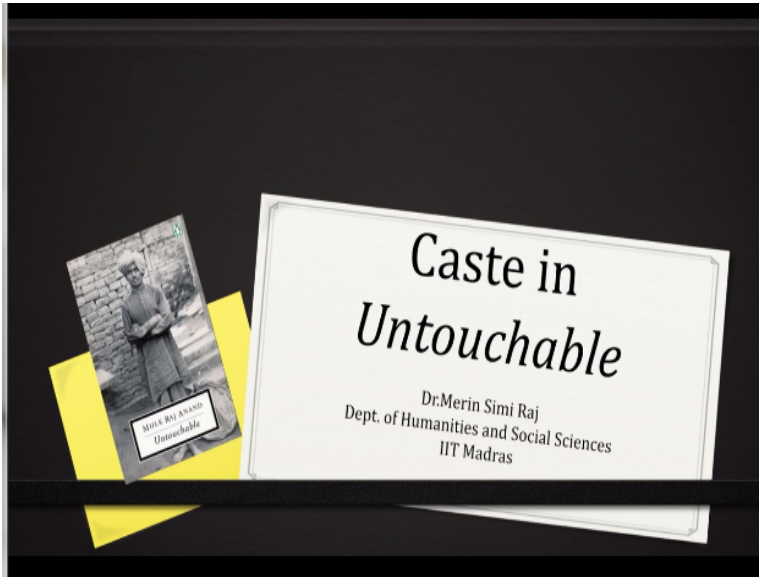


Indian Fiction in English
Prof. Dr. Merin Simi Raj
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology–Madras

Lecture-24
Caste in Untouchable

(Refer Slide Time: 00:11)



So, we are talking about this was published in 1935.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:18)

Untouchable (1935)

- o 19 rejections / 8 publishing houses
- o Published by Lawrence and Wishart - a leftwing publishing house
 - o Kanthapura - George Allen & Unwin Ltd
- o Foreword by Forster
- o Anand - one of the founder members of the Progressive Writers Association
- o Student in London - influenced by the Bloomsbury group - but disturbed by the 'undeclared ban on political talk' and failure to criticise the British imperial project - Gandhi and Sabarmati Ashram

And this is also by seen is one of the major works are laid the foundation of Indian writing in English and also as one of the prominent Gandhi novels yeah just like Gandhi figures in Kanthapura and then waiting for the Mahatma. We do a fine Gandhi visiting this place where this story is said. And it is said that Anand faced about 19 rejections but also there is a recent worker Priya Mathanagopal where she talks about the rejections by 8 publishing houses.

So, whichever way it is it had faced a number of rejections it was finally published by this published Lawrence and Wishart. And if at the left wing publishing house and also for the work to be published it required an intervention from E.M. Forster yeah who is E.s Forster (()) (01:05) yeah the author is the passage to India and also was a well acclaimed international figure in the 1930s.

So, and this also like reminds me Kanthapura was also published by a foreign publisher George Allen and Unwin limited yeah. And Forster had also written a foreword to this novel untouchable saying with this sort of an intervention has never been mean before. Many of the publishers where reluctant to publish this because they said to know even though I have a strong stomach even my stomach churns when I read through this.

In it is such a filthy novel, it talks about the dirtiest things that human beings too. So, it may not go you know very well done with the audience, so they did very very reluctant to get it published. And Anand also had a rather radical image during his literary carrier, he was one of the founder members of the progressive writers association and (()) (02:02) the Urdu writer yeah who would radically written about partition.

He was also one of the members of PWA so they were many of these writers who wrote social realist fiction and also thought it is their responsibility to respond to the social evils of those times yeah. They were all part of the progressive writers association and Anand also had a western education he was a student in London.

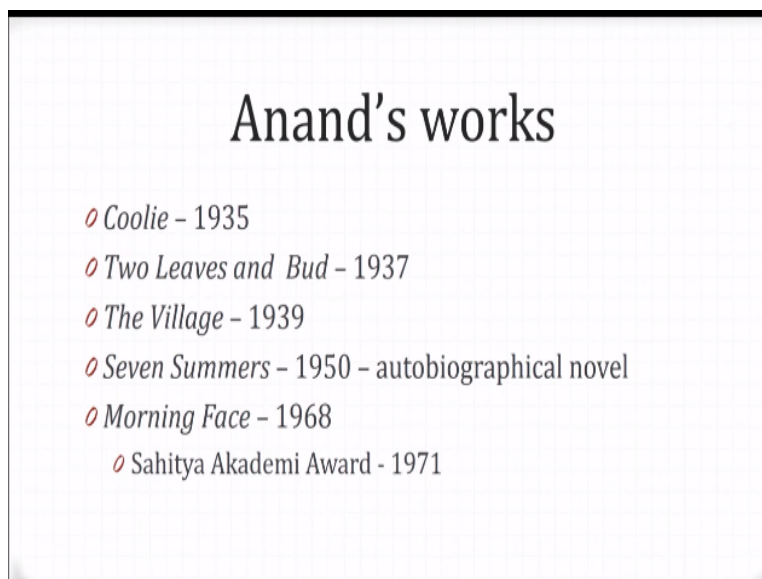
And he was also very briefly associated with an was influenced by the Bloomsbury group what is a Bloomsbury group (()) (02:42). So, I should go back in device earlier days each other.

So, yeah they also you know question the art of things which are considered that Tabu that are what made Anand will uncomfortable with the what he found very disorienting with that group of Bloomsbury group which was seen as that radical group during the modernist period in Britain was that they had an undeclared band on discussing politics.

And he thought that was also a way in which you know they fail to criticize the British imperial project. Because he was also being nurtured by the nationalist movement which was happening back in India. So, in his writings we can find this twin influence, the influence of the modernist writers of Britain and also of Gandhi and his experience while he was living in Sabarmathi Ashram.

He spend a considerable time in living with Gandhi in the ashram and it is said that you know his novel was the outcome of that experience that he gained in the ashram yeah.

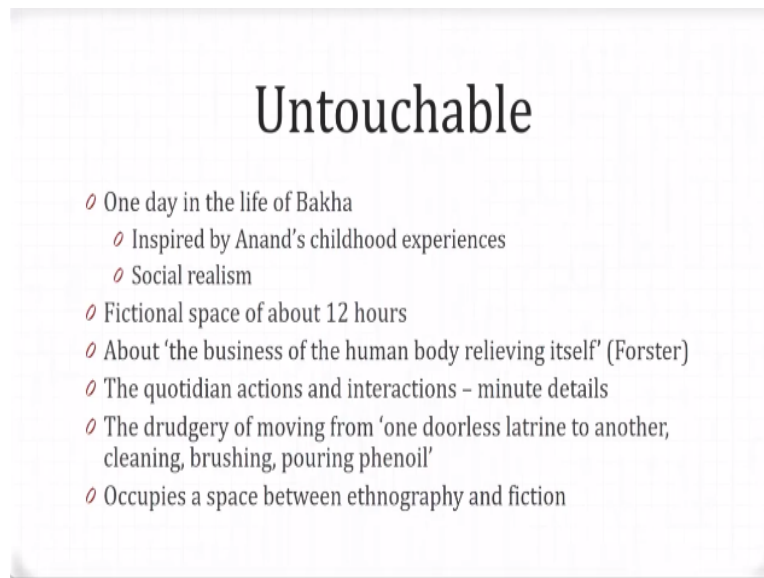
(Refer Slide Time: 04:06)



So, these are some of his other works he wrote like rather prolifically from the 1930s onwards in 1950 he published autobiographical novel *Seven Summers* and in 1968 this work which is considered as the best of his works. *Morning Face* was published and 1971 he rather appropriately like got the Sahitya Akademi award as well. So, in that also makes similar like

perfectly canonical in all respects. So, the novel *Untouchable* talks about 1 day in the life of Bakha.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:38)



And Anand himself has said this was the recounting of his childhood experience when where he had interacted with this sweeper who was there in his parents' home the sweepers name was Ooka yeah, so he was not allow to interact with this boy was the sweeper. So, he says it was also based on the experiences that he had during his childhood.

We find a generous amount of social realism being used in the depiction of this fictional work and the fictional space, the fictional time is just about 12 hours from morning till evening not even the entire day. And also it comprises of a lot of recollections by Bhaka and about you know some of his thoughts which he which is shaping or you know thus certain things which he picked up as and when he experienced newer things on that particular day.

And this particular day which is gets framed in this novel that becomes importance significance for a couple of things which we shall be talking about shortly. And Forster said this work is about the business of the human body relieving itself and for him more than the caste element what he found very significant was that such a work had not been taken up before.

And he also the thought that this can be a very right kind of in intervention especially when India was about to get independence and also there was this between modernity and tradition which was going on. And there are very mandarin day today a common place hence then which a part of this novel and most of the experiences that he has Bhaka has on that day except for 1 or 2 things that which is stand out.

Otherwise that is routine those other things are he does on a daily basis and those are the experiences even the humiliation it has a routine there is nothing extraordinary about the humiliations that he faced on that particular day. And it had been said for a long time that Narayan's craft was exceptional in this novel as he had given minute details of a life that he was not directly familiar with.

And in the novel itself you know talks about the tragedy about tragedy of this boy's work where he moves from one door less latrine to another cleaning, brushing, pouring phenol. So, those sort of minute details are given and it also when said that this novel occupies as a space between ethnography and fiction yeah because there are lot of details which there is lot of thick description yeah as the ethnographers would give yeah when it comes to the detailing of Bakha's life yeah.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:27)

Bakha

- ◊ A young man of eighteen, strong and able bodied
- ◊ A penchant for second-hand European clothing
- ◊ A thoughtful and sensitive individual
- ◊ "a bit superior to his job . . . With a sort of dignift that does not belong to the ordinary scavenger, who is as a rule uncouth and unclean"

So, who is Bakha, Bakha is a very young man he is just turned 18, he is been described as strong and able bodied. These are the terms at the novel uses to talk about Bakha, he is got a penchant of a second-hand European clothing. Because even when he is on the verge of being humiliated, he is able to find join the fact that he got a new coat yeah I will give revels and dressing up in those ways which also comes across is being very weird and cloudiness to the onlookers.

And he is been described as a very thoughtful and sensitive individual he thinks a lot yeah rather unusual think for people from his background. That is what again the novel tells us Bakha is a bit superior to his job and he also takes a lot of pleasure and cleaning well and getting appreciation yeah. Because he is a he yeah the novel says it with a sort of dignity sorry about the type dignity.

That does not belong to the ordinary scavenger who is as a rule uncouth and unclean. So, this is the voice of the narrator yeah that this is a different kind of a man and he is not like the others who as a ruler uncouth and unclean yeah. And he also gets a he does not think that he is doing a very menial dirty job yeah. There are places there he thinks you know he is really doing a service to the society and he should be able to do a better.

We also find a Gandhian reflection of all jobs being the having the equal kind of respond respectability and all and about him using this western attire yeah.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:06)

Imitation of Western attire

o "Whereas portraits of Gandhi usually show him in his loincloth, Ambedkar is always represented by his admirers as wearing a suit and tie. For the upper-caste Gandhi, the loincloth signifies sacrifice; were Ambedkar to wear a loincloth, however, it would attract no notice, since by custom and tradition he was permitted to wear the scantiest of garments. It is his wearing of a suit that signifies the successful storming of the upper-caste citadel" (Ramachandra Guha's introduction to *Untouchable*, 2014)

It may come across many have felt that Bakha was trying to blindly the western. The same kind of criticism was also leveled against a Ambedkar because if you remember the common images of Ambedkar it is not really in an Indian dress. He is always in a western dress yeah, so Ramachndra Guha in a 2014 edition of untouchable he had written an introduction.

And there he talks about they need to look back at this 1930s novel from the point of view of the present which is a 2014. And he also says we cannot like continue to look at this novel only as a sort of novel it becomes important to talk about Ambedkar as well because we are on the other side of independence, on the other side of history yeah.

So, this I read to you from Guha's introduction whereas portraits of Gandhi usually show him in his loin-cloth. Ambedkar is always represented by his admirers as wearing a suit and tie, for the upper-caste Gandhi, the loin cloth signifies sacrifice were Ambedkar to wear a loin-cloth. However it would attract no notice, since by custom and tradition he was permitted to wear the scantiest of garments.

It is his wearing of a suit that signifies the successful storming of the upper-caste citadel .yeah. So, we do not know whether these sort of thoughts were attributed to Bakha when Anand was writing this novel. But it is nevertheless important for us to keep this in mind yeah. This talk on trust between these 2 images as we see Gandhi's and Ambetkar's and how the way they projected themselves were also based on how their background had a bearing on them.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:56)

Two events

- o Bakha's accidental touching of an upper-caste man - morning
 - o His moment of epiphany (very Joycean)
 - o A new awareness of his body in relation to other bodies and objects
 - o 'why was I so humble? I could have struck him!'
- o The visit of Gandhi to the town - evening
 - o His inchoate feelings of discontent are given voice and transformative direction

So, coming back to the novel there are 2 major events which could be seen as a turning point in Bakha's life. The first one is when Bakha accidentally touches an upper-caste man this happens in the morning he is you know after his work he is enjoying up pocket of jalebi history engrossed in his world he is thinking he is eating his really savoring that act of eating which he does not get to do on a daily basis yeah.

Because he also talks about his food on other days which is like sometimes it is hardly there. He is also in a he has an ailing father he has a sister yeah. So, it is not as if this is a luxury that he afford everyday so historically must in this act of enjoying his jilabies and he accidentally touches an upper caste man. And this you know this man really loses it.

Because you know he thinks it just a morning he is on his way to some important work and now that he will defile his to go back in how about so. It is also a lot of confusion of people gather, he feels totally humiliated it is not as a Bakha is not used to this sort of behavior he knows very well that he is his rank in the hierarchy is very very low. He knows very well that he is not going to be considered touchable at any point of time.

This is not news to him but that day there is a it is like a that incident it is like a an epiphany incident for him. And many have said you know also very juicy and given that he always also influence by the modernist writers. So, that moment becomes a turning point and Bakha has a

new awareness of his body in relation to other bodies and objects yeah he also you know in whichever way he could theorize about it.

He talks about what makes a certain bodies, touchable and certain bodies untouchable and how he is actually you know he is the one who is actually cleaning the streets who he is a one who is cleaning that entire locality from you know getting dirty by the ways that is produced by other human beings. And he is the one who is been rendered untouchable too, so he is thinks about all of those things.

And he also wonders the novel tells us for the first time in his life why was they so humble, I could have struck him it is not as if you know he was powerful to overpower Bakha. He is a right in the beginning of the novel we get to know he is a strong able bodied young man yeah he is someone who is been engaging in manual labor. He could have done any of those since but he does not do that yeah.

And the other event which gives a different kind of a structure and form to the novel is the visit of Gandhi to the town which happens in the evening. And it that time he is listening to Gandhi initially when Gandhi begins talking about his own childhood he feels us instant connect yeah, he like listening to Gandhi he begins to think that yes this is the set of things that I was trying to articulate, whatever things that he could not think about in the morning.

All the set of those you know desperate in quite feelings they are given a kind of a voice and he is also he feels he is moving in transformative direction. And in between you know he is also there are instances where he realizes even Christianity's not a solution yeah. There is a Christian British machinery with whom he interacts quite often and the novel tells us about to know while this man the Christian machinery man is more sympathetic towards Bakha.

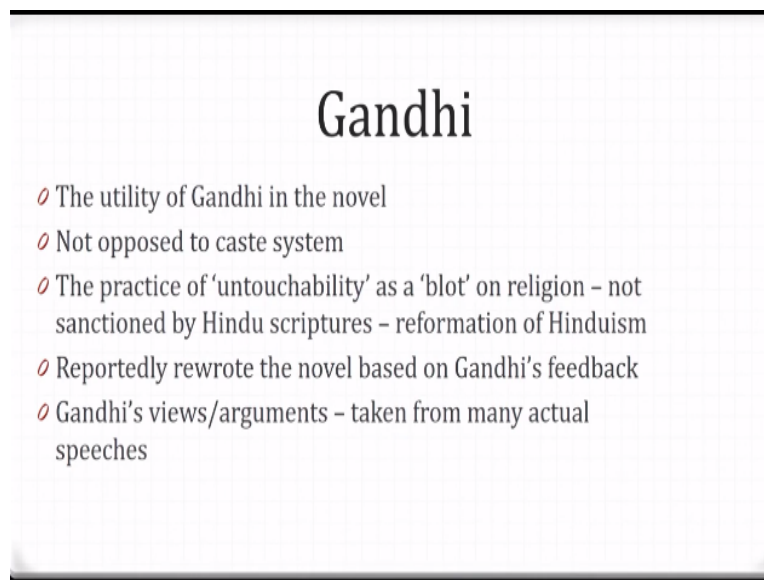
His wife is not sympathetic and he also feels the futility of you know changing his religion. So, many of those discourses are also part of the novel in between and write after the event with Gandhi occurs towards the end we are also told that maybe the solution is not in Gandhi either

that solution lies in the machine yeah you bring in the flush toilet mechanism and perhaps that can be resolved.

It also talks about the shifting political stances that Anand himself had yeah he was Gandhi and he lived in the Ashram he totally admired Gandhi for whatever he was doing but he was also a socialist and a we do not say such a radical elements of socialism in his work. But we also find that there is a move towards that especially that is one socialist character Iqbal when a poet is introduced towards the end of the novel.

And it is said that it is in the persona of the character who is introduced towards the end. We can find the authors persona as well that he does not think the solution lies in any of the nationalist things but in technology but .

(Refer Slide Time: 15:37)



So, how is Gandhi used in this novel, if we think about the other novels in which Gandhi figures, we find that they all make use of Gandhi in different ways. It seems it does not become very important for us to know who Gandhi is but on the contrary what use of Gandhi is in various contexts. Gandhi becomes many things to many people as we know some of those are political, some of those are true, some of those are part of you know folktales and legends.

Here also Gandhi is initially used as a very legendary introduced as a legendary figure that are these stories about Gandhi which people hear about. And Gandhi as he is introduced in this novel and also if you know about your certain comments that he has made in his discourse related to caste and untouchability he was not opposed to caste system yeah.

He did believe in caste system as you also believe that know catur varna gave a structure and kind of a proper kind of a hierarchy to the society. On the contrary what he was supposed to was the practice of untouchability and he argue that was a blot on the blot on Hinduism. And the practice of untouchability was sanction by Hindu scriptures. So, the solution to untouchability the problems of untouchability according to Gandhi was the reformation of Hinduism.

And that is the only possibility that he puts forward throughout and it is very evident in most of his discourses. And Gandhi is influence also comes in it can be seen that it can be said that you know Gandhi also endorses most of the things that the novel untouchable talks about because it is a it is said that Anand had rewritten the novel based on Gandhi's feedback here are many sections which he rewrote.

And he also has said that maybe that is held Bakha from becoming a Bloomsbury intellectual yeah. So, many of those say profound things that Bakha was thinking extreme of consciousness and heavily edited by Gandhi's intervention that is what you know we get to gather from some critical material. And Gandhi's views and arguments which are being discussed in the novel. There were also taken from the actual many of the actual speeches by Gandhi.

So, we do find a kind of a mixture of history and fiction in this Gandhi is portrayed, more or less like a very real figure he is also a character in the novel as you know he visits and gives a talk in the village. So, we do get a sense of you know the legendary significance at Gandhian comes across his more like a divined figure just like he did in some of the other novels. And less like a political personality and Bakha is initially very excited to listen to Gandhi.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:22)

Gandhi in Untouchable

- The legend – divine stories
- Bakha's sense of excitement – also moments of boredom and resentment
- Gandhi's call to untouchables to 'purify their lives' by giving up 'evil habits' – meat and liquor
- 'by far the greatest liberating force of our age' albeit one with 'his limits, of course'

Because Gandhi is talking about his own child toward he is able to relate to him, he thinks he is a very nice man who understands their problems. But then you know gradually it shifts to boredom and resentment yeah one because you know he is really not able to fact them the depths of the profound philosophies that Gandhi is talking about. And secondly Gandhi also talks about he gives out a call to the untouchables to purify their lives by giving up meat and liquor which are described as evil habits by Gandhi.

And that moment you know he feels a sense of resentment he thinks know why he is but the Mahatma blaming us for it what it read yeah. So, all that he gets towards the end is that yeah Gandhi all said and is also trying to blame us like the rest of them. So, he is not fascinated with Gandhi just like he was in the beginning of the speech yeah and the novel in that sense is also telling us in the voice of the narrator is also telling us that Gandhi is by the greatest liberating force of her age but with limits of course yeah. So, till how for the novel is willing to push the limits as a different question all together.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:27)

The solutions

- o Change of religion, change of attitude, change of technology
- o The flush toilet - the machine which clears dung without anyone having to handle it
- o A departure from Gandhi's anti-technological path
- o Iqbal Nath Sharsar - an alter ego for the author - openness to new ideas without a wholesale rejection of tradition

So, the solution is to untouchability as the novel tries to portrayed one is change of religion, change of attitude and the change of technology. And these are also the various experiments nationalist movement had double with Gandhi talks about a reformation of religion Ambedkar talks about a change of religion and also there was more than Ambedkar there was they were Christian machineries.

And their activities which were being shown as an anti (()) (19:57) to the practice of to the practice of cast and untouchability. And Gandhi also talks about a change of attitude both in the caste Hindus also in the attitude of the outcaste Hindus yeah. And of course there is a change of technology which the nation at that point of time where you know where they encounter with colonial modernity had just begun.

The nation thought at that point of time that with technology all of these evils would eventually go away but we know that is not been the case. And the flush toilet is introduced as the more or less like you know very strong character towards the end as if that this is the machine which will clear dong without an even having to handle as we all know. And here we also find the novel taking a very definite stands a departure from Gandhi's anti technological path yeah.

Gandhi believe that there is nothing that we need to learn from the rest yeah the (()) (20:53) sufficient culture we have traditions go back to the villages and we will be find yeah. He could

not really engage with the ideas of modernity in the way that the post-independence, post Nehruvian nationalist wanted to yeah. And in the novel this character Iqbal Nath Sharsar is also introduced as a he is poet.

He is also believer in socialism he is introduces as an alter ego for the author that is what many critics pointed out. And in this personality of Iqbal Nath Sharsar we can find a number of a middle class intellectuals such as either the congressman or the author himself where they are open to the new ideas yeah. They do think that modernity is going to bring in a lot of stay that is going to assure in a new era for the independent nation.

But they were also not for a wholesale rejection of tradition, it would be possible to say that the narrator or even the author figure himself.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:57)

The nationalist modern secular self

- ◊ Like the narrator, the author
- ◊ European education - modernity + unable to resolve colonialism with a return to village
- ◊ Village = provincialism, sexism, caste, superstition, orthodoxy
- ◊ Gandhi + the need to move beyond Gandhi
- ◊ Beyond the rural and the traditional

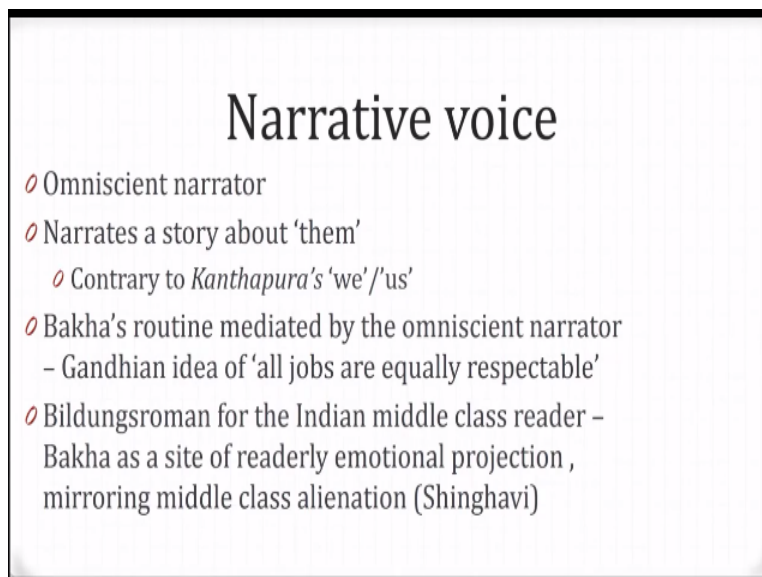
He can be seen as you know the nationalist modern secular self, the entire novel is narrated from that point of view. He is this the narrator, the author is the character who had a European education yeah where you know there is this he encounters modernity in different ways. His exposure is also very commendable given that it is a 1930s but he also had his unable to resolve a colonialism by returning to the village just like the Gandhi and (()) (22:25) yeah.

Because village for most of these western educated, English educated modern middle class national itself. For them the village also meant provisionism, sexism, caste, supertational orthodoxy. They were lot of things which had to be rejected within the village setting yeah and those things we do not find Gandhi talking about those things are trying to negotiate these things.

He really believed in the change of heart in the change of attitude and those things he thought can be worked out after the Britishers are thrown out. And we do find the narrator if that can be if the narrator can be seen as the nationalist modern secular self. We find this self-needing Gandhi and at the same time really seem that there is a need to move beyond Gandhi yeah and moving beyond Gandhi not in the sense that rejecting in many of the Gandhian ideas.

But rejecting the idea of Gandhi's attachment to the rural and the traditional, they find that there is some midway they realize that there is some midway which needs to be followed and this narrative voice of we try to analyze the voice of the narrator. The omniscient narrators voice for the.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:40)



Narrative voice

- o Omniscient narrator
- o Narrates a story about 'them'
 - o Contrary to *Kanthapura's* 'we'/'us'
- o Bakha's routine mediated by the omniscient narrator
 - Gandhian idea of 'all jobs are equally respectable'
- o Bildungsroman for the Indian middle class reader -
Bakha as a site of readerly emotional projection,
mirroring middle class alienation (Shingavi)

We realize that they narrator is telling a story about them yeah clearly he is not one among them yeah and it is a story that he is able to narrate. He knows everything about the story but he does not identify himself with the character who is story is he narrating. And this is in stock on trust with what we find in *Kanthapura* where it is we yeah it is an inclusive us and we find there.

And the narrator's voice is predominantly Brahminical in upper caste narrate narratorial voice yeah. And about this omniscient narrator, we also find that the description of Bakha routine is also mediated by the voice that this omniscient narrative uses. Bakha is not projected as you know an ordinary scavenger, he is someone who realizes the worth of his work who is able to talk about the respectability of all kinds of jobs yeah.

And he is been appropriated in that sense by this voice of the narrator and this is something we do not find in the later Dalith writings. And the Dalith men was in the Dalith fictions of the later decades yeah. And he also talks about a Snehal Shinghavi is a one of the recent writers postcolonial writers who have critiqued this novel in a very different way.

He has not really seen this as typical canonical anti-caste novel. He talks about certain other aspects which were also ignored during the transitions from colonial modernity to the postcolonial period. He talks about Shnegal Shinghavi talks about this novel as a Bildungsroman for the Indian middle class reader yeah and for Shinghavi also identifies Bakha as a site of readily emotion projection.

So, this narrator this amazing narrator who's writing whose narrating this story is also able to relate with the middle class reader who's reading it. This is certainly not to novel meant for reader from Bakha's class here and faster also talks about how Anand is the best person to write this novel.

Because it requires an insider to write it the (()) (25:59) could not have written it and again someone from Bakha's own community someone from a untouchable community also can cannot could not have written this because they will be talking about self pretty and suffering and here we have this perfect tradition which the middle class intellectual is also comfortable to engage with this is not a tail of suffering.

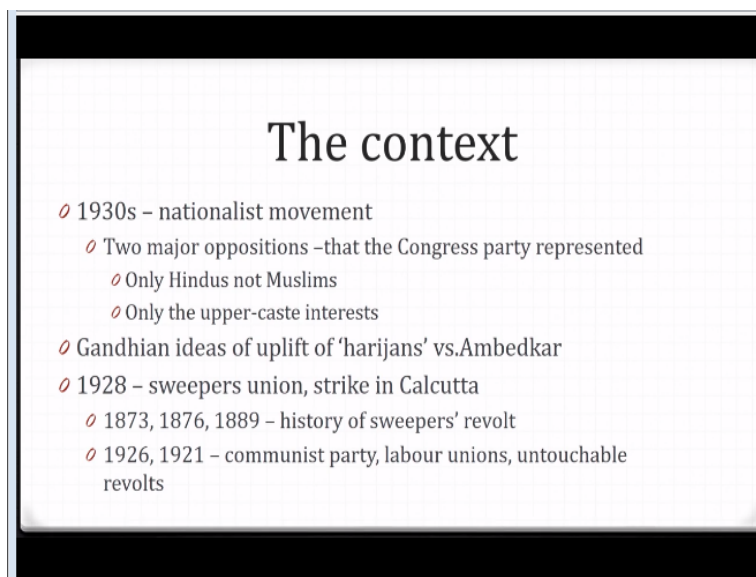
It is not a tail of self-pity this is about a different kind of an untouchable who is also able to engage with the nationalist politics in very minimalized ways. He does not really do that but he

knows that you know he knows his position when yeah that he need not rebel and that he needs to find other ways to negotiate with this reality of caste. Whether it is religion or technology the solutions lie in these mediate possibilities that the new nation is offering.

The character of Bakha is made to think like that and speak like that and we also are quite comfortable in this sort of a projection yeah. And Shinghavi also says Bakha's figure also mirrors you know middle class alienation. This is in all way in all respects this is a perfect way to engage with caste as far as the middle class modern secular individualist concern.

Because for the middle class modern secular individual caste something which is which should not be part of the new Indian society should not be part of the independent nation yeah. So, it is a, it could ideally fits in that sense. So, we think about the context the most obvious thing is that this was the time of the heighten period of nationalist movement nominated by the Gandhian politics that is an 1930s.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:41)



But with there was also you know two kinds of major oppositions which Gandhi as well as the nationalist movement (()) (27:53) by the Indian national congress where facing one was that the congress party represented only Hindus and not many Muslims. These short of issues were up growing during that time the second was that the congress party represented only the upper caste interest.

The novel does not engage too much with these ongoing issues but we do get a sense of how through Gandhi's talks and through the various discussions particularly towards the end of the novel. When the character of Iqbal is also introduced yeah. We get to know that these sort of issues are there at the background. But what we perhaps do not get to see this see it this dichotomy between Gandhian ideas of uplift here uplift of harijans.

The children of god yeah verses Ambedkar's expectation to the lower caste to educate united and agitate and this is also it is also important to note that it was not as a a lower caste and the untouchables had not begun to unite and protest in fact in 1928 in Calcutta there was a strike which was organize by sweepers union

And also there is a history of this you know untouchable sweepers revolt from 1873 76 1889 even during the colonial times this sought of protest where part of Indian you know Indian polity but it was not really talked about as far as an national historiographies constant and in there was other events which could have come as a which as formidable opposition to Gandhi and idea of nationalist politics

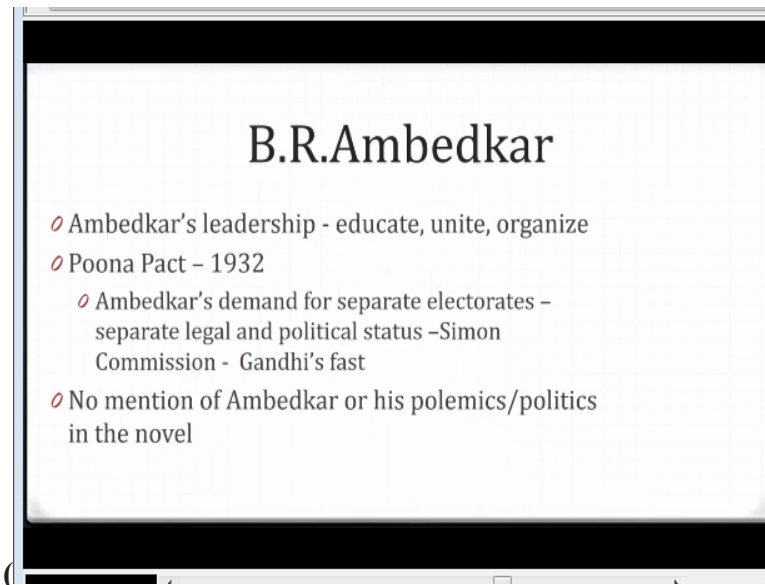
1926 and 1920 1921 and 1926 we realize you know communist party makes its entry into this subcontinent there are labor union and untouchables revolt so these are the this is a context yeah so be able to again foreground a character like Bhaka who is only a product of up of Gandhi and pacifist idea of anti-caste anti untouchables that cannot be totally ignored him

And if we examine certain kind of anti-caste writings which came from other languages yeah from the beginning the characters were not really formed as these pacifist characters without a sense of agency. But within the Indian within this Indian fiction particular Indian fiction English we find that Bakha remains as the model for a long time to come in our caste gets talked about that is a very predominant anti-caste rhetoric.

But the character is a very calm docile more or less a pacifist kind of a person with no sense of rebellion no sense of his or her own writes. And no sense of there is no discussion of this

access to constitutional rights or participation participating in the electro reforms. Those whether things which are also part of the nationals polity during that time if you know about you know what Ambedkar did in the 1930s yeah.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:02)



And to assume that Anand was totally unaware of all of these things which were happening 1932 was year of Pune Pact how many of you aware of that Pune Pact a part of this Simon commission yeah that (()) (31:18) introducing electrode constitutional reforms before you know India reaches this moment of Independence and Ambedkar demanded separate electorates because you also believe that it is not just okay.

If you treat them well and allow them to enter the temples yeah he was also against a temple entry and all many you do not have to it is not the reformation of Hinduism that Ambedkar asked for it was a rejection of Hinduism. If that it is a system which is not accommodating as we would rather you know go to another system to not just make certain compartments and allowances for Russia.

So, along side he also argued that what we need is separate legal and political status. He asked for constitutional rights and constitutional reforms that was not something that Gandhi was willing to grand. Because you also that this is going to divide the nation further along caste lines. He

goes on this indefinite fast he was in (()) (32:10) Gandhi. So, there was as huge across the nation with even the business tall what's like know TATA BIRLA were all there then yeah.

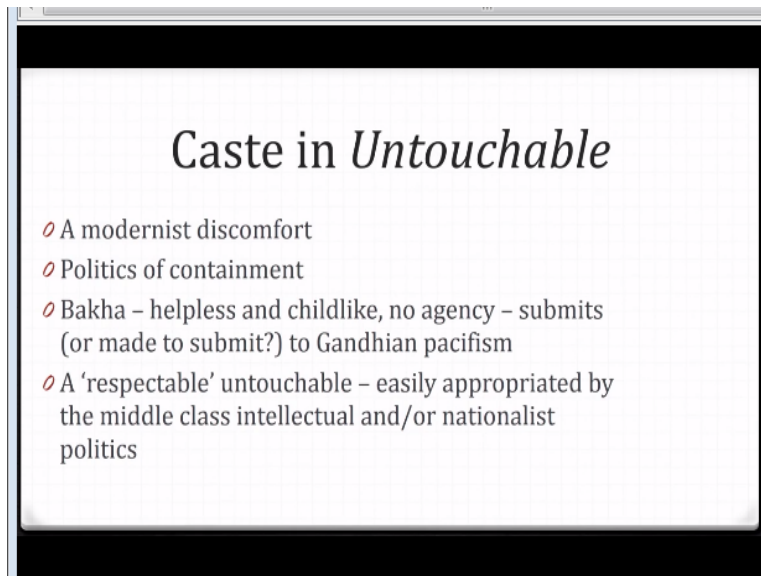
If you know you have to know little bit of Indian history they were all like they were these series of round table conferences where they all literally isolated Ambedkar. And if something happens to Gandhi because he is on this indefinite facts yeah if something to happen to Gandhi you will be responsible for the right which will break out across the nation. So, he was literally black male into giving up this demand yeah.

And Gandhi then you know as soon as he withdraws this demand for separate electorates Gandhi also stops his fast. And we do know you know the course that the nation took after that and how long which is for the same reason when the muddle commission and anything related to caste the moment it comes in the public space yeah. The moments something related to the reorganization of the constitutional rights come in.

There is a huge ratio yeah which still break out yeah. So, in this novel the point is that we cannot really assume that Anand was completely oblivious of all of those things yeah. But we done and also there is enough evident to suggest that at a later time in the 19 40s and 50s. he did write about you know how fascinated he was with Ambedkar's ideology it is said that he also wrote of 4 word to one of Ambedkar's best known works as the annihilation of caste yeah.

So, it is not as if you was totally oblivious of whatever was happening in this context. But there is no mention of Ambedkar or his polemics or his politics in this novel yeah.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:50)



So, caste in that sense we can say that in *untouchable* act based it figures like a modernist discomfort because this is its still is a modernist discomfort for us yeah. We know that this is all around as but we also know that because of these specific kinds of you know spaces of modernity that we habit. We know this is something that needs to be rejected but we do not know how fair it can be rejected.

And how much we need to embrace it and there is also politics of containment which the novel rather certainly advocates where we do have a character. We do have a Dalit character we do have a character who's from the untouchable caste. But he does not really disrupt anything it is not as a he is coming up with an alternative that the nationalist political front had not given to him.

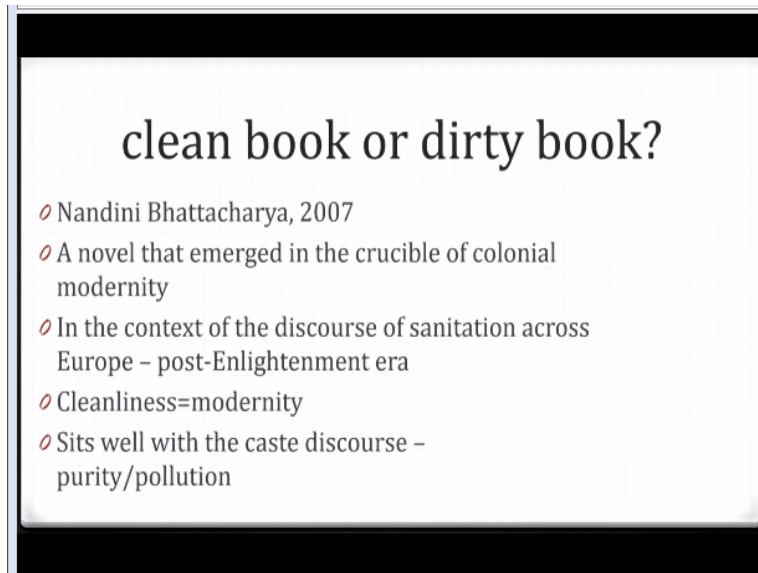
The alternatives that Bakha is willing to engage with or also the various alternatives provided by the nationalist of front. If we could think about an alternative in that sense may be a few for that you need to begin with Ambedkar. If you start with Gandhi there is only one trajectory that you can take it will follow only this politics of containment? But we have start with Ambedkar you realize that you cannot come this way at all.

It is a different trajectory altogether which eventually culminates in this ultimate rejection of the very religion that Gandhi was trying to reform yeah. And Bakha is also presented as a helpless

childlike character no sense of agency he submits or rather you know he is made to submit by this authority by this narrator to a Gandhi and form of pacifies and he is also respectable untouchable yeah.

In the beginning itself in the introduction itself in the introduction of the character itself Anand tells as he is not like the others who by who as a rule is unproved not so respectable. So, he is also character who can be easily appropriated by the middle class intellectual and are nationalist politics which is why which is what we also see when he responds to the various talks by Gandhi and later by Iqbal.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:57)



clean book or dirty book?

- o Nandini Bhattacharya, 2007
- o A novel that emerged in the crucible of colonial modernity
- o In the context of the discourse of sanitation across Europe - post-Enlightenment era
- o Cleanliness=modernity
- o Sits well with the caste discourse - purity/pollution

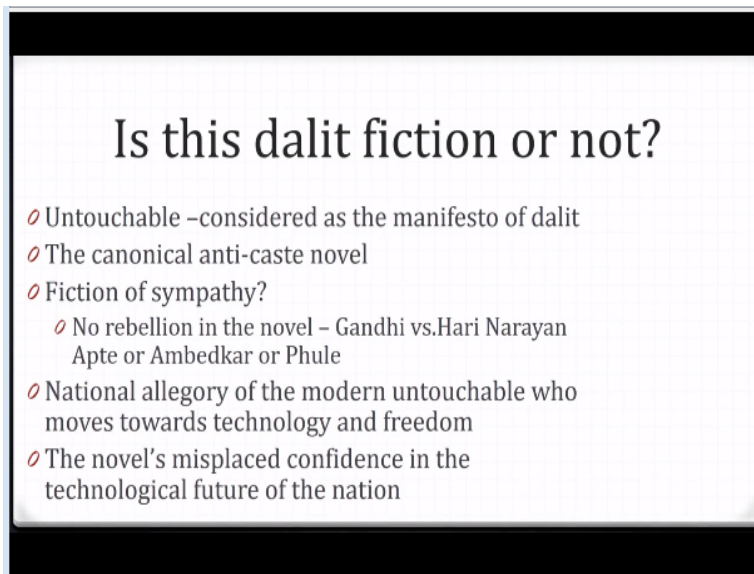
And Nandini Bhattacharya in 2007 she wrote an article about whether there is a clean book or a dirty book. And she also argues that this is a novel that emerged in the crucible of colonial modernity. And she also adds this point which is not been discussed before that this novel needs to be read in the context of this sanitation discourse of sanitation across you are a in the post and lighten man Era.

So, in the west there is a face in the post and lighten period from the 17th century onwards leading onto the 19 and 20th where cleanliness is equated to modernity yeah. There are these huge sanitation rights across the major cities of Europe. And we find that this discourse it is very

well with the traditional discourse of caste where you know this dichotomy between purity and pollution also excess.

So, we find both of these things coming together and it is a fine way in which modernity and tradition is both incorporate thus yeah. So, this question whether this is the Dalit fiction or not that has been debated a lot particularly because this novel was seen as a manifesto of Dalit writing and many Dalit intellectuals were very uncomfortable they totally rejected this claim. And this is also when seen as a canonical anti-caste novel till date.

(Refer Slide Time: 37:15)

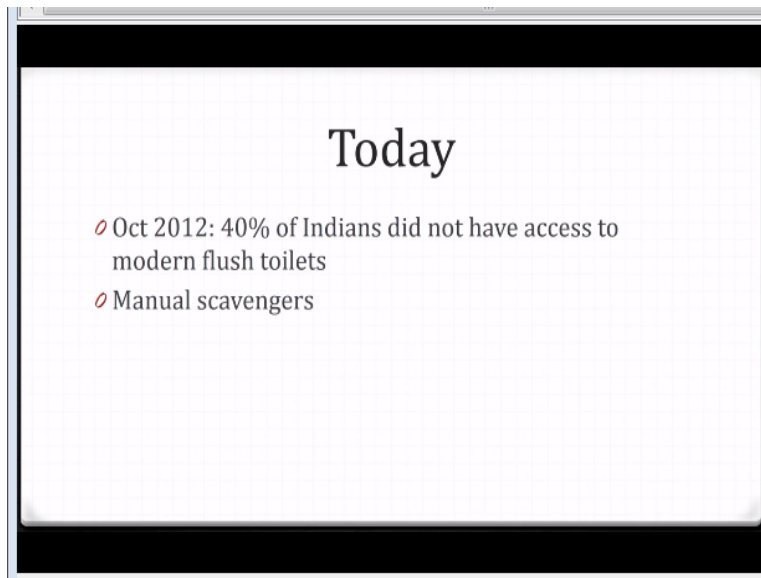


But this is also been seen as a fiction of sympathy because there is no sense of rebellion we only have the Gandhian model of responding to caste yeah, no not even a reference to the various other modes of responses to caste example by Hari Narayana they are Ambedkar or Phule or if you come further down to the south. We also have others to all was spoken against caste who introduced kinds of anti-caste rebellions and protest.

So, this has been seen as national allegory of the modern untouchable who moves towards technology and freedom. This is again from Snehal Shinghavi yeah, so here is this modern untouchable whom the modern secular middle class self is comfortable to engage with because just like me you are also matching towards technology and freedom yeah. It is not as if anything in separate you know you from me after this moment of Independence comes in.

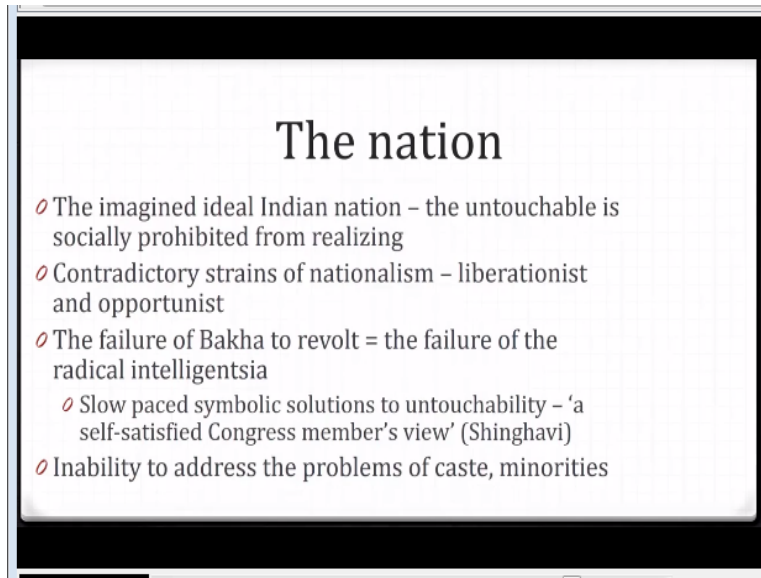
But we know that you know this is has not been in the case and novel also has a misplaced confidants in the technological future of the nation. Because for a long time if you look at the critical works on this novel this was like it had a very predictable familiar trajectory about how the novel talks about dissolution with a religion about mystery activities about Hinduism. And about Gandhi and finally technology is the solution yeah but it is said that this is again from the introduction to 2014 edition of untouchable.

(Refer Slide Time: 38:40)



This is from Ramachandra Ghuha's introduction where he says that when he access the latest figures which was October 2012 yeah 40% of Indians did not have access to modern flush toilets and manual scavenging still existed that this situation has not radically changed in the last like 4-5 years either yeah. So, how does a nation figure in this entire discourse which is projected within the novel.

(Refer Slide Time: 39:10)



There is this ideal imagined Indian nation which we are almost like you know just about just less than 2 decades away from accessing when the novel is written 1930s and we read this moment of Independence in 1947 year. So, we are almost there to access this ideal nation. But the untouchable the character of the untouchable is still prohibited socially from realizing India.

And that is seen not in a symbolic sense alone we also find in the way the untouchable character comes in contact with the touchable citizens of who are around him year. And we also find you know contradictory strains of nationalism which you know Narayan does reserve certain angulate for that he does not stick to the typical Gandhian Rhetoric. He also does to move a little away from that.

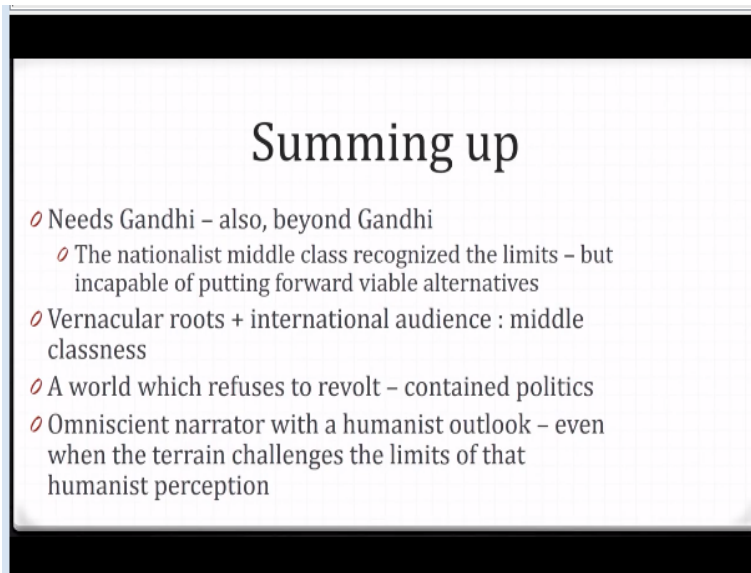
But the failure of Bakha to revolt year this is seen as this needs to be seen as a failure of the radical intelligence year. And making Bakha as a complacent character also fits in very well with the ongoing nationalist that we can Shinghavi says this is this only offers a slow placed symbolic solution to untouchability and it can be seen as a self-satisfied congress members view year.

And which is why the novel was celebrated even to if you just go randomly Google it will find it many writing a lot of praise lot of you know praise with things about . The novel saying till dates we do not have another novel to replace Anand’s work here. So, this also talks about the, this

also we should be able to see that this novel is also talking about the nations inability to address the problems of caste about minorities.

So, just summing up if you look at almost all the Gandhian novels not just this one and the other Gandhian novels including the two that we discuss gandhapura and waiting for the Mahatma that is a certain pattern which would emerge all of those may not be visible in all the works. But there is a certain pattern which emerges from all the Gandhian novels there is a need for Gandhi.

(Refer Slide Time: 41:17)

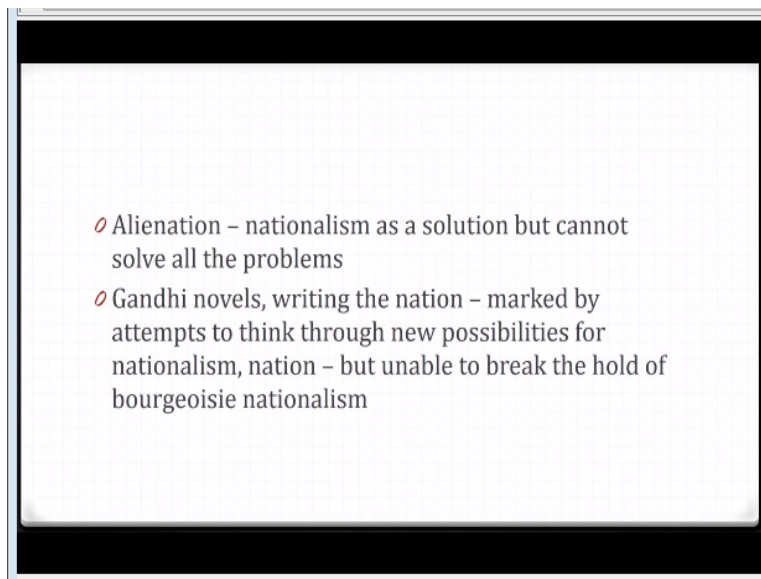


But the novels are also conscious about to in need to move beyond Gandhi yeah. It is also telling it is very telling in the sense it the authors of these novels where also part of the nationalized middle class. They recognize that Gandhian politics is good Gandhian ideals are very good but there are certain limits which needs to be several limits which need to be recognize.

But they are incapable of putting forward alternatives just like the nation also had been incapable of putting forward alternatives for a very long time and they also talk about their middle classness in particular ways they are in this you know in this in between space between vernacular roots and aiming for an international audience. They also present a world even when they are critiquing many of the social elements,

They always very conveniently and comfortably present a world which refuses to revolt with the set of characters who can be contain within the kind of politics that in the nationalist movement offers. And we also have always have omniscient narrator with a humanist outlook yeah and even when the terrain that is being dealt with for example caste or something like gender or alternative politics even when that terrain challenges the limits of humanist perception. We find that the narrator's voice continues to uphold the humanist outlook.

(Refer Slide Time: 42:37)



And that is also a sense of alienation with the ideas of nationalism because all of these novels also realize that nationalism is not the one stops solution from all the problems that even after the moment of Independence the nation's problems have really been result. The Gandhi novel which write the nation yeah particularly in the 1930s, 40s, 50s yeah they are all marked uh by attempts to think through the possibilities of nationalism nation they are able to critique it to a certain extent.

But what makes them a failed attempt to engage with this critiques is that may be failed as a to strong word not so successful attempt to critique with the idea of the nation is that, they are unable to break the hold of a bush one nationalism at least partly we begin to see that in the post-colonial times here they are also engage with their critiquing the nation. And also able to engage with wider set of alternatives okay.

I hope this make sense of the rather pack and lot of things brought in together I hope when you talk about when we discuss god of small things. We have a few more things to act to this and this needs to be kept in mind the moment we have a character like Velutha god of small things who is willing to rappel who is stepping out of the boundaries which were set for him, what happens to him with the end of the novel, what happens to Velutha towards the end of the novel (()) (44:13) yeah his skill yeah he dies yeah.

So, in this (()) (44:23) non-literary reading of this work sociological reading of a god of small things pointed this out very tellingly that the moment this figure the untouchable character is able to access to demand for constitutional rights demand for lot of you know right to equality he even loses his right to live even the fundamental right to live is taken away from him.

So, that is when we draw this arc from Bakha to Velutha and begin to see Velutha as the descendent is also this question to ask is really the descendant or a different kind of a Bakha whose allow to protestant certain minimalist ways. But after that if the protest going beyond a point yeah you lose the right to live yeah. If you try to link this up with a various things that the post independent nation has witnessed.

In terms of the practice of untouchability or in terms of caste rights and the deaths related to caste killing yeah this not very surprising either, thank you then.