

## **Indian Literature in English Translation**

Q.1.

India has 5 language families, 14 major writing systems, 400 spoken languages, and 1000s of dialects. We live in a world of continuous communication in different languages—from manuals that accompany gadgets to medicines, and bestsellers. All this is made possible only through the act of translation. Translation is the natural extension of anything verbal and valuable we wish to communicate and it crosses three bridges—personal, linguistic, and cultural. All intellectual transfers from ancient to the present time depend on people who can move words, sentences, images, and themes from one language world to another. In a multi-lingual society like India, translation is important because it is a form of promoting national understanding of the different regional 'selves' in the country. Through literatures in translation, the development of a certain shared social vision is possible. Translation is necessary for the emotional unshackling and well-being of our country. India has a strong and vibrant oral culture. Music and literature were in the form of songs and poems which moved from one language/region to another, informally and easily. They were modified and enlarged according to the narrator's wish. That is why there are so many versions of the Bhagavata stories and retellings of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Kathasaritsagar, the Jataka and Hitopadesa are also narratives that inspired the spread of hybrid stories. The clever wife, the foolish priest, and the greedy merchant are figures that appear in the lore of every region. This process of oral translation and transmission has always been our tradition.

The Turks who established the Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century introduced Arabic and Persian. India 'nativized' both and produced a hybrid language from it, namely Urdu. Thanks to the Arab traders on the Konkan coast and Malabar, there were brands of Tamilized Arabic and mixes of Malayalam and Tulu with Arabic, in South India, long before the thirteenth century. Under the Mughals, Persian became the court language. The Mughal emperor Akbar set up a translation bureau in India in the sixteenth century. He was genuinely interested in making Indian thought available in Persian. His goal was to promote harmony between the two major religious systems of the day through translation. The first translation of the Ramayana came from a Maulvi named Badayuni (1580). Akbar also arranged for the Mahabharata, the Yoga Vasistha, the Harivamsa, and the Bhagavata to be translated into Persian. So it was through Persian that the West first became acquainted with the language and sacred literature of the Hindus. His greatgrandson Dara Shikoh went on to translate some major Upanishads. The wisdom of the East was made available through translations prepared by a Mughal prince.

For the first hundred years, translations of Indian texts into English were prepared by Englishmen in collaboration with Indians. British scholars urged their government to discover, collect, and translate information about the land the East India Company was controlling. The Governor-General Warren Hastings (in office from 1772 to 1785) felt that Hindus should be governed by Hindu laws. He had the lawbooks (dharmashastras) translated from Sanskrit into Persian by Indians. Then Englishmen translated the Persian versions into English. The final texts in English translation were thus products of Sanskrit sources, mediated by Persian. They were very difficult to appreciate and understand since three languages are involved in the process. The first translation brought into being in this fashion using a 'broker-language' (Persian) between Sanskrit and English, was a legal text originally titled Vivadarnavasetu, which appeared under the name A Code of the Gentoo Laws (1776) translated by Nathaniel Halhed. The first complete translation of an Indian work into English was the Bhagavad Gita by Charles Wilkins. The year was 1784 and the publisher was the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Thus, the British administrators translated Indian books into English but side by side they brought English language education into India. Slowly, English grew more important than the

other languages. Probably the most linguistically influential translations have been those of the Bible which were religious in purpose and literary in practice. Missionary activities and translations of the Bible into different Indian languages led to the preparation of dictionaries and the establishment of printing presses. Missionaries made a study of Indian culture, philosophy and languages in order to develop methods to preach the Gospels. Some of the most important missionaries dedicated to this purpose were Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) an Italian, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) a German Protestant, and Heinrich Roth (1620-68) who developed the first Sanskrit grammar in Latin in the seventeenth century. All of this was transferred into English. The first Western-style dictionary in Kannada was developed by William Carey in 1817, a Serampore missionary and a polyglot. With these tools came the spread of journals, magazines, and newspapers in local languages. These developments led to the growth of print-media and book production. More and more people became literate. This generated a middle-class readership that wanted to read something other than stories and poems about gods and goddesses; they wanted to read about people like themselves. So forms and models found in English literature were quickly adapted by Indian writers during the nineteenth century. In this manner, English, a language that had no geographical base in India, became one of the mediums of our intellectual exchanges and the means of communication with the outside world. Colonial education brought with it the establishment of English literature in India, and great importance was accorded to English studies. This led to another irreversible reality: from the times of Raja Rammohan Roy, well into the twentieth century, Anglicization was viewed as an achievement, and a knowledge of English was equated with progress and modernization.

The most important face of British superiority in India was the English language, which established its hold over India's cultural world. English literature was not taught as a university subject even in Britain till the late nineteenth century, but was promoted as the symbol of civilization for the Indian colony; its study was institutionalized in India (by 1860 one could get a BA Hons in English from Calcutta University) before it was in England (Oxford University, 1894). When the British introduced English in Indian schools and colleges, they had an imperial plan. They believed that when someone studied English literature he or she would not be able to help admiring that body of work and would, as a natural extension of this, become admirers of British culture. They were right. For 200 years, Indian languages, literature, and art forms are yet to recover from English domination. Many generations of Indians genuinely believed that Indian literature and culture had nothing to match the scale, delicacy, or greatness of things British. English is not even among the first fifty languages in terms of number of speakers. Yet we study many literary and non-literary works only in their English translation. India is divided into states that were demarcated on the basis of the predominant languages in those regions. The fact is that we live on literary and language islands. Just because most of us feel safe in this island culture does not make it any healthier. We need to reach out of our regional boundaries and access the literatures and knowledge in other parts of India. Of all the languages we use, English is the medium of the widest literary exchange among Indians, and it offers an all-India participation on a scale that no other language can match.

**Q.2.****Thirukkural (Ch.79-83)****A Timeless Ethical and Literary Masterpiece by Thiruvalluvar**

Thirukkural, also known as the Kural, is a Tamil classic written by Thiruvalluvar, a renowned Tamil poet and philosopher. Thirukkural is a collection of 1330 couplets, or kurals, divided into three sections: Aram, Porul, and Inbam, each covering a different aspect of life. Chapter 79-83 of the Aram section discusses the importance of charity and the virtues of a philanthropist.

**Chapter 79**

**Chapter 79** of Thirukkural is titled “Charity,” and it emphasizes the importance of giving to those in need. Thiruvalluvar suggests that charity is an essential duty of all individuals, regardless of their social status or financial means. He states that those who give to others will be rewarded with happiness and good fortune in their own lives.

Thiruvalluvar also highlights the importance of giving to those who are truly in need, rather than those who are undeserving. He states that those who give to those who are undeserving will not receive any blessings, and their charitable acts will be wasted. Thirukkural also emphasizes the importance of giving without expecting anything in return. This selfless act of giving will bring the giver greater satisfaction and happiness than any material reward.

**Chapter 80**

**Chapter 80** of Thirukkural is titled “Gratitude,” and it discusses the importance of being thankful for the blessings one receives in life. Thiruvalluvar suggests that those who are grateful will receive even more blessings in the future. He states that those who are ungrateful will not receive any additional blessings, and may even lose the blessings they have already received.

Thiruvalluvar also suggests that one should be grateful not only to those who have directly helped them, but also to those who have indirectly helped them. For example, one should be grateful to the farmers who grow the food they eat, and to the teachers who have educated them.

**Chapter 81**

**Chapter 81** of Thirukkural is titled “Avoidance of Faults,” and it discusses the importance of avoiding harmful behaviors and actions. Thiruvalluvar suggests that individuals should refrain from behaviors that harm themselves, others, or society as a whole. He states that those who engage in harmful behaviors will ultimately suffer negative consequences.

Thiruvalluvar also emphasizes the importance of recognizing one’s faults and working to correct them. He suggests that individuals should seek the advice of wise and virtuous people in order to better understand their faults and how to overcome them.

**Chapter 82**

**Chapter 82** of Thirukkural is titled “Not Coveting Another’s Wife,” and it discusses the importance of respecting the sanctity of marriage. Thiruvalluvar suggests that individuals should refrain from seeking romantic or sexual relationships with married individuals. He states that those who violate the sanctity of marriage will ultimately suffer negative consequences.

Thiruvalluvar also emphasizes the importance of self-control in this chapter. He suggests that individuals should learn to control their desires and impulses in order to avoid engaging in harmful behaviors.

### **Chapter 83**

**Chapter 83** of Thirukkural is titled “Hospitality,” and it discusses the importance of welcoming guests and treating them with kindness and respect. Thiruvalluvar suggests that hospitality is an essential duty of all individuals, regardless of their social status or financial means. He states that those who welcome guests with kindness and generosity will be blessed with good fortune in their own lives.

Thiruvalluvar also emphasizes the importance of providing for the needs of guests. He suggests that hosts should provide food, shelter, and other basic necessities to their guests. Additionally, Thirukkural suggests that hosts should be mindful of their guests’ preferences and needs, and should do their best to accommodate them.

Thirukkural also discusses the importance of humility in hospitality. Thiruvalluvar suggests that hosts should not boast about their wealth or status, but should instead treat their guests as equals. He also emphasizes the importance of honesty in hospitality, suggesting that hosts should never deceive or cheat their guests.

Overall, the five chapters in the Aram section of Thirukkural that we have discussed emphasize the importance of moral and ethical behavior in all aspects of life. Thiruvalluvar stresses the importance of charity, gratitude, self-control, and hospitality, among other virtues. These kurals offer timeless advice that remains relevant and valuable to readers today.

Thirukkural has been praised for its universal values and ethical principles. It has been translated into many languages and is widely read and respected throughout the world. Its influence can be seen in various aspects of Tamil culture, from literature and art to politics and social activism.

In addition to its moral and ethical teachings, Thirukkural is also known for its literary and linguistic excellence. Thiruvalluvar’s poetry is praised for its simplicity, elegance, and clarity. The kurals are written in a unique form of Tamil verse, with each kural consisting of seven words and four syllables per word. This structure gives the kurals a rhythmic quality that is both pleasing to the ear and easy to remember.

Thirukkural’s literary and linguistic excellence has made it a subject of study and admiration for generations of scholars and poets. Its influence can be seen in the works of many Tamil writers and poets, as well as in the broader literary and cultural traditions of India and beyond.

In conclusion, Thirukkural is a timeless work of ethical and literary excellence. Its teachings on charity, gratitude, self-control, hospitality, and other virtues offer valuable guidance for readers today and for generations to come. Thiruvalluvar's poetic and linguistic skills have made the kurals a masterpiece of Tamil literature and a source of inspiration for writers and scholars around the world. As we continue to grapple with the challenges of living in an increasingly complex and interconnected world, Thirukkural remains a beacon of moral and ethical guidance, reminding us of the enduring importance of living a virtuous and fulfilling life.

### Q.3

#### **The Story of Two Bullocks**

The jackass is often considered the most stupid of animals, but it is unclear whether this is due to its actual intelligence or its harmless nature. Cows and dogs can display anger, but a jackass has never been seen getting angry. Indians in Africa and those not allowed to enter America are given a bad name despite their virtues of not drinking liquor, saving money, working hard, and avoiding fights. The example of Japan shows that a single victory can change how a nation is perceived. The bullock is considered slightly less stupid than the jackass, as it can express discontent and rage. Two bullocks named Hira and Moti, who were like brothers, were sent away by their owner and faced difficulties but managed to return home. The villagers celebrated the bullocks' return and considered them heroes.

Jhuri's wife accuses the bullocks of being ungrateful and threatens to feed them only dry straw. The bullocks find their food tasteless and long for better food. Jhuri tries to secretly give them oilseeds, but the servants are afraid of his wife's reaction.

Jhuri's brother-in-law arrives and takes away the bullocks, yoking them to his cart. Moti tries to pull the cart to the ditch, but Hira holds him back. Gaya punishes the bullocks by tying them with thick ropes and giving them dry straw to eat. Gaya treats his own bullocks well, giving them oilseed cakes and other delicacies. The bullocks feel humiliated and their honor is bruised.

The next day, Gaya yokes them to the plough, but they refuse to move. Moti goes mad with rage when Hira is struck, and he runs away with the plough, destroying it. Despite the mistreatment, Hira advises Moti not to fight back, as it is not their dharma. Gaya and his companions decide not to beat the bullocks, and they are fed rotis by Bhairo's daughter.

The bullocks remain tied up during the day and fed rotis at night. Moti suggests breaking the rope and running away, but Hira worries about the girl's safety. The girl unties the rope and tells them to run away quietly. Gaya tries to catch the bullocks, but they escape. The bullocks find themselves lost and hungry, eating peas from a field. They playfully push each other, but it turns into a brawl.

Two friends encounter a raging bull and are in a dangerous situation. They discuss possible escape routes and strategies to survive. They decide to attack the bull together, with one friend

leading the attack from the front and the other attacking from behind. The bull is taken by surprise and unable to defend against the united attack.

The bull is badly injured and eventually collapses, allowing the friends to leave. The friends celebrate their victory but have to figure out how to get back home. While trying to eat in a pea field, they are caught by two men with sticks. One friend manages to escape, but the other gets stuck in the mud and is caught. Both friends are then shut up in a pound the next morning.

The animals in the enclosure were not given any food, causing them to become weak and desperate. Hira and Moti, two friends in the enclosure, decided to rebel against their situation. Hira attempted to break the wall of the enclosure using his strength, but was caught and tied up by the pound watchman. Moti also tried to break the wall and succeeded in bringing it down partially.

The animals in the enclosure were finally able to escape once the wall came down. Two donkeys were hesitant to escape, but Moti convinced them to leave. Moti was thrashed and tied up for his actions, but he believed that saving the lives of other animals was worth it.

The two friends were tied up for a week without food, except for one instance of water. They became weak and emaciated. A crowd gathered to inspect them, but no one was interested in buying them because they looked like corpses. A bearded man appeared and began examining them, causing the friends to fear for their lives. They were eventually sold to the bearded man and forced to walk with him, trembling in fear. Along the way, they saw other happy and carefree animals grazing. They recognized the road that led them away from their home and became excited. They reached their own pasture and stall, where they were greeted by Jhuri, who claimed them as his own. The bearded man tried to take them away, but Moti defended them and chased the man out of the village. The villagers laughed at the spectacle. The friends were relieved and began to eat, while Jhuri and the mistress of the house showed them affection.

Q.4.

#### **A Corpse in the Well**

The narrator's father, Anna, is a Mahar who is assigned village duty. Anna and another villager, a Ramoshi, are guarding a corpse that has surfaced in an abandoned well. The head constable and another constable arrive to conduct an inquiry about the corpse. The constables order Anna to jump into the well to retrieve the corpse, but Anna refuses, fearing the backlash from the deceased's family. The constables and the village chief threaten and curse Anna, but he remains steadfast.

The narrator, angered by the injustice, speaks up in defense of his father and is threatened by the constables. Anna eventually decides to retrieve the corpse and begins descending into the well. The narrator notices a snake near the corpse and warns Anna. Everyone watches as Anna hangs on the rope, observing the snake's movements.

The village chief and the narrator have a disagreement about whether a snake will bite or not. The head constable gets angry and orders someone named Mahar to go down a well. The narrator is frustrated with the head constable but can't do anything about it.

The narrator tells Anna not to go down the well and offers to go instead. Anna decides to go down the well and successfully retrieves a corpse. The corpse is taken to a doctor for a postmortem examination. Anna leaves with the corpse, and the narrator goes home.

The narrator reflects on the dangerous nature of village duty and questions why the Mahars do this work. The Mahars have fought for their hereditary rights in court.

A Corpse in the Well is an extract from the book *Taral Antaral*, an autobiography by Shankar Ramchandra Kharat, an established Dalit writer in the post independence Indian literature scene. The story's primary themes seem to be on emphasizing the difference in power that exists in villages, and how the Mahars, or Dalits, are treated cruelly and in an almost sub-human fashion. The unfair method in which they are bossed around serves to highlight a broken system and ideology.

In the story, the boy's father, referred to only by the title 'Anna', is performing his village duties. A corpse had been found recently in the well, and the Mahar on duty (Anna) was assigned to guard it until the police arrive. Anna had been waiting at the well for the entire night, when his son, the narrator, arrives to give him some food. The father, in an exemplary display of loyalty towards his duty, refuses, saying that he'll only eat once relieved of his duties. At this point of time, the police arrived, and ordered Anna to fetch the body from the well.

Anna refuses initially, but, noticing the policeman's flaring temper, he enters the well. A snake in the well's shallow water causes a fright in both the son and the father, but eventually the body and Anna are successfully drawn up from the well. As the son heads home, he reflects on the injustice and the deadly work involved in village duty.

The head constable, or the policeman, is depicted in quite a negative light throughout the story. The fact that he, a police officer, a supposed implementer of the law, resorts to such primeval means of discrimination to get his job done, induces a sick sort of irony in the reader.

The theme of injustice is one that permeates the entire story. The Mahars and Ramoshis loyally and whole heartedly serve their village, as is shown in numerous examples throughout the story. Anna's refusal to eat while on duty is one; another could be his risking of life to recover the body from the well, and yet another is the respect that the Ramoshis and Mahars show the constable; when the latter arrives, the Mahars have laid out a manger of grass and a pail of freshwater to sate the horse's thirst. Thus, when the Mahars behave in such a fashion, the reader feels greatly shocked and appalled by the way that the policeman responds to such bravery and loyalty towards duty. He abuses them and threatens to beat them. This obvious abuse of power, combined with the father's air of surrender present throughout the story; such as his giving into pressure from the policeman, coupled with a line in which he says,

"Who cares if a Mahar lives or dies",

serves to but strengthen the theme of injustice, rife throughout the story.

When the constable begins to threaten Anna, pressuring him to retrieve the body from the well, the surrounding village elders respond by saying,

“Sarkar (government official), you will go away from here! You will leave this poor Mahar to his fate! We want to go on living in this village!”

In the above line, the author is conveying to the reader, the threat of communal violence. Neighboring villages, from whence the corpse in the well may have come, would not respond positively to their kinsman being touched by members of a lower caste, and thus, the Mahars in the community are responding not out of empathy and pity for the Mahar on duty, but more so out of fear of attack; serving to reinforce the aforementioned concept of injustice.

### **Beyond The Land of Hattamala:**

Badal Sarkar (1925-2011) is a renowned playwright and director. He is known for his anti-establishment plays. Sarkar was not happy with the conventional stage. Taking inspiration from the well-known Polish theatre director and theorist, Jerzy Grotowski and his Poor Theatre movement,

Sarkar started a new movement in the Indian theatre called the ‘Third Theatre’. It did not require a stage, heavy set-up, spotlight, furniture or costumes. It fulfilled Sarkar’s intention of bringing theatre to the working class and the marginalised people.

Beyond the Land of Hattamala was originally written in Bengali in 1977. It is a satire that questions the ideals of the materialistic world. The play explores themes of materialism, societal norms, and the search for a meaningful existence. The story revolves around two thieves, K (Older Thief) and B (Younger Thief). They escape from their pursuers by jumping into a river. They end up in an unfamiliar place called Utopia. The people in Utopia know nothing about the ways of the materialistic world. As they interact with the people of Utopia, K and B begin to question their own values and perspectives. Beyond the Land of Hattamala by Badal Sarkar is a satirical play on contemporary society. It questions the ideals of the materialistic world.

"Beyond the Land of Hattamala" is a story about two thieves of the same society with a feudal setup where they struggle to have enough materials to survive as result, they are forced to commit crimes such as thievery. In the play we get to see that while they robbed the house of the Zamindar and were escaping from their pursuers, Kenaram and Becharam, the thieves, jump into a river to escape but somehow this leads them into a strange society in a different land. "This society represents a modern society more like a utopia where ideals of Marxism and socialism are dominant, where everyone lives a communitarian life with each performing best to their ability for the welfare of everyone." In this play, Sircar depicts his socio-political and economic outlook with the creation of an ideal land, beyond our real society full of disparities.

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## Women's Literature

### Brief History of Women's Literature

Women's literature has often been defined by publishers as a category of writing done by women. Though obviously this is true, many scholars find such a definition reductive. What makes the history of women's writing so interesting is that in many ways it is a new area of study. The tradition of women writing has been much ignored due to the inferior position women have held in male-dominated societies. It is still not unheard of to see literature classes or anthologies in which women are greatly outnumbered by male writers or even entirely absent. The onus of women's literature, then, is to categorize and create an area of study for a group of people marginalized by history and to explore through their writing their lives as they were while occupying such a unique sociopolitical space within their culture.

Before the introduction of women's literary history colleges into academia and the renewed efforts of scholars to explore, recover, and preserve the literary tradition, women themselves were often the only champions of themselves, their contemporaries, and their predecessors. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication on the Rights of Women* (1792) is a landmark treatise that paved the way for many women after her to not only publish their works but also to engage in the overall critical discourse surrounding the issue of women in literature.

Occasionally there were men who spoke out alongside women. Some of the first recorded attempts to note women's contributions to literature were catalogs published in the 18th century and were written by men. *Feminead* (1754) by John Duncombe and *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain Who Have Been Celebrated for their Writing or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts, and Sciences* (1752) by George Ballard are two such manuscripts.

Yet for the most part, the majority of people interested in reading and responding to works written by women were other women. One prime example of this is *The Female Advocate: A Poem Occasioned by Reading Mr Duncombe's Feminead* (1774) by Mary Scott. The poem was Scott's first publication and is notable because it praises other women writers publishing at the time, including children's writer Sarah Fielding and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, a writer whose political opinions eventually led to her being blacklisted after she published an inflammatory poem on her disagreement with the British Empire's involvement in the Napoleonic wars.

In fact, only a renewed interest in women's literary history led Barbauld to retake her place in the literary canon. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is often considered a driving force behind this movement. Considered by many to be Woolf's master work, the long form essay is told through a fictionalized narrator and presents an argument on the necessity of both a metaphorical and literal "room" for women's literature within the literary tradition. The book also served as the inspiration for the literary journal *Room* (formerly titled *Room of One's Own*). The journal was launched in 1975 and specifically seeks to publish and promote works by female writers.

Second wave feminism in the '70s and '80s sparked a resurgence in forging a place for the works of women. Colleges began offering courses in women's history and literature. Presses were founded that dedicated themselves to publishing lost or ignored works by women. In recent years a greater emphasis on intersectionality has encouraged exploration into the relationship between race, gender, religion, and class to even further prove the importance of the acknowledgment of the place of marginalized groups in literature.

Writers like Toni Morrison, Adrienne Rich, and Margaret Atwood whose work exemplify the need for acknowledgment and activism prove that there is a place for this dialogue and that a room of one's own benefits not only women, but the literary tradition as a whole.

### **The Joy of Writing**

The title of “The Joy of Writing” by Wislawa Szymborska quite literally defines what the theme of the poem is. Wislawa Szymborska was a Polish Nobel Laureate and she lived through the Nazi occupation of Germany. The atrocities faced by Poland during the World War 2 had a great influence on her poems. Wislawa’s poems are generally about defiance of the illogical and immoral restrictions that were levied upon people during the wars and “The Joy of Writing” is no exception to this fact. Through the poem, the writer expresses her feelings on the restrictions on the fundamental individualistic freedom that the Polish society faced during the Nazi occupation, and all through it, the poet tries to reiterate the fact that no matter how much the people be suppressed, the moment a person picks up a pen, he comes the master of his own world—the world that he creates in his writings—and even the oppressor might be at his disposal in his World.

The poet begins by describing a doe. The doe symbolizes the subject of a poem in generic. She asks that why does this doe wander in these “written woods” for a drink of water from the surface of a spring that would show the reflection of her muzzle while she drinks it. The word written woods symbolizes that the poet is talking about the imagery that a poem brings with it. As soon as the poet writes the word “woods” and “doe”, the scene of a doe bounding through the woods appears before the eyes of the reader. She further goes on to ask why does the doe lift her head, perhaps she heard something. She then affirms the remarkability of poetic freedom as even the word “Silence” makes a sound when the pencil screeches the white paper and tears through the trees that have already appeared before us owing to the imagery of the woods, and perhaps the doe heard this sound of Silence. In other words it may refer to the fact that the word Silence when read, conjures up a very unique environment in our minds that almost shouts in our ears. The poet further goes on to say that the doe is standing on her slim four legs borrowed from the truth, which implies that poetry is strongly derived from what we see and hear in the real World. The imagery that the doe is pricking her ear right underneath the fingertips of the poet as she scribbles the word “Silence” on paper is a very strong affirmation of what the poet is trying to convey—In his writings, it is the Writer who rules absolutely on fate. The fact that the first stanza is in the form of questions further aggravate this viewpoint, since almost all the questions that she asks in the first stanza have a unanimous answer—It has happening because the writer is writing it down; because he wants it to happen; because it is at his own discretion.

In the second stanza, Wislawa becomes more critical about the subject of the poem and it is perhaps a description of what a critic can do to the subject he is writing about. The thoughts of a critic lie in wait, all set to attack the blank page in the form of words. The letters that the critic scribbles on the page are upto no good and they are looking for the smallest perceptible mistake about the subject, as if a hunter is eyeing the doe with a squinted gaze. The clutches of the clauses on the page are so subordinate, that they’ll never let the subject get away cheaply. She says that each drop of ink contains enough ink to write down ample amount of words that would surround the subject, rendering it at their mercy, much the same way that hunters would gather around the doe with squinting eyes, prepared to pounce on her with their guns.

Wisława goes on to say that “they” forget that this is not real world. Here “they” refers to the subject of the poem, expressed as *doe* in the poem, and is mainly aimed at the oppressors. They forget that this isn’t real world where it is their rule and discretion that matters. This is the Writer’s World in the poem where everything is guided by his whims and fancies. He decides all the laws of black on white i.e. ink on paper, might be an ironical deviation from Modern World as it may be referred to as the reciprocal of Apartheid. Even the twinkling of the eye on paper occurs for as long as the writer wants; and if he wishes, these twinklings can be divided into tiny eternities that go on forever. He can make the impossible happen in his poems and stop the obvious from occurring—can stop bullets in mid-air on one hand and not even a leaf in his imagery would fall until it receives the blessings of his nod. Not a single blade of grass in his creation would bend beneath the hoofs a passer-by until he says, or rather writes down the same. Through this stanza, the poet has tried to convey the message that the power of speech breaks all shackles of oppression where the entire World is spun by the hands of the Writer and everything is at his discretion. His writings can change the course of mankind, and make dynasties fall.

The poet further goes on to ask is there a World where she can rule absolutely and endlessly; is there a time she can bind in chains and order to stop? Can an existence become endless just at her nod? The answer to all these questions is unanimous. It is in her creations that she can achieve all that—where she is answerable to none and Master of All. She closes by saying that the Joy of Writing is the Power of Persevering. It is the revenge of a mortal hand. When a human, oppressed all his life and perseveres through all the atrocities decides to pick up the pen and do something about it, his writings can literally change the course of nature. History is evidence to the poet’s argument. The power of Writing is truly the Revenge of a Mortal Hand.

### **Song of Death**

The speaker of the poem is a someone who has lost a child or young person in their lives. They are personifying death as one who takes the lives of babies. The speaker is going against death and saying that those who die should be remembered. At the end it also states that eventually we will all face death. She is saying that Death comes and takes who it pleases ripping apart families.

Sniffing at newborns, smelling for the milk” - This is imagery; it allows you imagine the sound and picture of little babies. “People-Collector” - It’s personifying death. Death is a person who just collects the lives. “Death the Trickster” - Again, it is saying that death is a person who is tricking them into giving up their lives. All these quotes have a huge impact because it makes it seem that the lives Death is taking are the lives of innocent children and those who have been tricked by death. Death has left many behind and taken the lives of those who were still full of life. The tone of the poem is gloomy and sentimental. It is saying that death is taking the lives of children, which is a sad concept to everyone. People are affected by death in a variety of ways; that is why it is sentimental as well. The speaker is also trying to get death to face them and not the innocent youth, so it carries a feeling of hopelessness. Death is tragic, especially when one who still had their whole life ahead of them ,and weren't able to accomplish their goals. The theme of the poem is death doesn't pick and choose who shall die; we will all face death eventually. Death doesn't care if you're young or old, a mom or a child, it just happens.

There are times that we wish death wouldn't take the lives of the young, but at the end of the day, we can't decide for Death. We should all remember the lives that death has taken because we all will face death one day. When the poem talks about “baby”, “newborn”, “child”, “he grows”, it gives you an image of death taking away innocent children. It gives you a feeling like life is being cut short. When I think of death on the beaches, I think of war. The young soldiers are being sent off the foreign beaches, where they face constant death. Death is also referred to as the “anti Mother of the world,” which makes the Death a worldwide issue that everyone is facing at the moment like war. The stanzas are cut into small sections of four. They are broken up into these sections just like the lives of the young children facing Death.

### **‘Girls’ By Mrinal Pande**

Lali, the mother, along with her three daughters was about to leave for Lali’s mother’s place when suddenly Lali’s husband broke the surahi, and water was everywhere. Lali pictured the scenario of one of her girls slipping and breaking their bones and perceived it as a problem. The narrator, Lali’s middle daughter, says that everything is a problem for her mother whether the things are sound or in turmoil. But then we understand why everything has become a problem for her. She was going through pregnancy for the fourth time in hope of a son while managing three daughters already.

They were leaving for the narrator’s maternal side of the family so that Lali can be taken good care of. The narrator is the most troublesome among the three daughters, but all she craved for was love and acceptance. She was chided now and then by her mother for her mischiefs. Her elder sister warns her to never trust the grown-ups and never ask them questions but the narrator was far from obeying.

It happened to be the time of the auspicious Hindu festival, Navratri. Eventually, the Ashtami day arrived and the girls, who were reprimanded and detested the whole year, were suddenly worshipped. They were now called ‘Kanyakumari’ and ‘Laxmi’ from ‘Problems’ and ‘Burdens’

This switch of behavior was inconceivable to the narrator and she questions her Naani, and the society as a whole, that why do they worship girls when they don’t even want them. Her words hang in the air because nobody answers her. In the end, she compares the crimson color tika on the tip of Naani’s finger with the bloodstain, metaphorically implying that a tika on a girl’s forehead is no less than the bloodstains.

#### Portrayal of Girls

“If I have a boy this time, then I will be relieved of this burden forever...”

Lali keeps complaining and keeps praying that this time be it a boy for she cannot imagine having one more girl when she already has three. She is a woman who would trust her maid at any time more than she trusts her daughters, and the maid is a woman who would at any time be proactive to listen in from the next room. This gives the first glimpse of the women that the narrator is surrounded with.

The women on the narrator’s maternal side of the family behaved as if Lali was always harassed by her daughters, which is yet another example of a typical Indian family where women always

give unrequited caring and are always sacrificing. Then Mami's chewing paan, Naani's antipathy towards the street dog, and the elderly woman from the neighborhood, who could tell that Lali was expecting a boy from the color of her skin, are also examples of typicality of the Indian society.

"This time Lali will definitely have a boy. Just look at her complexion - when she was expecting the girls it was pink, but now it has a tinge of yellow. I'm sure it will be a boy this time."

Human behavior is multifaceted and whatever they do, their focus on the returns. Their humility is demolished by their greed, their wit crippled by their materialism. Hence, as long as a girl is believed to bring prosperity in the family they are worshipped, and then they are a burden. Girls set a typical Indian scenario with traces of hypocrisy and materialism.

The characters are all women or girls, we know their lives, we are aware of their conversation, and nowhere do they talk about the importance of men, yet so many females together fail to represent feminism but patriarchy. Their presence, their identity, and their sacrifices are blown away like thin air. For example, the maids are called by their children's names like Saru's mother and Hari's mothers, though they have their own, showing how less their identity matters. Then, when Naani should have taught her daughters to stand for themselves she tells them, "All of us suffer like that, one just has to endure it."

That the society doesn't like girls was not a misconception of the little narrator, it was indeed a fact, for when she asks Hari's mother to pronounce that 'girls are nice', she tries to avert it and laughs it away. The worst is when Lali says that the narrator is born only to plague her life and calls her a witch because she had been eavesdropping on their conversation the previous night. Hence, putting these together, one can understand why Naani says one just has to endure it.

These scenarios make the narrator miss her father and everything around reminds of him. Though the father also has a desire for a boy in the family, he doesn't mistreat the girls the way Lali does, which again zeroes on the same point - women only suppress women.

"Oh Goddess, protect my honour! At least this time let her take a son back from her parents' home."

Girls were never a choice of the family but then they are worshipped during Navratri as Kanyakumari. They are the embodiment of Devi Laxmi when they are married but after that, all their life, they crave for respect. They are taught how to fit in the little that they have because that's how things are meant to be.

The motive of the story was not to show women in a bad light but to bring to the surface what is wrong and what can be mend. Times have changed and things have become advanced. Women are no longer confined within the boundaries of their houses, but even now can one safely believe that both, sons and daughters, are accepted equally?

The change of attitude is a slow process and the narrator here shows swift mobility. She wonders whether the birds too think their daughters are inferior, she demands appreciation from Hari's mother and longs to cuddle in her mother's lap. Children make everything look innocent and pure but who could have thought that an eight-year-old girl, unlike her elder sister, could be this thoughtful and courageous as well. She is elfish and bold - she sucks the broken piece of surahi and scares her younger sister with a piece of smashed potato showing how naughty she is while on the other side she rebukes the receiving of the Ashtami puja, and declares that

she doesn't want to become a goddess. Her external obstination and her secret desire to be loved like her Mama's son makes the entire story touching.

### **'Happy Endings' by Margaret Atwood**

'Happy Endings' is a short story (or, perhaps more accurately, a piece of metafiction) which was first published in Margaret Atwood's 1983 collection, *Murder in the Dark*. The story offers six alternative storylines which feature a relationship between a man and a woman.

Because of its postmodern and metafictional elements, 'Happy Endings' requires a few words of analysis to be fully understood. Before we begin, it might be worth summarising the plot (or plots) of the various storylines which Atwood presents to us.

The story is divided into eight sections, the first six of which posit six different storylines. In the first one, labelled 'A', John and Mary meet and fall in love and get married. They both have good jobs and buy a nice house, and in time, they have children. When the time comes, they retire, enjoy their hobbies, and die.

In the second storyline, labelled 'B', Mary falls in love with John but John doesn't love Mary back. He uses her for sex and she hopes that he will come to love (or at least need) her, in time. He never takes her out to a restaurant and instead comes round to hers and she cooks for him.

When her friends tell her he is cheating on her with another woman named Madge, she takes an overdose, hoping that John will discover her and feel so guilty that he'll marry her. However, this doesn't happen and she dies, and John marries Madge.

In the third storyline, 'C', John is an older married man who is having an affair with Mary, who is twenty-two. She really likes James, who is the same age as her, but he is too young and free to be tied down to a relationship. She takes a shine to John because he is older and worried about losing his hair, and this evokes pity in her.

John, meanwhile, is married to Madge. When Mary ends up having sex with James, John discovers them both and buys a handgun and shoots them dead, before killing himself. Madge, his widow, subsequently marries a man named Fred.

In 'D', Fred and Madge are happy together until a tidal wave approaches their coastal home and they narrowly escape. However, they remain together.

In 'E', Fred has a bad heart, and eventually dies; afterwards, Madge devotes herself to charity work. However, the narrator acknowledges that these details can be changed: Madge could be the one who is unwell, and Fred might take up bird-watching (rather than charity work) when she dies.

In the final scenario, 'F', the narrator suggests that the story can be made less middle-class by making John a revolutionary and Mary a secret agent who starts a relationship with him in order to spy on him. However, the story will still ultimately come to resemble 'A'.

'Happy Endings' concludes with two brief sections in which the narrator (author? Atwood herself?) observes that the endings of all of these stories are the same, ultimately: John dies and Mary dies. After all, death is the ending that comes to all of us, and therefore to all characters. This is the only true authentic ending.

Having treated endings, the narrator remarks that beginnings are more fun, but mostly people are interested in the middle bits. Plot is, fundamentally, just one thing happening after another. The questions of 'how' something happens and 'why' it does are more interesting, and require attention.

'Happy Endings' is an example of metafiction: self-conscious fiction that is itself *about* fiction. It is, in other words, a story about stories and storytelling. Rather than work at creating a realist picture of John and Mary, the two protagonists of 'Happy Endings', so that we immerse ourselves in the story and view them as 'real' people, Atwood deliberately distances us from them, keeping them at arm's length by reminding us that they are nothing more than authorial constructs.

Much of Atwood's story is about delineating the six different scenarios, each of which involves a relationship between a man and a woman.

But as the story develops, the author breaks in on her characters more and more, 'breaking the fourth wall' to remind us that they are mere ciphers and that the things being described do not exist outside of the author's own head (and the reader's: Atwood's fiction, and especially the short pieces contained in *Murder in the Dark*, are about how we as readers imagine those words on the page and make them come alive, too).

Why does Atwood do this? Partly, one suspects, because she wishes to interrogate both the nature of romantic plots in fiction and readers' attitudes towards them. It's a commonplace that happy endings in romantic novels 'sell': it gives readers what they want. Boy meets girl, girl falls in love with boy, and after various rocky patches they end up living, in the immortal words, 'happily ever after'.

Atwood wants to put such plot lines under the microscope, as it were, and subject them to closer scrutiny. By the time we get to the fifth plot, 'E', the narrator is happily encouraging us to view the plot details as interchangeable between Fred and Madge, as if they don't really matter. After all, do they? Perhaps the more important details are, as the closing paragraphs of 'Happy Endings' have it, not What but How and Why. Character motivation is more important than what they do or what is done to them.

Of course, as so often in Margaret Atwood's fiction, there's a feminist angle to all this. Relationships are not equal in a society where men have things easier than women, and the third of Atwood's six scenarios, in which Mary is the key player, makes this point plainly.



Freedom, Atwood tells us, isn't the same for girls as it is for boys, and while James is off on his motorcycle, she is forced by societal expectations to do other things. (It is not that she isn't free herself – she is, after all, carrying on an affair with a married, older man even though society wouldn't exactly view that kindly – but her freedoms are of a different kind. A woman motorcycling across America on her own would not feel as safe, for one, as a man doing so.)

In the last analysis, 'Happy Endings' is a kind of postmodern story about stories: postmodern because it freely and self-consciously announces itself as metafiction, as being more interested in *how* stories work than in telling a story itself.

But within the narratives Atwood presents to us, she also addresses some of the inequalities between men and women, and exposes how relationships are rarely a level playing field for the two sexes.

### **We Should All Be Feminists**

*We Should All Be Feminists* was adapted from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's popular TEDx Talk of the same name. The Talk was first delivered at TEDxEuston, which is held annually in Great Britain and features prominent leaders and thinkers speaking about issues relating to Africa. Adichie's TED Talk argues that "feminist" isn't a bad word and that everyone should be feminist. She begins with a brief anecdote about her friend Okoloma, with whom she grew up. Okoloma was a great thinker and enjoyed debating Adichie about anything and everything. One day, during a heated debate, he called Adichie a "feminist." She didn't know what the word meant at the time, but understood that it wasn't a compliment. In fact, Okoloma was criticizing her. She never forgot this incident.

Many years later, Adichie published her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*. It's about a Nigerian man who, though a public hero, has violent outbursts at home and beats his wife so mercilessly that she finally resorts to poisoning him in order to escape the abuse. When the novel was published, some Nigerian men, all strangers, advised her that she should never call herself a feminist, because feminists are all unhappy and hate men (according to him). This didn't lead Adichie to abandon her feminism. On the contrary, she embraced it, adopting the tongue-in-cheek label of Happy African Feminist Who Does Not Hate Men And Who Likes To Wear Lip Gloss And High Heels For Herself And Not For Men (a label that pokes fun at the old stereotypes about feminists). Adichie now refers to herself simply as a feminist, in part to defy these stereotypes.

Adichie then offers another anecdote about her childhood in Nsukka, Nigeria. In primary school, the teacher gave the students a test, promising that the student with the highest score would be given the title of class monitor. Adichie got the highest score, but the title was given to the next highest scorer, a mild-mannered boy. Surprised, Adichie asked why, and the teacher said the title was always going to be awarded to a boy—the teacher had assumed this would be obvious to the students. Sometimes, what Adichie thinks is obvious isn't obvious to others, as when a brilliant male friend of her initially fails to understand that the valet who thanks him for the tip Adichie paid for is being sexist, because he assumes that any money Adichie has must come from a man. This is representative of traditional Nigerian attitudes toward gender

and money. Men are presumed to be the breadwinners, and as such men hold all the economic power.

Nigeria isn't the only country where sexism and money are related. In the United States, women are still paid less than men, and a woman working the same job with the same qualifications as a man is almost invariably paid less for the same amount of work. President Obama attempted to fix this with his economic policy and the signing of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, but the sexist wage gap persists in America. In Nigeria, matters are much worse. Adichie can't enter a hotel alone without men there assuming that she's a prostitute, and there are nightclubs to which she's denied entrance if she's unaccompanied by a man. This very justifiable anger fuels her argument that unfair expectations are placed on women and their behavior in and out of the economic sphere. For example, women in the workplace learn not to speak up for themselves or criticize men for fear of seeming "aggressive." To be a woman, Adichie argues, is to be taught to defer to men, to be likeable, to be less ambitious, and to make sacrifices that aren't expected of men.

Sexism doesn't begin and end in the workplace, however. It's something that we perhaps unwittingly teach our children every day. Culturally, we define masculinity in a very narrow way, teaching boys that being a "man" means being macho, disrespecting women, and expecting their wives to do all of the household chores, including cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. These traditional gender roles are part of Nigerian culture—just as they are in the United States. Adichie deftly argues that enforcing such gender roles does a disservice to both men and women. The narrow definition of masculinity teaches men not to feel or even cry, making their egos very fragile. Women, in turn, are taught to cater to the fragile egos of men and to value their own needs less than the needs of the men in their lives. For instance, women often feel pressured to give up their careers in order to stay home and care for the household. (This is never expected of men.) When a woman happens to make more money than her husband, she's encouraged to lie about it in public so as not to emasculate him.

"The problem with gender," Adichie later writes, "is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are." In graduate school, Adichie felt stifled by traditional gender roles and was afraid that if she wore clothes that were too feminine her students wouldn't respect her. In retrospect, she wishes that she had simply been herself and that she had engaged in an honest dialogue with her students. But conversations about gender are not easy to have, she admits. Many men will not admit that there's a problem, and some feel threatened by the thought of women having power and respect. Some also argue that women do have power, what they call "bottom power," which is the power that a woman wields over a man (most often by using her sexuality). This is not power, however, and we must all acknowledge that not enough is being done about the problem of sexism. Adichie defines a feminist as someone who says, "Yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better." In the end, we must all do better.

## Trifles by Susan Glaspell

The play opens on the scene of an abandoned farmhouse. The house is in disarray, with various activities interrupted, such as dishes left unwashed and bread prepared but not yet baked. Five people arrive at the house to investigate the scene of a crime, including the county attorney, George Henderson, the local sheriff, **Henry Peters**, and the neighbor, **Lewis Hale**, who discovered a murdered man, **John Wright**, strangled with a rope in his bed. The men are accompanied by two of their wives, **Mrs. Peters** and **Mrs. Hale**. Mr. Hale describes for the county attorney the experience of finding John Wright's dead body the previous day. He stopped by his neighbors' house to ask if they'd want to install a party line telephone. He encountered **Minnie Wright** sitting in her rocking chair, and she calmly announced that her husband was dead. Mr. Hale went upstairs to find the body, and left everything in place for the inspection of the attorney and the sheriff. Minnie claimed that she didn't wake up when her husband was strangled in their bed.

Mrs. Wright (Minnie) has been arrested for the crime and is being held until her trial. The men do not look closely around the kitchen for evidence of a motive, but discover Minnie's frozen and broken canning jars of fruits. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale know that Minnie was worried her canning jars would explode in the cold weather, and the sheriff jokes that a woman would worry about such things while held for murder. The men criticize Minnie's poor housekeeping, as evidenced by the mess in the kitchen and **a dirty towel**.

The men go upstairs to inspect the bedroom and Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale collect items from the kitchen that Minnie requested be brought to her at the jail, including clothes and an apron. The women comment on the strangeness of strangling a man to death when the men had pointed out that there was a gun in the house. The women admire **a quilt** that Minnie was working on, and are wondering if she was going to finish it by "quilting" or "knotting" when the men reenter and, overhearing the women talking, joke about the women's trivial concerns at a time like this. Once again left alone by the men, the women notice that some of the stitching of the quilt is very poor, as if Minnie were nervous or upset.

The women then find a birdcage without any bird in it. Mrs. Hale expresses strong regrets having not come to visit Minnie more often, acknowledging that John Wright was a hard man and that it must have been very difficult for Minnie to be alone at her house. She recalls Minnie before she married and how cheerfully she sang in the choir. The women then uncover a beautiful red box, and in it, the dead bird that was missing from the birdcage, its neck broken.

When the men return, Mrs. Hale hides the box with the body of the bird. Once the men leave again, Mrs. Peters remembers a boy who killed her childhood pet kitten, and her certainty that she would have hurt him in return if she could have. And yet, Mrs. Peters says, "the law has got to punish crime." Mrs. Hale berates herself for what she sees as her own crime of not visiting her neighbor Minnie, crying out, "who's going to punish that crime?"

The men return, and the sheriff asks if the county attorney wants to take a look at the items Mrs. Peters is bringing to Minnie at the jail. He says that Mrs. Peters doesn't need supervising and assumes the things she's taking aren't harmful. The women hide the box with the body of the bird. The county attorney jokes that at least they discovered the fate of Minnie's quilt project, and Mrs. Hale reminds him that she was planning to finish the quilt by knotting it.