

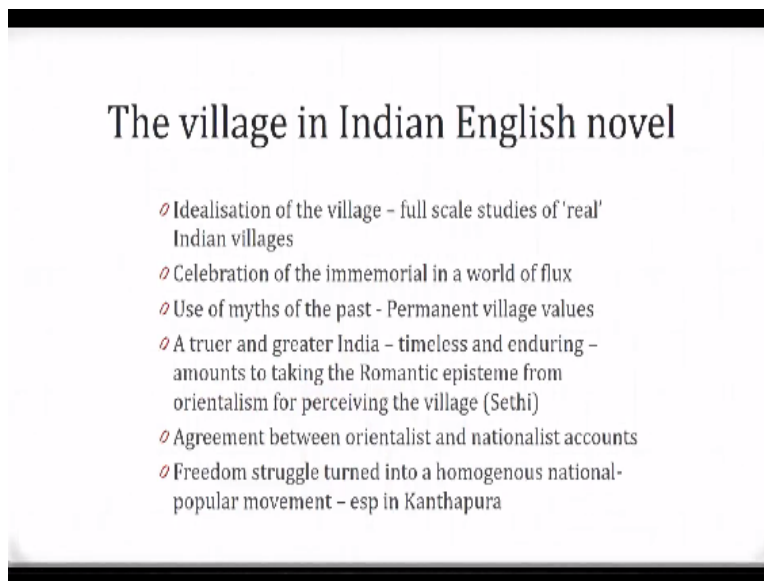
Indian Fiction in English
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Lecture – 11
Waiting for the Mahatma Part - II

So what we will do is, first we will go through some of the ways in which the novel, the early novels had been highlighting the role of villages and this we see in a particular way in the Kanthapura in an entirely different way in Waiting for the Mahatma and later when we take a look at Untouchable, we will again see that the, the village setting plays an important role.

So there are number of critics who have located Waiting for the Mahatma as a sequel to Kanthapura but one need not take that claim too seriously because we really do not see many ways in which Waiting for the Mahatma could be seen as a continuation of the narration that we see in Kanthapura looking at the ways in which the village plays an important role

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In factor, we realise that this is more, may be in most of these acclaims would be more appropriate when we talk about Kanthapura but again we also have to keep in mind the fact that the same set of reading has been extended most of Narayan's works but in a certain way, again we can see that Waiting for the Mahatma is a different novel which really does not fall into all of these claims, all of these generalizations about the village.

But nevertheless it is important to know how the village has been generally located, especially in the early phase of Indian English fiction. There is an idealization of the village and most of them, they also presents the village scene, this is very evident in Kanthapura. It is like a real village. This is a, it is a fictional village but somehow the, the rendition, the narrative techniques, the presentation of the characters, they all give us this impression that this is the authentic real village that you would find anywhere, that could be any other place.

Of course, the same reason, even this term, Sthala Purana, has been used extensively to talk about these sort of novels and we know that Narayan's novels also, he created this fictional village called Malgudi which is also present begin as an authentic real kind of village and, and some of them also feel that this use of the village as the main setting for most of these Indian nationalist events or the early dilemmas of the, that the nation went through.

The village provides an ideal setting to stage all of these concerns, these debates, etc., because it makes it possible to celebrate the immemorial values in a world of flux, yes. There are number of things which would change, we would see that, you know, in, with respect to the nation, with respect to the responses of the urban spaces to nation, to Gandhi, to colonialism but village in certain ways remains very constant, yes.

And in the values which are deeply entrenched in the village may be in Kanthapura also this was initially seen as, you know, the way in which the novelist want to portray the village as a celebration of all those immemorial values, may be that was projected as a very positive thing but looking back we can also see that that also had let to very deeply entrenched feelings about cast, about traditions, about reinforcing superstitions, yes.

So somehow the village setting, somehow the role of Gandhi and the role of nationalist movement is superimposed into the village setting which has been foreground in the novels and we find a lot of use of myths and again, you know, the myths also reiterate a permanence of certain values which are part of the village system and we know that Gandhi also in multiple ways, he highlighted the role of the village in sustaining Indian values, Indian tradition that we

know the root of everything Indian can be traced back to its villages.

The need to preserve the villages in their pristine sense on and so forth. And in Rumina Sethi's work, *Myths of the Nation* where she engage with *Kanthapura*, she talks about, generally about how villages had been projected, may be early novel. She talks about how the villages made it possible to talk about a truer in greater India which is timeless and enduring and it also amounts to taking the romantic episteme from orientalism for perceiving the village.

She extends this argument further and says that most of the novels, she does not specifically talk about *Waiting for the Mahatma* but most of the novels by Narayan as well as *Kanthapura*, they all talk about nationalism placed within the village setting, more or less as a orientalist term, the rhetoric. She also argues that it would be perhaps impossible to differentiate the orientalist rhetoric from that of the nationalist rhetoric, particularly when India is being projected.

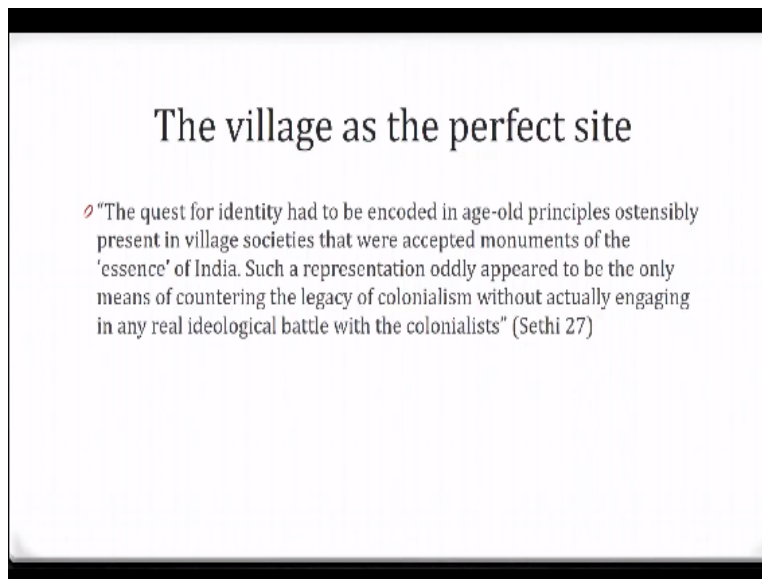
When the village purity is being projected as a, as the ideal, as, as the exotic, as something timeless, as something which cannot undergo a change irrespective of what kind of attitudes are being superimposed on to the village and she also finds this, you know, very uncanny agreement between the orientalist than nationalist accounts about the village setting in India and she also, she is also very critical about the way the freedom struggle has turned into a homogenous national popular movement.

While some of the critics are also of the opinion that *Waiting for the Mahatma* also does precisely that that, you know, it also is a celebration, is also is a foregrounding of a homogenous, nationalist popular movement. We find that on a close reading, it actually critique certain nuances which are part of the nationalist movement as well. It is not an entirely uncritical, celebratory approach like we would find in *Kanthapura*, yes.

But again, you know, we also need to be aware of the factor and not too many works which eulogise *Waiting for the Mahatma* just the way they eulogise say a work like *Kanthapura*. *Kanthapura* assumes an iconic status in terms of a proper nationalist novel, a proper Gandhian novel.

But *Waiting for the Mahatma* is always talked about as one of those novels where you also find nationalism being talked about, where Gandhi emerges as a character. But there is a certain refusal except for in certain kind of a discussion in Priyamvada Gopal's work. We do not find *Waiting for the Mahatma* occupying a central position among the other Gandhi novels of the post-independence period.

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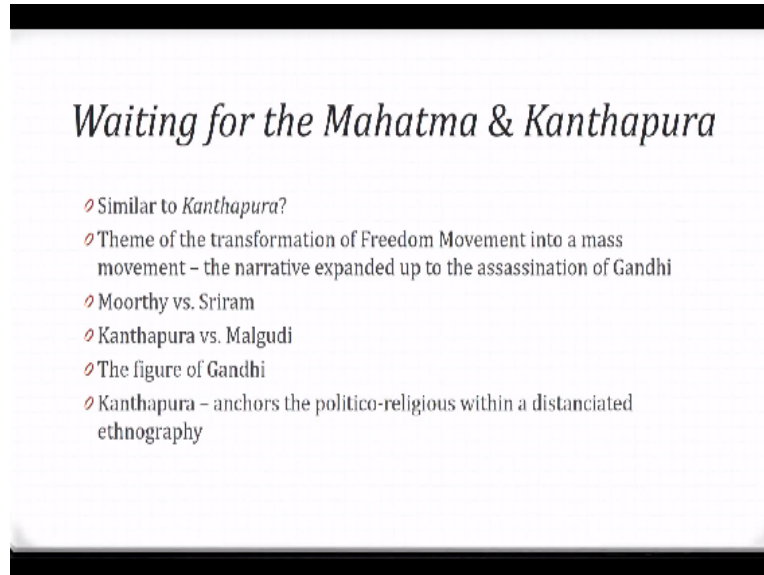
And Rumina Sethi also says this about the village being the perfect site, the quest where identity had to be encoded in age old principals, ostensibly present in village societies that were accepted monuments of the essence of India. Such a representation oddly appeared to be the only means of countering the legacy of colonialism without actually engaging with any real ideological battle with the colonialists, yes so.

Here, you know, it is also seen as an escapist sort of a narration without dealing with any set of real ideological tussles which are going on, which are part of the pre-independence and the post-independence period. This sort of a setting allows the narrator, allows the author to talk about various aspects of the nationalism without really engaging with the ideological tussle which is also a part of it.

Again, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, in fact, he does try to satirise some of the aspects of it, about

the identity, about, you know, who belongs to India, about the ways in which, you know, there is not always entirely a change of heart when one decides to follow Gandhi. So there are many ways in which *Waiting for the Mahatma* tries to challenge many of these dominant aspects related to nationalism.

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So if we try to compare *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *Kanthapura*, yes, so how would you respond to this claim by quite a number of critics who argue that this is similar to *Kanthapura*, that this is a sequel to *Kanthapura*? Can you begin the site at least, you know, couple of differences which would make *Waiting for the Mahatma* a very different kind of a novel from that of *Kanthapura*?

Some of the things you started identifying from the previous session onwards. **“Professor - student conversation starts”** This one is more character oriented, *Waiting for the Mahatma*. *Kanthapura* is more like a historic, regions, village, etc. The characters of this tone, just tones to go on with the plot in *Kanthapura*. Yes. But *Waiting for the Mahatma*, I think, character is the central forte.

Right. Not it too. Right, right, yes. Any other thing? It is not certain like, the central character in *Waiting for the Mahatma* is very general. What do you think that prompted at least some of the critics, you know, present *Waiting for the Mahatma* as a sequel? Presence of Gandhi. Could be

the presence Gandhi. Could be the nationalist movement at the background. Village setting, the village setting.

The village setting. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Also it could be that in Kanthapura, there is an entire village which is waiting to be initiated into the Gandhian mode of living, the Gandhian mode of protest, The Gandhian anti-colonial struggle, but here we find a village which is more or less equated with this entire scenario. It is not as if is just one character who is pursuing Gandhi.

In the beginning, we even get the sense that unlike Kanthapura, there are unset of volunteers, yes. Gandhi is arriving, the village is getting ready and we are looking at the novel, looking at the entire set of events through the eyes of narrator who is Sriram, yes. So maybe it is also seen as a sequel because there is a progress, you know, in the sense there is a, a progressive way in which the village is more accepting in its attitude to Gandhism and its attitude and its responses to the nationalist movement, yes.

So but in that process of locating Waiting for the Mahatma as a sequel to Kanthapura but they have also overlooked a number of things which make both of these novels a very distinct set of, both of these novels as very distinct set of narrators, yes and also what one tends to lose out when we see Waiting for the Mahatma as a sequel is the mild satire, humour is way of looking at the Gandhian ideology or nationalist movement, all of those things also we tend to miss out, yes.

In fact on the contrary, the way in which Waiting for the Mahatma deals with Gandhi has also been severely critiqued. Many have also been really appalled with how could Narayan who is such a gentle soul even write such a thing about Gandhi, you know, without acknow, because there is no way in which this novel explicitly acknowledges the divine character of Gandhi. It does not talk about Gandhi as an infallible.

Of course, you know, you get a sense of that but Sriram is may be sceptical about his attitude in accepting Gandhi uncritically and unapologetically, yes. **“Professor - student conversation starts”** Why do one say in humour that, what the purpose of each novel. Yes. I think one care is

more to mass consciousness of the national movement and the other is note of the individual leaders.

Also that is affecting the kind of the approach that the set of others lead towards the protagonist, the respond to national movement, nationalist movement. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Yes, in the same way in fact while Kanthapura talks about the entire village responding to the figure of Gandhi or the nationalist movement. Here though the entire village, entire village is there, we are more concerned about what Sriram goes through which is why, you know, a more human thing also comes out.

Because how an ordinary human being, an ordinary person who was living during that time who has no overt sympathies for either side, how would such a person, how would such a person had responded to Gandhi at that point of time. But may be a similar novel if it had come out in the 30s or 40s, it would have been seen as may be sacrilegious, yes. It may not really, it may also would be seen as, you know, a tool in the hands of the British.

He, Narayan also has this the advantage of hindsight, this is 1950s, yes. He is looking back at it and he is able to narrativise the historical period in a better way if we would like to put it that way, yes. And how would you see this contrast between the characters, Moorthy and Sriram? Do you think it is just because, you know, the novel was written in 1930s that Moorthy emerged as a character.

And had that novel also been written at a later point would Moorthy had transformed into a Sriram by then? One would not, just want you to think about, you know, the, the material aspects of publishing, the date of publishing, the time when the novel was getting written. Did it have any bearing on the kind of characters that it produced, yes and also Kanthapura versus Malgudi, yes? **“Professor - student conversation starts”**

That is what contributed. Yes, yes, yes, please, please, please Ranjana. As you are talking about, thinking about how it would have not been very right in terms of Moorthy to just taken liking to a girl or something like this, this is (()) (14:12) someone like Gandhi who is a very concerned

one. So this is a new emergent of that thing where he actually begins to induct himself to the nationalist movement because of a girl.

So it is very progressive. Sriram. Little? Progressive. Yes. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** and also this is not an, we find that, you know, where door closed reading of the novel which is not really been undertaken in a serious way because, you know, most of them, they try to locate this as a sequel of Kanthapura. We can actually see that this goes against the grain of many things that Gandhi and nationalist movement talk about and even when that seems to toe the line, there is always this scepticism or there is some way in which, you know, count abuse also being raised, yes.

In terms of the, it is not as if, you know, it is very radical in the sense that it talks about cast, it talks about gender, not much of a discussion of the alternate histories and the alternate voices which were prevalent then but nevertheless compared to the other set of Gandhi novels which are available to us, this is the only one which dares to even talk about these things in a mocking tone, in an almost satirical tone, yes.

And how would Kanthapura and Malgudi, both are fictional villages. **“Professor - student conversation starts”** Constructed especially for (()) (15:31) Malgudi has mostly behind it and after it which I think a scene may be the difference. In Waiting for the Mahatma, the nationalist movement is more as the, what the main focus. Sriram and his life before that and... Yes. He would continue run his life after that and he thinks stable, same in the village up to certain extent.

But in Kanthapura, they did not want to like, it builds up to the nationalism or it add to the fact of why it did happens. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Yes, it is almost as if it is, there is no unique story for Kanthapura unless it is associated with nationalism. I think we are, we are not being given that impression, yes. And the figure of Gandhi that we also discussed in the previous session how the figure of Gandhi is very symbolical in Kanthapura.

But in Waiting for the Mahatma, he emerges as a real character but again, he is not the major character. He is, he is the major character historically but the narrative allows Sriram to continue

as a central character from the beginning till the end, yes. And one of the critics have pointed out that Kanthapura anchors a political religious within a distance sheet of ethnography, these are the Waiting for the Mahatma, yes.

So maybe it is also because the, the setting in Kanthapura, the narrative in Kanthapura does not allow us to go into the inner lives or even, you know, other lives of the villages outside the setting of nationalist movement, yes, outside their engagement with Moorthy. Moorthy and Gandhi are such towering figures that every character is described in connection with how they respond to Gandhi or how they respond to the nationalist movement.

But in Waiting for the Mahatma, there are also characters who are completely ignorant of what Gandhi is doing, completely indifferent towards Gandhi's doing. We also get a sense that it is possible to live an ordinary, mundane, safe, happy life without really being conscious about all of these things in multiple ways do we can say that Kanthapura and Waiting for the Mahatma, they are not talking about the same kind of village settings, yes.

And also this is not the same Malgudi that Narayan had introduced to us in his other novels, yes which is why this again stands out, yes. This is a Malgudi, this is a Malgudi which he uses to acts as the nationalist movement satirically as well. There is a way in which the novel does not always look, the village does not always look inwardly but it also looks outside to critique and to comment on the overwriting influence of the nationalist movement.

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Waiting for the Mahatma

- ◊ More laconic about the Gandhian phenomenon compared to the seriousness in Kanthapura
- ◊ Gandhi's historical personage
- ◊ Narayan's trivialization of Gandhianism through comic irony - criticised by many - the bantering tone
- ◊ 'Not wholly a success'
- ◊ 'far more effective than the staged debate in Untouchable'

This is, you know, something that I also draw from Priyamvada Gopal's work. *Waiting for the Mahatma* is more laconic about the Gandhian phenomenon compared to the seriousness in *Kanthapura*. There is a deliberate attempt that *Waiting for the Mahatma* does to not assume a serious tone throughout. This could be seen in a number of instances from the beginning till the end where Sriram is always having these thoughts.

He is always, you know, even when he is engaging with very very serious thing. Even when he is listening to Gandhi's talk. There is another conversation which is going on on his head, yes. So in that way, you know, novelist deliberately trying not to be serious, yes and about Gandhi's historical personage and how that gets used in the novel in a very different way and Narayan's trivialization of Gandhianism through comic irony.

So what, what do you think is the purpose of that? He does trivialize certain things that Gandhi talks about and that of course as I mentioned earlier has been criticized by many. The bantering tone was not found very, many were not too appreciative about Narayan using such a tone, yes and may be for the same reason, it also had led to 2 different camps when it comes to be critical appreciation of this.

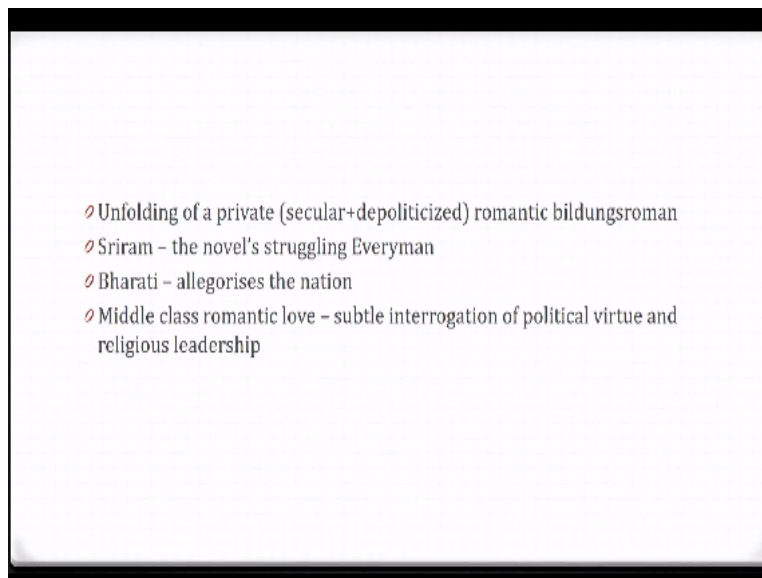
Novel one which argued that this was not wholly a success and the other set of people who argued that this is far more effective than the staged debate in *Untouchable* and *Kanthapura* and

Untouchable in that sense have also been seen as not so authentic, yes, in terms of, you know, there is a deliberate attempt to focus on certain aspects and it looked very staged, very artificial, the kind of, you know, the kind of naturality which was, which we confined in Waiting for the Mahatma, many also feel is missing in the other works.

May be when we take a look at Untouchable, there was a Gandhi's central figure in a very different way, yes because if you look at Kanthapura, the narrator is, the central character is Moorthy and the narrator is a woman. In Waiting for the Mahatma, the story is about Sriram. We get to know about everything through Sriram's eyes. When it comes to Untouchable, the central character and the narrator, both are the same.

It is an, it is an untouchable figure Bakha, yes. So in all of these novels, Gandhi is there as a figure either entering the novel directly or entering the novel through the lens of the narrators and the central protagonist, yes. So in, if you date a comparison, again, you know, we may come to, we may begin to feel that Waiting for the Mahatma has a more human approach, a more realistic approach there is a more critical way of engaging with Gandhi as a real person than any kind of, you know, symbolic presentation or a mythical, divine quality being attributed to Gandhi.

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So here we also find a romantic angle being included into the novel which also makes it a very different novel from the other Mahatma novels, other Gandhi novels. There is an unfolding of a

private which is a secular a depoliticized world and this is combined with the romantic bildungsroman, yes. And Sriram in that sense is the novel's struggling everyman. It could be any ordinary person like Sriram who has been living rather uneventful life even in the wake of, you know, this period of high nationalism.

And Bharati allegorises the nation as the novel explicitly tells us as well and it also talks about the middle-class romantic love and here we find a subtle interrogation of political virtue and religious leadership. No uncritical acceptances are these values over here. And time and again, many have stressed upon the novel's value in such a way that, you know, it talks about Gandhi's impact on ordinary people and this is again something which began to be examined in say historiography in general only from the say 70s and 80s onwards.

Until that time, Gandhi was seen as the major leader. There were other, other figures who also had assumed leadership position regionally, nationally. So the nationalist discussion was mostly centered around those set of people. From the 70s then 80s onwards with the advent of subaltern studies, with this need to critic nationalist historiography, we begin to see a number of writings coming up questioning Gandhi's impact on ordinary people.

So in that sense, may be the novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* was not accepted wholly, was not considered like, not wholly, not considered as wholly a success in the 1950s because it was little too early to talk about Gandhi in such a way, yes. It was a little too early to, to view Gandhian impact with a, with a suspicion, yes. Because the novel in fact resonates more with many of the retellings of the nationalist's historiography from the 70s and 80s onwards.

In that sense, it also stands out as a very different sort of a, it neither, we can neither fit it into the 30s-40s setting and 50s-60s when many other novelists are talking about, you know, the domestic struggle, the internal struggle, the tradition modernity dilemma. Here is someone who is challenging the nationalist framework altogether, the nationalist historiography altogether. May be this sort of inability to fit in the novel to any of those frameworks must have led to, you know, this critical neglect which we could, you know, see in terms of the novel.

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- ◊ The possibility that Gandhism might have an oppressive side - authoritarianism
- ◊ Sriram's didactic patriotism - humorously undercut
- ◊ Who is an Indian?
- ◊ Jocular scepticism

Priyamvada Gopal makes this argument that there is a possibility that Gandhism might have an oppressive side and this has been engaged by the novel. Can you think of any instance? Do you find Gandhi being an authoritarian at any point? Does Sriram feel that at any point that he is doing thing just because Gandhi is saying. He is not even sure whether he should be doing that or not.

Can you think of a couple of instances for that? **“Professor - student conversation starts”**
 There is one instance when Bharati sends a letter to Gandhi to seek his permission for the marriage. Yes. And Gandhi says no, not yet. So I think this, this instance when Sriram had to do something because of Gandhi's, become (()) (24:50). Is it Gandhi who is the connecting thread from the beginning to the end of the novel or is it Bharati?

Bharati. It is hard to say. It is hard to say. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Towards the end when the permission for the marriage is like again sought in a moment of desperation, we even find him saying, yes, this is an, this book, it is page 252, yes. Mahatma Ji looked from one to the other to join. Do you like each other so much. Sriram burst out. I have waited for 5 years thinking of nothing else, yes.

And after he comes out of his, comes out of the jail, after the moment of independence has been achieved, this is the only thing which continues to, you know, hold his passion very strongly. So

is it Bharati or is it the Gandhi, yes? Did he just way into this entire movement. In between again, you know, we find a different streak of his personality coming out during his encounter with Jagadish, yes.

He is glad that, you know, he has met somebody who is not gentile because he was, he was also little claustrophobic throughout. He always had this internal dialogues in his mind. Every moment, you know, he comes across those swayamsevaks or the ones who are, you know, the volunteers of Gandhi when Gandhi is speaking. He knows it he is compelled to listened to all of these things but that sort of a passion was not there at all.

Do you think he is more perhaps, you know, though he also is disillusioned with whatever happens with after his encounter with Jagadish but do you think he resonates more with Subhash Chander Bose than with Gandhi? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** He is a boyish, a very boyish sight where glamour and... lot of things, boys do in the Indian storybooks and (()) (26:43) possibly one picks something. Yes. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”**

Extending that argument, would it be fare to say that Kanthapura's Moorthy is a more natural character, sorted, yes and this is an immature character who is just dallying with different phases of a nationalist movement, not really convinced about anything, yes. Just a phase in his life. He is like, the novel begins in the early 20s and this is over before he crosses the certain period of his life.

It is like just the early 20s still, yes. Do you think it, it is also talking about a certain kind of dalliance with nationalist movement. Is Narayan also trying to tell us that may be a number of them had only that sort of a dalliance with the nationalist movement which is why post-independence we do not see a resonation of many of those things happening. This is 1950s. 1960s we see the peak of disillusionment with the nationalist post-nationalist phase entirely and from 70s and 80s.

We know, we do not get the same sort of a celebratory rhetoric, forget about Gandhi, not even about the nation. The entire narrative not just fictionally, historically and politically, we do find a

very different sort of a rhetoric emerging, yes. So it at some level it is a deliberate thing with Narayan thus by giving us a very immature character, who is very unsure of himself, yes, who is, you know, who is ready to take, seemingly ready to take all kinds of risks, yes.

And, but not really fully prepared for that, yes, who is, who is clueless about his own life, yes and Bharati on the other hand, we do not get much insights about her character but Bharati on the other hand is like, you know, is like a girl who is best suited for say Moorthy, yes, quite sorted, yes. She knows what she wants. She says that he knows how to say the right things at the right time.

On the other hand, Sriram thinks he has this me to get, train himself to talking that kind of a language, we will also take a look at, you know, some of those instances and about his didactic patriotism, patriotism needs to be, he learns patriotism and he also thinks it should be taught to anyone whom he meets. He feels miserably in that. There he gets lost in his own arguments, yes and he does not know how to go about it.

Again, you know, after the Gandhi phase when he meets Jagadish, the same sort of a thing. He wants to first get tutored in those, once you get the grammar right of, you know, how to talk to certain kind of people, what would please them. A very immature character but also gives the novelist, you know, a lot of room to explore, to satirise, allow him to be sceptical and this question about who is an Indian and who is the one who needs to be liberated from what, yes?

That is being asked many times in the novel though not very directly and even Sriram. Sriram was not under any bondage, yes and the novel begins, he begins, it begins on a very happy note, yes. He is an orphan but it is not as if, you know, he does not have anybody in life. He is happy with his own life. He has not really faced any sort of difficulty in his life and even during the course of the novel, he is fortunate to have, been part of, you know, a privileged position, yes.

And there is a way in which he needs to consciously tell himself and others that we have to be part of the struggle but even towards the end of the novel, one is not too sure whether he is really convinced about it. You remember that brief episode in between about, does this character who is

quite adamant about the fact that look I do not want the British to go. Does the British leave, what we will do now.

Now is not the time. We are not yet ready to rule ourselves, yes. So all of those debates are also being built into this through the immaturity and naivety of this character. You go through some of the, very quickly go through some of the episodes of novel and from the beginning in fact and right at the outset, we get to know about Sriram celebrating his 20th birthday, yes that is in this book.

It is on page 9, so we also get to know that he is a very young boy, early 20s, yes and page 24, Sriram suddenly woke from an age old somnolence. So the fact that Malgudi was about to have the owner of receiving Mahatma Gandhi, yes. So the narration that he gives, it also, you know, it is all of these things that, all the things that he received from here say, is being retold to the or to the audience as well, yes.

And he is also ready to wait for Mahatma and there, you know, on page 25, waiting for the Mahatma makes one very thirsty, yes. So he is trying to think about very profound things but he can only, you know, present them in a profound way but the thought remains very base yet throughout, yes. This we see from the beginning till the end of the novel. He is, so we, it also like brings us to the question whether he really underwent the change of heart or not?

Come to page 32 where Gandhi is giving this spectacular speech, he talks about, you know, it is not enough for you to clap your hands and show your appreciation. He talks about love in-between. He says towards the end, be sure to have in your heart love and not bitterness and Sriram, yes, definitely it is not bitterness. I love her. But Mahatma Ji is saying, if I have the slightest suspicion that your heart is not pure that there is bitterness there, I would rather have the British stay on.

It is lesser of 2 evils. And Sriram on a different trip all together, oh revered Mahatma Ji, have no doubt that my heart is pure and without bitterness. How can I have any bitterness in my heart for a creature who looks so divine? Yes. So throughout this thing, Gandhi is talking about one thing

and all he can think about is Bharati. At a later point when Jagadish begins to talk, the first thing why does he befriends Jagadish in the first place because Jagadish also was a friend of Bharati.

And there is a sense of competition, a sense of rivalry in his mind, yes. Did she ever considered marrying Jagadish, yes. So it is, it is from the beginning till the end, we do not find him really getting out of those very immature mundane concerns that he has about himself and about life in general and the, yes? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** One more twist, do you think that was afterwards whether nationalism can be cultivated or whether it is just an Indian thing because think as an artificial attempt to come, some places to appear... Yes.

There he knows he has that inbuilt quality of... What do you think? What do you think about that? I think it has a lot to do with the bringing of that person. That is very profound again, yes. Could you just elaborate, can you just what... it is the upbringing. Think the way you are, the way you are born and brought up in a particular family and your exposure to certain things, then it reminds if you are a guy, a person who thinks of nation or not in a particular way.

Okay. So you mean to say that one is, one needs to be taught to be patriotic from the younger days onwards like. Yes. It has been taught. Yes. Yes. Patriotism. What do you think? Have we been taught patriotism or not? Surprisingly... More or less yes like what is dirt and... **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Think about your school days, what was the one thing that you sang everyday like what, about 10 years of your life.

And that too not correctly. Yes, what was the one pledge? Is there any other pledge that you have repeated and you will ever, you are not going to repeat any other pledge ever. What was the only thing that you repeated like, you know, and even today, the moment, you know, see certain things or being sung, yes, you suddenly feel this, you know, that the momentary surge of patriotism, yes and then yes, it just dies off, yes.

I mean you see the flag, yes, you in the sense I am not talking about like you, generally, yes. So at some level, I think Narayan is also a little too early a critique in that. The way in which this been cultivated, this, this, in this section, this is page 73 by my book where he talks about, you

know, he is thinking to himself about luxuries, yes because Bharati tells Sriram you just better get used to, you know, these sort of things.

You will not have any comforts. We are trained to live like this and he is thinking. There was a class of society where luxuries gave one a status and now here was the opposite. The more one asserted one cared for no luxury, the more one showed an inclination for hardship and discomfort, the greater was one's chance of being admitted into the fold, yes. As if, you know, he is telling himself I should learn the tricks of the trait, yes.

How to get into this cult, yes. Sriram had understood it, the moment he stepped into the camp. Here the currency was suffering and self-mortification. Everyone seemed to excel his neighbour in managing in uncomfortable situations, and Sriram caught the spirit, though it took him some time to grasp the, the detail and get accustomed to it, yes. He is telling us the novel, through the novel, Sriram from the beginning till the end is, you know, he is trying to tutor himself, yes.

And also he is very acutely conscious of displaying the right kind of behaviour, the right kind of patriotic behaviour, yes. So did you think it is a case even today? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** There is another question of the right figures. Why is it being right, yes? What is not in. Yes. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** The same dichotomy can be seen over here.

The Gandhian kind of nationalism is the right nationalism, yes. But the moment you talk about, what was Subhash Chander Bose talking about? He did not say succumbed to the British. He also said the same thing. He also said, yes, please kick them out, let us rule ourselves, yes. But that is seen as a bad nationalism. He is not he is cared to listen to the radio, he cannot talk about that but on the contrary, Gandhism is something that he can really flaunt, yes.

But the other association was not something that, he also knows that that he likes it but he knows it he cannot be, he cannot flaunt it in anyway, yes. So, yes, of course, you know, these are also like certain criticisms which are historically undertaken at a later period, later point of time, yes and at that time again the novel feels to get an in sort of a recognition, yes. Because it was a

predated, yes.

It came out in 1950s and we do not find people going back to it in the 1980s but this question in fact it is certainly interesting about whether patriotism can be taught or, you know, is it like one needs to be born with it or are there certain privileges associated with it that you should be able to afford to be able to own it, yes. These are again certain questions which, particularly the post-80s novels would again ask and this page 109, Sriram said, you are no doubt making a lot of money, but it is worth nothing unless you develop some spirit of, he fumbled for words.

He wanted to say, National Service or Patriotism but he was tired of these expressions, they smacked of platform speeches, yes. That is what he thinks about these terms, about patriotism and about National Service but he also knows this is the right thing and then he says, you know, if you have a photo of Mahatma Gandhi, pray that he may inspire you with the reasonable thinking, that is all I can say, yes.

Then he got up abruptly to leave, yes and after that, you know, he is writing Quit India and there is this man who comes and asks what is the use of writing Quit India in all these places? Do you want us to quit, yes? So he is actually trying to be part of the nationalist movement. He is also making lot of blunders along the line he feels but he does not mean that. Then write it where it can be seen by those for whom it is meant.

They are everywhere, sometimes seen and sometimes unseen. It is better to have it written everywhere. Waste of time and paint, said the man. I am merely carrying out an order and I cannot afford to stop and listen to too much wisdom, yes. So this, this sort of a quarrel is there throughout in his mind and whenever somebody asks a question, he gets very defensive, yes. It is not as if, you know, because he gets defensive, he is also answering himself perhaps, yes.

The same sort of a doubt somebody else is asked, maybe he also has the same sort of things. Why do we, why do we have to write Quit India everywhere. If you think about it, you know, like we just write Quit India everywhere, it is not as you will get oh, Quit India, okay, let us quit, yes. Does not work that way, yes and also about the some of the absurdities which are associated

with these ritualistic depiction of patriots.

And the other instance is, will you marry me after we are out of all this? Will you promise if Bapu Ji promise, yes. This is like half way through the novel, yes and these are some of the very honest, true things that Sriram seems to say, yes without, you know, thinking twice about this. This is the right way to talk, yes and yes I promise, she said and hurried off before he could talk to her or follow her, yes.

And he stood where he was and saw her raising her hands to her eyes once or twice in order to wipe off the tears gathering there, yes. We also get this feeling that even Bharati is not really allowed to be herself, yes. There is this, I know, overarching presence of Gandhi more than the presence of Gandhi. I think the struggle is internally as well, yes. Would I be betraying myself if I am truer to my own cause then to the nations cause then to the cause of nationalism, yes.

And from part 3 of the novel, that is a different journey altogether but Jagadish entering the scene and this, these repeated broadcasts from Tokyo, Subhash Chander Bose talking and this is after he gets imprisoned. There is a place when he encounters another person who is very indifferent towards this entire movement. Sriram wanted to speak to them about politics. This page 197 in my book. Sriram wanted to speak to them about politics, Mahatma Ji and non-violence, and the British rule.

He began to speak but he was cut short by the man saying, who cares who rules? We do not belong to that world. I have seen all those Gandhi followers in prison and they think they are honoured guests. If you had been careful, you could have enjoyed that too. They would have put you in a bungalow with a cook and pocket-money and they would have given you books to read and sherbet to drink, yes.

So because he is not a Gandhian prisoner. Sriram is not a Gandhian prisoner when he reaches the prison. So here we are also shown this difference between the nationalist prisoners and the other prisoners who were also arguably fighting the British, yes. And look at the sarcasm and the indifference which is being shown over here which is like true as well. The political prisoners

were treated differently.

When they came out of the jail after the, after independence, they continued to be treated in a different way, yes but it took a while perhaps, you know, again, you know, this sort of thing can be written only in the 50s or later on, yes. Because that was the generation which began to see and some cases even the true colours of those, yes, who were fighting for the nationalist cause, yes.

And Sriram's blood boiled at his words. How dare you speak like that but, you know, he, he wants to get up and hit that man and all but he also knows in his heart that that is a truth of the matter. And about Independence day, we ought to rejoice that it is our own people that are blundering, is not that so? Sriram asked, some of his irresponsible spirit returning. Fancy Nehru and Patel and the rest sitting there where there were haughty Viceroys before.

Did not Churchill call Mahatma Ji, The Naked Fakir? The Naked Fakir is everything now, think of it. He was excited. There are bound to be mistakes, bound to be blunders everywhere but we must not make much of them. He was wildly incoherent and happy. If you had been out of jail, you would have been garlanded and carried in a procession on Independence Day. What a pity you missed it.

It was a grand affair, yes. So it is also about, you know, not just about Sriram, maybe a number of such people, yes, who were waiting for that day and when that day came, yes, they just hearing reports from other or maybe it is not even such a major event when Independence actually happens and in the 70s and 80s, we have also seen various other accounts about how disillusion, the entire nation was with that event happening.

Because it was not just a particular Independence, it was also about set of new struggles which began after the nation was born and about 227, after all as you said we are an infant nation. The word was very convincing, it had a homely and agreeable sound, nobody need worry what it meant or why it was mentioned. He is trying to be very joyful at the occasion but he is not bring, not able to bring himself to this mood of celebration.

There is even some regret in his, in his approach, yes. So it is a very different, very ambivalent situation in the post-independence period and now I am coming to the end of the novel when he is travelling in train, yes. He is out of jail, he is travelling in train. You remember that scene where you know Sriram understood that the intruders were men looking for Muslims in the compartment.

If Muslims were found, they would be thrown out of the moving train and echo of the fighting going on in other parts of the country. Sriram lapsed into silence for the rest of the journey. It was a most uncomfortable journey, yes. So we are also being told very indirectly about the communal riots which have set in, about how you know he escapes narrowly because he is a Hindu and not a Muslim.

The novel does not well much into it but it is very telling state when over here. Sriram felt more uncomfortable here than he had felt in the prison, yes. So we do not find him joyful except towards the end when he is finally united with Bharati and this is towards the end, yes but you know Mahatma Ji talking about, she would be a very unbecoming bride who spoke her mind aloud. God bless you.

When is the happy occasion, yes and all of this and towards the end, what happens towards the end of the novel? What is the final scene? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** That is when Gandhi was shot dead. Right **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** So in the same, I mean in the same like chapter where he is united with Bharati, Gandhi is shot dead by, there is this.

I will just read out the last bit. The man tried to step forward again. Mahatma Ji's granddaughter said, take your seat and tried to push him into the line. The man nearly knocked the girl down and took a revolver out of his pocket. As the Mahatma was about to step on the dais, the man took aim and fired. Two more shots rang out. The Mahatma fell on the dais. He was dead in a few seconds, yes.

So we have absolutely no way of knowing what Sriram felt after this, yes. There is his comment to be like, you know, his internal thoughts end like much before that because the last thing that they tell each other like Bharati and Sriram, they decide to attend the prayer. There is place for 2 of us. They stepped aside, yes. So it ends on a very ambiguous note as well. We have no way of knowing what happened to Sriram after this or, you know.

Do you think he was just left disillusioned man? Did he move further away from this cause after this or does he like, you know, take charge and assume leadership, it is very unlikely. There is no way of knowing either. Why do you think the novel ends like this? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** Because it is, I think, is a way of telling how convincing the, like we were talking about nationalism and all.

Like we were thinking about like in this inherent like, cause like or not cause like, teaching how, how you think nationalism like. In the end, it seems like it is kind of telling like how convincing it can be. Even if it is Gandhi or someone like, so you have in one way you have the inherent want like feel I will say and some other one, how can you convince. How effective it can be? So it is kind of intriguing like, like can it be or can it not. Right **“Professor - student conversation ends.”**

Also at the risk of sounding very blasphemous, does Sriram even think could be this, what if the man continues to dictate, yes? He just get united with Bharati. One does not know. So, yes, what do you think about the novel? Readable novel, right, yes? Please read it before your exams. We will have questions on Kanthapura and from this, yes. Okay, so see you on Monday. Nice for coming.