

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

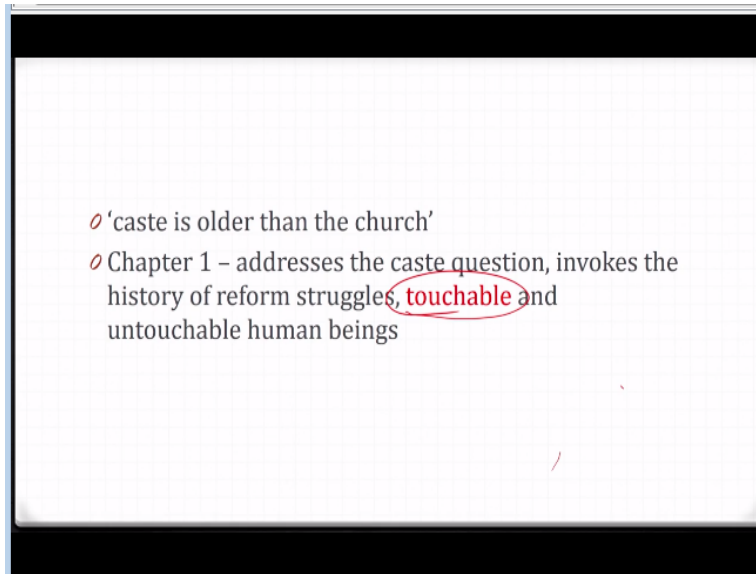
Lecture-25a
Reading The God of Small Things

Hello and welcome back to our session on the course Indian fiction English we are continuing to discuss the novel The God of Small Things which we started in the previous session. While reading a novel with multiple interpretative possibilities and novel like The God of Small Things, it is quite difficult to make a decision as to the frame work one could use for reading the work critically. It is in the size of thing to while thinking about the most appropriate curability material to introduce and class.

Because one could find different kinds of approaches and different ways of looking at the work, for this lecture we look at these various different alternative readings and tendencies and trends and frame works which we are brought into the understanding of The God of Small Things. You would be surprise that the range of critical material which excess about The God of Small Things and the many perspective this novel opened up for discussion.

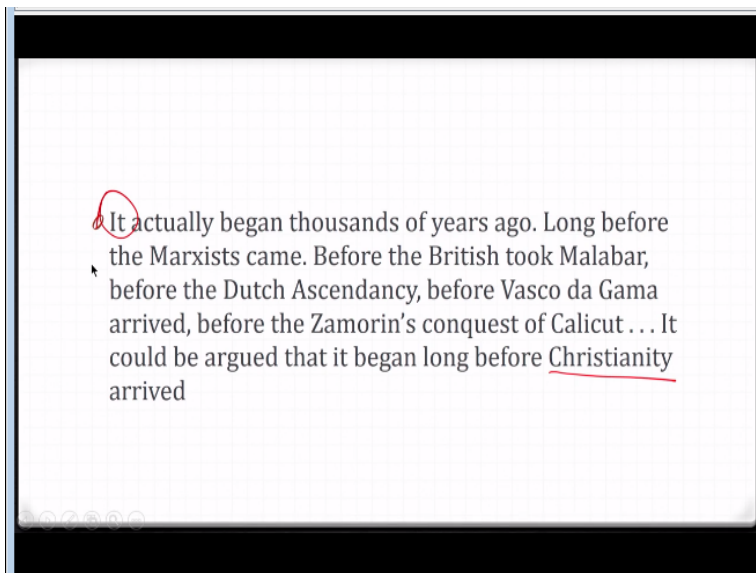
And the objective of this lecture is also to showcase and take you through journey of these varied perspectives which would perhaps open up have a news for you to understand the space of Indian fiction itself in a different way all together. I begin by drawing your attention to this short essay which appeared in PW title older than the church Christianity and caste and God of Small Things.

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This essay by Ajay Sekar draws the title older than the church from certain passage which appears in the novel. If you could read through that passage this is how it reads in the outset of the novel.

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It actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came, before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendancy, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut under the range of things like that. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived what is it being referred here yeah that is what makes this reading extremely interesting.

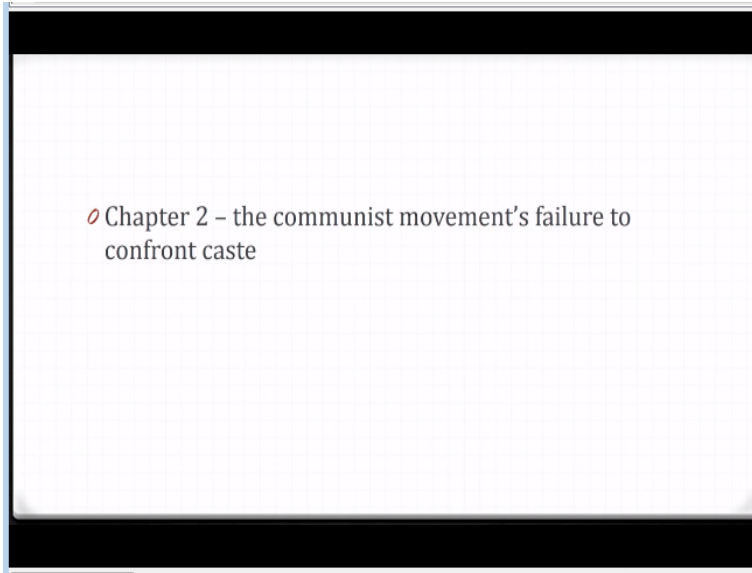
The reference is to caste the practice of the caste system and the varied ways and the interesting and sometimes unfortunate ways in which it operates. And this title is drawn from this idea that it began long before Christianity arrived and hence the title of this paper as older than church. In this entire novel we can find this underlying assumption that caste is older than the church older than communism that it becomes difficult to defy it, for religious or ideological purposes, write in the chapter1 we find the caste question being addressed by invoking the history reforms struggles.

And the reference to the touchable and untouchable human beings in page13 in chapter1 I read to you short except he worked past the village school that his great grandfather belt for untouchable children. We find the history of reforms struggles being in invoked over her. We find that the protagonist the narrative voice is employed in this novel. They also belong to a privileged upper caste.

Because they are shown to be belonging to a family where they had initiated certain reform movements for the uplift of untouchable children. And here I would like to especially mention the use of the playful use of the term touchable. We will find that the term touchable is used repeatedly to pose a very satirical and questioner will stands of the term untouchable being used, while untouchable gets understood as common sense.

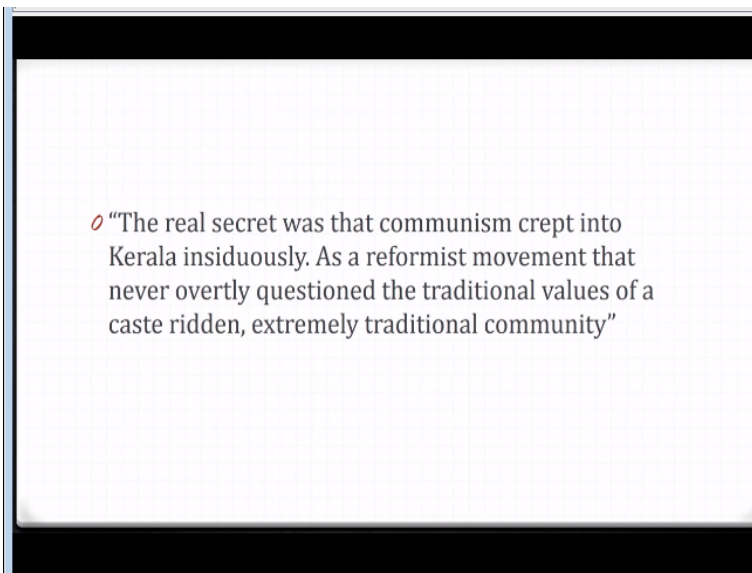
The moment the novel begins to use a term like touchable you begin to see the complete irrationality and the complete absurdity of the term untouchability And in the same way going along as Ajay Sekar's essay also would point out chapter 2 talks about the communist movements failure to confront caste which is way we would also find the reference to EMS ((04:41).

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The communist leader of Kerala as being high priest of communism and the reference is to the terms just high priest which invokes caste and religious foundations is in an antithetical presentation (()) (05:02) communism which denies the existence of hierarchical structures such as caste or with practices of religion. We find Rios novel employing various ways through which these existing frame works are challenged. We find a certain humor at work all the time whenever these critics have been made as well.

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And here also she makes this connection between communism and caste where the novel says the real secret was that communism crept into Kerala insidiously as a reformist movement that never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste ridden extremely traditional community.

And another context she also speaks about how even Christianity had seeped into Kerala like tea without even realizing that caste was also being integrated into it.

So, this connection is rather this nexus between caste communism and caste and how both these seemingly liberate forces of Christianity or of communism. How they are both routed in this fundamental even in this fundamental hierarchical present system of caste is certain theme that this novel continues to explore. And this is perhaps just one way of looking at the novel and today we have a presentation by one of our students Teza where she would also try to bring together these multiple perspectives on reading the God of Small Things.

This would also take you away from the familiar way of reading a novel she would also showcase how important. It is to bringing these multiple perspectives biggest at the heart of the novel lies this extremely important agenda lies this ambition to break past the orthodoxies of politics, gender, caste and religion. Whether Arundhati Roy is a novel successfully does that or not is a question perhaps you need to answer yourself after having read the novel.

I will just leave you with this note before handing this over to Teza in Ajay Sekar's essay. He argues that while the novel seems to be extremely promising to begin with, it does not seem to entirely break away from these hierarchical structures. If I could read to you a short excerpt from Ajay Sekar's essay towards the end of his argument. He says one striking difference in representational discourse regarding the gender question.

And caste question in the novel is it is submission or inability to attack the power social structures and world view presented by the letter. And he pursues this argument a little further and then says but unfortunately the narrative lacks this powerful subversive asterisk in confronting the ancient hierarchies. In the course of his argument Ajay Sekar also points out that perhaps this novel was successful to a very large extent in the context in the sense of question in the hierarchy of gender.

But it could not push past beyond a certain boundary when comes to caste that is what this work argues this piece of writing argues. I encourage you to be alert to these multiple readings of this

novel. Because this is one of those novels which opened up a lot of newer things out of a discussion a lot of things which Indian English fiction was either to silent about lot of things which were not part of any narratives space within this body of writing.

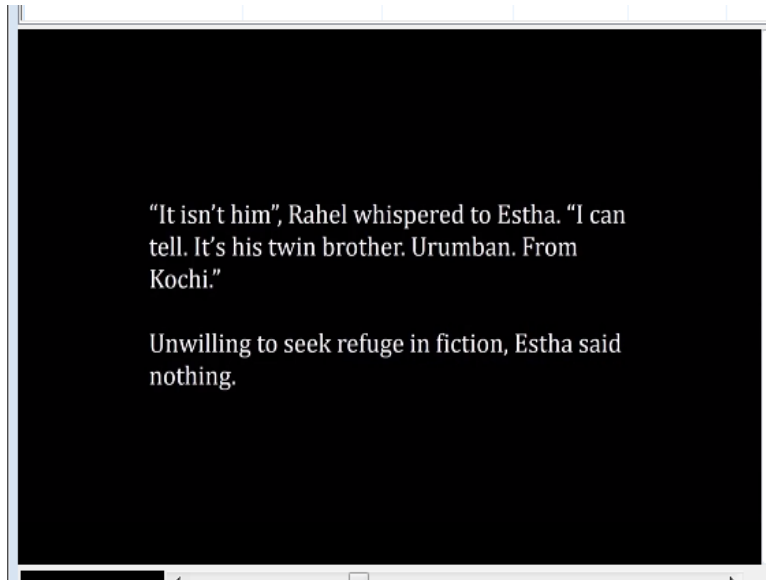
So, here we have this opportunity in the form of this novel to talk about to lot of things which otherwise Indian English fiction thought would not concerned them way, the way agree with the things presented in the many readings or in this narratives space. It is important for us to engage with the novel and also with these alternate readings available about this work a fiction. I thank you for listening I will also invite Teza to present her views on the critical reading of this novel The God of Small things.

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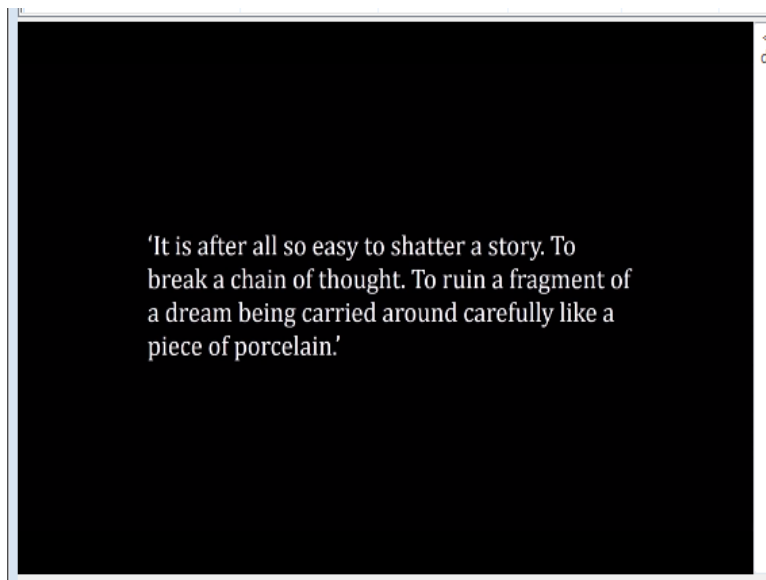
The God of Small Things is a book of fiction written by (()) 09:49) published in 1997. It is oven around to people who find themselves unable to take refuge and fiction.

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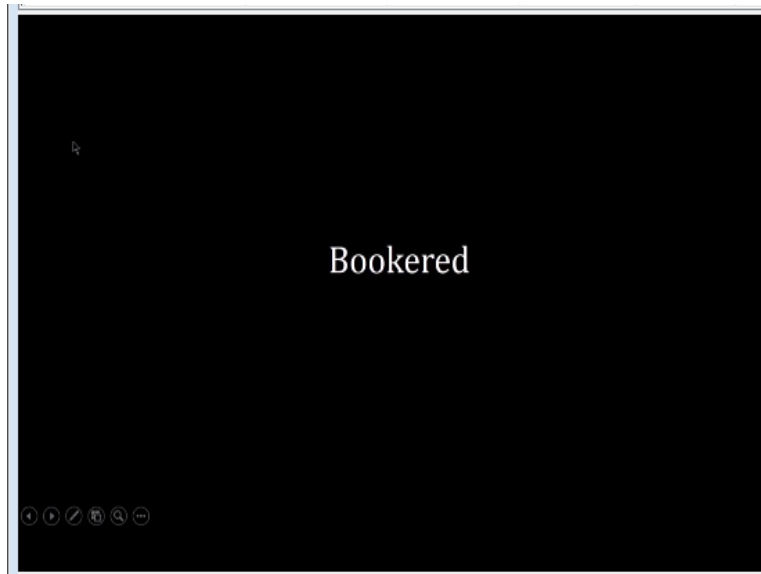
And hence the book requires you to instinctively collude in the conspiracy of its fiction taking care not decimated with adult carelessness or affection.

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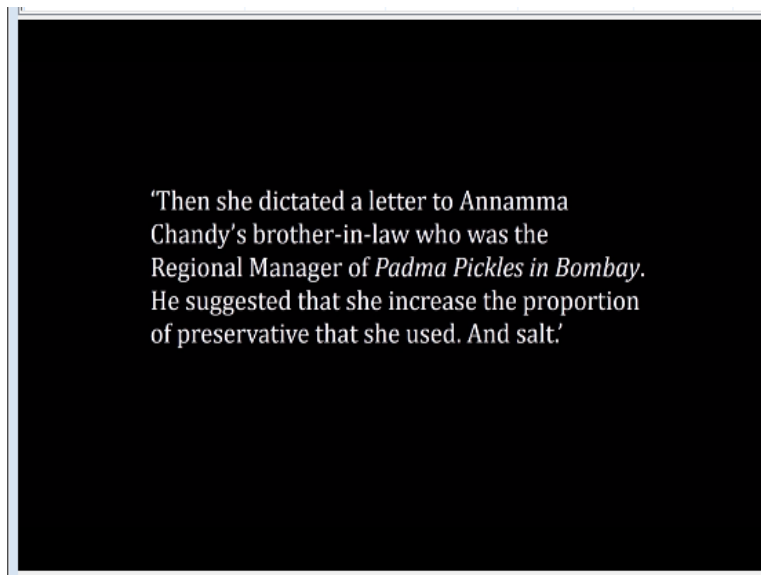
It is after all, so easy to shatter a story the fiction of god of small things. If we follow the line of this thought where shattered almost immediately.

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In 1997 October it got bookered and Roy became that girl with the book a tattoo widely red applauded critic, interestingly in her novel Roy paste a tribute to that earlier book a event which chutnify history and pickle time may be there is more preservative in the god of small things.

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And maybe we should take it with a pinch of salt there is of course god big god this structural, the political counter poised again to small god the personal the private.

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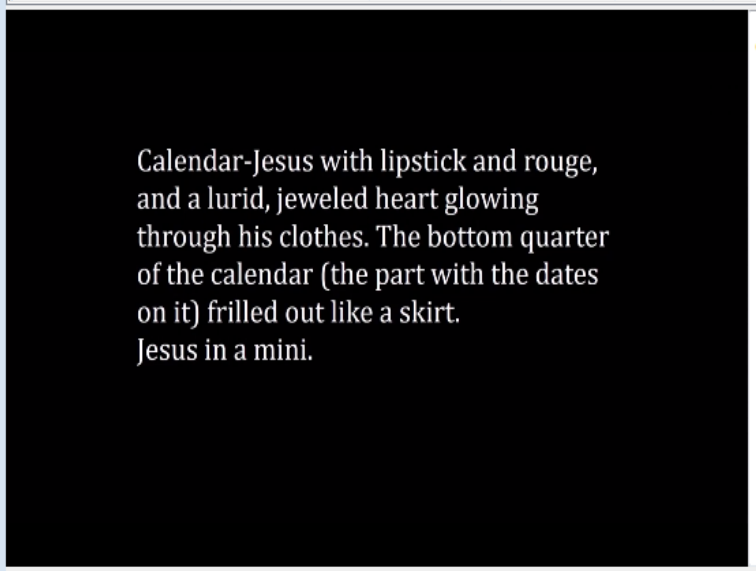
'The Big God howled like a hot wind, and demanded obeisance. Then Small God (cozy and contained, private and limited) came away cauterized, laughing numbly at his own temerity.'

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'Nothing mattered much. Nothing much mattered. Because Worse Things had happened. In the country that she came from, poised forever between the terror of war and the horror of peace, Worse Things kept happening.'

And in Roy's fiction they prevaricates of the big god they seems to unfold a conversation with the small and unimportant god.


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Calendar-Jesus with lipstick and rouge,
and a lurid, jeweled heart glowing
through his clothes. The bottom quarter
of the calendar (the part with the dates
on it) frilled out like a skirt.
Jesus in a mini.

There are of course other gods some comically celestial inhabiting calendars, lending his years to delighted litany scatology and others tragically human inhabiting a less than human existence.

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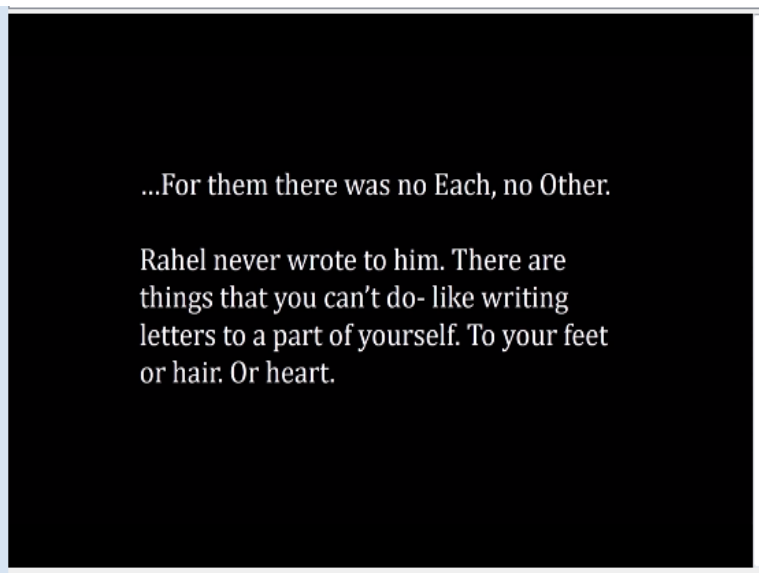
The God of Loss, the God of Small Things.
Naked but for his nail varnish.

The gods may be understood only in relation to the small things two small things an identical.

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People the pages of this story twins (()) (11:47). There are others small things.

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Rahel's toy wristwatch had the time
painted on it. Ten to two.

Rahel looked at her watch. Ten to two.
Still no train.

"So long you took, Baby Kochamma," she
said. "It's ten to two."

A faulty record of time. Ten to two.

In fact the story loops around from one small thing to another.

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Past the Audience that had to move its
legs again. Thiswayandthat. The red sign
over the door said EXIT in a red light.
Estha EXITed.

It takes (()) (12:03) in this tiniest of footsteps, this monocle of smallness allows for a perspective that is free of all adult in his one sees moves stops and reads through the book with distinctively small thing sensibility.

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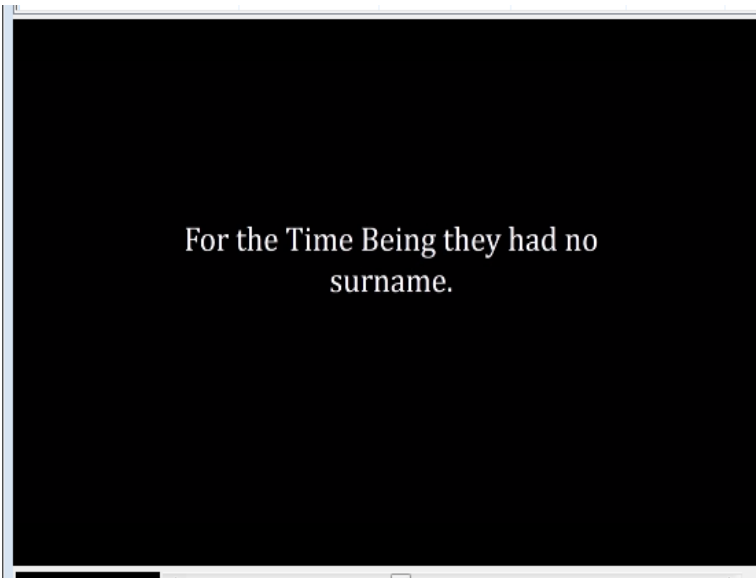
Margaret Kochamma told her to
Stoppit. So she Stoppited.

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UPPERCASENESS
lowercaseness

According to Gareth Convel realism is supposed to reflect and dramatize the only contingency of ideas, for a child everything is contingent. When a mother says (()) (12:40) it is (()) (12:42) dilemma to the child because as for if the child is concern there is (()) (12:48).

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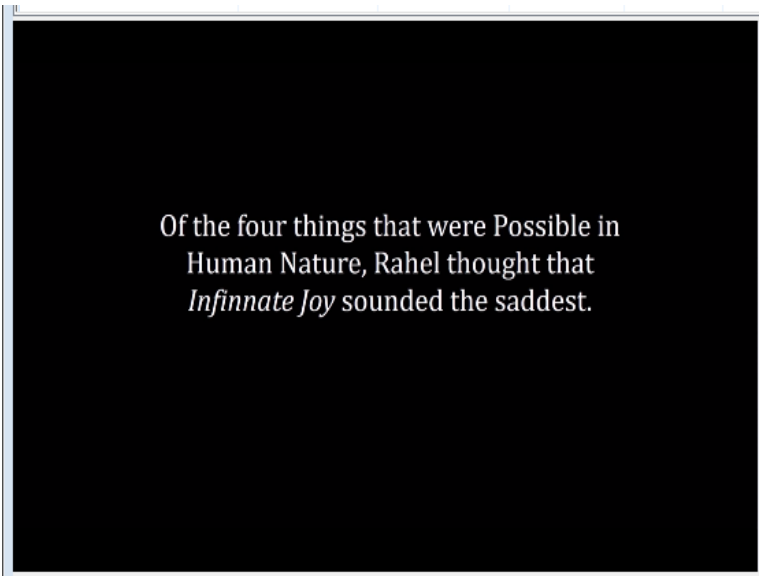


And it has to go through this whole process of attributing this concrete (FL) that is truly beyond him perhaps it is because of this childish (FL) and with adult concepts that Roy engages in excessive uppercaseness.

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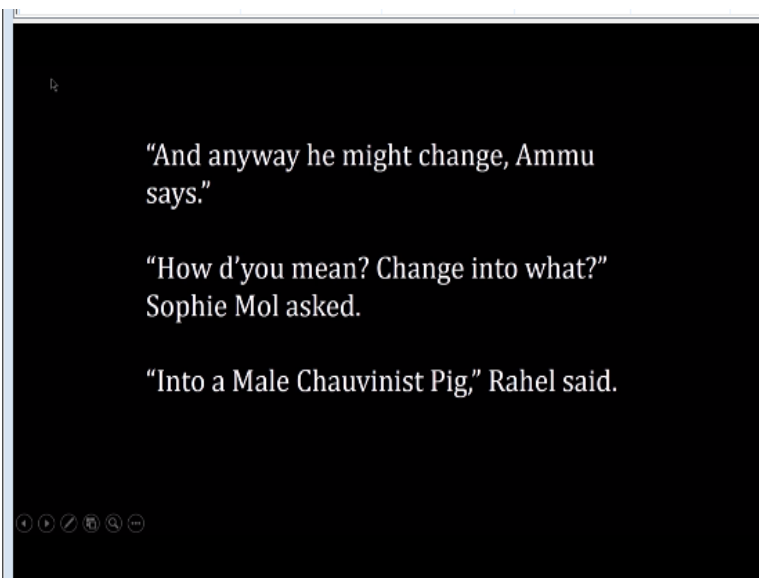


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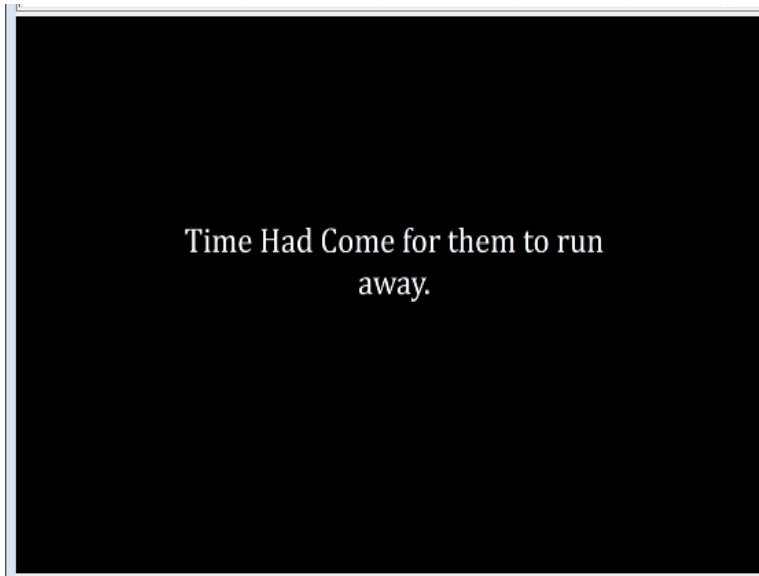
Uppercaseness has to be understood from the lowercaseness of the child, in a child's irrationally uppercased old.

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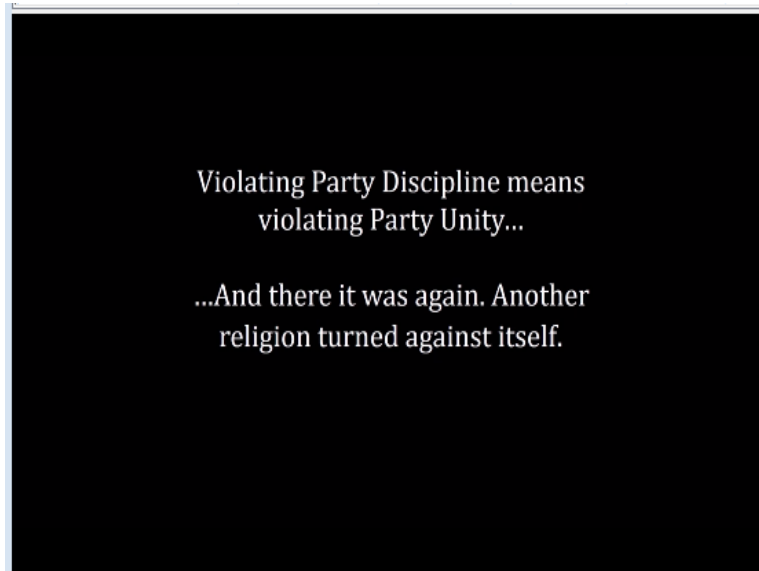
There is something that is given to him that he finds inexplicable.

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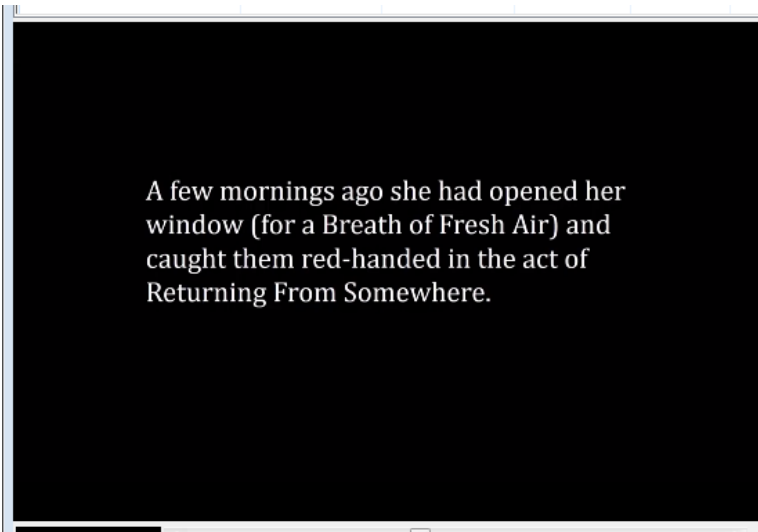
And that he has to reconcile with gods of course need to be mentioned in the upper case.

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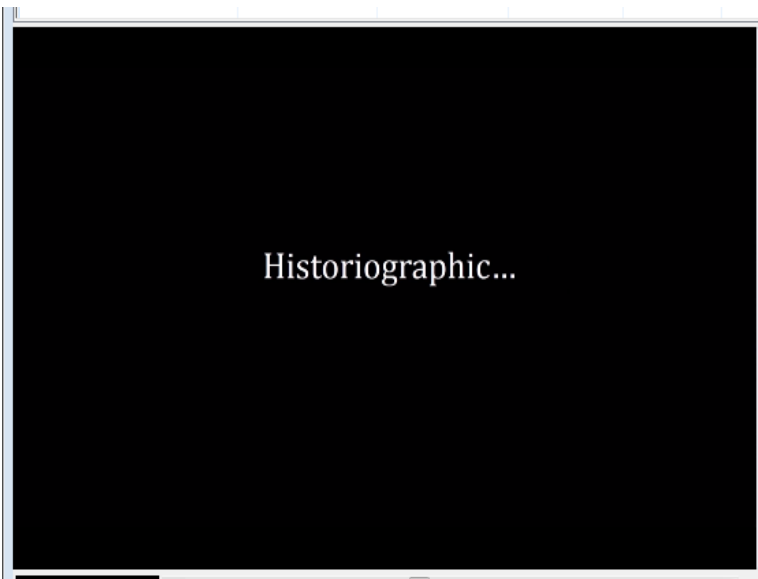
According to Roy Kerala houses four of the world's greatest religions Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Marxism perhaps the gods do reduces to children.

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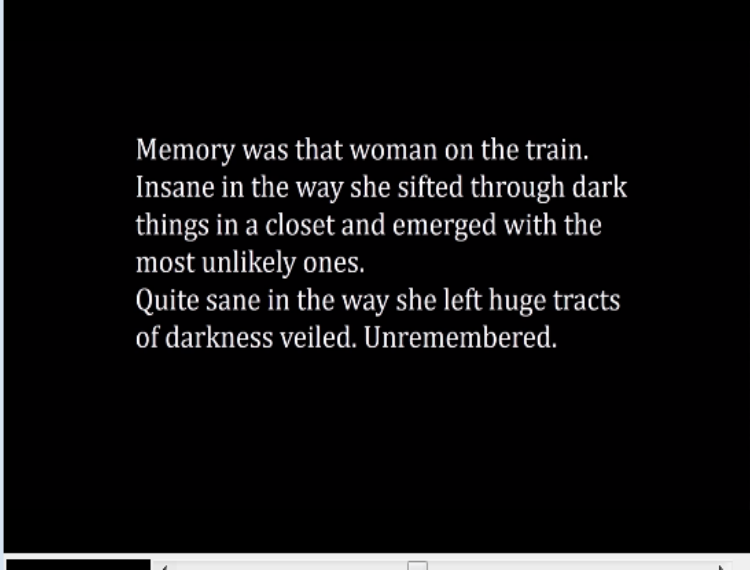
They will daring as offering as no explanations or perhaps it is we who we who have with such adult insecurities inflated of fears to gods. One would not know and hence the uppercise this indiscriminate upper case.

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The sense of history that god is small things gives as is one that is narrated through memory where a small god mediates.

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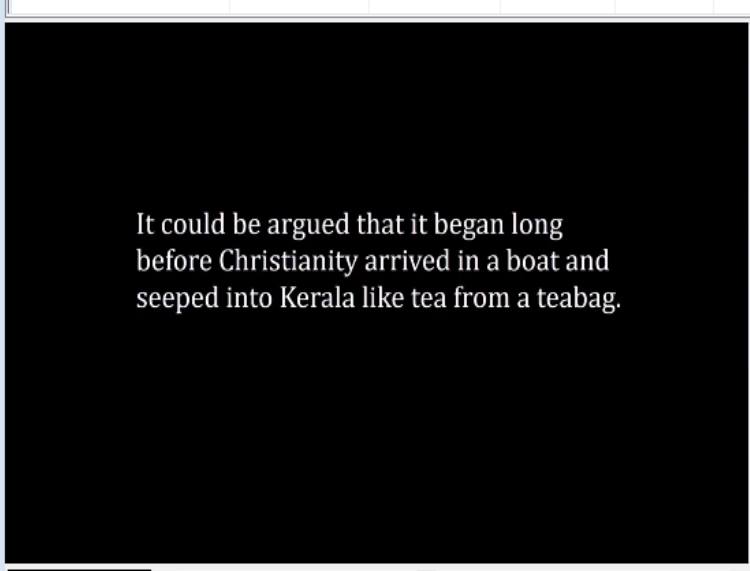


Memory was that woman on the train.
Insane in the way she sifted through dark
things in a closet and emerged with the
most unlikely ones.
Quite sane in the way she left huge tracts
of darkness veiled. Unremembered.

The incomprehensibility of a big god determining history and its loss. The incidence on the slide happens on a train on a Sunday train Rahel encounters the woman who is coughing out phlegm, rapping it up in Sunday paper pieces that she tears up from the papers on a lap needly forming pockets and arranging the packets on the vacant state of opposite her as though she setting up a phlegm stall all the while she is taking to yourself in this soothing and consoling voice.

One has to approach god in small things with this knowledge there are huge tracks unremembered and yet to when the terrace strikes.

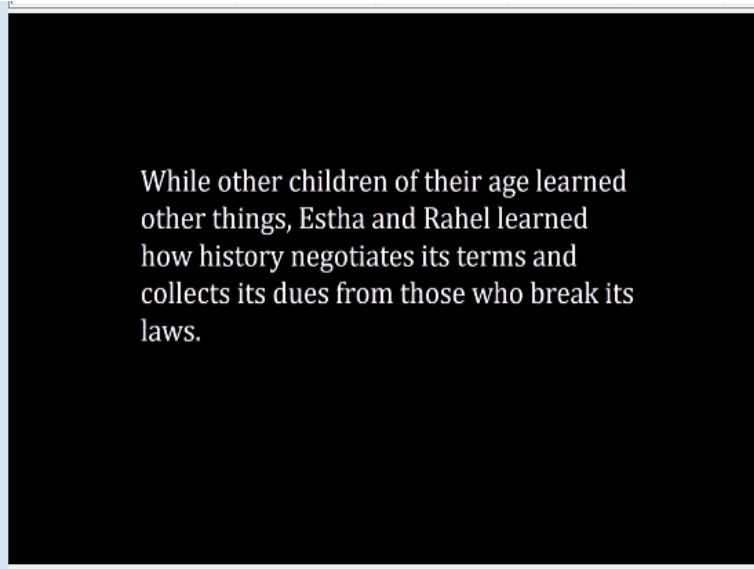
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It could be argued that it began long
before Christianity arrived in a boat and
seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag.

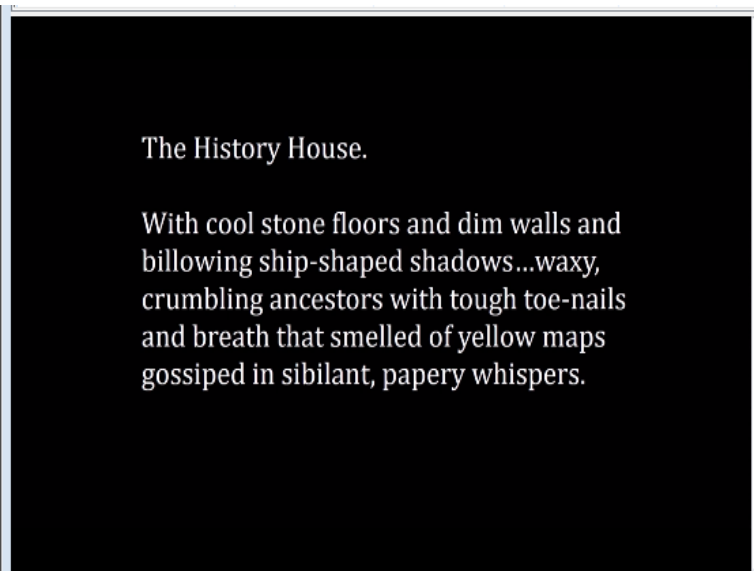
It is translated into a history lesson for all (()) (15:08).

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It is from the history house the terror chooses to begin it is expand to mine in the textuality.

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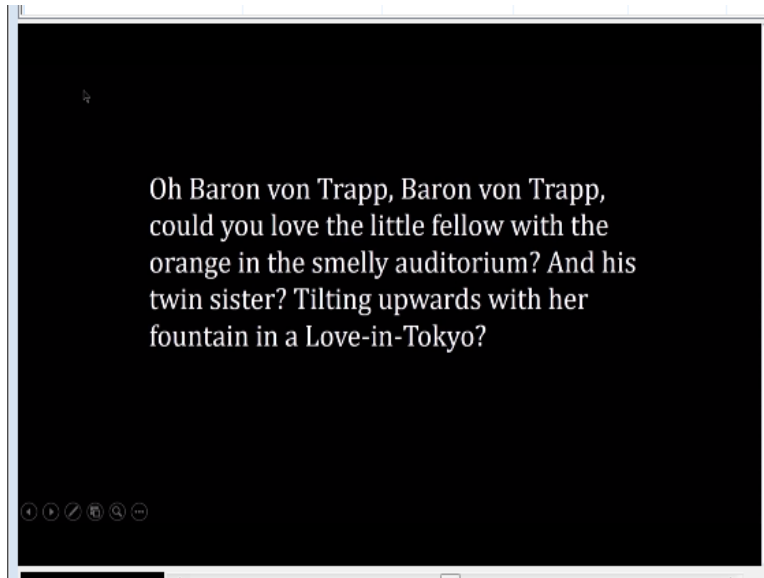


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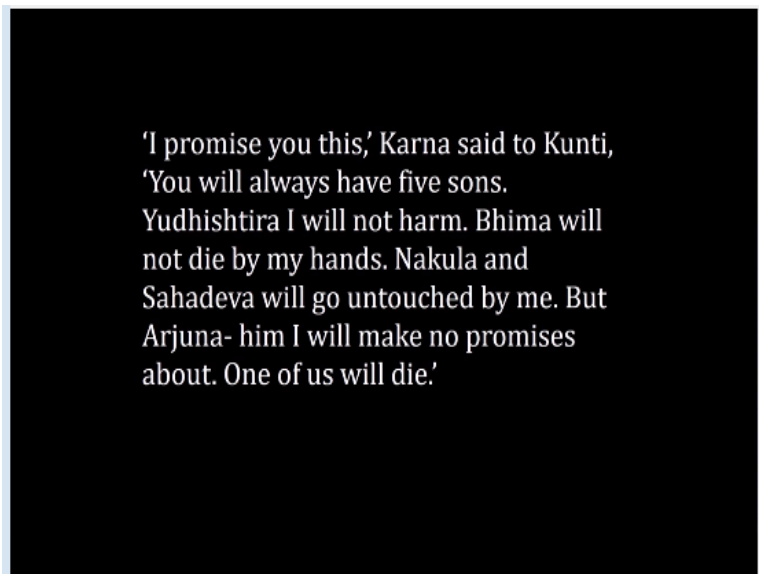
In the textuality of the novel covers this (()) (15:25) ranging from the twines bed time Kipling to the coated and misquoted Shakespeare.

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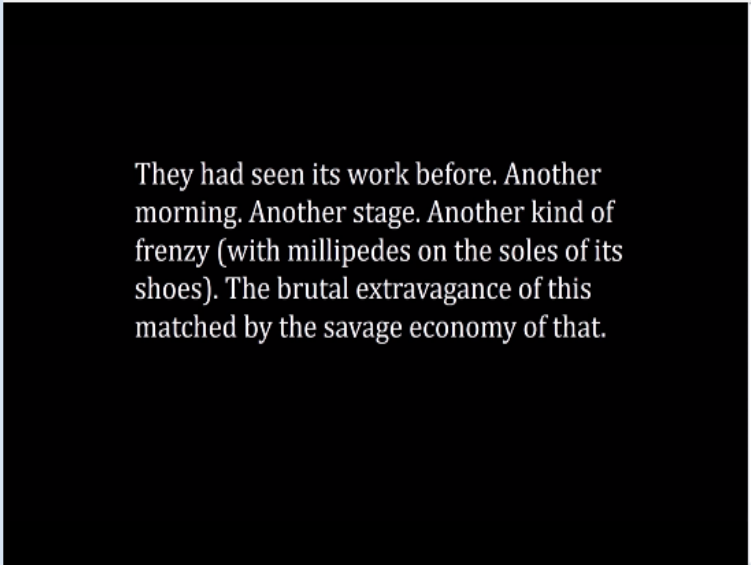
The narrative goes as far as to engage captain Baron von Trap from the sound of music which they watching for the third time in a conversation with the disowned twins.

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There ask transfer the Mahabharata Karna show and Bhima’s revenge that a pelted into the text through Kathakali.

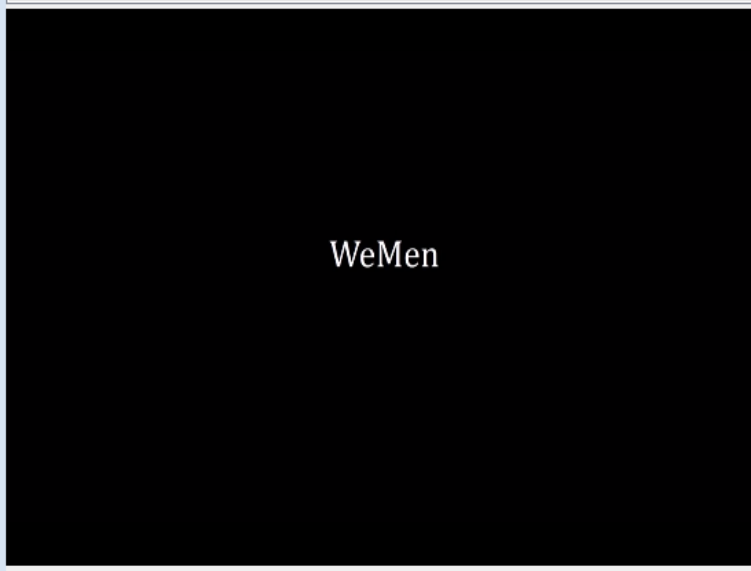
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They had seen its work before. Another morning. Another stage. Another kind of frenzy (with millipedes on the soles of its shoes). The brutal extravagance of this matched by the savage economy of that.

One finds the twins trapped in this bog of a story that was and was not theirs Kathakali the art form itself is interlaced into the text through the B sense of loss. And as an evidence to the change towards which the landscape of (()) (16:11) account.

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WeMen

There are plenty of women in the novel and these women makes sense of in a relation to the man.

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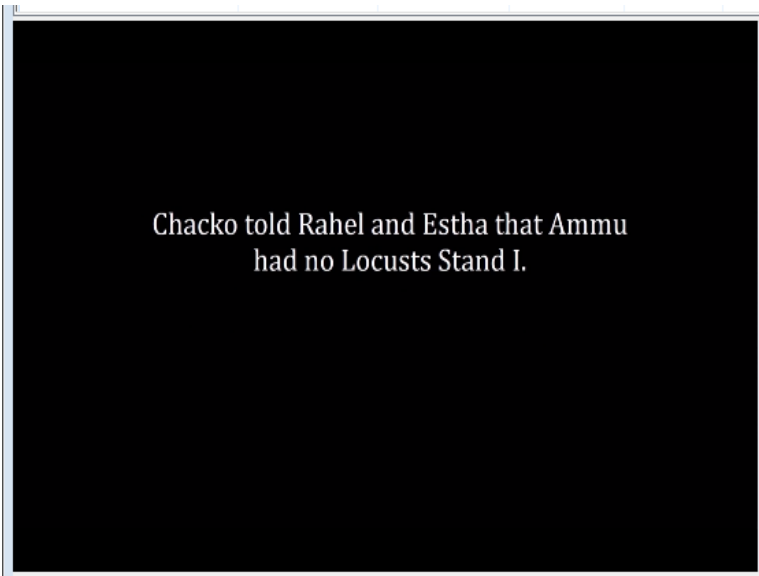
At Pappachi's funeral, Mammachi cried and her contact lenses slid around in her eyes. Ammu told the twins that Mammachi was crying more because she was used to him than because she loved him.

The man who beats her with braswast or the man who makes a write I love you, I love you in a diary every day before she goes to bed.

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Baby Kochamma resented Ammu, because she saw her quarreling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of the wretched Man-less woman.

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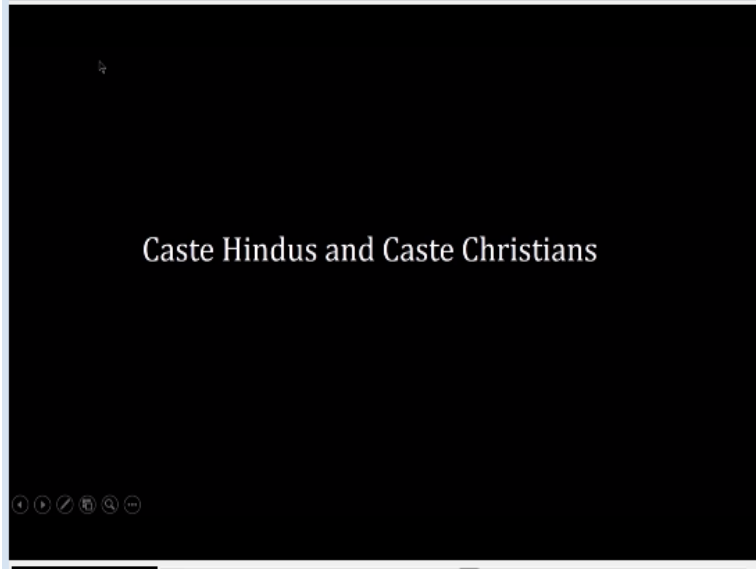
Are the **system** that reduces her existence to sufferance.

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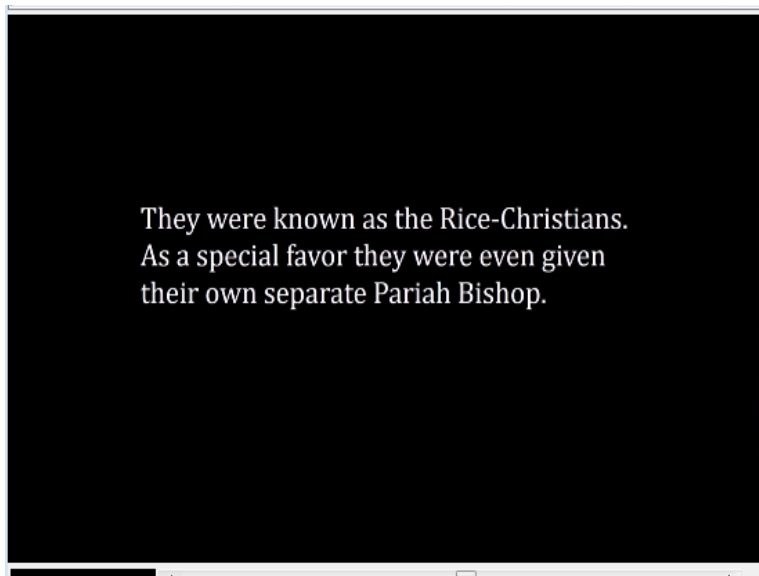
Roy's fiction is considered to have reconstituted literary focus into the discussion of caste what it lay Domes for a while sense untouchable was brought to the four once again.

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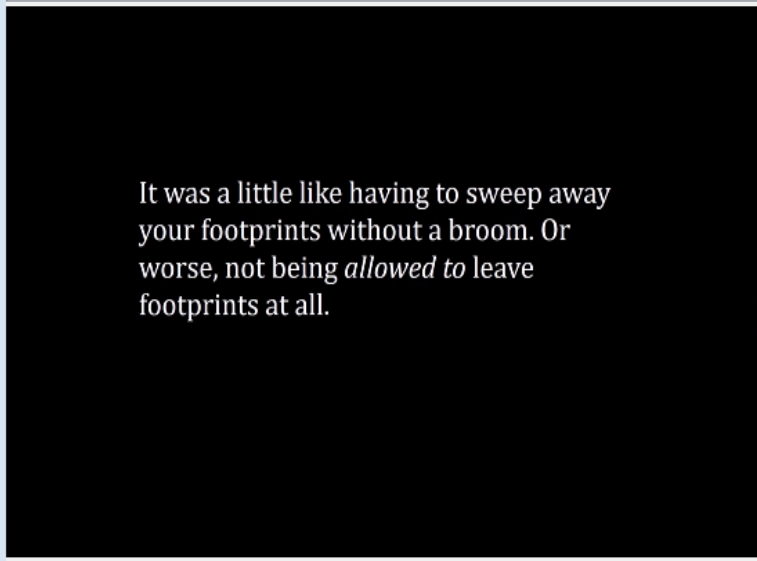
God is small things is discussion of caste takes place in the context of Christian converts from the untouchables who had 4 feet.

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The schedule caste privileges by which is being in a technically costly society.

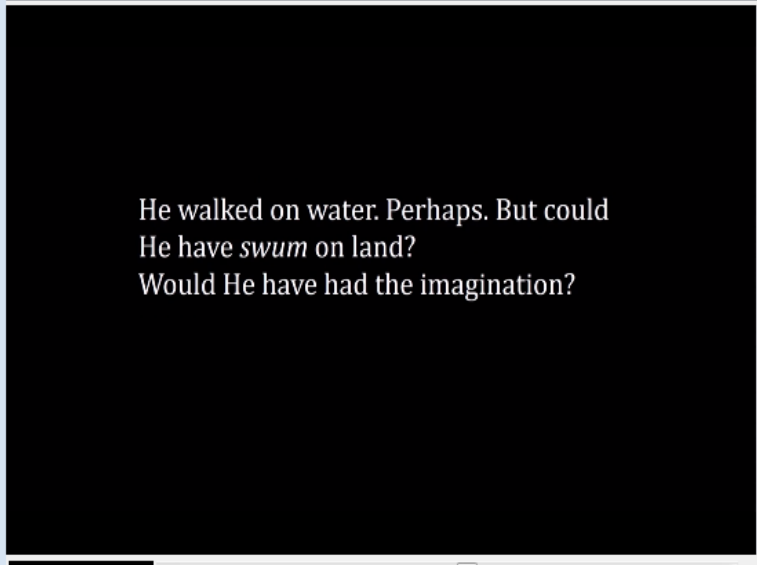
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It was a little like having to sweep away
your footprints without a broom. Or
worse, not being *allowed to leave*
footprints at all.

Here we have a god who walks in water who tells you to love the enemy.

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He walked on water. Perhaps. But could
He have *swum* on land?
Would He have had the imagination?

And when it comes to the reality of the land we find the Christianity is unable to swim simply it is lastly imagination to rework the Ethas of the land a little water that could have challenged the territorialities of the region might have aided them.

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Traumatic Irony

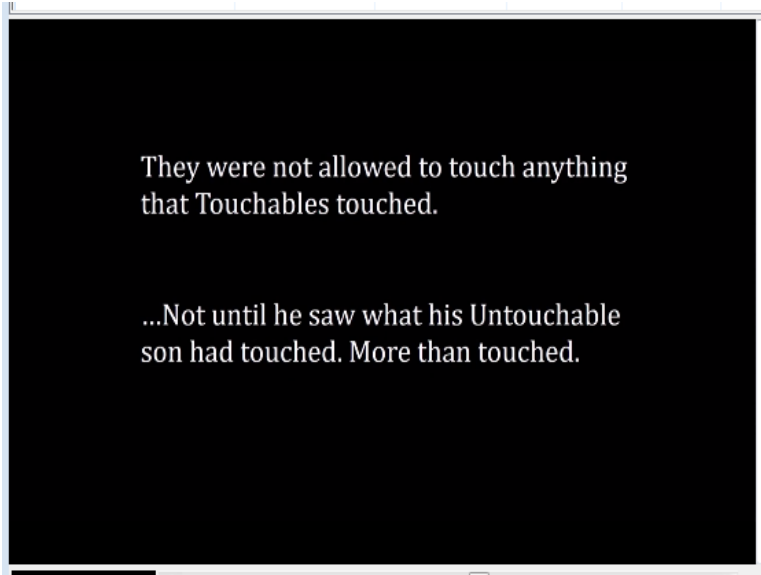
Roy writes with generic helpings of Irony said the Irony is not as dramatic as it is traumatic this traumatic, the sourness of metals smell of bus fares for instance something so common place deployed all of the text which childish puerility strikes the reader as the child's perspective imprint of trauma only to late.

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Rahel could smell the sheaf of bus tickets
and the sourness of the steel bus rails on
the conductor's hands.

The quip of the touchables.

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So, you big cautiously found all over the text it is strips naked the deluded logic of it is opposite the untouchable.

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The reverse readings twins and their story even when it does not do so obviously doe make available to the reader a tonality of Malayalam.

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And hence a film actor becomes a Mactor who did occasionally Fil.

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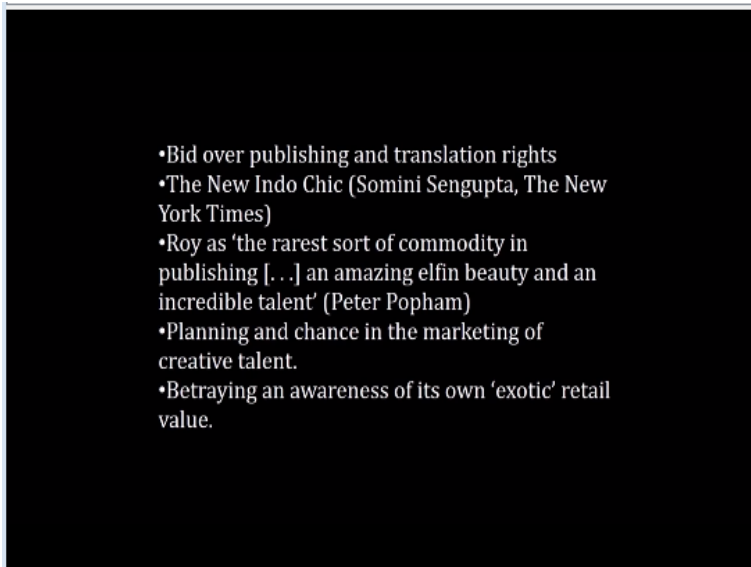
And Owl becomes Nowl.

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"You were right. It wasn't him. It was Urumban."
"Thang god," Rahel whispered back.
"Where d'you think he is?"
"Escaped to Africa."

These devices these tonal devices the imaged the metaphase all of a postmodern sleight of hand or used so, repetitively in the book that Ramu seems anxious to ensure the none of these images left of as loosens once the story draws to a class, at the end there is a desperate tying of a ends. And it is this anxiety that is going to set off a set is of on unreading regard small things
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- Bid over publishing and translation rights
- The New Indo Chic (Somini Sengupta, The New York Times)
- Roy as 'the rarest sort of commodity in publishing [. . .] an amazing elfin beauty and an incredible talent' (Peter Popham)
- Planning and chance in the marketing of creative talent.
- Betraying an awareness of its own 'exotic' retail value.

God is small things as a bookered event has to be viewed adjunct to the historical movement where India began to take it in place and the semi-periphery than on the periphery. And the marketing of Roy's novel contributed to the domestication of India for the western consumer. This view contest the idea of Roy as a finding discovery an unschooled genius because in an industry that honors as and markets created potential chance in planning or a complexes chance

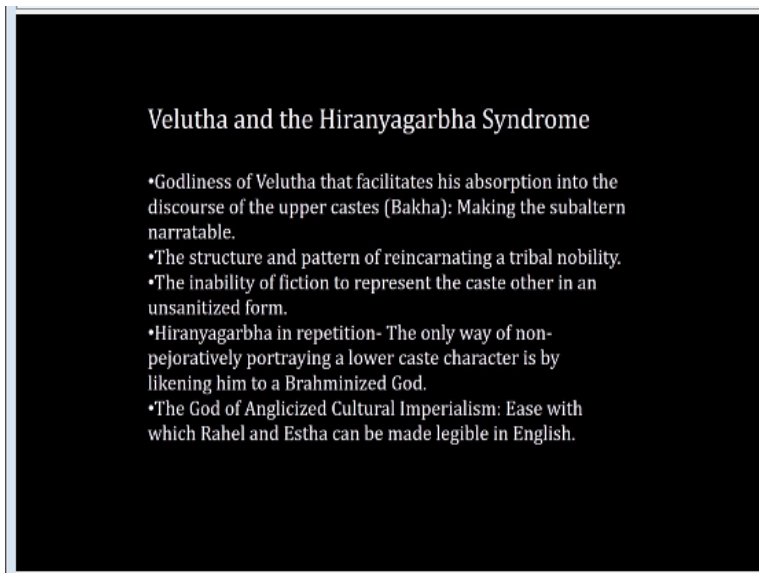
serves is in (()) (19:46) for the planners and hence god is small things is a conscious retail attempt.

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God

(Refer Slide Time: 19:55)



There Velutha's characterized an exceptional unsafe paravan a standalone (()) (20:03) the Hiranyagarbha syndrome of Indian English writing. The argument is that the (()) (20:10) only if he is absorbed into the discourse of the upper caste. If not explicitly then by liking him likening him to a Brahminized God with upper caste which is Bakha from last class and able body very

good experts, very committed to his work all of this virtues do not put him with the rest of the suboltance.

It sets him apart that makes him a standalone all of these are issues for (()) (20:51) where a privileged and secured as writes about a caste other. It seems that the only way of non-pejoratively for train the other is if he is figuratively reincarnated into the upper class and class virtues. As if the common place of the lower caste isn't itself a shameful thing to be rented literature care further argues that no whether how much Royal lends the dichotomy between the big god and the small god.

Rahel and Estha private spear it is very much like the big god of anglicized cultural imperialism. Because it is this semblance that makes them legible as Indian writing in English to the small things.

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'Kulcha' Baiting

Strategic exoticism

Lushly romantic images

Designed as much to challenge as to
profit from consumer needs

Neocolonial commodification

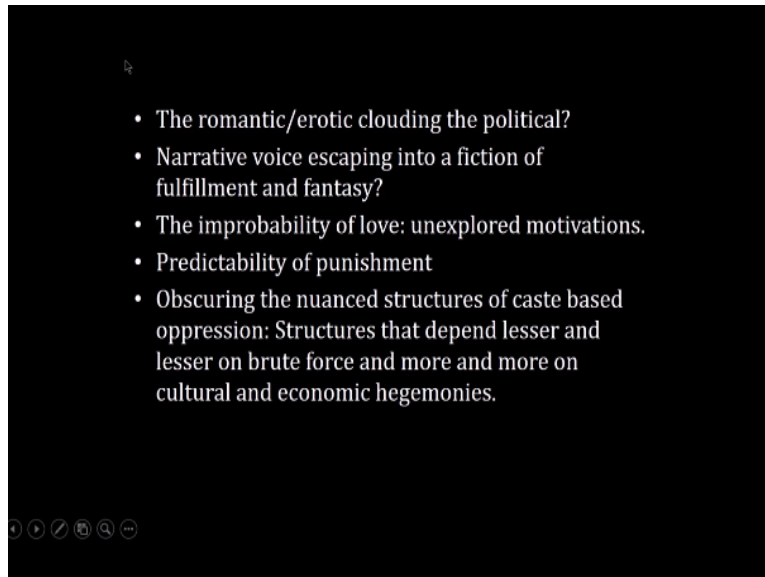
Row is accused of, culture dating I think it is a part (()) (21:47) I am not sure what makes god is more things a mere colonial commodity is this strategically exotic seniors of the text. And the lushly romantic imagery that it leaves in it is weak but many among you also makes a comparison between the cover design of the book and the cleverly auscultated way in which once stumbles into the authors photograph which is dreamy inviting.

Here there is a complexion of stylistics of the text with the stylistics of the author, thus argued that the authorial persona was carefully managed as to portray Roi as this vital outgrowth of her own fictional world. What exactly is Roy capitalizing on.

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UPPERCASENESS
lowercaseness

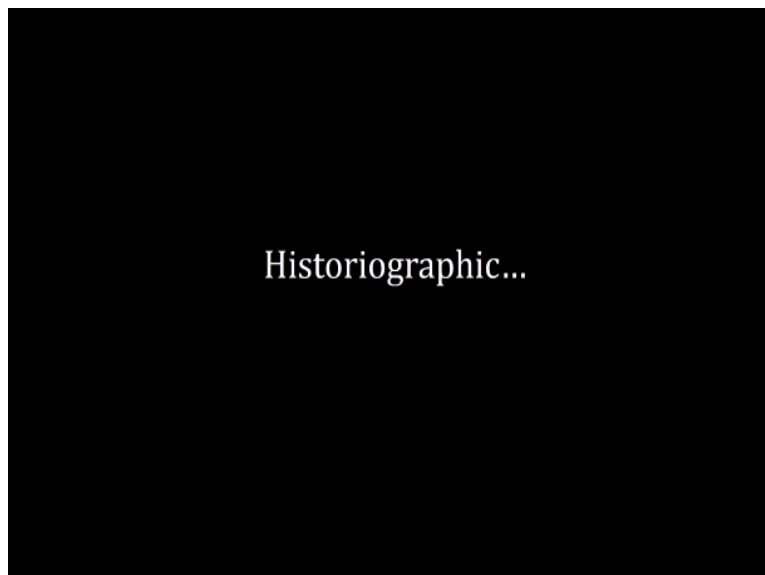
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It is ages Ahamed who wonders if the romantic and the erotic does not cloud in the political in the god small things. In the improbability of love between Ammu and Rowther and Roy's refusal to offer explanations. In the culmination of the text that text solely under a romantic and erotic lines as though it is trying to escape in a fiction of fulfillment and fantasy. In the predictability of the punishment accorded to Velutha (()) (23:15) wanders.

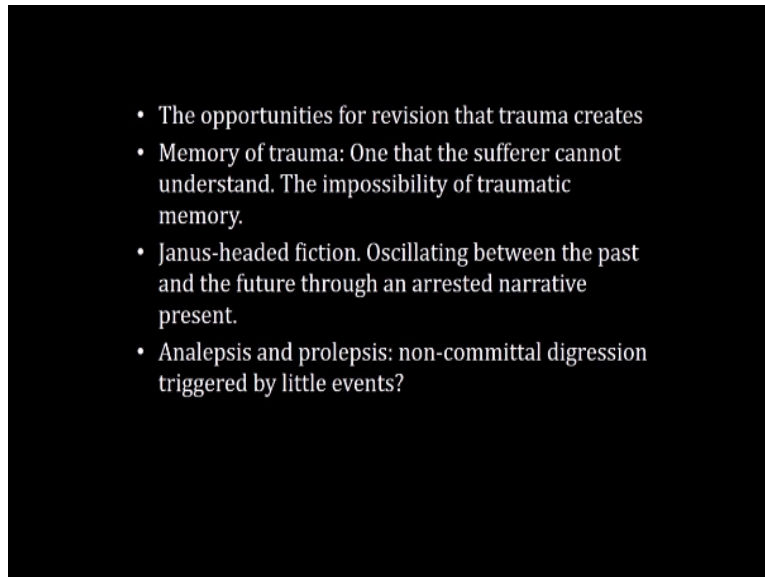
If Roy is not obscuring the nuances of cast addition that rely on several apparatuses far more compelling then droop falls.

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Catholic Arothe identifies the possibilities of trauma.

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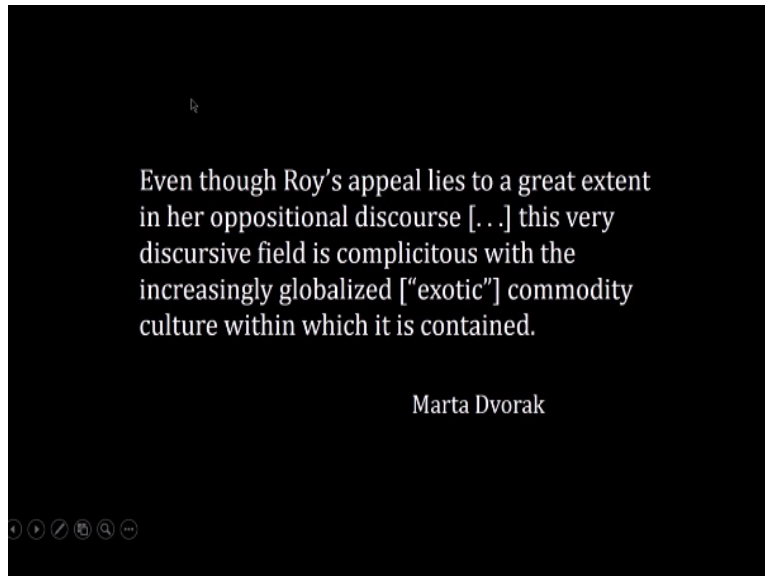


In the opportunities of revision that it creates, memory of trauma is thus one that is it only accessible to the I suffering. Traumatic memory is thus an impossibility and hence a history narrated through traumatic memory becomes a Janus-headed fiction that looks into the past and the future from an arrested narrative present. One wonders whether this process of Analeptic flashback and prolepsis flash-forward is a non committal act to both the past and the future whether this narration triggered by little events is running both from the past and the future.

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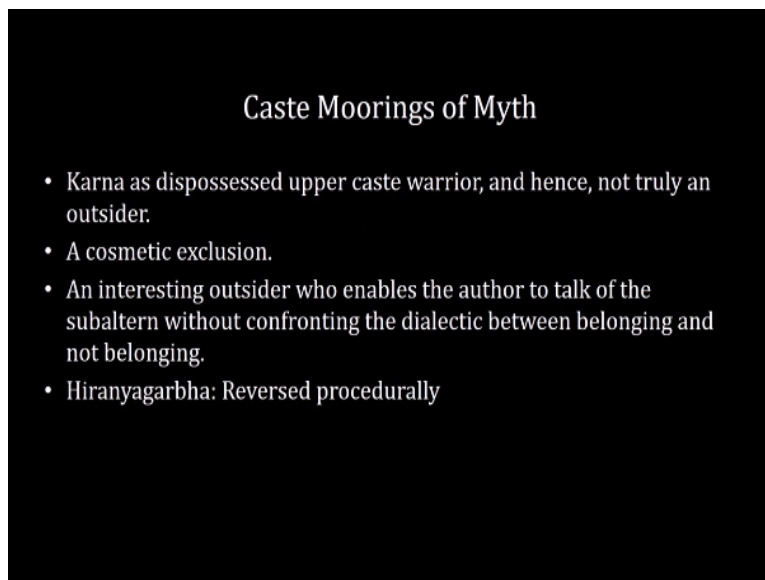


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In the argument that Roy is trying as much to profit from the commodity culture that she is trying to critic. Her depiction of truncated Kathakali performances becomes problematic.

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Justice captain (()) (24:39) present anglicized cultural imperialism, Karna represents a reversed Hiranyagarbha where if factually privileged persons fiction of un-belonging. A cosmetic exclusion is construed into that voice of the subaltern.

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Women

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- The personal becoming the political.
- Acceptance that there are certain kinds of politics that are to do with inter-personal relationships than with grand narratives. Reclamation of the Small Things.
- Integration of gender and caste into the tacit sanctioning of violence demonstrates how feminist geopolitics engages locationally with power structures.
- Within the politics of desire, is Ammu's death arbitrary and astonishing? Upward mobility is daring, but not so in the reverse?

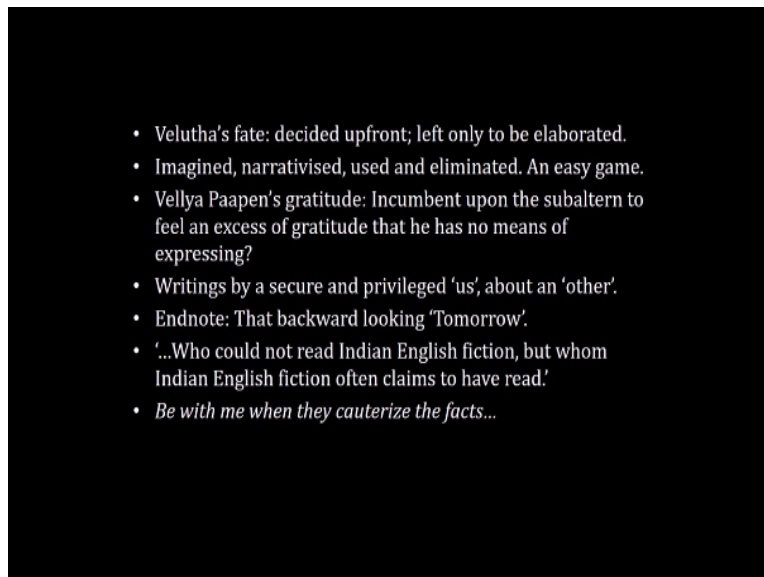
Feminist readings of the text applaud the confluence of the personal and the political because it involves an acceptance that there are certain kinds of politics that it do with the interpersonal relationships than with grand narratives. Demonstrating the interplay of gender and caste in the political sanctioning of violence shows the geopolitical engagement of feminism with power structures. And finally it suspect Roy's feminist intend musing if the death of Ammu was not arbitrary and astonishing with if the only way Ammu's death can be mutely accepted is if 1 concedes that.

In the politics of desire upward mobility is daring and desirable but it is not show when one wants to move down and that notion is problematic for feminist ideologues.

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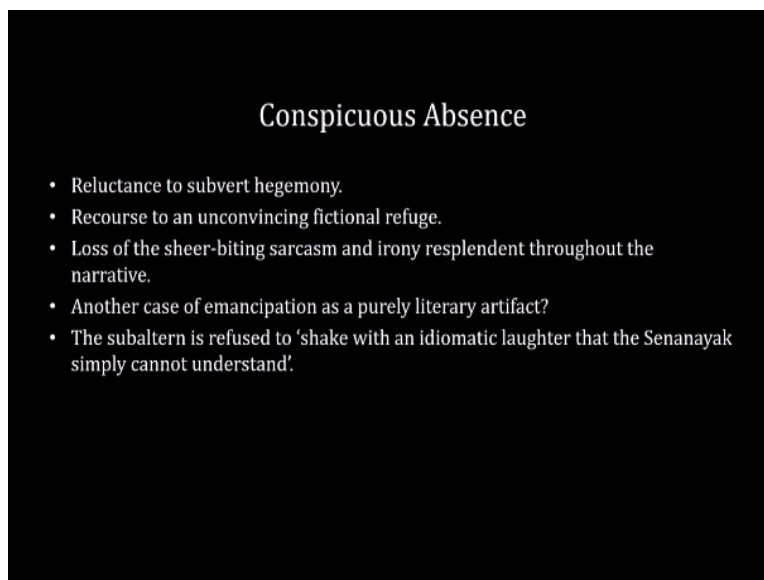


God is more things has right at the beginning beside it Velutha's destiny, the rest of the novel is just a matter of underling it. In the words of Ajay Sekar the subaltern has been imagined narrativised used and eliminated and he is a gay. More interesting is Vellya Paapen's gratitude to Mammachi which is torn and unflinching it makes him want written as mode gets are you too Mammachi.

But the author does not problematize this gratitude, she does not ask the question whether it is incumbent upon the subaltern to feel an excessive gratitude. Again the novel dominated by structural sophistication hence in a backward looking tomorrow nai that is heart trending because of the readers awareness of the futility of that promise, is this act of looking backward. This extraction of an unfruitful promise is it an active resistance, helplessness or worse authorial complicity. 1 second horio move backwards.

Those last 2 lines last 2 points are from Tabi's case dedication in his book Babu fictions. He dedicates the books in that book to **to** the class of servants and the village people that he knew who could now read in Indian English fiction, but whom Indian English fiction often claims to have read. And then it narrates 4 lines that starts with b with ne when they cauterize the fax, some of gives of the impression that on some level god small things if a cauterized fact.

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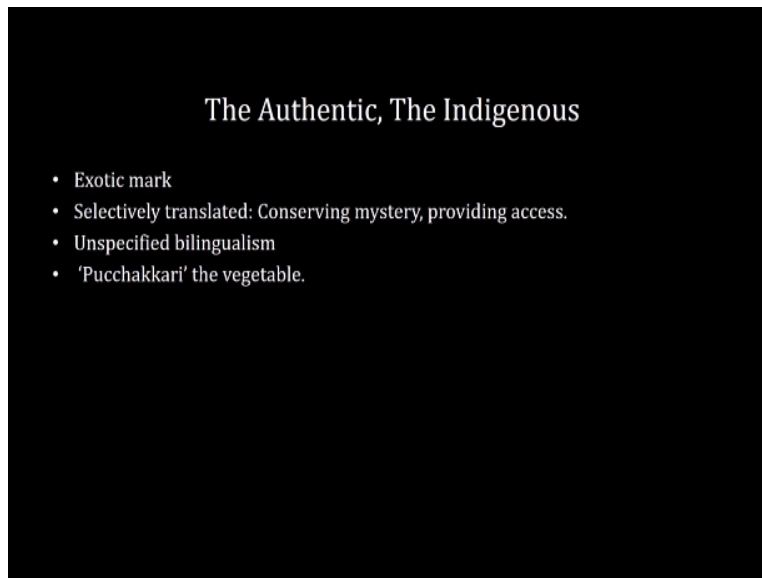
Conspicuous Absence

- Reluctance to subvert hegemony.
- Recourse to an unconvincing fictional refuge.
- Loss of the sheer-biting sarcasm and irony resplendent throughout the narrative.
- Another case of emancipation as a purely literary artifact?
- The subaltern is refused to 'shake with an idiomatic laughter that the Senanayak simply cannot understand'.

There is sheer biting sarcasm and sting stinking immense doses of irony throughout the book except when you just falls out of the text towards the end of the novel. And the narrative was slits as though it is trying to take refusing of fictional happiness and it is enthralling romance. There seems to be a hesitation in engaging with any real possibility for a subaltern character to override structures of oppression.

And if not a complicity with they definitely is a reluctance to harmonic structures from the author's part is emancipation only literally care offers the example of Maha swetha Devi's Drowpathy harassed exploited. But who in the end Shek's with an idiomatic laughter that eludes Sena Nayak, Velutha on the other hand is not allowed is catching assault on authority when his fiction is staking over by reality.

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Roy unlike the other aspheric writers of Indian fiction in English holds this claim to be the authentic Indian writer, the indigenous breed. When an indigenous breed tries to sell it is on a global market the eccentric tongue of Malayalam turns out to be an exotic mark. It is offered and translation here and there enough to provide access and enough to conserve the mystery. I would like to conclude by pointing out this common that errors somewhere.

There is this book by Deepak Unnikrishnan and apparently in the book he translates vegetables to Pacha curry with the given spelling. The commentator says that, that word maybe alternatively read as puchha curry in Malayalam means a very hot women who just looks like slightly at everyone else can if thus very belligerent attitude you know it just this general look of condemnation.

And a vegetable is suppose to be the most benign element on a platter. Now imagine this vegetable sitting on a platter and looking with contempt of the rest of the platter territory and the

commentators reading is that what might if turned into a culture bait in Roy in Arunthathi Roy here receives but a lightened knowing nod from the author that is Deepak Unnikrishnan.

I think it is serves an example that somewhere we are suppose to deconstruct that marketing Mith of Roy as a discovery and the child narrator as an innocent.

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