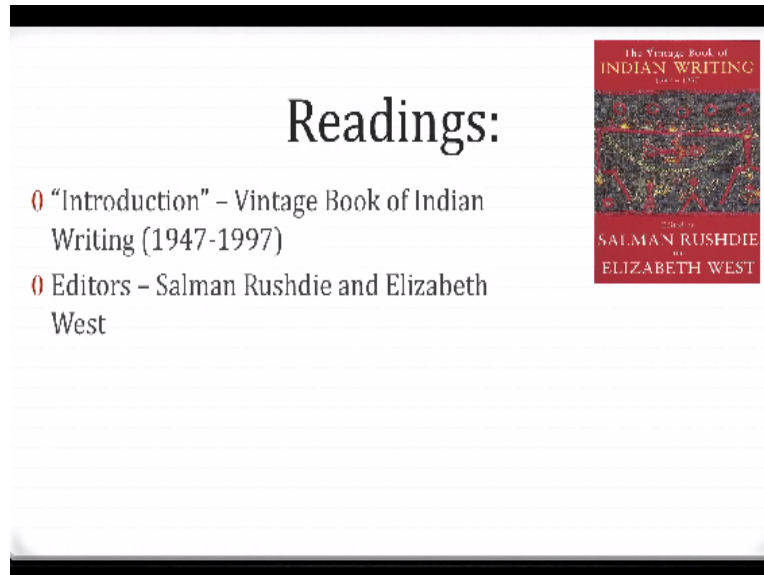


Indian Fiction in English
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Lecture – 02
Rushdie and Indian Writing

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So can I first hear from you? Some of your first thoughts after having read Rushdie's Introduction, which book is this Introduction of (()) (00:22). **“Professor - student conversation starts”** From the Vintage Book of Indian Writing. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Yes, yes. It is an anthology that he edited along with Elizabeth West. Elizabeth West is an American writer and scholar.

She was also at the time of this, you know, when they were editing this together, she was also his partner. So this came out in 1997. This introduction was also published separately as, as an article in The Journal New Yorker. It was in 1997. It had a different title, Damn, this is the Oriental Scene for You. So, but it really became a controversial issue only after this was part of the introduction to this anthology and what was the title of the anthology?

Vintage Book of Indian Writing, not Indian Writing in English. Vintage Book of Indian Writing which is why, you know, many were also of the opinion if they had titled it a Vintage Book of

Post-Colonial Indian Writing in English, yes, maybe there was no issue at all. Whatever he was saying would then fit in perfectly well with the selection that he had, his arguments will also begin to make sense.

But the moment he begins to call it Indian Literature, there is a problem with the arguments that he is trying to make, yes. So do you want to quickly summarize the, this article for me, this Introduction for me? What is the controversy over here? What is he saying? You can just read out the passage. What is the outrageous remark that he makes about Indian Writers working in English and page number 10, yes, second paragraph?

Are you all there? This is it the pros writing both fiction and non-fiction created in this period. This period is the 50 years of independence. In this period, by Indian writers working in English is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 official languages of India, the so called vernacular languages during the same time and indeed this new and still burgeoning Indo-Anglian literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books, yes.

So among the many many other things that he says, this is what was seen as, as very problematic, the dichotomy that he creates over here between Indian writers writing, working in English and the ones who had been writing in 16 official languages as he puts it, you know, the other vernacular languages and then he goes on to say that the, if you compare, if you make a comparison, whatever has been produced by the Indian writers in English, it holds more value than the sum total of what has been produced by the vernacular, the vernacular writers.

Does this remind you of somebody else? This rhetoric? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** McCauley. McCauley. What did he say? India is somehow Oriental in the (()) (03:17) **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Yes. So he was also, Rushdie was also severely criticised for being very orientalist in his reading of, in his analysis, in his devaluation of the vernacular writers.

In this cause since, you know, we are looking at Indian English fiction, why do we have to begin

with this introduction by Rushdie? Why did not because, is Rushdie a critic? No, not a renowned critic, not a renowned theorist. He is only a novelist, yes. A lead, leading novelist for sure but why do we begin with this? Because, you know, here in this article, he is writing this in the capacity of an editor.

He, of course in between, he makes a few remarks about his own writings, justification for including his own writing, yes but nevertheless, you know, he is doing this, this writer is in the capacity of an editor and this was also a major theoretical and critical intervention in the field of Indian Writing in English, not just an Indian, a fiction in English, in the field of Indian Writing in English.

This also came in at a very critical point, the late 1990s, yes. It was also a time, that decade, the 90s was, the 80s and the 90s in fact were the decades when Indian writing in English made a comeback as they say because, you know, after the 1930s, it was generally assumed that by the late 60s and 70s, there were many who wrote about the death of Indian Writing in English because they thought, you know, there was a brief period of fruition.

And now it is not fair to expect anything more, yes because whatever little bit that they had to write in English, it is over and done with now. We cannot make a mark in say again, you know, make our presence felt, Indian writers in English, it was seen by the critics that they cannot make their presence felt again in the world literary map and then Rushdie happens but no, it should not happen, yes.

There is a revival in Indian Writing in English and you know about, you know, the number of bookers that Indian writers in English, especially Rushdie had been winning, yes. He won the booker once, then he won the booker of all bookers, yes and also off late, you know, recently when they did the survey about the greatest work that has been ever been produced in terms of, you know, if you take a survey of all the booker prize winners, again it was Rushdie, yes.

So when Rushdie says this, it does have an impact, yes. And also when we talk about post-coloniality in the subcontinent and also in a general sense, a number of theorists have used

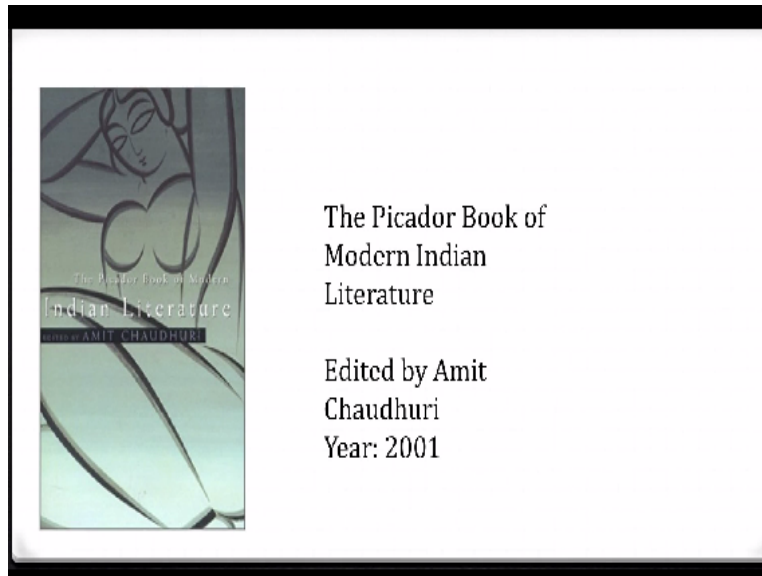
Rushdie as an entry point to talk about post-coloniality. So we cannot dismiss whatever he is saying regardless of the kind of controversial comments that he had been making, regardless of how he totally runs out of favour with some of his old colleagues and also with, you know, his regional counterparts, it is impossible to disregard what he is saying.

Because this is seen as a critical intervention because he is one of the major literary landmarks which is also important in defining Indian writing in English, yes. And the other thing is that, he is making this distinction, very official over here. The distinction between Indian writers in English and the regional writers who are working in, you know, 16 official languages as he puts it or it could be, the number could be more than that as well, yes.

So this dichotomy which is always already been there, the distinction between writers in English and the writers in other languages, Rushdie makes it more official over there and he also, he being a writer, it carries more, it carries a different import altogether, yes. He is certainly being very very unkind to the regional writers. He is being very biased in many of his opinions but nevertheless, you know, this is an important.

This is an important moment because after this we also see a number of other writers taking sides, yes. So it is not as Rushdie alone is responsible for holding this, for maintaining this sort of an attitude, yes. Because if you look at the number of other writers, the number of other critics who came after him in support of him, against him, they also begin to see, maybe they were already 2 of these scams existing, yes. It just took Rushdie to, you know, stir the hornets' nest and get this controversy going, yes.

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And also if you, there were also a couple of other anthologies which came out. Amit Chaudhuri, he came up with this Picador Anthology of Indian Literature and there he thought in not so many words, he said I am going to kind of respond to Rushdie's anthology and set it alright, yes. What were biases which were part of Rushdie's anthology will be taken care of over here, yes. So there were a lot of critics and writers again, you know, making a comparison between Rushdie's and Chaudhuri's anthology.

So in multiple ways, this is a landmark moment. So this is important for us to begin say in 1997 when Rushdie's work was published, this anthology was published and then turn back and chase the chronology and the history and the ways in which Indian Writing in English particularly fiction had been narrativised in history in criticism and also in the, as part of popular culture. And, and Rushdie in addition, he also carries an additional say, let us say, you know, position.

He is the, whether we like him or not, whether we, whether we include him as a proper legitimate Indian writer or not, he is the best known figure of Indian post-colonial writing in English, yes. He is almost like, you know, the, the iconic figure that is also, he also talks about how, you know, people speak about this, Rushdie-it is, yes which they developed after he started writing. A number of writers have also acknowledged that.

It is only because of Rushdie. Arundhati Roy in one of her interviews she says, it is only because

of Rushdie that we have been able to tell our own stories. There is a way in which Rushdie made it possible for the Indian writers in English to tell their stories in connection with the nation that too very legitimately, without feeling the burden of the colonial rule with the, colonial rule without feeling say weighed down by these dichotomies between the, the colonial connection that English had.

These are the legitimate, native, rootedness, the regional languages had, he made it possible for them to in a certain way, you know, naturalise and Indianise English because Rushdie's English, you know, it is not as if, you know, he is, he is, he is not really endorsing the king's or the queen's English, yes. He has his own kind of English, a hybridity as they talk about, yes. He has his own kind of English that he experiments with, he uses a number of Indian words.

And we also know that, you know, you know if you are familiar with Arundhati Roy's writing. She does precisely that and she takes it to another level altogether. So a number of writers have been extremely encouraged to write in particular ways without feeling the colonial burden and Rushdie's English has also been seen as a chutnified language, yes. Because he does not, it is a, it is a very post-colonial Indian writing that he does.

It is in fact, you know, again coming back to the crux of this essay for the same reason, many have been very disillusioned that this, the very person who has written against authority, against authenticity, yes, who has used hybridity, irony and mimicry in multiple ways, has in fact used the language of authenticity when he is writing this essay, yes. The languages of authenticity to say that see, look at this, there is set of Indian Writing in English is more legitimate, yes.

This is, this has made a mark compared to the, compared to the other writers, other writings available in regional languages, yes. So this, so this essay in that sense, it brings together these divergent elements. Rushdie as a writer challenging the colonial authority, challenging the legitimacy which was originally only part of the say the colonial modernity and on the other hand, Rushdie as an editor of this anthology talking about a different kind of authenticity which should be in place in order to privilege Indian Writing in English over say other regional writings and other regional writers, yes.

So and here the, there is a way in which he situates when he tries to privilege Indian writing in English over vernacular languages. He uses, you know, different tropes he talks about. What is his vice that he talks about, the vernacular writers? He just, you know, something is a greatest vice of the... **“Professor - student conversation starts”** The parochial. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”**

Parochialism, yes. He identifies parochialism as the greatest vice the writers writing in vernacular languages. What is parochialism? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** Narrow-mindedness. Yes. What could be the opposite if you say, you know, this writer is parochial. If the regional writers are parochial, then Indian writers in English would be what? Cosmopolitan. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”**

Cosmopolitan, broadminded, modern. Parochialism, think of the multiple words that could be associated with parochial, yes. Narrow-mindedness, yes. Traditional, yes. In fact, you know, he has even gone to the extent of talking at length about what he meant by parochial and he even equated the writings of other, other, writings by other vernacular writers to Tractor Art. It is a term he also, you know, borrows from Soviet.

The, this term Tractor Art was used to refer to particular kinds of art forms and writings available in Soviet Union at one point of time, yes. So he uses the term Tractor Art, Tractor Art and then he is also very unapologetic about using this term, parochial, to talk about the Indian writers in other languages, yes. So according to him, the writers were writing in regional languages, they are very traditional, very narrow-minded.

They cannot rise up to such a level, yes, that they can talk about cosmopolitan, broader things. On the other hand, he is also inherently implying that look at us, yes, Indian writers in English, yes, we are like the window to the world. We are more open. People can relate with us in a better way, yes. So he is very consciously building this barrier between Indian Writing in English and other vernacular writers, yes, despite the shared ancestry that we can trace back to during the colonial modernity period, yes.

And then he talks about, there is another thing that he brings in about the difference between translation and original, yes. English writing, it is we write in the original, it is circulated in the original but the Indian writings in other languages have to be translated and as Rushdie would put it, if the translation is bad, yes, then you have, there is no way in which, you know, you can, you can make it to the global audience, yes and translation also has got other inherent problems.

So here in fact we find Rushdie also moving away from that post-colonial position of, you know, embracing other kinds of local, regional, post-colonialities, yes. He becomes, you know, automatically in to this single stroke of writing this article, writing this introduction. He becomes the spokesperson of a cosmopolitan post-coloniality, though you know, in his work, it has been, multiple times it has been analysed it.

He is also the spokesperson of the local, the local and regional, multiple post-colonialities and he is also completely dismissive of the kind of work that is coming out from say the regional writers. He is not even, and if you notice, he does not even spend enough time to dismiss them logically or in a systematic way, yes. With a single stroke, he is extremely dismissive. He is not even willing to discuss them at length because there is nothing over there, yes.

So this sort of an approach is also in a way alarming because if Rushdie can be seen as a leading figure of Indian Writers in English, if Rushdie is seen as the face, if you want, you know, cull out just one figure out of all the Indian, Indian post-colonial writers, yes, maybe the safest face would be Rushdie's. If he is this poster face of Indian post-colonial writing in English and if this is the kind of view that is being endorsed by Rushdie who ceases to be an individual.

He is the representative, yes, of a kind of writing, he becomes a representative and a spokesperson of a particular kind of approach towards writing, then this is certainly an alarming thing, yes. And also the, some of the debates that followed, we shall be visiting those when we talk about, particularly about the post-colonial writings after Rushdie and moving on the other interesting things that, though he talks about a number of writers whom he anthologizes in this literature, though he is also a part of the same set of writers, the same tradition.

He does not really acknowledge his, say, his intellectual tradition, nor he does not acknowledge his intellectual ancestry in any way. It is very interesting. In fact, you know, the only, who is the only person he says from whom he has learned a trick or 2? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** G. V. Desani. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** G. V. Desani and G. V. Desani, have you heard of his name before?

G. V. Desani in fact, he is seen as the perhaps the, a writer who became post-modern, yes, even before post-modernism arrived. He wrote in the 1940s. His work is called All About H. Hatterr, yes. All about H. Hatterr, H A T T E R R, yes and this work was resurrected only after Rushdie wrote this introduction. So this also reminds us about that canonising power that Rushdie's anthology and his introduction has.

Because after Rushdie's anthology, this work which he also mentions, it was out of print for a long time, yes. Even now it is difficult to get hold of G. V. Desani's book but after 1997, after Rushdie acknowledges his debt towards G. V. Desani and also how he locates, you know, Tristram Shandy. Have you heard of Tristram Shandy, right? Yes, he is also seen as very post-modern, yes.

Though it is an 18 century text, yes. So after this, you find a number of articles talking about G. V. Desani. You find a, a, at least a few university syllabi, in curricula, trying to include G. V. Desani, a lot of critical attention, books being churned out about how, how you can find, you know, similarities across Desani and Rushdie. So this is a canonising power that Rushdie's anthology also has had.

So it is difficult not to look at it whether we agree with his points or not. Interestingly, Mehrotra also. May be we will come back to discuss Mehrotra in detail in the next, next class but Mehrotra also talks about how Desani becomes important because Rushdie says, Allan Sealy's Trotter-Nama would have been impossible. It would not have happened if G. V. Desani had not written before that, yes.

So this sort of connections that Rushdie makes, whether we like the logic behind it or not, it gets accepted, yes. And which again, you know, it is not something that we can really complain about and quarrel with because this is a way canons are getting created, this is the way particular kinds of, modes of legitimacy, it is at work, so on and so forth, yes. And he also here even if we talk about the inclusion and exclusion policy that Rushdie and rest adopt as, as an editor.

Do they give us any, any, any sense of, you know, how they used the criteria, yes? They only talk about, you know, all, all kinds of anthologies, may have different kinds of things that they use and we also have used our own thing. We have used our extensive knowledge, our reading based on that, other than that we do not get a sense of the aesthetic criteria or the theoretical criteria or the critical criteria that they are using as a policy for inclusion or exclusion.

And this lack of criteria, we need not in fact find problem with it but it becomes a problem only when he begins to also assume the, also assume the status of an evaluator, a judge. This is better than that, yes. Because he does not talk about criteria in the first place and his aesthetic preferences, what are the bases of that also we do not get to know about, yes. And also, and this also would not have been a problem if under Indian literature, he had perhaps included a number of other languages, yes.

If you look at his selection, yes, have you, could you take a look at the kind of text that he, he has included in his work? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** Yes. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** It is mostly written originally in English and other than that, he has only included a couple a texts which includes Toba Tek Singh, yes. So other than that, he does not really engage, it looks as if he is not even engaged with the other forms of writing available in languages other than English, yes.

And there is a mistrust that the, the reader would have with his anthology right from the beginning because we do not know what the aesthetic criteria is and we do not know on the basis of what critical attitude he is making these comments? He is making these judgements? We are totally at a loss. But on the other hand, he also successfully manages to sort of, you know, insert a wedge between Indian writers working in English and the others, the others.

He does not even, may be occasionally he names a few who could have been great writers but again due to various reasons which he does not really specify or engage with, they have not made the, remember the phrase that he uses in the beginning, they have not made the final cut, yes. So here he is also assuming the position of power and authority as if being, by virtue of being a well known Indian writer in English.

He also has the power to decide who makes the final cut and who does not make the final cut, yes. So here and in fact, you know, if, if you think about different kinds of anthologies, different kinds of things which are being included or excluded from particular anthologies, the, may or may not have problems with this, with those sort of inclusions and exclusions but here, because of the position that Rushdie assumes.

Because of the authority that he has as a post-colonial writer in even changing the paradigms of critical discussion, yes, this is extremely important. This intervention that he makes, it does have a, it does have a consequence, it does have a bearing on how others write, how particular kinds of writers and writings are included, excluded, so on and so forth. And these issues in fact, very interestingly the issues that knowingly or unknowingly Rushdie talks about, they are also an inherent part of the history of Indian writing in English.

If you look at Mehrotra's work which we will not be doing in detail right now, in the section, if you notice, you know, the introduction, Mehrotra's introduction is also divided in different sections. He has got altogether 5 sections. In section 3 and 4, in the section 3, he talks exclusively about language issues, yes, which is what Rushdie also problematizes in a different way altogether, yes.

Mehrotra talks about how there was always this dichotomy about, again this issue of language Mehrotra says was also associated with questions of loyalty, questions of nationalism, yes. Whether you are a party of, whether you are, you owe your allegiance to, whether your allegiance is to the nationalist movement or to the colonial ruler, was also decided on the basis of the language in which you chose to write, yes.

He talks about how, you know, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay also believed that he had to write in Bangla to prove his nationalist loyalty also dissuaded others who were writing in English, yes. And in the same way in section 4, he talks about, Mehrotra talks about the animosity against Indian writers in English because English has also been associated with a number of other things.

English as a language of power, English related to certain kind of eliteness, about particular kinds of social status that you enjoy in society and Rushdie in fact, here, we can see that Rushdie is not perhaps addressing these things in isolation. May be he is also responding to a lot of things which were building up from say early 19 century onwards, from the time Indian started writing in English, yes.

And may be for the same reason, many of the things that Rushdie talks about, it, it also went down well with at least some of the Indian writing in English, at least some of them though not very openly, they have at various points through interviews, through the snippets of conversations that, you know, they shared during like festivals, during the promotional events. They all have in some form or the other, they have declared their allegiance to Rushdie.

These are the authors, the others writing in, the Indians writing in other languages. When we talk about Rushdie's introduction and the kind of issues that he raises over here, though in a controversial manner, you would continue to see that even in the discussions of, say individual works, the critical analysis of individual works, the framework within which particular issues within Indian Writing in English is located.

These issues come time and again, about the eliteness of Indian writers in English, these are the, the, you know, the traditional, low profile status that the writers in vernacular literatures are forced to occupy. In fact, you know, there was another controversy in between about the Stephanian writers. It was about, you know, whether there is a Stephanian School of Writing or not.

Because there are number of these Indian writers in English who were also products of St. Stephens college, yes. Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Allan Sealy, yes, Vikram Seth, they all went to, there is a pattern of education which could be traced. They went, you know, one of those public schools like a Doon School and then to St. Stephens and then to Oxford, yes. And in between in one of the interviews or in one of the newspaper articles, Arundhati Roy remarked they are not part of those old boy's club, yes.

So I do not really, I do not live abroad. I did not go to any of these places either, yes. So there is a, there was a this, you know, a few, in one of the critics wrote about an entire book about the Stephanian writers, yes. And Shashi Tharoor came up and said, you know, it cannot be called as a Stephanian school of writing because it is not as if, you know, they all came together to write particular kinds of works.

But nevertheless, they also defended that only if you went to Stephens, these sort of writings could be produced, yes. Say work like, are you familiar with English August, Upamanyu, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Upamanyu? **“Professor - student conversation starts”** Chatterjee. **“Professor - student conversation ends.”** Chatterjee, right, yes. Upamanyu Chatterjee's, yes, English August, yes.

So they all felt that, you know, if someone who is not, who is not had that kind of education, someone who is not that, who has not had that sort of a cosmopolitan exposure, could not have written that kind of a book, yes. So those were also in some, at some level, they find that all of those approaches, all of those belief systems and world, those are also coexists very well with what Rushdie talks about, yes.

They are more cosmopolitan, yes. We look at the world, yes. Look at you here and also in that interview where he spoke about the vernacular literatures being, you know, quite into Tractor Art. He talks about, you know, how still in the vernacular fiction, they are still talking about, you know, about patriarchy; about how you know, women are sidelined; woman do not have a voice. He talks about how the vernacular literatures still talks about everything traditional.

They find it difficult to come out of that. So here, we also get the sense that these writers were working in English, are completely unaware of the various sorts of revolutions and rebellions and forms of post-colonial protests that are happening within vernacular fiction. So he is trying to reiterate the fact that nation is not a biggest thing, there are other bigger things than the nation such as gender, cast, issues related to communalism.

So the regional writers are busy engaging with all of these pressing issues which are like more, which has got, you know, more relevance than the issues which are happening at the national level, yes. So keeping that aside, yes, there is one article which came out in 2004 which critiques this. It is by S. Shankar which critiques this, this attitude of Rushdie in a very success way. He says that, you know, what came out of this entire article was that it suggests the backwardness of Rushdie's own approach, yes.

So we, there are a lot of other regional writers also who shared the same opinion that Rushdie in spite of this sort of, you know, cosmopolitan approach and the vast exposure that he has had and the irony and the hybridity that he could incorporate into his own writings, into his own novelistic enterprises. He is, he has come out as a very backward critic who has not been able to accept different pluralities, the multiplicities and the different kinds of narrativizations as he, as we think he had been doing in a number of his works.

So in a sense when we try to look at the, look at Rushdie's essay, either in isolation or, you know, as a corollary to the many literary, historical approaches that we shall be taking a look at. It is important to come back to Rushdie's essay and look at what the sense, look at the sense of history that this introduction is giving us because this introduction, it is also, you know, it is primarily meant for a western audience, for a, for western academies, for the western readers, yes.

So what is the sense of history that in 1997 Rushdie is trying to give to his audience, yes about Indian writing in English. Have this, though you know, in the other multiple histories that we shall be taking a look at Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's or M. K. Naik's or Srinivasa Iyengar's, they all emphasized on this shared history, the shared intellectual trajectory that Indian writers in

English as well as the writers in vernacular languages had, yes.

And Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is an example, Derozio is a different kind of an example, yes. So they all were part of the same kind of nationalist movement, they all engaged with similar struggles as part of the transition which, which was going on during the period of colonial modernity but Rushdie's work again when we come back to this and look at it, it is a little dismissive of this history.

The approach that Rushdie takes towards in situating Indian Writing in English in a historical paradigm is very different, yes. Again, you know, G. V. Desani's example also comes up because he is, there is no talk about the phase that Indian writers in English or Indian literature as such went through during the colonial modernity. He does not give us that, does not talk about that part of history at all.

Instead, it is a very fluid, very illusive, yes, very non-committal, yes and also does not, we do not know whether deliberately or inadvertently does not acknowledge his this, this trajectory. Does not acknowledge how he has been part of this particular trajectory which he also seeks to trace by, you know, giving a chronological account of a number of writers through this anthology. Is there anything that you want to add to this?

There was also an article which came out in the outlook magazine. I do not know if I have with. If I had given this as part of your course material and it is called *Midnight's Orphans* because in connection with the post-colonial Indian writing, been seen as, you know, *Midnight's Children*, yes, again, you know, taking off from Rushdie's own work, yes. So this article in, I think it was outlook.

If you Google it, you can find it. I can also send you the link. It talks about how the regional writers also in this process became *Midnight's orphans* because in this process, initially even Mehrotra also when he is tracing this history of Indian Writing in English, he talks about the shared history but in the post-colonial world. Particularly after the 80s and 90s, we get to know that there is a, the entire paradigm shifts, yes, due to various reasons including, you know,

cosmopolitanism, globalisation, yes and all kinds of things which happened after the 1990s, precisely the scene which, which Rushdie presents you, this is the oriental scene for you.

It actually holds true because due to this paradigm shift, due to the shift in the market conditions, due to the shift in the forms of governance, ways in which you receive texts, circulate text, how texts are being popularized, publicized, everything has changed. So now you find it Indian writers in English, they have become the, they hold, they have become the legitimate inheritors of this post-colonial narrative.

And the writers in regional languages, writers in the vernacular languages, they have been forced to occupy a, a sideline, a marginalized position. So this article in outlook, it also refers to them as being the Midnights Orphans and also has a number of interviews with other regional writers, a number of Jnanpith awardees and all responding to how, what they think about Rushdie's charges or parochialism, of, you know, Indian Writing in English, having more say output, quality output compared to the others.

And we also go through some of the things that Rushdie talks about which we also agree with in certain sense. He talks about and come to page 16, the section which ends over there after he talks about Rushdie-it is and all, as an individual, Hindi, Urdu, the Hindustani of north India remains an essential aspect of my sense of self as a writer. I have been partly formed by the presence in my head of that other music, the rhythms, patterns and habits of thought and metaphor of my Indian tongues.

What I am saying is that there is not, need not be, should not be, an adversary relationship between English language literature and the other literatures of India. We drink from the same well. India, that inexhaustible hall of plenty nourishes us all, yes. So we, it is also evident that, you know, we do not even know whether he really means it or it is just a plain rhetoric but this similar thing has been dealt with in a more serious systematic way by a number of literary historians.

There is something that I want you to keep in mind when we also do the analysis of individual

works, that also in some form we can take from this essay, the previous page, page 15, the way he talks about the writers who have homes outside of India and he also refers to them as wanderers, yes. So remember in the first session, we spoke about how after colonial modernity, these 2 different sets of writers, writers working in English and the writers writing in regional languages, yes.

One set was seen to be like travelling, wandering, seeing the world. The other set of writers, the regional writers, they were equated with this idea of staying home and writing, yes. So this thing, and one was modern, the other was traditional. One was cosmopolitan and the other was parochial. And here on page 15, in that paragraph if we take a look at those set of writers that he talks about, whom he also perhaps identifies with Indian writers in English.

All those, you know, the iconic figures of world literature were Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Doris Lessing, yes and the list goes on, (()) (38:33) Nobuko, (()) (38:34), they are wanderers, yes. So he talks about may be people like him as well and equates Indian writers in English who do not have a home in the traditional sense just like, you know, the, near the writers in vernacular or regional languages have, we are wanderers.

So in some sense, you know, he is also equating Indian Writing in English with the status of, you know, world literature with the status of more international literature compared to the more inward looking according to him, inward looking parochial writings of vernacular writers. Also about this, this point about Rushdie do not acknowledging his intellectual ancestors. In Mehrotra's introduction, he also draws our attention to how this set of writing, the Indian writers in English, it generally does not acknowledge each other.

It is as if, you know, the only exception has been when a number of writers have acknowledged Rushdie; otherwise, because, you know, Rushdie enable them to write in a very post-colonial way, experimenting with language, experimenting with narratives of the nation, etc. Otherwise, Mehrotra also draws our attention to how we do not find these writers acknowledging each other, yes, except for 1 or 2 instances that he talks about.

One is, you know, Allan Sealy acknowledging Derozio as is literary forbe, yes, that he made it possible for people like him to write. Otherwise, there are very very few instances of writers referring to each other, even acknowledging each other's presence though they all share the same literary canvas. This is something very peculiar that you would continue to note. Each writer, we also get this feeling that they write in isolation, targeting perhaps a world audience whom we do not even say know for sure, yes.

And for the same reason a number of critics, it is not something very novel that Mehrotra is pointing up. In a number of criticisms of all of these leading writers, it has been pointed out multiple, multiple times this, you know, they all exists like islands and write about interestingly rather similar kind of things. Even the Stephanians, when certain critics were trying to point out the kind of similarities that they had, these writers who were also Stephanians.

They were also quick to reject that claim and say there is hardly anything similar, perhaps we all share the same sort of background and that is getting reflected. Other than that, there is an unwillingness to, you know, to, to engage with these visible similarities or, yes, whatsoever. Next session, we will come back to take a look at Mehrotra's introduction. This is, in fact, this is, this literary history, it devotes a separate chapter for each writer or each phase that he thinks is quite representative like sometimes it would be for an individual writer or sometimes it will be for an entire period like writers of the 30s, of the 40s.

It is a fairly exhaustive literary history that Mehrotra presents and in his introduction, he also gives a rather non-judgemental trajectory of events from the beginning, yes and also he, he also, you know, it is a, the narrative also is very interesting. He locates the starting point of 1800 and tells us the various reasons for that, yes. He also incorporates the story of Indian Writing in English and narrates it alongside the story of the nation because.

And also there is an impossibility again to narrate the story of Indian Writing in English without talking about the nation, yes. And also eventually I was thinking about this question that you raised yesterday like in when we did literary history, we, we spoke about how all literary

histories are autobiographies of the nation, yes. So what is so peculiar about this, yes. So I think one way in which Indian fiction, it, we find it very unique in the sense that almost every single work.

We are not talking about the literary history, we, the novels which are being produced, almost every single work is engaging with the nation, yes. The, may be, you know, if you try and do a survey of the canonical works, yes, they all have got something to do with the nation or not, yes. And there is also one essay which we shall be doing as part of the course where, you know, the, Josna Rege talks about how, you know, woman had been neglected in particular ways.

May be because they are not talking about the nation. You think about, you know, who are the women writers in Indian Writing in English, Anita Desai, yes; Kamala Markandaya, yes. If you are even vaguely familiar with their works, yes, it concerns with issues of woman, domesticity, family, yes and you come to the beginning of writers, Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh. They are dealing with subjects of, you know, which, which really demand a lot of seriousness and a lot of gravitas.

It is about the nation, it is about partition, it is about the post-colonial condition, yes and you survey any, any of these canonical writers who have, who are these big names in Indian Writing in English, they are all talking about the nation, yes. So in fact, Arundhati Roy's work which does not in that sense directly engage with the nation, it was a very, it was at a different paradigm altogether.

But even then if you look at the critical material, yes, there is a way in which Arundhati's work also, novel is also been appropriated into the narrative of the nation, yes, retelling of the nation, right. So may be in one way in which the Indian English novel stands out as unique compared to the novels being produced in a number of other languages in India that they are still in the beginning, in the 1930s, they were writing about the nation; in the 1990s, they are still writing about the nation, yes, in different ways, yes.

May be the mode of narration has changed but you look at regional fiction, yes, in your own

mother tongues, you know, in your mind run through the handful of novels that you are familiar with, yes. Look at the range of issues that they engage with, it is not always about a particular community. It is not always about nation. It is not always about the big events that concern the nation.

It is also about individuals, yes. Here, you know, because *Midnight's Children*, it is certainly story of 2 individuals. But the story of those 2 individuals, it becomes important because it is narrated against the backdrop of the nation, shadow lines again, yes. It is narrated by, it is a child narrator, it is about his family, the people whom he comes across but that becomes important of the shadow line of partition and the stories are being projected.

Because the partition happened, he is not, you know, 1947 partition, whatever happens later in Bengal, yes. So there is a backdrop of these mega-national events in most of the works that assume this canonical status. This has also been, you know, the nation theme also has been worked and overworked and may be one of the interesting projects that you can think of for your presentation, for your assignment is, you know, how to get out of this, this trap of nation.

And writing, and in Rushdie's introduction if you note, you know, he talks about writing nationalistically in a very derogatory sense, yes. So writing nationalistically is different from writing about the nation, yes. Nationalistic is seemed more or less like, you know, very parochial, only talking about things that are, you know, your own, yes, that are your immediate concern, yes.

So, do not get these 2 things confused about writing about the nation and about writing nationalistically. If you have already read through Mehrotra's thing, you know, go through that again and also one thing if you could do, you know, for each section if you could just highlight some of the major points that you note in terms of, you do not have to go into the details of, you know, the dates and things such that.

The major issues that he talks about, just like, you know, in section 3 and 4, the highlight is the language issue and then in section 4, it comes to say the, the kind of animosity people had

against Indian Writing in English. So in that sense if you could note down certain points, it will be easy for us to compile them and discuss over here. That is all we have for today. Thank you.