

Golden Threshold

One-Act Plays

Questions and Answers

(from the text)

Swan Song – Anton Chekhov

Answer the following in a word or a sentence

- a) Which short story of Chekhov was adapted into the play, ‘The Swan Song’?
Answer: ‘The Swan Song’ is an adaptation of Chekhov’s own short story titled, ‘Kalkhas’ published in 1886.
- b) Which was the last role enacted by Svietlovidoff before leaving the stage?
Answer: Calchas, the Trojan priest who appears in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*.
- c) Why do you think Ivanitch implores Svietlovidoff not to tell Alexi Fomitch that he spends his nights in the theatre?
Answer: Ivanitch implores to Svietlovidoff not to tell Alexi Fomich because he does not have any other place to spend the night (a place to sleep) other than the dressing rooms.
- d) Which play is regarded as Chekhov’s ‘swan song’ as a playwright?
Answer: *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)
- e) What was Nikita Ivanitch’s occupation?
Answer: Nikita Ivanitch was the prompter (a person who remains out of sight of the audience and provides the lines of dialogues to the performing actors)
- f) The woman who loved Svietlovidoff had put forward a condition to allow him to marry her. What was this condition?
Answer: The woman wanted Svietlovidoff to give up the stage (stop acting and leave theatre or give up his career as an actor) because she could love but never marry an actor.
- g) According to Svietlovidoff, two things cannot exist together. What are they?
Answer: Svietlovidoff says that old age and genius cannot exist together.

Answer the following in about 50 words each

a) Why does Svietlovidoff feel dismayed?

Answer: Svietlovidoff feels dismayed as he realizes that his final performance as an actor is over. He feels that his life as an actor has come to an end and death is on its way to capture. Svietlovidoff is disillusioned to see the empty theatre (without audience and their applause) and he laments that after spending forty-five years on stage (he is 68 now), he has become old and alone now with none to love him, without a wife and children. The old actor suffers from alienation.

b) How does the protagonist describe the younger days of his life?

Answer: Svietlovidoff says that he belonged to an aristocratic family (with the blood of noble ancestors) and he served the army (in the artillery) during his younger days. He considers himself as a fine young chap, handsome, daring and eager but later he quit the army because of his passion for theatre.

c) How long has Svietlovidoff been an actor?

Answer: Svietlovidoff has spent forty-five years as an actor on stage and had done different roles including the famous Shakespearean characters. He is sixty-eight now and has become old, neglected and helpless.

d) Comment on the character of Nikita Ivanitch.'

Answer: Nikita Ivanitch is the prompter who does not even have a place to sleep. He spends his nights in the dressing rooms without anyone noticing it. Nikita has been part of the theatre for many years but none including the audience have acknowledged his presence. He never hogs the limelight. Like Svietlovidoff, Nikita too suffers from alienation, old-age and poverty and he feels marginalized.

e) How does Svietlovidoff realize that old age is no more a burden?

Answer: Svietlovidoff says that where there is art and genius, things like old age, loneliness, sickness, etc. cannot exist. He believes that even death will be half before the genius of an actor. He once again performs different roles before Nikita who is amazed at his talents and thus Svietlovidoff feels that old age is no more a burden.

f) How did the audience bid farewell to the actor?

Answer: The audience called Svietlovidoff's name sixteen times, brought him wreaths and lots of other things. They applauded his performance and acknowledged Svietlovidoff as a master-actor.

Answer the following in about 100 words each.

- a) Comment on the significance of the title ‘The Swan Song’.

Answer: The phrase ‘swan song’ is metaphorical and it refers to the final gesture or performance given by a person (artist) just before death or retirement. It is connected to the ancient Greek legend that the swans sing beautifully and mournfully in the moment just before their death, having been completely mute during their lifetime. In Chekhov’s play, ‘swan song’ refers to the final performance of the protagonist Svietlovidoff as he has decided to quit the stage. He has completed forty-five years on stage and has now become a sixty-eight year old man. Svietlovidoff realizes that he has become a squeezed lemon, a cracked bottle and it is tough for him to continue as an actor. So Svietlovidoff considers that day’s performance in the role of Calchas as his ‘swan song’.

- b) How does Svietlovidoff prove to Nikita that his histrionic talents have not been exhausted?

Answer: As an actor, Svietlovidoff was in the limelight for many years and after completing forty-five years on stage, he realizes that he has become old and lonely. Svietlovidoff reveals his past to Nikita Ivanitch but he still feels proud of his histrionic talents. Before Nikita, he performs the roles of various characters like Boris Godunoff, King Lear, Hamlet and Othello for the final time (His favorites were the Shakespearean characters). Nikita is amazed at the old man’s acting skills and he yells out, “Oh! You’re a genius, a genius!” Svietlovidoff too realizes that old age is not at all a barrier for flair and he leaves the stage with Nikita quite satisfied by quoting the farewell words of Othello.

- c) Comment on the use of dramatic irony in ‘The Swan Song’.

Answer: In the play, ‘Swan Song’, Anton Chekhov, focuses on the lives of two characters Svietlovidoff, the actor and Nikita Ivanitch, the prompter. Svietlovidoff had spent all his fruitful years on stage performing different roles. Though the audience applauded his performances and queued for his photographs, in reality, for them, Svietlovidoff was a stranger. This is quite ironic. The audience was willing to meet him but they never allowed their sister or daughter to marry him. Even the woman who loved Svietlovidoff wanted him to quit acting. She said that she could love but never marry an actor. Svietlovidoff realizes the irony that the people loved him as an actor but no one considered him as an individual human being. Similarly, in the case of Nikita Ivanitch, no one was there to acknowledge his contribution or even his presence in the theatre since his job was to prompt dialogues to the actors. Towards the end of the play, Svietlovidoff once again proves his talents before Nikita and he is amazed at the old man’s brilliance. Irony

works here too because Nikita feels saddened by thinking that there is no audience to watch Svietlovidoff's talents. Chekhov thus skillfully presents the irony in the life of the actors and he has created Svietlovidoff as the representative of the whole community.

- d) Comment on the importance of language and rendering of dialogue in an actor's performance on stage.

Answer: Through the play 'Swan Song', Chekhov has presented the significance of language and way of rendering dialogues in an actor's life. In dramas, the characters mainly reveal their intentions through dialogues. The actor conveys the emotions of the character through voice modulation, accent, stress, etc. Regarding 'Swan Song', the play begins with colloquial expressions as it follows the ordinary style of conversation but turns more literal as Svietlovidoff begins to perform various roles before Nikita Ivanitch. The language becomes more literal and Nikita is amazed at the voice modulation, stress, etc. given to the dialogues by Svietlovidoff. The style changes as it switches from one character to the other. Finally, he quotes the lines from *Othello* as a farewell to the stage and through these dialogues, Chekhov emphasizes the significance of language and rendering of dialogue in an actor's performance on stage.

- e) Discuss the various themes in the play, 'The Swan Song'.

Answer: The themes of the play are death and old age, reminiscence and regret of past, attitude of the society towards a person who has taken acting as his career, disillusionment and false ideals, alienation and suffering.

Write essays of about 300 words on each of the following.

- a) 'Acting is a unique form of expression because the actor himself is the medium of his art.' Comment on this with reference to Svietlovidoff, the thespian in 'The Swan Song'.

Answer (Points to be included): Svietlovidoff's character – a man born in an aristocratic family and had joined army – returned to stage because of his passion for theatre – different roles enacted on stage – lived on stage as different characters – psychology of an actor – performance with the support of costumes, stagecraft, acting and dialogues – creative aspect – acceptance of the audience – irony – individual vs actor – old age as a barrier for the thespian.

- b) The theme of 'alienation' and 'mental torment' in 'The Swan Song'.

Answer (Points to be included): Alienation and mental torment as the main themes of the play - In the play, 'Swan Song', Anton Chekhov, focuses on the lives of two characters Svietlovidoff, the actor and Nikita Ivanitch, the prompter –

Svietlovidoff had spent forty-five years on stage performing different roles – applause of the audience for the character and the actor and never for the individual behind it – Svetlovidoff, the man as a stranger for the audience – he could not marry – feels estranged and alienated when he completed his final performance on stage – Nikita Ivanitch too suffers from the same – plight of the actors.

Thirst – Eugene O’Neill

Answer the following in a word or a sentence

- a) ‘Oh, this silence! I cannot bear this silence. Talk to me about anything you please . . .’ Whose words are these?

Answer: These are the words of the Dancer woman

- b) Why did the sailor croon the song?

Answer: The sailor crooned the song to keep the sharks away (which have surrounded the boat waiting for the death of the three people) as he feels it as a charm and he believed that as long as he croons the song, the sharks will not eat them.

- c) Identify the major theme of the play, ‘Thirst’.

Answer: The major theme of the play is thirst itself – yearning for a drop of water to quench the thirst and it also presents the passion of humans for life.

- d) ‘It is beautiful, is it not? I hate to part with it.’ What is the dancer referring to here?

Answer: The dancer is referring to the expensive diamond necklace (given to her as a present by an old duke).

- e) Which word does the playwright use to describe the singing of the negro sailor?

Answer: The word is ‘croon’ – The man is crooning a monotonous Negro song.

Answer the following in about 50 words each

- a) Is ‘Thirst’ an appropriate title for the play? Justify your answer.

Answer: Yes. The play presents the attempt of three shipwrecked victims to stay alive and to reach the shore, fighting against the forces of nature. Though they are on boat in the tropical ocean, they don’t even have a drop of water to quench their thirst. The title also signifies man’s passion for life and the unending desire to live.

- b) What is termed as the ‘angry eye of God’ in the play?

Answer: It is the Sun’s scorching rays which is referred to as the ‘angry eye of God’. The sun is glaring down from straight overhead and it troubles the three travellers on the boat.

- c) What in the gentleman’s appearance identify him as a first-class passenger?

Answer: The dress of the gentleman qualifies him as a first-class passenger. He was in his evening dress. He wore a white shirt and black tie. Though the sun and salt water have distorted his dress, one can still understand that he belongs to the first-class.

- d) What is the significance of the image of the ‘sea’ in the play?

Answer: The ‘sea’ represents the nature. It is referred to as ‘dead flat sea’ or as the Tropical Ocean. The sea stands for the unrelenting power of nature and it proves that man is powerless before the forces of nature. For the characters, the sea also stands for death and terror as they spot sharks waiting for their bodies. It symbolizes loneliness, terror and agility.

- e) What is the dancer’s impression about the captain of the ship?

Answer: The dancer says that the Captain was so kind, good natured, handsome and broad-shouldered. The Captain greeted her and said that he was eager to watch her dance that evening. She also reports that she had seen the captain committing suicide taking the responsibility of the tragedy. The Captain was on the bridge and his face was pale and it looked like the face of the dead man. No one paid attention to his orders and finally he shot himself.

- f) Comment on the song sung by the mulatto sailor.

Answer: The mulatto sailor was crooning a monotonous Negro song. The dancer says that the song is quite queer and it sounds like a dirge. When enquired, the sailor explains that it is the song of his people and he is singing to the sharks like a charm to keep them away from eating the humans on the boat (Dancer, Gentleman and Sailor).

- g) What irony does the gentleman see in the ‘souvenir menu’?

Answer: The gentleman finds a black object when he fumbles inside the pocket of his dress coat. He identifies it as a souvenir menu of a banquet organized by his friends to honor him in the name of the Club of Buenos Aires. The irony is that, they are on the boat now and do not have anything to eat or even a drop of water to drink but the menu promises different kinds of relishes (like Martini cocktails, soup, sherry, fish, Burgandy, chicken, champagne, etc.). They starve but the menu offers variety of dishes. The lady cannot bear this irony and she asks the gentleman to throw the menu card away.

- h) Why did the dancer girl exclaim, 'He is no better than a murderer'? Who is she referring to?

Answer: The dancer girl is referring to the Negro (the West Indian Mulatto Sailor). She feels that the sailor is the only person in the boat who has some water and he has hidden it somewhere. Both the dancer and the gentleman are yearning for water but the sailor denies. Hence, she says that, "he is no better than a murderer".

- i) Comment on the symbolism in the play, 'Thirst'.

Answer: Eugene O'Neill has employed many symbols in the play 'Thirst'. The three characters represent various classes in the society. The Dancer and the Gentleman represent the dominant, white upper class while the Sailor stands for the marginalized lower class. The sea is another symbol which represents the immense power of nature and proves that man is powerless before the forces of nature. The diamond necklace of the Dancer is another major symbol. It represents the craze for materialistic pleasures and at the end of the play proves that it is futile before nature.

Answer the following in about 100 words each.

- a) Sketch the character of the dancer.

Answer: The Dancer woman represents the glamorous, cozy aspect of human life. She is unable to tolerate the silence at the beginning and she aspires to live. She also represents hope, dreams, arts, culture and glittery side of life. The dancer appears with all glamour and her job was to entertain the audience. The Second Officer of the ship had fallen in love with the woman and his plan was to escape with her. But he could not reach the boat and she was left stranded. She is a fragile character who is unable to face the challenges of life and destiny. She feels assured when the gentleman says that the sharks won't eat the humans but later gets shattered when she comes to know the reality. The Dancer is hopeful and urges the gentleman to look for a rescue ship or island. The woman also possesses a precious diamond necklace that was gifted to her by an old Duke and she says that she cannot even think of parting with it. Finally, she becomes desperate due to thirst and offers the necklace and even her body to the Sailor. Exasperated when the man rejects the offer, she turns eccentric and begins to dance. She falls back on the raft and dies. At the end of the play, the necklace is seen shining on the deck of the boat, reminding the audience of the futility of materialistic pleasures.

- b) Comment on the importance of the diamond necklace as a metaphor.

Answer: The diamond necklace of the Dancer is the major symbol employed by O'Neill in the play. It represents the craze for materialistic pleasures and at the end of the play proves that it is futile before nature. The necklace was gifted to the Dancer woman by an old Duke and she hated to part with it. Later, she is forced to surrender the necklace to the Sailor for a drop of water which underlines the triviality of the object. When the play ends, the necklace is shown on the raft, glittering in the blazing sunshine. Thus, O'Neill presents the diamond necklace as a metaphor in the play.

- c) Comment on the climax of the play.

Answer: Towards the end of the play, the Dancer realizes that the Sailor is not willing to give water to drink (in fact, he does not have water), the Dancer gets ready for a final performance. She turns eccentric and begins to dance on the raft backed by the support of the gentleman. The woman falls and dies. Suddenly, the Sailor begins to speak and asks the gentleman to confirm whether she is dead or not. Realizing that she is no more, the Sailor becomes happy and says that, now they will live. The gentleman at first did not understand the meaning but soon realizes that the plan of the Sailor is to feed upon the dead body of the woman. Seeing, the Sailor coming with a knife to slit the body, the gentleman pushes it to the water and it is consumed by the waiting sharks. A tussle between the Sailor and the gentleman ensues and in the process, both of them lose the balance and falls into the water. The terrified look on the face of the Sailor is seen as the sharks take them too. At the end of the play, the sharks disappear, the sun shines and the necklace is seen glittering on the deck of the boat. O'Neill adds the element of cannibalism in the climax of the play. He proves that the man will turn atavistic or lose his sense when they become desperate for life. The climax is superbly written and it shows the struggle of humans to live.

- d) Identify the major themes in the play, 'Thirst'.

Answer: The play presents human zeal for life, the struggle for survival, the absurdity of existence, the futility of materialistic pleasures, the battle against the forces of nature and the optimism in the attempt to stay alive. The dominant themes in the play are waiting, mistrust, hunger, thirst, silence, savagery, fate, racial rift and the irrationality of life.

- e) 'The characters in the play are both symbols and individuals'. – Explain this statement in the context of 'Thirst'.

Answer: The three characters represent the various classes in the society. The Dancer and the Gentleman represent the dominant, white upper class while the Sailor stands for the marginalized lower class. It was the dream of the Gentleman to travel on this ship and he had done everything to achieve his goal. He represents the ambitious nature of the upper-middle class who strive hard to move ahead in life but has so many dreams and goals to achieve. The Dancer woman stands for the glamorous aspect of life. She represents the upper class who wishes to lead a cozy life without bothering anything. Many people admire and woo her openly as well as secretly. She possesses a diamond necklace and she considers it as precious. Both these characters are Whites too. On the other hand, the Sailor stands for the lower class and to some extent represent savagery. He is presented as the representative of the working-class community. Being a Negro, he gets abused a number of times by the Dancer and Gentleman. The attitude of the upper class for the lower class is perfectly portrayed by the playwright in this play. The gentleman says that the Negro had hidden water somewhere and he also once dreamt that he had come to stab him. The Dancer too feels that the Sailor being a Negro would love to have money and that is why she offers the necklace. In the same way, the aspect of lust is also shown when she succumbs before the Sailor. So, O'Neill through the presentation of three characters has depicted the issue of racism and the different psychological aspects. Thus the characters are symbols as well as individuals.

Write essays of about 300 words on each of the following.

- a) 'Through the play, 'Thirst', what O'Neill tries to present is the triviality of human existence and its multifaceted intricacies' – Explain.

Answer (Points to be included): 'Thirst' as a play inspired partly by the sinking of the Titanic ship – three characters left stranded to survive on a small boat on the tropical ocean – the Gentleman, the Dancer woman and the Sailor – fighting against different challenges like the vast ocean, scorching sun, waiting sharks which have surrounded the boat, thirst, etc – the characters realize that humans are nothing before the vast nature – psychology/attitude of the three characters – different symbols employed by the playwright – climax of the play – futility of materialism and absurdity of human existence.

- b) Comment on the racial politics and dynamics presented by O’Neill in the play, ‘Thirst’.

Answer (Points to be included): The three characters from various classes in the society - the Dancer and the Gentleman represent the dominant, white upper class while the Sailor stands for the marginalized lower class – attitude of the Gentleman and the Dancer towards the Negro – the song of the Negro sailor which sounds like a dirge for the woman – the dream of the Gentleman in which he feels that the Sailor has come to stab him – the Sailor as the representative of the working-class community – the gentleman says that the Negro had hidden water – the Dancer believes that the Negroes always have an attraction for money and sex – she offers the necklace first and later her body too – element of Racial politics – climax of the play.

Matsyaganddhi – Sajitha M.

Answer the following in a word or a sentence

- a) Who is the central character of the play, *Matsyaganddhi*?
Answer: The central character of the play is a fisherwoman (a woman belonging to the *araya* community).
- b) What is a monologue?
Answer: A monologue can be defined as a long speech delivered by one actor in a play (here in *Matsyaganddhi*, there is only one character and hence it is also known as a ‘Solo-Play’).
- c) What is the significance of the two constellations referred to in the play?
Answer: Orion, the Great Bear and the Southern Cross are the two constellations mentioned in the play and they always act as indication for the boatmen. It guides them, provides a sense of safety and also acts as an indication of where the fishes are.
- d) Comment on the attitude of the public towards the fisherwoman.
Answer: The public (people) hold their noses at the fish baskets and the smell of the fish but they love the taste of a plate full of fish on the dining table.

Answer the following in about 50 words each

- a) Identify the major themes of the play, *Matsyaganddhi*.

Answer: *Matsyaganddhi* presents the plight of the *araya* (fishing) community during the post-globalization era. It also deals with the marginalization of women, double standards of the society and the process of commodification.

- b) According to the play, what are the problems that a fisherwoman encounters in the market?

Answer: In *Matsyaganddhi*, the woman says that if she couldn't reach the market in time, it becomes a hassle. The tidy and better spots will be occupied by the males who can also go around and sell fish in vehicles. The women are forced to take whatever dirty spots are left and they are troubled by flies and mosquitoes. The tap in the fish market lacks water and under it, the women fight against one another for a drop of drinking water. These are the problems faced by the fisherwoman in the market.

- c) Comment on the myth prevalent in the *araya* community that is referred to in the play.

Answer: The myth prevalent in the *araya* community says that the women or the wives of the *mukkavas* (fishermen) should remain chaste so that they will be protected by the *Kadamma* (Sea-Mother), that is, the safe return of a fisherman from the sea depends on the fidelity of his wife waiting for him on shore. If the woman turns immoral, *Kadamma* will take away the life of her man. The film *Chemmeen* which is referred to in the play deals with this theme.

- d) The play uses a number of transliterations from the Malayalam. Comment on the effect of this in the reading of the play.

Answer: Transliteration is the process of transferring a word from the alphabet of one language to another. The play *Matsyaganddhi* has been originally written in Malayalam and later translated into English by Prof. V.C. Harris. Words like *arayan*, *mukkuva*, *chemmeen*, *Kadamma*, *Molay*, *aila*, *mathi*, etc. appear in the English translation too in the form transliteration. The translator has deliberately restored these words to convey the original tone and intent of the message, taking into account cultural and regional differences between the two languages (Malayalam and English). Moreover, it provides a realistic impression and takes the audience closer to the culture of the particular community.

Answer the following in about 100 words each.

- a) Comment on the significance of the mythological story of Matsyaganddhi, with reference to this play.

Answer: In *Matsyaganddhi*, Sajitha M., the playwright has used the mythological story of Matsyaganddhi to juxtapose the past and present situation of the women of the *araya* community. In the original story of *Mahabharatha*, Satyavati who is also known as Matsyaganddhi used to ferry people across the river in her little boat. Once, an old sage named Parashara fell in love with her as he was fascinated by the *Matsyaganddham* (smell of the fish). He created a cover out of the thin blue mist and made love with her in the boat itself. Later, he gave her a musky fragrance and got her renamed as *Yojanagandha*. She gave birth to Vyasa, the legendary author. But in the modern era, the playwright ironically narrates the story of Flory, a hapless fisherwoman who was brutally raped publicly by three ruffians in Trivandrum. This incident shows the attitude of the modern people towards the women of *araya* community (women in general too). Thus the playwright proves how things have changed by referring to the mythical story.

- b) Comment on the intertextual elements in the play.

Answer: In the play *Matsyaganddhi*, a few intertextual elements can be traced. It means the interconnection between similar or related works of literature. The play refers to the story of the film *Chemmeen* by citing the myth which is prevalent among the *araya* community. The play also refers to the story of Matsyaganddhi and Parashara depicted in the epic, *Mahabharatha*. The playwright employs this story to narrate the plight of the fisherwomen in the new era. Thus, through these intertextual elements, the playwright has skillfully juxtaposed the past and the present.

- c) How does the central character bring out the glorious past of the fishing community, in the days before the advent of trawling?

Answer: The central character of the play recollects the glorious past of her community in the play *Matsyaganddhi*. She says that in the past the sea was full of fish and it was less expensive too. The children of the community were healthy at that time and the women didn't have to hunt for fish at the harbour and other markets. The shore itself had abundance and her mother used to pick a few fishes and sell at far-off markets. She and her siblings waited for her mother's return as she would come with the basket full of rice, vegetables, peas, chillies and bananas. She believes that, labour had its rewards and *Kadamma* used to protect her children. Her husband too confidently went to

- sea for fishing and returned safe with plenty of fishes. Later, the whole scenario changed with the motorboats and trawler boats disturbing the sea. This is how the woman reveals the glorious past of the fishing community.
- d) Bring out the use of irony in the play.
- Answer: The play *Matsyaganddhi* subverts the central motif, taken from the *Mahabharata*, to narrate a story of poverty and despair. The playwright uses irony effectively to depict the plight of the *araya* community of the present era. The woman says that the people hold their noses at the fish baskets and the smell of the fish but they love the taste of a plate full of fish on the dining table which is quite ironic. The playwright takes the story of Matsyaganddhi and Parashara from the epic *Mahabharatha* to juxtapose with story of Flory, a hapless fisherwoman. It is too ironic because in the past the women of the *araya* community received respect and love from others while nowadays, they are treated with disdain. Towards the end of the play, the woman says that the community has lost everything and the government has even snatched away *Kadamma* from them which is also ironic. With the advent of modernization, the ethnic community has lost their roots. It is time to ponder and address this issue too. The women are forced to sell their bodies to earn their living and the central character says that shore will be full of illiterate, fatherless little Vyasas unlike the legendary Vyasa born in the epic story. These are examples of irony in the play.
- e) Comment on the ending of the play.
- Answer: The play ends with the depiction of the impact of globalization in the life of the *araya* community. Towards the last part, the central character is seen with an umbrella on which it is printed as 'God's own Country'. She says that the government has decided to build a harbor on the sea shore which will lead to the arrival of many foreign ships. More people will get jobs and a new hotel will be opened. But the problem she feels that, the wall which is going to be created will affect the lives of the *araya* community. They won't be able take out their boats to the sea and she feels that the sea itself will be gone. The women will be forced to sell to sell their bodies to earn their living and the shore will be full of illiterate, fatherless little children. The play concludes with a few questions raised by the central character. She thinks what she is doing on the shore with her hair down. She asks whether the government can return her husband who had died when the trawler vessel hit his little boat. The woman says that if the story which says *Kadamma* will be angry if a *mukkuva* woman stands on the seashore with her hair unloosened is true, let the sea rage

and break all trawler boats and foreign vessels. The central character of the play says that the stench is not the fish-stink as people believes and it is also not from her basket but it is the stench of the sea decaying and stench of the little fishes being slaughtered by the trawler nets and above all, it is the stench of the decaying dreams of Matsyagandhis.

Write essays of about 300 words on each of the following.

- a) *Matsyagandhi* is a play with contemporary relevance; it looks at the life and times of a fishing community in the context of globalisation. Comment on this statement.

Answer (Points to be included): *Matsyagandhi* is a solo-play – a monologue by a fisherwoman – the play as an expression of her angst, anguish and anxiety – the play presents the life of the fishing community in the context of globalisation and the ecological and economic issues related to fishing in the aftermath of globalization – examines how the members of the community are affected by the technological innovations brought about by globalization – depicts the glorious past of the community when the shore was full of fishes and their lives were safe – the coming of the modern era which has created many issues in the community – struggle of a fisherwoman to sell the fishes – perspective of men and general public regarding the fisherwomen – reference to the myth and the epic – death of her husband – decision of the government to build a harbor – alters the equation of their lives – lamentation which later turns out to be a curse – contemporary relevance – class struggles and the issues of being marginalized – plight of the women – universality of the play.