nonliterate peoples

Prayer is one of the most ancient expressions of religion. The practices and rites of contemporary tribal peoples might offer a glimpse into remnants of earlier forms of religious behaviour. An adherent of a tribal religion is aware of his dependency both in relation to his tribe and to the Supreme Being. He often addresses his prayers, however, to various numina (spiritual powers): the dead, the divinities of nature, protective gods or actor gods, the Supreme Being localized somewhere in heaven, or a feminine divinity linked to the earth (i.e., the great mother). It is impossible to determine the historical precedence of one over the others, and it is difficult to describe the most rudimentary prayer because certain forms escape modern scholars, so much so that it has been assumed by some that prayer was absent in earliest religion. The first form may have been a cry, then brief formulas repeated as incantations, such as "Come...hear me...have pity" (e.g., Algonkin Indians of North America).

## Ancient civilizations

From the 3rd millennium bce to the beginning of the Common Era, forms of prayer changed little among the Assyrians and Babylonians and their descendants. The oldest forms are composed of hymns and litanies to the moon goddess Sin and to the god Tammuz. Though some songs of joy have been found, most are adjurations. Some hymns of thanksgiving tell of gratitude to the divinity for victory over an enemy. One such hymn, addressed to Marduk (the Babylonian sun god), apparently goes back to the 12th century bce. A number of hymns of later date celebrate the king, but their intent is to request divine protection first for him and his country. Preserved in the library of Ashurbanipal (7th-century-bce Assyrian king) at Nineveh is a rather long hymn to the goddess Nana (queen of the world and giver of life), the consort of the god Nabu, son of Marduk and a god of wisdom and science. There also is a long acrostic poem in praise of the god Marduk, creator of heaven and earth, and hymns that the Babylonians recited at the new year, at the beginning of spring, and at the celebration of Marduk.

Other hymns accompany sacrifices, such as in the offering of a young gazelle in place of humans. A most important form of prayer, however, is found in the conjurations and exorcisms of a priest or believer and in lamentations, which are particularly numerous and which often end in a refrain similar to a litany.

## Religions of the East

Although the religion of the Vedas contains private prayers, it gives importance and hieratic stature to liturgical prayer, which may or may not include sacrifice. There exists a whole series of hymns, such as the morning hymn addressed to Agni (the god of fire), who brings light, and to the two Ashvin (twin gods of light). There is also an evening prayer, the *savitu*, more precisely a prayer for dusk, which the disciple of the Brahmans (priestly teachers) says at nightfall until the stars appear, and a benediction formula. The gestures of adoration (*upasthana*) in effect give more intensity to the prayer. The prayers that accompany sacrifices and the numerous hymns of the Rigveda, which were composed by the members of the priestly caste according to

a stereotyped and schematic form, are addressed to the greatness of the divinity in exaltation of his great deeds.

### Religions of the West

In Judaism is one of the best known collections of prayers, the 150 psalms in the Bible. In these psalms, which always presuppose a collective witness, though they may be used by an individual privately, praise is descriptive (God is...) or narrative (God does...) in nature. Also included are hymns, exhortations to praise God, and supplications. The psalms of request include lamentations and songs of confidence or gratitude. Whether individual or collective, the psalms have a rather similar structure: a cry to God, a confession of sins, a protestation of innocence, and imprecations against one's enemies.





