

UNIT 1 CHAPTER 3 MATCH BOX

CHARACTER OF AJIT

'Match Box' is a story of a married couple Ajit and Nomita. Ajit married Nomita because of her beauty. He has the habit of opening his wife Nomita's mail and reading it. He says that it is his right to check it to see if she has a lover. Even if she questions about it, he would laugh or scold her. When there is a letter from her mother, Ajit says sarcastically to find out a money order form. To suppress his behavior problems, he highlights Nomita's family and background saying that she is a poor girl's daughter and now a queen only because he married her. Though he is from a rich family, his behavior towards Nomita seems not up to his status. Towards the end of the story, Nomita burns the anchor of her sari. He was frightened to see it and immediately he puts out the fire. It is clear that Ajit is of dominating nature outwardly whereas he fears inwardly when Nomita asserts her rights and tries to break the shackles of her domestic slavery. He is presented here as a man who always tries to keep his wife under his control and thus becomes a typical male chauvinist.

CHARACTER SKETCH OF NOMITA

Nomita in the story Matchbox written by Ashapurna Debi is a typical Indian housewife who is bound to sacrifice many of her ambitions and hopes and be enslaved in the kitchen. Ashapurna Debi portrays her colourless –without the hues of a happy life. Her widowed mother thinks that she is successful in consigning her daughter to a rich family which is not on the merit of finance but by looks alone. Nomita expects a minimum freedom of reading the letters addressed to her. Her husband seems to be dubious about the letters when he tries to read it without her consent. It is true what Ashapurna Debi says about Nomita and women in general that they are like matchboxes settled at the corners of the house with their hidden power to explode at any time. Nomita follows the example of a matchbox and she burns with anger when she is helpless. To break the shackles of marital slavery she is ready to kill herself. Again she is depicted as a meek innocent woman who smiles in front of others when a volcano is burning inside her. She can tear off the mask of her husband's large heartedness, but she doesn't. Thus she proves to be a prototype of an Indian woman who is meek as a lamb.

Character sketch

NOMITA'S MOTHER (Not an empowered woman)

A silent but powerful character of the story and the center of all the unfortunate incidents that take place in the ^{life of Nomita in the} story - "The Matchbox".

Fate has ^{made} ~~her~~ ^{mother} a widow and her poverty is the cause of her worry.

Pride and greed are her inherent characters. Her only daughter Nomita and her good looks prompt the mother to get her married off to a high class bachelor Ajith. With this marriage she gets a chance to rise up the social ladder. She is proud to state that her daughter lives like a 'queen'.

This nameless character, Nomita's mother is not empowered. She is illiterate and does not have self-respect. If she was empowered, she would not have caused shame and insult to her daughter, by begging for money from her son-in-law. She would not have written letters to her son-in-law asking for money unnecessarily. She wouldn't let her daughter's head

go down in shame. ⁽²⁾ She would have lived with whatever income she had with self-respect. She would not have been greedy for money and social status. All these negative qualities exhibited by her were the result of not being empowered. And in a positive thought, we can assume that this negative character of her mother must have prompted Nomita to live with great self-respect and dignity.

12. "We are all the slaves of our customs"
— Analyse the statement with reference to the poem "The Mending Wall".

Man is a social animal, but becomes selfish when he is concerned with his private property and belongings and riches and family. When he thinks of wealth, he thinks of living safe. For luck and good living conditions he starts thinking a bit orthodox and he becomes a slave of tradition and customs.

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He remembers his father's wise words and decides to live by those principles. He asks for God's blessings because he obeys his father's words. Thus we all become slaves of one custom or the other.

Here in "Mending Wall", the old neighbour is purely traditional. He will not move an inch from wise sayings. He wants to play safe. But this ~~behaviour~~ behaviour prevents his mind from thinking reasonably. He becomes narrow minded. He forgets that pines and apples will not go into each other's property and destroy themselves. In the snow filled areas, and without people living in these two properties, a wall is actually not necessary. He is a man walking in darkness. Education has not made him enlightened. He is not ready to accept his brother. His riches are leading him to darkness. Truly he is a savage, compared to be a rustic ancient man, who believed in survival of the fittest. The stone age man of ancient human civilisations.

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13. SEMINAR : WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES IN
KERALA

(Speech by moderator introducing the topic
and the paper presentors)

Good Morning Everybody.

Let me take the fortunate opportunity to introduce the theme and the speakers for today's seminar on the topic 'Women Empowerment Initiatives in Kerala'.

Kerala is known to be God's own country. Kerala is the state with highest literacy in India. The governments from time to time give prime importance to educating and empowering the GIRL child. The Child Helpline is on the vigil to rescue any child who is a victim of abuse and misuse. Even the Civil Supplies dept has made a move to empower ladies of the household by giving ration cards in the name of the mother.

Anganvadi's and schools monitor the health and growth of teenage girls especially in the villages. Everyone must be aware that the infant mortality rate in India has been reduced on the whole. ~~The~~

However the most important point to be noted is that in Kerala,

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almost all political parties and voluntary organisations take many initiatives to monitor the wellness of the women in Kerala. The introduction of the Panchayathi Raj ensured the entry of women in the field of local bodies, and management too. And most of all the formation of the 'Ayalkootam' in the village level has been the turning point in women empowerment in Kerala. This group initiated the village women into self employment and even the starting of small scale industries. The Ayalkootam has brought our women from the 'Kitchen' to the 'Forefront' or the Home Maker to the Nation Builder.

14. "Take me not till my children grow" Write a critical comment on the depth of maternal love; based on the poem 'Any Woman'.
- 'Men' are what their mothers made them. Some of our mothers are kissing mothers and some are scolding mothers but it is 'Love' just the same, and most mothers do them both together. The love of a mother is unconditional, it waxes up her children and wanes herself. It means giving up her own sweat and blood too, to build up the future of her loved ones. It means a whole lot of sacrifices - of time, of favours, of labour, and

much more.

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In the poem 'Any Woman' Katharine Tynan pictures 'A mother' — her life her duties and responsibilities. We are 'bought face to face with a mother's life aim'. She is the pillar of the house, the keystone of the whole structure of both concrete and blood. The family is her matter of concern. If the keystone is removed the family will be ruined. She is the heart of love and warmth of emotions. She lights up love. She is the ring of the holy marriage and the knot of love. She is the multitasker. She spends her whole life for the welfare of her family. So she prays to God daily to take care of her children. No evil happening must make their life endangered. If God is to take anyone away from their family, he must not. Mother prays for all of them. And moreover, she prays that God mustn't take her away from the family until the children become strong enough to look after themselves.