

**14 Days Online Lecture Series on
B.A. I Semester Compulsory English Syllabus
ORGANISED BY
SSPM'S MAHILA MAHAVIDYALAYA, NADANVAN, NAGPUR
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Unit I Prose
2. Between the Mosque and the Temple
Boman Desai**



A presentation
by

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Parsi Culture and Indian literature –

Parsi Writers in India have contributed a lot to the literature of the country. They have ventured deep into the field of creative work. There are several Parsi writers whose work in English have brought them immense fame and placed them high in the social structure. The Parsis, after settling in India, adapted Gujarati language but have preferred to express themselves in English. A lot of people are under the impression that Parsis as a community have their own language. This is not true. Parsis have incorporated and changed a lot of words of the Gujarati language, and this language is commonly known as 'Parsi Gujarati'. A major sect of the Parsis speak this.

Eminent Parsi Writers in India-
From among the top Parsi writers in India writing in English, Rohinton Mistry, Boman Desai, Firdaus Kanga, Farrukh Dhondy, Perin Bharucha, Meher Pestonji, Dina Mehta, Nergis Dalal, Ardashir Vakil, Gieve Patel, Keki N. Daruwalla, etc are the prominent names.

Some famous names in Parsi Community- Trade , Commerce and Science

Dadabhai Nouroji, Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Dr. Homi Jaharir Bhabha

Jamshetji Tata

Ratan Tata

Bollywood and Film Industry-

Boman Irani

Aruna Irani

Asrani

Rajkumar Hirani

Dinesh Hingu

Literature and Art-

Boman Desai

Ruth Pravar Zabwala

K.N.Daruwala

Ardashir Vakil

Chetan Desai

Rohinton Mistry Firdaus Kanga Farrukh Dhondy, Perin Bharucha, Meher Pestonji, Dina Mehta, Nergis Dalal, Ardashir Vakil, **Gieve Patel**, Keki N. Daruwalla

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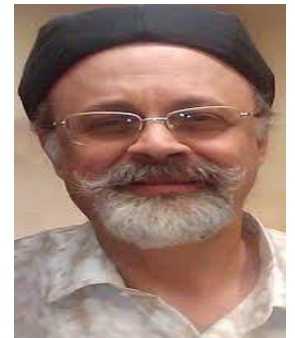
Ardashir Vakil

Rohinton Mistry Firdaus Kanga Farrukh Dhondy, Perin Bharucha, Meher Pestonji, Dina Mehta, Nergis Dalal, Ardashir Vakil, **Gieve Patel**

About the Writer- Born in 1950 (71 Yrs old)

Indian by birth and International by culture, the versatile Writer Boman Desai is one of the major Parsi voices in Indian English Literature. He was educated in India and went to America. for higher studies in Architecture in 1969. Being a music lover he had accompanied with an American Rock band also in 1970s .

Desai has four novels namely as *The Memory of Elephants*(1988),*Asylum USA* (2002),*A woman Madly in Love*(2003) and *Trio: A Novel about the Schumanns and Brahms*(2004) and a considerable number of short stories, narratives and non-fictional writings are to his credit.



Main Features of his Writings-

- Liveliness of expression
- Comic Irreverence/subversion
- Novelty in narrative Techniques
- Linguistic Innovations

Situation or background of the story-

'Between the Mosque and the Temple' is an extract from Desai's debut novel *The Memory of the Elephants*. The novel speaks on the arrival of the Parsis in India in the 7th century and focuses on three generations of a Parsi family living in twentieth century India.

The narrator Homi Seervai is a young student in America. The heroine of this episode is his grandmother.

The present story documents the importance attached to religious places in India. It revolves around a trifle incident which could have resulted into a violent riot between two religious communities.

There is a dispute between the Hindus and Muslims on a petty reason of placing a dustbin between their religious places. The Hindus claim that it is close to the temple and may defile the purity and sanctity of their religion. On the other hand the Muslims have objection about placing the dustbin closer to their Mosque.

Banu , a mature and qualified woman is Chairman of Sanitation Committee and the Collector has assigned her a sensitive task to manage this communal dispute and dissolve the issue.

Banu being a woman administrator successfully manages to solve the communal issue showing her great administrative and managerial skills.

Banu does not hurt the communal feelings of both religions and successfully places the dustbin at the exact middle point which is consented by both the communities.

The story highlights that a woman has tremendous potential to successfully tackle any critical and sensitive issue confronted to them in life who has been subjugated in patriarchy and traditional cultural mindset.

The story also highlights the public influence and mob psychology in a brilliant way.

Characterization in the story-

Major Character-

- Banu, a devoted minded grown up woman administrator who is a Chairman of Sanitation Committee.

Minor Characters-

- A District Collector
- Two Members of Sanitation Committee
- Six women carrying vegetable baskets on their way to Weekly Bazars
- Two men carrying crate on their way to college.
- A group of college students
- *Chanawallahas*
- The hawkers
- The begging Children
- Street animals
- A street gymnastic performer(acrobat)
- A Hindu spokesman
- A Muslim Spokesman
- And a huge crowd of people.

Social Context of the story-

- The story revolves around a very sensitive issue about communal unrest in Indian society.
- The writer has pin pointed the vanity about the significance of religious places in Indian culture being a land of pluralism.
- The term Religion as rituals and practices carry a great significance in India rather than human ideals and values of better conduct voiced by religion.
- The writer feels that religion as a political ideology is explosive and results in communal disharmony.
- Populist approach is more appealing than an aristocratic approach.
- The central thought expressed in the story is that every dispute/tussle can be solved through a proper understanding and showing respect to all religious tenets.

Religious context of the story-

- The story highlights the central thought that a communal dispute between the Hindus and the Muslims is successfully managed and dissolved by Parsi **woman** in an impartial way.
- A proper understanding and reverence to all the communal colours can be the only solution for universal brotherhood and world peace.
- In indian society,a minor act like placing a dust bin near the religious places can result into explosive event like bloodshed and communal riots.
- The writer has mirrored short sightedness of different religious practitioners and followers in Indian society.

Historical context of the story-

When Banu is assigned a task of managing communal dispute about placing a trifle dustbin between the mosque and temple she is reminded of the unity shown by all religious sects , classes and races against the colonial autocratic rule in the Indian freedom movement..

She is reminded of the Dandi Salt March innitiated by Mahatma Gandhi against the colonial clutches where people from every nook and corner of the nation had voluntarily participated to throw away the exploitative British rule.

She thinks about the local public unity to strengthen her and tackle the sensitive issue.

Exercise and Language Skills-

Reflection of Parsi culture and Farsi dialect-

Ku-re-ku- Morning rooster cock/hen

Dubri- a lady maid servant

Kusti prayer –a morning prayer offered by fastening a particular belt and untying after the prayer is over .

Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer- a spiritual prayer

Saebji-Madam

Tame kem cho- how are you?

Sari kani- I am fine

"BEFORE
BECOMING A
SIKH, A MUSLIM,
A HINDU OR A
CHRISTIAN,
LET'S BECOME A
HUMAN FIRST."

SRI GURU NANAK DEV JI

Thank
you









