

Short Fiction in Indian Literature
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Lecture – 09C
Catharsis in Mulk Raj Anand's The Price of Bananas - Overview

Hello and welcome to another conversation between me and Miss Gayathri who is a MA student at IIT Madras. And today we are going to talk about Mulk Raj Anand's the price of bananas. Gayathri what do you think of the story? The story was a pleasure to read it had a lot of good humor in it it was very simply written. You could actually imagine the things that were happening.

I mean I think I do not know I have never seen been a part of the situation. But I could actually connect to it. So, I think it was a really good story yeah thank you. And okay let us talk about a let us start from the use of the humor in the story. There were certain points in the story which were which actually made you genuinely laugh out loud like the part where the monkeys actually grabbed out things from it.

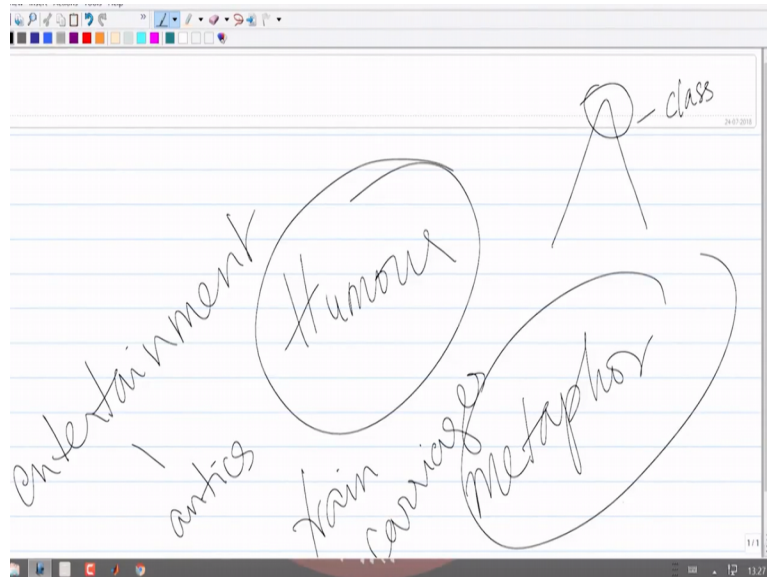
And then you get to find out that they are actually trained to do so. Yeah, yeah okay so this is the incident on the railway station. In connection with this pious Hindu who is taking a bath under a pump on the railway station and the understanding is that he is not supposed to do it and the monkey sort of disciplines him by stripping him of his dignity. And he is there you know in all his naked glory there for everybody to laugh and mock at him.

And the interesting thing there is that we realize gradually that perhaps it is the station master who has trained this monkey to establish order on this platform. So, I can kind of extend the metaphor from a lot of Rama and his gentle Hanuman and the kind of apply it to this particular context where the station master becomes a kind of a lord of the space. And he is getting the services of these monkeys to kind of somehow establish some discipline on the railway stations.

So, that metaphor can be stressed to this particular specialty too in some respects but there is a lot of humor there in that situation what are the other perspectives that come out of this particular

incident. Let us talk about the use of mythology again you said you could extend it to Ramayana that is what Mulk Raj Anand also did it here in the story. So, last time we talked about R K Narayanan a Horse and two goats there was also a mythology. So, the Indian authors and the use of mythology I think it is very natural yes.

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Indian sensibility that comes out of it so when you think yeah it becomes a kind of a metaphor thought for kind of a cultural you know a landscape to which these writers just go back. And you know pick out certain elements and aspects and ideas from this vast land of epics and religious traditions and try to see the present day through that lens and make compatible judgements in that regard.

And in terms of the narrative it enriches the story it kind of deepens the story gives it a lot of profundity. Because the epics also have a lot of philosophy you know our narratives of justice and truth and things like that so and at the same time you can also make you know or understand certain events literally too. You do not have to always resort to these cultural metaphors you can also look at things literally too.

And that reminds me of the next incident where you know the monkeys are literally hungry that is there that aspect is there and the fruit vendor kind of gives them the bananas and helps them ease their hunger. So, that is the literal understanding of that of that incident if you want to apply

this metaphor this cultural metaphor this religious metaphor you can also see the monkeys and the fruit vendors and everybody else on the platform as somehow disciplining the set right.

This businessman for the for the for the harassment that he offers to this coolie and other people. So, there are two levels of interpretation there one is the literal interpretation and the other is the cultural interpretation. So, this precedence or this availability of this enrich tradition this Hindu tradition this religious tradition this spiritual well that is there is very very helpful for the Indian writers in order to make their point.

Yes, and all of the readers also actually get the metaphor it is like the Bible of the west. Yes, there are a lot of biblical references in all the stories and here it is the epics it is Ramayana and Mahabharata. Yeah and the readers who share the same Indians again even though there is vast people actually get yeah. Yes, that is true because it is like the the Christian bible and I mean the Hindu epics.

And all these cultural traditional information is always in everybodys mind it is like the cold that has been passed down to everybody and everybody can relate to that and even if you look at the story in the flood you know Ramayana verses are being recited by somebody we do not even get to see the person that person is far off. We only hear the echoes you know across the flooded waters of Kerala.

And that is supposed to give some kind of strength to the people who is reciting it and to those who are listening to it. So, not too many of the population would have actually read the verses of these epics but it has been handed down to them and through all these recitations the tales the grandmothers tell their grandchildren and by hearsay as well so it is a definite cultural landscape that is there at the backdrop of most of the Indian minds.

And what is the point you are getting that here so it is available it is I mean that that tradition and that philosophy is easily available and that becomes a great strength because as I said you know contemporary events are also just judged against those philosophies and truths. You were talking about the monkeys the description of the monkeys by Mulk Raj Anand is beautiful he just keeps

talking about how do we he keeps referring to Hanuman.

Yes, yes, yeah division of monkey yes which paragraph do you want to read out for the benefit of the audience shall we go for the second or third one. The third one okay do you want to read it up in this respect it may be observed that the civilians have preserved the glorious heritage as well as the sense of clarity in a far more integral form than the humans so that one can see thousands of monkeys performing miracles are tricks just as you may prefer to call their antics.

Almost without with the actually agility with such general Hanuman brought to his noble task in helping Rama. Of course as succeeding ages have brought more and more highly organized armies an improved weapons the fighting skill of the monkeys has diminished through the lack of regular training until only the daring plans of the pentagon for training gorillas and monkeys to fight news war can revive the historic prowess.

But the monkeys have lost none of their capacity for fun and their instinctive ability to spot out a demon. Whom they can fight or abuse themselves that has remained as sharp and uncanny and secure. Yeah thank you for that so there is a lot of information there connecting the past in the present science made then contemporary American politics and mythology. So, it is a blend heavy blend of so much of information there.

And a lot of you know amusement is also there in terms of how the monkeys behave in the contemporary world what should we pick up on what we should pick up on this quality of the monkeys. You know the ability to perform tricks their antiques and their agility of all this is a set of skills a set of hereditary skills that prove us that has come down from General Hanuman and his troops of monkeys.

Monkeys which have helped the Lord Rama to perform his you know defeat of the demon king of Lanka. So, that is the background and Mulk Raj Anand kind of traces this and carry ability from the past to the present and every like are like this particular phrase the instinctive ability to spot out a demon. So, they can know who is the bad guy they instinctively get that and and there are two ways by which they react to the bad guy there.

Either fight with that person or amuse themselves with that person. So, those two qualities are very very interesting and that is what happens in the two incidents in this particular story. So, Gayathri your thoughts on this let us talk about the reactions of the onlookers to the monkeys. Some again he says they say they fight some are amused. And again again he keeps talking about Rama Yeah Ramas generalist Hanuman is Ramas general.

So, here is always this thing at the back of their mind saying that they are the descendants of Hanuman. So, some of them work shipped monkeys yes some of them are annoyed by it some of them amused themselves again because my imagination as far as I imagine the story as he has written it is a very hot day and people do not have much to do. So, they amuse themselves with the antics of the monkeys yes there.

So, there are different reactions again how the monkeys behave. Yeah we can also see this is entertainment right and this is one of the antiques for the benefit of the people who are there on this hot day on this railway station Faizabad right. So, that element is also there they offer pleasure to the onlooker's amusement to the on lookers and at the same time they are seen as you know demi gods or representative of the mythical religious figure of lord general Hanuman.

So, it is very interesting that the pious Hindu kind of begs supplicates to this monkey to return the cloth and perhaps he sees these monkeys as these icons or representatives of the original you know general monkey god. So, which is why he is very submissive and perhaps he also recognizes the mistake that he is committed in performing this action in a public space. So, there is a lot of set of interpretations to his action of pleading right.

And that is not there in the case of this businessman Seth and that is very interesting that is very very interesting. I would say because onlookers somehow consider monkeys as representatives of the holy power and the narrator also has this idea and the pious in Hindu has this idea why does not the Seth have that idea. Why does he look at these monkeys? as you know demi gods as supreme beings as spiritual creatures.

That is it that is an interesting question to speculate on alright. So, what do you would you make of it what are the other aspects that come to your mind in terms of this businessman. May be he is an atheist no not very likely and not very likely but what we can get at is a different you know perspective of life itself from him. For him more than religion nationality more than yeah more than religion.

More than is you know his personal dignity which seems to be connected to this cap you know. Even though he claims that he is embarrassed he seems unnerved by the fact that his cap has been lost more than that there is something else which is preoccupying his entire thoughts his mind and that is self-interest and greed. So, everything takes a back seat when he is faced by the fact that his cap has been taken away.

And it is an embroidered cap signifying that it is a wealthy possession just as his muslin, a dhoti and all his other outfits. Everything is costly he cannot afford to lose a single thing so more than a mark of respect it is a wealthy object that has been snatched away by this monkey. And he cannot see anything else but the fact that he has to get it back so which is why all these religious considerations take a back seat and that is how I see it.

And and perhaps everybody else the onlookers they do not sympathize with him at all right and that is perhaps because he is not in a submissive attitude towards the set of monkeys that is also very possible. Because they have seen the pious Hindu being very very you know submissive and plea in a pleading position and he does not do that. So, perhaps that chasm between the Seth and the rest of the world is kind of made manifest through his behavior too.

One more observation between a contrast between the saint and the pious and the businessman is that pious Hindu his only loin cloth only garment which he has is the only possession. And when that is taken away he actually pleads for it. While this the businessman a mere calf it might be an embroidered it might be costly yes but it is just a cap cap and his idea of dignity is so different from the pious idea of dignity yes and he makes such a huge fuss about it.

And he refuses to be refuses to be submissive and it is not even a human he is being submissive

to I think that is also that at the back of his mind. Yes, again I do not think even if it was a human who had snatched away from him he would not been submissive. Humans animals equally right yes he treated the fruit vendor as an idol is what I think he did not give the dignity he does or the vendor deserved as a human.

So, he sees himself above one step he places himself on a pedestal he sees everybody as his inferior. So, the ideas of dignity what constitutes dignity is very different for the businessman and the fruit vendor. Obviously the pious okay there are lots of things with what you have just said let me pick up on those fantastic observations that you made about you know the loin cloth being the only element if you know real dignity for this pious Hindu.

And then when that is snatched away he does not lose his equanimity he is not unnerved he is not embarrassed. He does not perspire unlike the businessman who perspires his and that is very interesting because it suggests that you know material possessions do not matter to him. And real dignity is the dignity of the mind rather than dignity that is derived through all these material possessions that you use to cloth yourself or other things right do other things with.

So, which is why this pious Hindu is a very very very very composed in the way he reacts to the monkey's behavior. And and the other to yes he he kind of his strategy is a very interesting because he plead that he gets the reward. And perhaps that is kind of a trick as well we do not know I am just speculating on the other hand the businessman has only one strategy to deal with any and every kind of issue that he meets with.

He is always angry at everybody and anybody right that seems to be the only one modus operandi and that is very interesting and as you mentioned that he treats everybody as his inferior. Which means he really is at the top of the hierarchy and everybody is considered to be beneath him so when he is at the top and monkeys, human beings everybody seems to be you know objects or or mean creatures.

Whom he could even kick at that is what he tries to do with the coolie right. And so what becomes the most important thing for him is being at the top and that indicates his class position

as well. And probably communal position to community wise he could be at the top too. He takes his entitlement for granted I think nobody has questioned him before till now so he just takes it for things everyone.

Yeah yeah there is this again I want to talk about one contrast between the pious and the businessman is again attitude materialistic versus spiritual how he sees yeah you were talking about how he is not really materialistic he does not care even his loin cloth yeah yeah again so this let us read a couple of excerpts here to see how materialistic this guy is this this business man is. And this is on the next page while all this was going on I noticed that.

A gentleman a businessman by the look of him clad in a white muslin dhoti a delicate Lucknow tunic and an embroidered cap on his head had come up towards our first class compartment and stood looking out the white reservation card to see if his name was on it he recognized just name on the card and turning back into the coolie who was following him with his luggage a big steel trunk.

And hold odd and several small baskets and a brass jug weighed on the enormous articles on his head the coolie could not see the Seth. So, the businessman shouted array come here cannot you see blind one look at the amount of stuff he traveled with you know several small baskets a brass jug a big steel from and hold all that is an indication of the of the material wealth that he has with him and he has to constantly have with him when he is moving about.

And again the the delicate Lucknow tunic the sophistication of his outfit suggests both a superiority in wealth and his his class position too which can afford to spend time looking at several kinds of fine cloth to make a choice. And he has the leisure and the space to do that and the material wealth to do that so it is a very interesting contrast between this guy and this pious Hindu who just has that loin cloth as his off you know personal possession.

So, it is the contrast could not be clearer and his conversation that happens between the conversation that happens between this business man and the coolie again suggest pretty starkly. The difference between the two in terms of attitude as well. Again the subtleties of class

difference is broadened really well and again in one railway compartment you can see who is who and you can just find out.

By the way they behave by the way which compartment they belong to and how they belong within the compartment. Again there is one line which Mulk raj Anand says he compares us to Monkeys again yes I noticed that in our resolution to the carriage space we have not only grown much clumsier but also less (20:31). Yeah, your comments on this okay yeah so here the comparison is more literal I would think because wild behavior.

And you know wild behavior and an animal like behavior are associated with the monkeys and more you know civilized behavior is traditionally associated with human beings. So, in the context of the train carriages many people flock to the compartments to the intermediate and to the third class compartments and they try to fight literally forced their way into find a sport for themselves in that act activity.

He can see the behavior of the monkeys or the wild animals which are very very primitive and there is no sophistication there is no civilized order there is no discipline. It is you know free for all kind of spaces there so that comparison is made. But I would I would think that if you want to discriminate between you know several things here in terms of the monkeys this will fall into the literal comparison.

Whereas the mythological comparison would fall under the in a more higher level of interpretation in terms of the monkeys and the class differences how I just he has not spell it out this person is a person is a upper caste person he just says he travels in the unreserved he says because I am a middle class person I could easily get a seat in the compartment yeah yeah. And again the businessman and he on a sudden come up first class compartment.

You just know where they stand in a social hierarchy when you know which compartment they go you know. Yeah again there are a lot of instances in the story which indicate the class differences which you had already talked about regarding the businessman but the passengers, other passengers I think empathy is one of the values that distinguish the classes is my

observation.

Because the middle class people are more empathetic towards the lower class and all that but when he is the businessman he has a total lack of empathy. There is not even a shred of empathy anywhere yes what do you think of the other characteristic which could distinguish classes. Okay I will just write this word stony face which comes to my mind when you talk about the idea of empathy and sympathy.

So, okay about class he says that the narrator says that the first person narrator says that I qualify into the middle class. Through the expenditure of my savings on a daily show of my pictures it is not a very reliable a stable middle class that he is in he has a windfall because he had a good show of his paintings in Delhi therefore he had this money which he gets you know spend in buying a first class ticket.

So, his class position is not very very you know determinate or stable he could fall into the lower middle class category at any moment and he could make a mad rush like the rest of the people who are heading towards the intermediate class. That is one thing to observe and the other thing is that you are quite right the Seth character has no empathy he does not have seem to have any shred of human emotion towards the people who are around him.

He seems very self-contained very comfortable in his skin right right even towards the end he very quickly cools down and assumes an air of casual indifference. That is a very interesting thing to achieve at a very short notice when he has created so much havoc around him right. So, he assumes air of non chance is not it so that is that is a very very interesting you know attitude on his part.

However, the narrator is extremely angry at him he has been observing the unfolding of events and he has a lot of grievance against it and just as a narrator he says that the other people who occupy the first class compartment such as the Sikhs and the bureaucrats all do seem to be very angry with him. But they do not express it verbally unlike the narrator. The narrator seems to step in every now and then.

And says cannot you give a little bit more money to the coolie or to the fruit vendor. The others do not intercede they are quiet they are angry but they are quiet is that the way superior higher class of people behave is that the kind of etiquette that they adopt when they see such moments of crisis. That the big question to ask not step in and not a break your composure do not intervene unnecessarily you know and that is the mark of civilized behavior.

If you read Karma of Sir Mohan Lal, you know he does not show any emotion because educated upper class people are not supposed to show any kind of emotion. They are supposed to keep the stiff upper lip just like the English you know upper classes so that is one thing that we need to keep in mind then there is the behavior of the onlookers who did not show any kind of sympathy to the Seth when his cap has been snatched away how do we interpret that kind of indifference.

They have fun they are entertained on at the expense of this guy this businessman but they do not step in and this is what the narrator has to say about it but the people just his and look at the way he kind of tries to get the sympathy. The Seth trying to get the sympathy of the onlookers he says look people he said stretching his hands to the crowd with the 50s. And hopeless expression on his bespectacled face.

Just complete you know drama there for you he just cooked up those emotions at a very short notice. He thought that the loss of his head dress which is a symbol of dignity in India would be deplored by everyone and the sentiment of solidarity would arise right that is the stereotype he is trying to play on in order to get some kind of sympathy but the people just turn their faces away or looked stone face.

As they often do for the fear of being dragged into giving evidence before the police right. So, as they often do is the interpretation of the first person narrator there he assumes that that could be the reason. Because in India whenever you just step into a trouble and try to you know get a point of view then you would be dragged on to further cycles of you know hassle so which is perhaps why they do not want to intervene.

So, the system itself makes them stony faced hard hearted that is on one kind of meaning tagged onto the indifference. So, there are different kinds of indifference in the behavior of the people so we need to kind of unravel and see why that indifference is coming about. In the case of the Seth the businessman that indifference is about protecting his money basically if you just unpeel unpeel he will just get to his greed.

And his self-interest and his desire not to raise even a single Anna for anybody. But if you look at the people they do not they are already very troubled by life itself life itself on a daily basis is an uphill task and they do not want to get into extra trouble with the police or with higher authorities therefore they are indifferent. And if you look at the upper class people in the compartment they have been educated to be indifferent not react.

So, that is why they are indifferent and we have the middling classes here represented by this narrator who is torn between the two classes. He wants to establish a kind of a superior civilized you know attitude to himself his personality at the same time he is really feeling sorry for the people who are beneath him. And that is the plight of the middle class is for you labelled in the story.

Let us talk about the fruit vendor after a point even you get to know that even he is manipulating the businessman but I feel that the readers sympathize with him and he gets away with his manipulation. While if it was an upper class or say even a middle class he would not get away with it and he would be put to much ridicule. So, is it okay to get away with something just because he is in a cycle he is traveling in a cycle of poverty.

It is a good question and a totally understandable question let us go back to the scene with establishes his manipulation to get a clearer idea okay. So, here he is a minor character he just arrives halfway through the story is not there as a term from the compartment I saw that a food hawker had come forward pushing his little cart and was telling the Seth that he would rescue his cap Sethji seems to be only slightly relieved by the voluntary offer of the fruit vendor.

But the vendor went ahead nevertheless dangling a couple of bananas before the monkey with

his right hand and stretching out his left hand for the cap very quick set of actions happen within these lines right very practiced tones very practiced and it is not a very uncommon thing that is what we get from this scene. And you need to notice that this Seth figure is not a very very clever he senses that something is off which is why he is not entirely relieved he is only slightly relieved.

Why is he only slightly relieved why does not he trust the food hawker why is he suspicious of this guy and before the Seth could agree before the treatment could say ok yes please go ahead and helping rescue my cap he just went ahead nevertheless without getting the agreement from the tradesmen. So, he always pushes his way in the fruit vendor and he starts you know practicing his routine almost and he dangled a couple of bananas you are quite right.

So, how should we understand this manipulation let us go to another extract where the Seth spells out what he is saying closer to the finale of the series he says the narrator this poor narrator this tender hearted narcissist give him one more analogy I said with a straight face and he is very angry that is what he says with those with a straight face he is hiding his anger you do not know you do not know these budmashes then league with the monkeys.

Bananas are to a price fancy asking for an enough one rotten banana. So, we will come to the price of banana a bit later but the fact that he pretty quickly says they are in the league they are acting together this is a conspiracy. It just occurs to him straight away and he lays it on the table for the benefit of those who are listening and it is a very interesting argument and he later says at some point he says if he did not want to help me to get my cap back he should not have offered the monkey the bananas.

I did not ask him to help write the meaning is pretty clear the man should have offered the bananas without expecting any kind of money as repayment in the form of thanks right you should have done this altruistically without any kind of self-interest that is how we should have done it. Very hypocritical very hypocritical and it is a really sound argument if you just look at it in isolation right he is just arguing for disinterested altruism there.

You know in a generous behavior without expecting any kind of reward do your work do not expect anything in return the current philosophy is being spelt out. The very interesting thing and if you go back to the manipulation of the fruit hawker which is what you wanted to talk about it is manipulation alright that is quite clear if he pushes his way in perhaps the entire set of people are in on it.

The people on the platform perhaps it is their daily routine we do not know we can speculate on it. But the other thing you need to remember is this that is the paragraph here very good at the description of the monkeys here. As I arrived at Faizabad station half an hour in advance of the times for the trains departure I sat on a bench watching the simian hordes frolicking in the trees and on the open platform.

The monkey mothers were hugging the little ones tenderly as they descended now and then from the purchased collect half sucked mango stones not mangoes half sucked mango stones and the remainders of food from the platform. The older monkeys sat enjoying a good old scratch which is so soothing in the hot weather as they obviously learned from the loin cloth wearing much in the facilities.

And the young fraternities sat adroitly on the thinnest boughs of neem and tamarind trees camouflaged by the leaves and so poised to jump down with alacrity in pursuit of any meager spoils that may be visible in the famished landscape of Uttar Pradesh. It is a furnished landscape and the monkeys represent this furnish population right. So, the monkeys are you know go off to scavenge for food the minimum food.

So, that they can feed their young ones and it is a very, very tragic moment there you know people scavenging monkeys scavenging for food and that they hide behind the tree leaves in order to make an attack on what was left over the meager spoils again that metaphor of war and battlefield is there you know when and when people start to go and look for stuff from the dead bodies of the soldiers and everything the leftovers right.

So, it is a sad sight it is a sad sight in this particular context in this particular context how do you

see the behavior of the food to when he has to be manipulative in order to get by on on a bare minimum and in that regard the fact that he feeds the monkeys right that is very very that becomes an admirable gesture right he does not steal from the food at least he is kind of you know you know feeding the monkeys and also looking after himself in the exchange.

So, we need to kind of go beyond that black and white judgment of certain things and look at the bigger picture when there is so much scarcity on the scene. Yeah again you were talking about the businessman he calls him the conspiracy which he draws out which he thinks. I believe he just functions on a set of stereo types yeah one stereotype to the other his preconceived notions.

And he uses to justify his behavior absolutely absolutely very very cold hearted hard heartedly stony faced businessman made it apparent. He has a very black and white sort of imagine everything he is either cheating me or he is not so it is very so what do you think of yeah, yeah as I said it all his words and gestures and thought processes stem from this particular desire of not losing a pie from his pocket.

And it is very interesting that we can compare his behavior to the behavior of the narrator who kind of senses what is happening he realize that some kind of manipulation has been going on which is why he is dumb with shock. That dumb with shock could be because because of the interpretation of this tradesmen or because of his realization that this fruit vendor has manipulated this tradesman.

So, we do not know what he is shocked by despite being shocked by all these he still persists and says why do not give him some more money. So, that is where real generosity is kind of being played out there and on the case of the all of this businessman as I said material interests are uppermost he is a businessman very very calculated. And he splits hairs about the price of a banana right what is at stake is not the price of open than right here.

The stake is something higher right and which demands the empathy of this human being and there is so much you know dirt there and people are starving this is not the place for you and your kind of bargain with the poor isnt it. Mulk raj Anand style itself a lot of critics have called

him the champion of the under log again this is this story is also not different. Could you just elaborate on characteristic of his life with reference to this particular story?

Yeah so he was also known as the Charles Dickens of India right because he talks about the half knots and Mulk Raj Anand also does that so and he does it in a very very interesting manner but blending myth and contemporary realities of Uttar Pradesh. So, that that blend you know is done in such a nice way that we kind of naturally almost you know without any kind of manipulation on our part we gravitate towards.

Or sympathize with this generous hearted fruit vendor and despite the fact that we know that some strategy some stratagem has been performed on the part of this man this fruit vendor. And we also need to realize the crisis in the story is not the crisis in which the Seth loses his cap. I would say the crisis in the story is that moment in the story when this fruit vendor hangs on to the window of a train moving train.

A train which has started to move from the platform and he hands on to it and he begs for more money. And that is the high point of the story and despite that supplication despite the pleading monkey is a very sympathetic they return the cap right one monkey does without any reward the other monkey gets the bananas and returns the and this is the only figure who does not give even an inch right to the plight of the other person.

So, that is the crisis in the story which is why I tend to see the story as a more a tragic one rather than a comic one. True and that tragic element is kind of suppressed somehow by these all these comic overlay in terms of the incidents that we have littering the landscape Anand does that beautifully. True again talking about the dignity of the Pious Hindu who has learned taught his here his very he does not even respect him as a human being.

Yes, his dignity is entirely stripped off and again you can see this as a class yeah also how the businessman is a representative of the upper class. The people who oppress and the oppressor and the oppresses so this can be when you extrapolate it to the larger picture I think it makes perfect sense yes yes yes. Yeah you are right he does represent a particular strand in the upper

class.

Because we need to also remember the bureaucrats and the Sikhs in that compartment who are all so the figureheads for this particular community and they are really angry with the Seth they do have that ends with them when they see this man harassing the coolie. So, there are other hearts there you know which do not want such kind of behavior being enacted there and that at least gives us a lot of hope and faith in the fact that some change will happen.

Not everybody can be painted with the same kind of brush there. So, he somehow has been isolated just because it is an isolated one and he is really visible as a monster because of his cruel hard hearted behavior you know he is like the scrooge you who does not undergo any kind of change right he is that kind of character. And there are moments in the story for example when this businessman gets onto the steps of the compartment.

And he stands in the doorway and that position is indicated of the social hierarchy at whose top he is in and from that position he is almost coming down to kick the coolie. And that again is very very symbolic in the story so the story talks about cross positions and the gaps between the different classes and so on and so forth. But there are also indications that this man is not representative.

There are other figures who really you know empathize with the lower orders and we need to talk about what kind of revenge that they have against this man. Can you mention that finally other than that they do not want to talk about it but everybody knows there is a tension in the compartment. But finally it is the narrator who actually there is a he makes an auction and he actually does something which is not great.

But everybody knows in that room that he has been distant and he has been isolated. For all his money and wealth and dignity he has been isolated from the people yeah in the first. Bureaucrats smiled while the Sikhs begun to laugh out loud for all for shaming this Seths by showing the cartoon to him and even a normal human when they make fun of them I do not think he would go and show to the person.

Who would, who is made fun of but here they are also ruthless yes their behavior they just go and show it to him and the final thing I restrained them. I think he knew from the ease which arose after the cartoon has been passed around that are relaxed minds with the index of discomfort. Okay yeah a common enemy is the best bond yes that is also their this is that even even before then they had some kind of you know a solidarity between themselves.

The bureaucrats and the Sikhs and and the funny thing is it is a caricature and that caricature is the revenge you know. That is the only weapon that these passengers have on their hands to attack this man Seth who has been cruel to the coolie. And who has put the life of a fruit vendor in a precarious situation so we need to compare the two incidents a caricature on one side of that scale of justice and the behavior which led to the fruit hawker hanging on to a moving train.

So, so how do we compare is this sufficient punishment that is a question that we can ask is this a mild punishment discomfoting him somehow embarrassing him what kind of punishment is that. But I think he whatever he values more is his dignity. His dignity is a very strong concept is what I find because for him it is a matter of life and death for him a matter of he does I think the drama associated with him.

Hanging from the train was less portrayed than him being stripped of his hat. So, just making fun of his dignity is again reduced yes him as a person. Yes, you know on one level of interpretation you are quite right because apparently he invests a lot of emotional you know energy on that particular cap. And then when that is taken away he is kind of put off balance and the caricature once again you know takes strips his dignity takes away his dignity strips his dignity.

And everybody is laughing at him so somehow that seems to be sufficient you know a punishment. But I want to go back to the caricature once again because I get up close analysis of the process let us see what exactly is the caricature yeah I took the only revenge I could take on this mean creature by drawing a caricature of him. In the position in which I had seen him as he stood under the neem tree supplicating to the monkey who had taken his cap away.

My good question here is, was he ever in a supplicating position did he ever go back to the monkey all he offered was threats challenges and implications which means causes right. He was not in pleading position he was in a rebellious position and here in the caricature he is that is the kind of there is a slant there it is not their actual truth the truth has been manipulated by the narrative to make him a figure of fun.

He wanted to mock him which is why he turns him into a figure or who was pleading for the cap back and that is an interesting change there we do not have the rebellious Seth there we have the begging Seth. So, again it is a misrepresentation of reality and that makes me wonder why does not he captured the truth and somehow insult him from you know through a caricature representation of truth. That does not happen so that does not happen.

So, that is again a very interesting question to ask in the further thing about dignity is this was he ever you know really worried about his dignity you know. That is a big question because everybody here seems to isolate him seems to be angry with him there is a lot of grievance against the Seth and he does not care for that his dignity is lost and I mean so where is his real dignity. So, that seems to be a little bit he is very superficial concept according to yeah.

Let us talk about the title one final question the price of bananas yeah it is a very nuanced title is what I feel There are lot of layers of really different meaning. Yeah who is speaking the truth let us look at the literal meaning what is the price of a banana can you get two bananas for one anna or the cost of banana is that is it in anna. So, who is speaking the truth but ultimately I think the actual price of a banana is is not what is important to the story.

You know these bananas are ultimately help in how you know satisfying the hunger of these hungry populations of monkeys and these populations of monkeys are representative of the human populations across the society of India. And if you do actually feed some of the people, the hungry people then that is a great gesture at the end of the day. And the point that we need to remember is that this man this businessman.

Seth is is capable of providing lots of bananas to these hungry populations across the societies.

So, that seems to be my interpretation of the title that is a very interesting interpretation I never thought of that. Also the price of bananas when we talk about it we always think of it from the customer's point of view. But here what I thought was the price of bananas paid by the shopkeeper the fruit vendor the price he paid for was yeah he lost.

It was not a profit it is a loss only. He lost his dignity he lost more than he almost lost his life right. So, the price paid for the banana paid by the fruit vendor is greater than what the literal price paid by the or the lack of what is paid by the businessman. Yeah so the fruit vendor comes up pretty badly and the end of the day and if you remember the premise of the story the premise being that monkeys were spotted a demon.

And the monkeys will punish demon by amusing themselves with the demon or by fighting with the demon. The monkeys leave the story house way in fact the metaphor of the monkeys stop there midway and the other half of the story is carried on on the shoulders of this fruit vendor who really loses this battle with this demon. Actually the battle has been lost and that seems to be the message.

I mean the poorer weaker vulnerable sections of the Indian society are in no position to fight with this really powerful rich you know a members of the society. It is very remainder side of the story yeah very far from it it is a slice of reality presented in a very very you know consumable manner. But if you kind of unpeel the layers of narrator you will get at the heart of the story the crux of the story and the message and the meaning is very very discomfoting true.

Thank you very much Gayathri I hope you had a good time listening to this conversation and I thank you for watching I will catch up with you in the next session.