

**Indian Poetry in English**  
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**Lecture - 34**  
**R Parthasarathy**

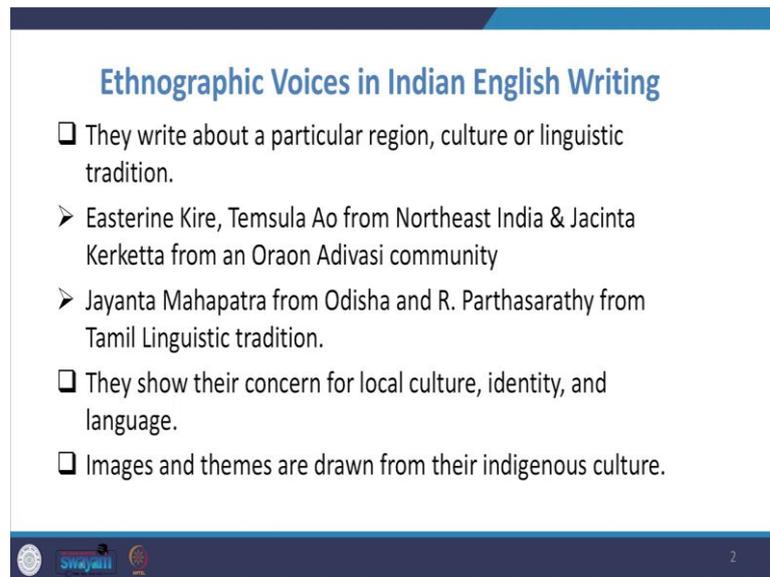
Good morning friends and welcome back to NPTEL online certification course on Indian Poetry in English. You might well remember that till now we have covered many major poets who have been writing or composing poetry in English. Today we are going to start with one such name without whom Indian poetry in English would be incomplete and the name is that of R. Parthasarathy.

Now, one question that might be cropping up in many minds is that R. Parthasarathy was simply an editor and we have already quoted on a number of occasions one of his collections where he has given chances to many Indian poets writing in English. But then R. Parthasarathy himself was a renowned poet, of course, his poetic contribution may not be as rich or as more in number if compared to some other poets.

But then with only one collection which actually became a major work of Indian poetry in English, R. Parthasarathy has been able to create vibes, bubbles and many questions that many other poets have already discussed in their poetic stride. Now before we come to a discuss R. Parthasarathy because I have put R. Parthasarathy in a different section and the section is Ethnographic Voices in Indian Poetry in English.

I think many people might still consider R. Parthasarathy to be a diasporic Indian poet, but I think the way R. Parthasarathy's lines go on and they actually depict, he actually is an ethnographic voice. Now you might be eager enough to know what actually are ethnographic voices.

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**Ethnographic Voices in Indian English Writing**

- ❑ They write about a particular region, culture or linguistic tradition.
- Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao from Northeast India & Jacinta Kerketta from an Oraon Adivasi community
- Jayanta Mahapatra from Odisha and R. Parthasarathy from Tamil Linguistic tradition.
- ❑ They show their concern for local culture, identity, and language.
- ❑ Images and themes are drawn from their indigenous culture.

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My dear friends, those people who are practicing ethnographic voices, they are actually the people who write about a particular region, culture or linguistic tradition. In that light even the famous and celebrated poet A. K. Ramanujan could also have been put here, but then Ramanujan did not have that much of repentance if compared to the remorse and the repentance, disillusionment and the frustration that R. Parthasarathy had.

Because right from the beginning R. Parthasarathy like any other Indian boasted of, thought of and actually could see also dreams of writing in English. But writing in English by being an English poet also.

Of course, with the change of time and with his own experiences he himself changed his own vision and his outlook on life and that we shall see. We have in this regard found some ethnographic voices whose works are very much rooted in their region or in their own state are Jayanta Mahapatra from Odisha we have already discussed his poems.

Then, we can also find about such a sort of feeling and experience quite assertive and determined in the voices of Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao from Northeast, Jacinta Kerketta from an Oraon Adivasi community and when we talk about Parthasarathy. R. Parthasarathy it is actually from a Tamil linguistic traditions voice. Now such poets they show a concern for local culture.

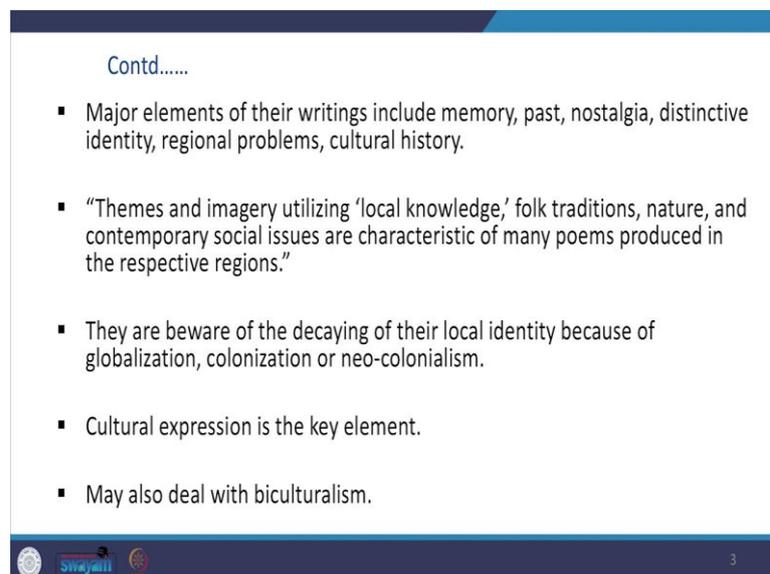
So, once we come across we will find local culture, local identity, I mean, everything that is specific in terms of their own language their own climate. And of course, their own culture that actually makes them represent ethnographic voices. Even the images and the themes that are drawn and that are portrayed in their poetry they also have got an imprint of indigenous culture. A culture of their own---- a culture which actually sings of nativity songs and culture that talks about the native tradition and all.

Now, there comes a question which many of us might think that in this regard even Adil Jussawalla was one such voice and in a major book by Bruce King--- Bruce King has compared Adil Jussawalla and R. Parthasarathy, but realize the difference. Adil Jussawalla actually even when he was in England or in some other, in a foreign country majority of the times he used to think of, but then he also tried to see that how he could create a sort of connection.

But when we come to Mahapatra we find a note of disillusionment, we find a note of embarrassment and in one poem after another he actually has been saying that perhaps majority of us are de-rooted, uprooted. Majority of us have actually left our own legacies. In this regard, at times Parthasarathy is full of admiration for A. K. Ramanujan who also used to think about his family bonds, family connections and many more.

Now, the major elements of such ethnographic voices may include memory as we can find in the works of A. K. Ramanujan fine.

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- Major elements of their writings include memory, past, nostalgia, distinctive identity, regional problems, cultural history.
- “Themes and imagery utilizing ‘local knowledge,’ folk traditions, nature, and contemporary social issues are characteristic of many poems produced in the respective regions.”
- They are beware of the decaying of their local identity because of globalization, colonization or neo-colonialism.
- Cultural expression is the key element.
- May also deal with biculturalism.

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Past, nostalgia, distinctive identity, regional problems, cultural history even the themes and imageries that we have been mentioning from time to time they utilize local knowledge. We have already found while we were discussing A. K. Ramanujan that how he talks about Indian traditions, Indian superstitious beliefs, how the snakes were revered fine.

And then he also talks about the conflict between the tradition and then the science the between rational between belief or philosophy. So, folk traditions, nature and contemporary social issues, of course, they become very characteristic in the ethnographic voices. They are also aware of the decaying of their local identity local identity.

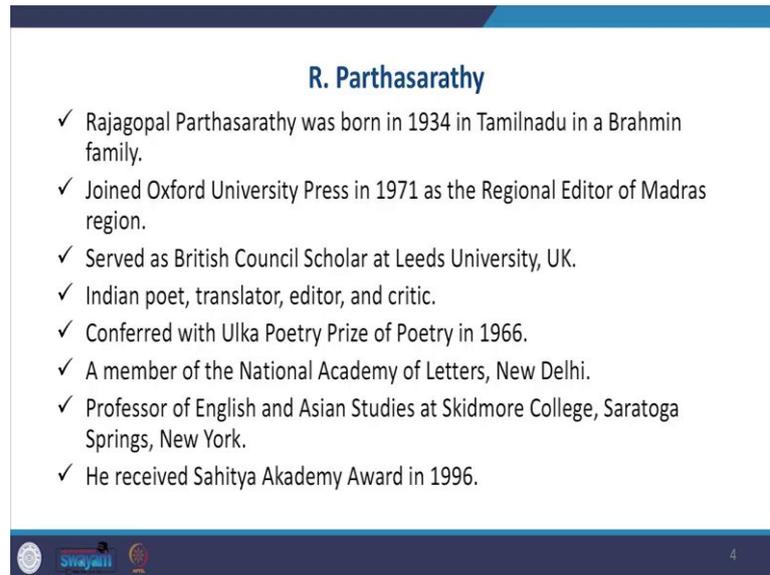
Nowadays, local is actually being dissolved into global and that is why the local touches are missing. We have even found such sort of vestiges in the poetic world of Nissim Ezekiel where he also has written *Unfinished Man*. Again, we have also talked about in one of the poets *The Missing Person*.

So, the local identity because of globalization, colonization or neocolonialism. Actually, R. Parthasarathy thought that many of us Indians even when we are writing in English perhaps we are trying to imitate and we are trying to imitate in such a manner that we neither become Indian writers nor become English and that is why he is full of admiration for one of the most insignificant voices of Indian poetry in English.

And that was of Madhusudan Dutt who actually abandoned writing in English and came to start writing in Bengali and so, is the case also with R. Parthasarathy who as we will find later who finally, turned not only towards translation, but also towards depicting his Tamil culture, his Tamil motives, the Tamil traditions and all. Actually, when we talk about ethnographic voices we are to be aware that cultural expression is the hallmark.

It is actually the key element. And of course, it may deal with the two cultures--- there is a depiction of biculturalism that also we can find. But let us first try to understand who this man R. Parthasarathy was.

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**R. Parthasarathy**

- ✓ Rajagopal Parthasarathy was born in 1934 in Tamilnadu in a Brahmin family.
- ✓ Joined Oxford University Press in 1971 as the Regional Editor of Madras region.
- ✓ Served as British Council Scholar at Leeds University, UK.
- ✓ Indian poet, translator, editor, and critic.
- ✓ Conferred with Ulka Poetry Prize of Poetry in 1966.
- ✓ A member of the National Academy of Letters, New Delhi.
- ✓ Professor of English and Asian Studies at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York.
- ✓ He received Sahitya Akademy Award in 1996.

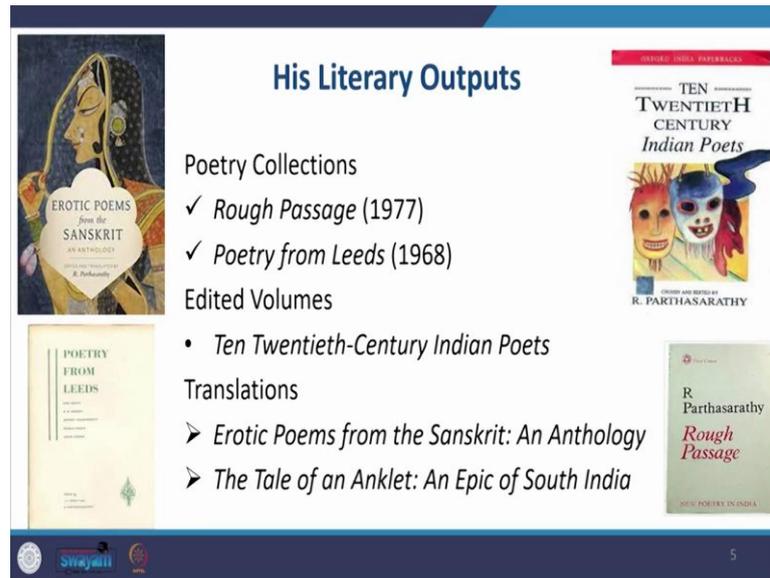
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Actually R. Parthasarathy whose full name was Rajagopal Parthasarathy was born near Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu in a Brahmin family in the year 1934. His early education was in local schools, but later on he got chances to study not only in Mumbai, but he also got a fellowship at Leeds and after having done his education then in 1971 he joined because early days he spent in the publishing industry.

He also took up some jobs in Mumbai's Mithibai College. And then in 1971 he became the Regional Editor of Madras Region of OUP, fine. And then he also served as the British Council Scholar at Leeds University U.K. R. Parthasarathy is actually an Indian poet translator, editor and critic of great repute. I think R. Parthasarathy deserves special accolades because it was he who brought 10 Indian English poets to limelight and then his work has become a classic.

Parthasarathy was conferred with the Ulka Poetry Prize in 1966. And then he was also a member of the National Academy of Letters, New Delhi. Later on, he also became a Professor of English and Asian Studies at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, actually it was for his translation fine. That in 1996 Parthasarathy was awarded Sahitya Akademy Award.

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### His Literary Outputs

Poetry Collections

- ✓ *Rough Passage* (1977)
- ✓ *Poetry from Leeds* (1968)

Edited Volumes

- *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets*

Translations

- *Erotic Poems from the Sanskrit: An Anthology*
- *The Tale of an Anklet: An Epic of South India*

As we have mentioned earlier that Parthasarathy did not have many poetry collections like many of his predecessors. But one collection only of him actually made him so famous and that was called *Rough Passage*. When we shall take up the lines of *Rough Passage* you will come to know what sort of poetry R. Parthasarathy writes. Because Parthasarathy majority of his poems in the *Rough Passage* they are like triads, I mean three liners and they are written in free words there may not be any musicality.

Because the flow is quite natural and through his poetry while one can find autobiographical echoes in his poetry, one can also find the depiction of life one leads in a foreign country and then what sort of remorse does one have. So, that is quite evident once one reads the poems of *Rough Passage*. He also had another collection I mean prior to the publication of *Rough Passage*.

Because early poems of R. Parthasarathy was dipped in love, we shall take some of them also and he got many of his poems published in many of the journals fine. So, *Poetry From Leeds* came out in 1968 and *Rough Passage* came in 1977. *Rough Passage* actually made R. Parthasarathy very famous. Parthasarathy also edited as I have been saying *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*, fine? And actually he also had certain translations. One of the translations entitled *The Tale of an Anklet: An Epic of South India* actually brought him Sahitya Akademy Award in 1996. Even he has also translated many of the Sanskrit poems and these Sanskrit poems he has translated in such a fashion that they actually

give you a real picture of erotic poems-- something that is dipped in love that is dipped in the depiction of body that is depiction in sexuality that is a depiction of the union of two lovers.

So, erotic poems from the Sanskrit and anthology that also was to the credit of R. Parthasarathy now let us take some poems from his early days as I have been saying because R. Parthasarathy right from the beginning wanted to feel himself as an English man.

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Contd...

He had spent his youth whoring  
After the English Gods,  
There is something to be said for exile:  
You learn , roots are deep. That language  
Is a tree, loses colour  
Under another sky. The bark  
Disappears with the first snow  
And branches become hoarse. ( From "Another Sky")

" English forms a part  
of my intellectual,  
rational make-up,  
Tamil of my  
emotional , psychic  
make-up."

That is why his fascination for our English language was too much. But then as he progressed what he himself had said English forms a part of my intellectual rational makeup intellectual and rational makeup, but the question is did he really get the satisfaction with this intellectual and rational makeup. Because he himself says—‘Tamil of my emotional psychic makeup.’

So, when as a poet you have your own language as an emotional and psychic makeup naturally what you write in other languages will ultimately provide you or will ultimately result into a sort of disillusionment and a sort of desperation and disappointment followed by a sort of dejection and that is already reflected in majority of the poems of R. Parthasarathy.

Let us take for example one poem which was published in one of the journals and the poem is titled "Another Sky". Look at the title of the poem- Another Sky. And once we go through the lines we can find what he says and is there a sort of or is there a picture of the disillusionment because when he says he had spent his youth whoring after the English Gods. I mean R. Parthasarathy was quite confident that the language which we have been following. I mean the language that we have been imitating. It is just like whoring after the English gods. So, perhaps we are giving more weightage, we are giving more credit to English language and then in poems after poems he says that how his tongue was chained; why? Changed because of this foreign language there is something to be said for exile.

So, the very first part of his famous collection *Rough Passage* is also exiled you know Rough passages divided into three sections and the very first section is entitled *exile* fine. Now in exile what sort of experiences one can have you learn roots are deep of ,course, when you are whoring after the English gods.

So, English gods here is a sort of dig you learn roots are deep that language as a tree loses color under another sky. Your own language, your own mother- tongue that actually gets even though language is a sheltering tree, my dear friend fine, but then it loses its color under another sky, the bark disappears with the first snow.

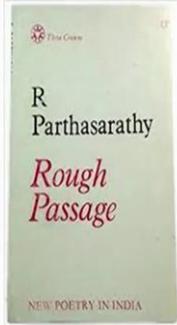
So, when you visit a different country and you try to put yourself according to the language that is spoken there or that is in communication there the bark disappears with the first snow. So, now, this snow is actually reflecting now the snow of England it disappears with the first snow and branches become hoarse.

So, you actually start losing your grip over your own mother- tongue. My dear friends, is that not a reality and does that not make R. Parthasarathy a realist? It is not like Bharati Mukherjee or it is not like Kamala Das who says the language I speak in becomes mine. But here is the poet who says that one loses one's language under another sky.

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*Rough Passage* (1977)

- ❖ It has three sections- *Exile*, *Trial*, and *Homecoming*. It has 39 poems.
- ❖ Poetic autobiography
- ❖ Delineates his poetic experience.
- ❖ Elements of disillusionment and cultural conflict is there.
- ❖ Exiled within his own mind.
- ❖ Explores the alienation caused by the distance from own culture, tradition, and language.



The image shows the cover of the book 'Rough Passage' by R. Parthasarathy. The cover is light green with the title 'Rough Passage' in a red, cursive font. The author's name 'R. Parthasarathy' is printed in black above the title. At the bottom, it says 'NEW POETRY IN INDIA'. There is a small logo at the top left of the cover.

Now let us come to his major celebrated and seminal work that is *Rough Passage*. *Rough Passage* title itself is very symbolic. So, it symbolizes how the poet when he was in England because this collection is sort of description of 15 years of his poetry writing. Even though it came out in 1977, but then it has got 15 years of the experience of the poet. It has got three sections and all these sections are quite long enough fine and the first section is entitled exile the second is entitled trial.

And the third finally, you know where do we return to we return to our homeland and through these titles also we can find how the poet also comes to a sort of reconciliation, but then when the poet comes to a reconciliation what are the experiences that we shall find my dear friends. Let us go deep into are the poetic oeuvre of R. Parthasarathy. This collection has got 39 poems in a way as I have been saying it is a sort of poetic biography.

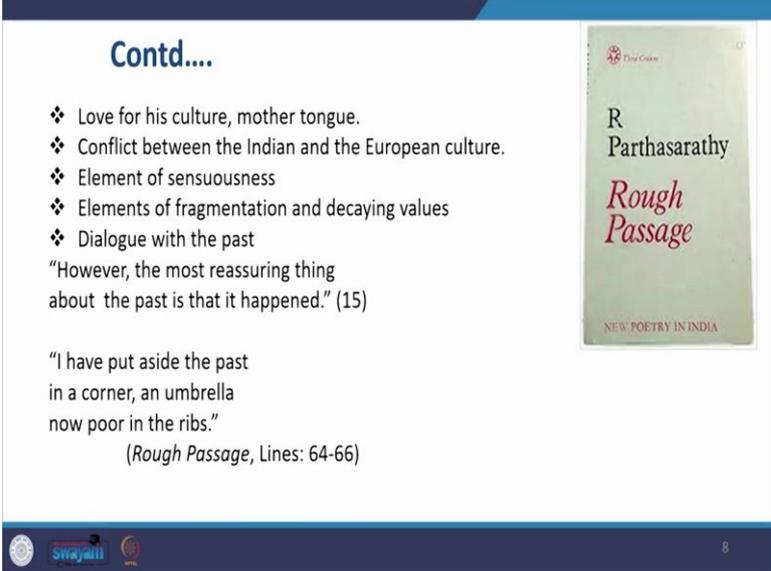
There are autobiographical notes. The poet compares his stay in England and then because you know the poet believes that his stay in England could not make him a man, we will come to those lines as well. It delineates his poetic experience and the entire collection is a record of the poet's disillusionment.

So, the first section in "Exile" where the poet feels there is a loss of identity and a loss of language, loss of identity and a loss of language, but then the second section which is called 'trial.' Here, the poet actually tries to recuperate, the poet actually tries to recover,

he tries to make himself a man himself, a man and the poet actually tries to neutralize the feeling of alienation with the celebration of love. Maybe it is also soaked in some amount of memory, some amount of dream.

But then the elements of disillusionment and cultural conflict is found in abundance in “Exile”. The poet is in true sense exiled within his own mind and the poet will realize of late that what he thought of early was not actually the true path. He explores the alienation which is actually caused by the geographical distances and the poet is distanced from his own culture, from his own tradition and from his own language, my dear friends!

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The slide is titled "Contd...." and contains the following text:

- ❖ Love for his culture, mother tongue.
- ❖ Conflict between the Indian and the European culture.
- ❖ Element of sensuousness
- ❖ Elements of fragmentation and decaying values
- ❖ Dialogue with the past

“However, the most reassuring thing about the past is that it happened.” (15)

“I have put aside the past  
in a corner, an umbrella  
now poor in the ribs.”  
(*Rough Passage*, Lines: 64-66)

On the right side of the slide is an image of the book cover for "Rough Passage" by R. Parthasarathy. The cover is light green with the title in red and black. It also features the text "NEW POETRY IN INDIA" at the bottom.

Now, when we come to the next one we will of course, see, but in the first one he finds the love for his culture, missing his mother tongue being lost fine. There is also a sort of clash between two cultures-- the Indian culture and the European culture. At times we come across the elements of sensuousness also like because you know it is all many people have often gone to the extent of saying that *Rough Passage* is like T.S Eliot’s *Waste Land*.

And there are several touches one can find in the poetic, while in the poetic world of R. Parthasarathy, but then the poet actually tries to mend his own fences with the dialogue of the past and he said just in the beginning- “However, the most reassuring thing about the past is that it happened it cannot be changed now.”

It happened it has already happened—"I have put aside the past/ in a corner an umbrella/ now poor in the ribs." Now you look at the words--- this word umbrella is also sheltering like the language, no? The poet says language is like a tree, it loses its color fine under another sky. So, 'umbrella', he says-- I have put aside the past my own traditions my own legacies, my own cultures, my own language in a corner an umbrella now poor in the ribs it appears. Now, the ribs of the umbrella have become very poor, it cannot hold my dear friend. It cannot provide me this sort of shelter. So, let us depict one by one-- we will tell take the first section first as we have said the title itself 'Exile.'

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*Exile*

- ❖ Delineates his traumatic experiences in England.
- ❖ Shows the cultural conflict between the two cultures.
- ❖ Effects of colonialism on Indian society and Indian linguistic tradition.
- ❖ Dislocation, alienation, and trauma caused by this colonialism.
- ❖ Special focus on the decaying of Tamil linguistic tradition and culture.
- ❖ Feeling of dissatisfaction in India, as the condition is same.

*The Angrez impudently rub salt in our wounds. Our pride bites the dust still pullulate the decrepit ruins. Now, blood trickled down the Jamuna, while the Emperor flies indecisive kites."*

Swayam 9

All of us are familiar with the word exile. It is a sort of banishment from one's own culture, one's own native to a different one to a strange one. So, it delineates his traumatic experience in England it also shows the cultural conflict between the two cultures that is European and the Indian or the Asian culture.

The poet has himself said in some of his lines and he has already recorded the effects of colonialism you know. So, in order to get oneself attached to the root what is essential is to decolonize ourselves. So, the effects of colonialism all Indian society and Indian linguistic tradition.

Actually R. Parthasarathy as a poet was trying to find out where is the Indian locale and where is the Indian tradition and that actually makes R. Parthasarathy a most loved poet. There are instances of dislocation, alienation and trauma which have actually been

caused by colonialism, fine. There is also a special focus on the decay on the deterioration of Tamil I mean you know Tamil has got two languages-- one is classic which is often when we worship god.

So, that actually is a classic Tamil fine. So, far as my knowledge is concerned and then there is a decay of such a classical language of Tamil feeling of dissatisfaction even in India as the condition is the same. Now you will find that when the poet actually had gone to London to find that it is actually a land of opportunities, of dreams, of a new sort of development.

But then thus the way he got himself disillusioned with the circumstances in the situations. So, to him even the Westminster bridge appears to have no attraction. Now the poet as he says “the Angrez impudently rub salt/ in our wounds/ our pride bites the dust/ still pullulate the decrepit ruins/ now blood trickled down/ the Jamuna while the emperor/ flies indecisive kites.” Look at the use of the words indecisive kites.

So, these indecisive kites are the indecisive ambitions, my dear friend. We are flying these indecisive ambitions, but perhaps we ignore the fact that we are still imitating, we are whoring after the English gods.

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*From Exile*

Through holes in a wall, as it were,  
lamps burned in the fog.  
In a basement flat, conversation

filled the night, while Ravi Shankar,  
cigarette stubs, empty bottles of stout  
and crisps provided the necessary pauses.

He had spent his youth whoring  
after English gods.  
There is something to be called for exile:

you learn roots are deep.  
That language is a tree, loses colour  
under another sky.

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Let us take some lines from the exile in order to see what the poet thinks as I have already told you that exile is the experience of the first phase when the poet had been in England.

The lines are so simple that you will be in a position to relate to the meaning. And the words used are also very simple because as a poet when we talk about R Parthasarathy we can find that the entire poetic collection is not only a delineation of frustration, but then there is also a sort of economy of expression, there is also a sort of the subtle use of certain words in order to make others aware what sort of stay one has when one is in a foreign country.

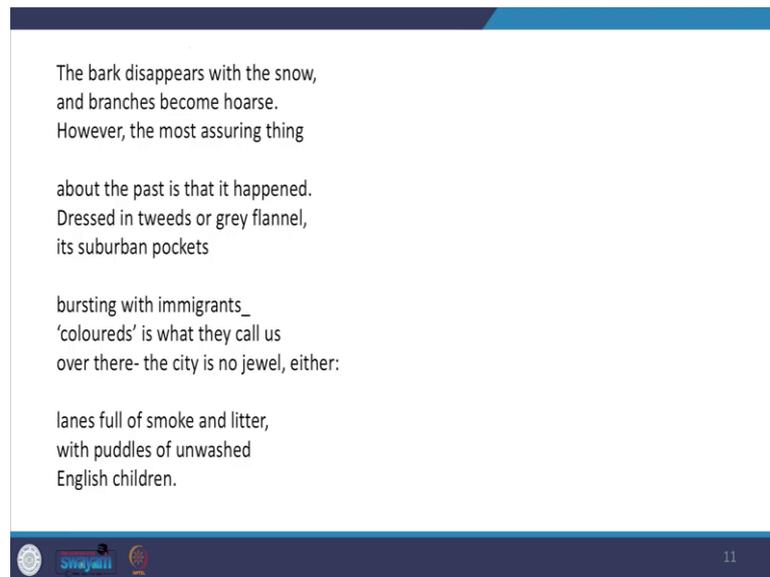
“Through the holes/ this is actually through the holes “in a wall /as it were lamps burned in the fog./ In a basement flat/ conversation filled the night/ while Ravi Shankar/ cigarette stubs empty bottles/ of stout and crisps provided the necessary pauses.” The poet actually takes a dig here because Ravi Shankar did not consider himself to be an Indian.

He was so, much influenced by the other cultures that he considered himself not of India the way the poets like R. Parthasarathy and A. K. Ramanujam considered. That is why he says while Ravi Shankar cigarette stubs empty bottles of stout and crisps provided the necessary pauses he had spent his youth whoring after English gods. Look at the use of the words ‘whoring after English gods’ there is something to be called for exile.

So, life in a foreign country is just another form of exile another form of banishment. You learn it is only when you go there then you realize what sort of indecisive kites we are flying, my dear friends. “You learn roots/ are deep that language is a tree loses colour/ under another sky”. So, all your ambitions of flying kites-- all your ambitions off your choices all your ambitions of being great.

They actually are just like indecisive kites. They are some of the traces of your determination which was only on a very weak ground the bark disappears as we have already discussed these lines.

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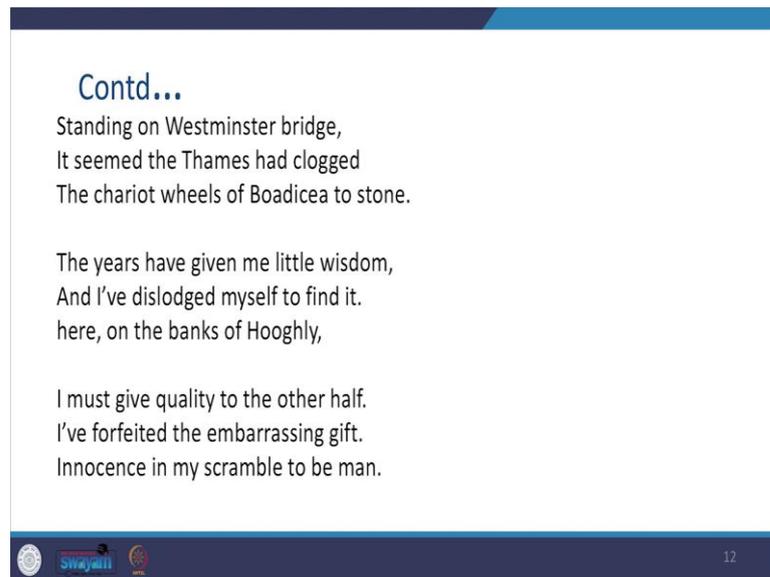


“The bark disappears with the snow/ and branches become hoarse/ however, the most assuring thing/ about the past is that it happened/ dressed in tweeds or gray flannel/ its suburban pockets/ bursting with immigrants/ coloureds is what they call us. Look at the reaction that these people show us, look at the comments that these people pass on us.

We are considered coloureds is what they call us over there the city is no jewel either. And what is there? Because you had high aspirations and imaginations and the poet says—“Lanes full of smoke and litter/ with puddles of unwashed/ English children.”

If you simply think that going to a foreign country and you will find that there is a sort of elation. No, my dear friend, you are not right. There are also lanes full of smokes and litter with puddles of unwashed English children, fine.

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Contd...

Standing on Westminster bridge,  
It seemed the Thames had clogged  
The chariot wheels of Boadicea to stone.

The years have given me little wisdom,  
And I've dislodged myself to find it.  
here, on the banks of Hooghly,

I must give quality to the other half.  
I've forfeited the embarrassing gift.  
Innocence in my scramble to be man.

Swajati 12

And then he says even if you happen to stand "...on the Westminster bridge./ It seemed the Thames had clogged," even if the river that you feel that it is very glorified; no, we often think of Thames even in our dreams and we read about them as something great. But then the poet says it seemed 'the Thames had clogged/ the chariot wheels of Boadicea to stone.'

And then finally, he says--- "The years have given me little wisdom/ if people like me who think that going to England will make me a gentleman and I will be quite a wise man. So, the years have given me little wisdom, it has given me less wisdom.

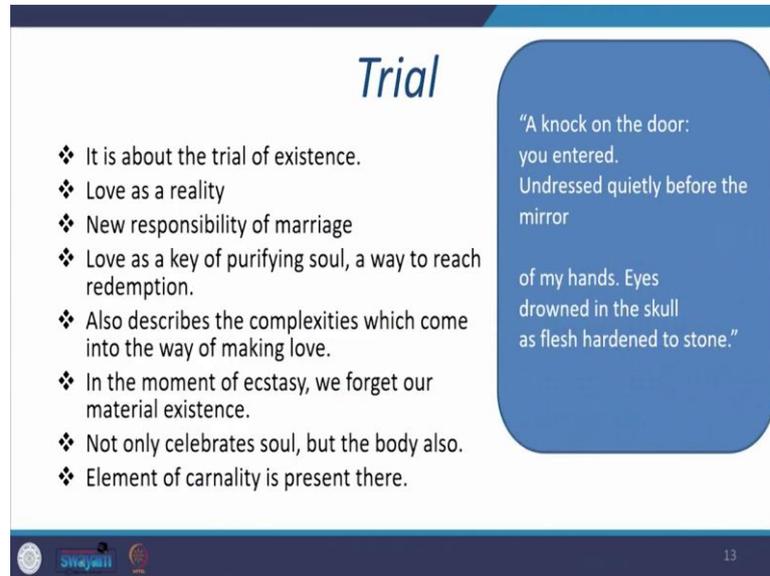
"And I have dislodged myself". Look at the use of words—"I have dislodged myself to find it/ here on the banks of Hooghly." So, the situation is no different, my dear friend! If you simply believe of having castles in the air perhaps you are not right. "I must give quality to the other half" it is only one of my halves.

So, I must think because you know there is actually a conflict and there is a conflicting emotion no between emotion and ambition. So, he says--- "I must give quality to the other half/ I have forfeited the embarrassing gift/ innocence is my scramble to be man." Perhaps I could not realize that it was my innocence.

And now what should I do? I must now realize fine and I must discover myself I must think of my other self because innocence in my scramble to be man and that is why with

this, we come to the next step and that step will be trial because the poet thought that all his efforts that he had thought of in order to become wise perhaps those have been wasted and I have got very little wisdom, my dear friend.

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*Trial*

- ❖ It is about the trial of existence.
- ❖ Love as a reality
- ❖ New responsibility of marriage
- ❖ Love as a key of purifying soul, a way to reach redemption.
- ❖ Also describes the complexities which come into the way of making love.
- ❖ In the moment of ecstasy, we forget our material existence.
- ❖ Not only celebrates soul, but the body also.
- ❖ Element of carnality is present there.

"A knock on the door:  
you entered.  
Undressed quietly before the  
mirror  
of my hands. Eyes  
drowned in the skull  
as flesh hardened to stone."

swayamii 13

So, let us think of how I can recuperate, how I can recover, my dear friend and this is possible and this is what he depicts in the other section entitled "Trial". The poet actually, at times, feels there is a sense of atonement for what he did. So, the trial is about the trial of his own existence, about his own making, about his own being about his own becoming, where he perhaps thinks that it is only the force of love that can mitigate all his anxieties.

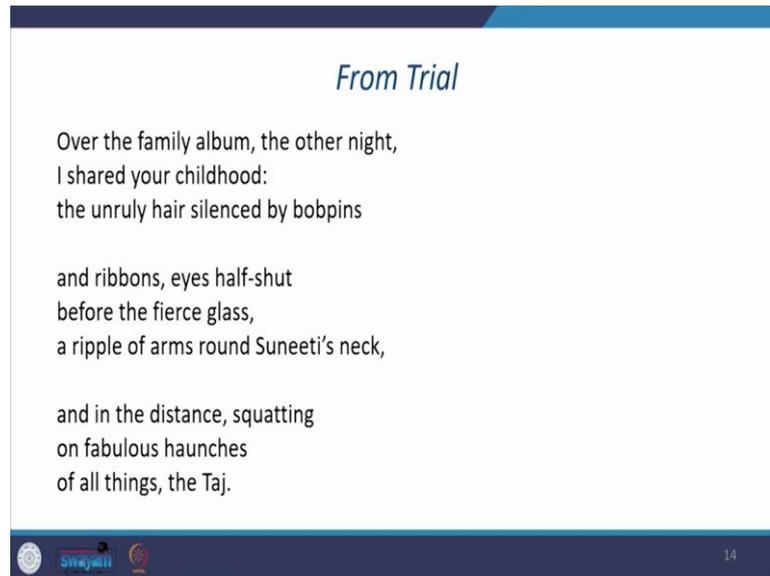
It is only the force of love that can actually help him recuperate it is only the passion of love that can help him overcome and that is why love only is a purifying force that can purify his soul and this is only way to redeem himself of all that he thought of in earlier days. So, the trial also describes the complexities which come in the way of making love and in the moment of ecstasy.

Now, here is another experience. In the moments of ecstasy one actually forgets the material existence and the material existence is; so, dull and drab. So, the poet actually wants now to float on in order to recover himself from all sorts of feelings, from all sorts of experiences that he had and that is why here in this section he celebrates not only the

body, but also the soul. One can also find the touches of cardinal desires at times being satisfied or dissatisfied.

Let us take some of the lines: “ A knock on the door/ you entered undressed quietly before the mirror /of my hands eyes/ drowned in the skull/ as flesh hardened to stone.”

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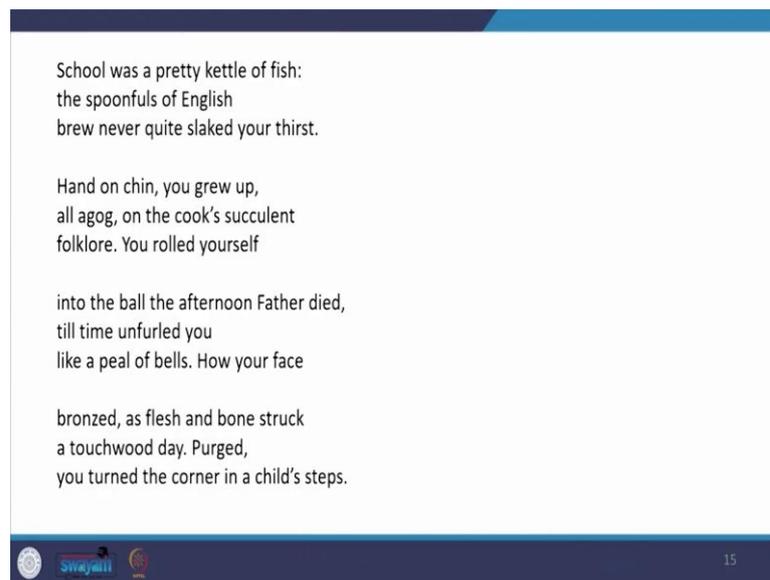
So, let us take some lines from this section also the trial which is actually the making and the becoming of the man. “Over the family album now”, here we can find how he follows or imitates A. K. Ramanujan and he has also mentioned that in this regard Ramanujan had got an upper hand.

He actually wanted to create a sort of link, a sort of connection with his family members and that is why in his poetic world, we find memory working great where through his memory he often thinks of his own nostalgic feelings being satisfied. “Over the family album the other night/ I shared your childhood,/ the unruly hair silenced by bobbins.”

Now, he thinks of all those people who in his childhood were friends maybe some of the cousins and after you know some years perhaps when he can find them he will find them not only into a grown up, but then they can sometimes become the father and the mother and might be holding several responsibilities. “Silenced by bobbins and ribbons eyes half shut/ before the fierce glass/ a ripple of arms round Suneeti's neck.”

So, Indian touches here and “in the distance squatting/ on fabulous haunches/ of all things the Taj”. So, the poet also here travels in the memory lane and then he also imagines a lot of things--- the childhood experiences and his own experiences his own accompaniment with all those people or with whom he had spent are the childhood joys and the childhood sorrows. “School was a pretty kettle of fish/ the spoonfuls of English/ brew never quite slaked your thirst.”

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Those were the days when the spoonfuls of English brew never quite slaked your thirst. “Hand on chin you grew up”, maybe this is some of the very near and dear ones about whom the poet is actually depicting hand on chin in the poet's mind and in the poet's memory he finds “hand on chin you grew up/ all agog on the cook's succulent/ folklore you rolled yourself.”

There was place for memory there was place for story and this actually takes us back to the world of A. K. Ramanujan and many others who used to say about the grandmother's stories that used to bring or that used to induce sleep. “Into the ball the afternoon father died/ till time unfold you/ like a peal of bells how your face/ bronzed as flesh and bone struck/ a touchwood day purged /you turned the corner in child's steps.”

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**Homecoming**

- ❖ Explores the phenomenon of returning of one's home.
- ❖ A dialogue with his Tamil past.
- ❖ Concerned with the decay of his Tamil linguistic tradition.
- ❖ Linguistic dilemma becomes the major part
- ❖ Reclaiming of past.

"How long can foreign poets  
Provide the staple of your lines?  
Turn inward,  
Scrap the bottom of your past."

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And then having traveled in the world of memory because we know you do not have much time to discuss in detail, but then having celebrated some love making, unfolding some experiences of love, now the poet in this section which is entitled "Homecoming" where he explores the phenomena of return and reconciliation. Return and reconciliation are the two things that many of the existing thinkers have also talked about.

And the poet like an existential person actually wants to return to his own roots and while returning to his own roots perhaps the poet will also talk about in the same way the famous romantic poet John Keats had said.

"I returned home/ tried my face pressed against the window of expectation." So, finally, it is only the home that can address all your problems and he says the linguistic dilemma that the poet had experienced that actually becomes the major problem in this section and here is one who tries to reclaim his own past and then he says how long can foreign poets provide the staple of your lines can they really provide the staple of your lines turn inward and what is actually the solution the solution is turned inward.

So, when he says turn inward once again he refers to a sort of homecoming scrap the bottom of your past. It is only your past that can actually help. Even when you are in a foreign country and you find yourself lost bewildered dazed fine disappointed. It is only the homecoming that can actually soothe all your frustrations and anxieties.

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**From Homecoming**

I am no longer myself as I watch  
the evening blur the traffic  
to a pair of obese headlights.

I return home, tired,  
my face pressed against the window  
of expectation . I climb the steps

to my flat, only to trip over the mat  
Outside the door. The key  
goes to sleep in my palm.

I fear I have bungled again.  
That last refinement of speech  
terrifies me. The balloon.

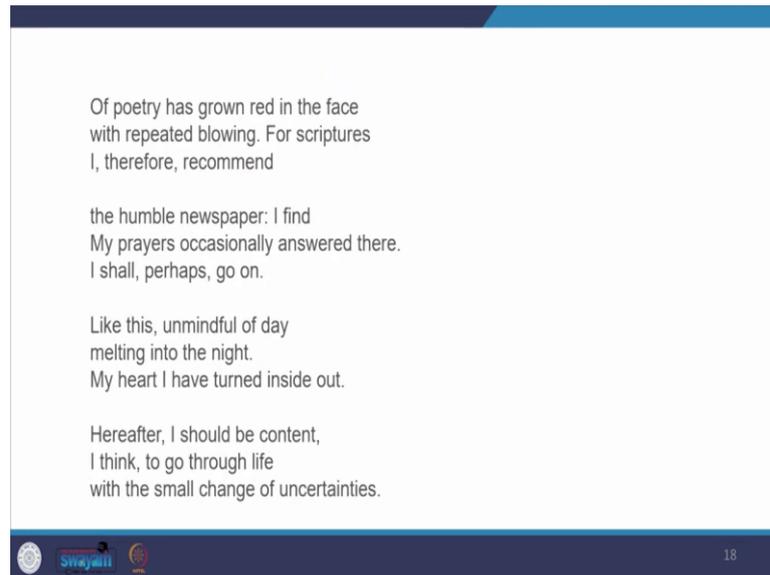
" I now firmly  
believe that I should  
not write poems in  
any other language  
but Tamil."

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The poet has at one place said, I watch/ the evening blur the traffic/ to a pair of obese headlights.” I am no longer myself now firmly believe that I should not write poems in any other language but only in Tamil; that is how all my anxieties are will be over. And he says—“I am no longer myself as I find myself that it was it was actually a sort of indecision of mine to go to a foreign country, but now I returned home, tired my face pressed against the window of expectation.

I climbed the steps to my flat/ only to trip over the mat/ outside the door. The key/ goes to sleep in my palm/ I fear I have bungled again/ that last refinement of speech/ terrifies me. The baloon

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“The balloon of poetry has grown red in the face/ with repeated blowing for scriptures/ I therefore, recommend/ The humble newspaper, I find/ my prayers occasionally answered there, / I shall perhaps go on./ Like this unmindful of day/ melting into the night/ my heart I have turned inside out./ Hereafter I should be content/”, perhaps it is only the home coming that will actually provide me with a sort of contentment.

“I should be content I think to go through life/ with a small change of uncertainties.” My dear friends, even though Parthasarathy is considered to be a poet who was actually sandwiched between anxiety between disappointment. And then who wanted to come back to his home, but how can one come back to one’s home and have the satisfaction.

So, Parthasarathy has been considered a poet who talks about diasporic experiences, but home is the only reality, but it would perhaps be injustice not to consider R. Parthasarathy a poet who also talks about love we can take one poem.

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**Parthasarathy's love poems**

1.  
Under the warm coverlet my woman sleeps on;  
I am drenched in the intractable scent of hair.  
The notion has often crossed my mind;  
I should crumple it up like a handkerchief  
That I could press to my face from time to time.  
Meanwhile wakeful hand peel the skin off the night;  
I drink from her tongue in the dark.  
Our breath tips the room over to one side;  
The tight hardwood floor groans  
Under the slew of discarded clothes.  
We shut the whole untidy threadbare world out--  
Dogs, telephones, even the small indifferent rain.

2.  
As you untie your long flowing hair in bed,  
It spreads over slowly and colours the sheets,  
Leaving behind a pool of black  
Caught in the red glare of the lamplight.  
You turn towards me, disturbing the pool;  
Hands and tongues lose no time in spinning their moist  
web,  
And we fall into their delicate net.  
Day breaks: the window empties its pail  
Of light over us, waking us up.  
It is our sweat now that colours the sheets;  
It is the clean scent of your hair in the morning  
That keeps me awake, and I am unable to rise.  
(from The Concise Kamasutra)

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Because the time is not on our part and here we can take one poem which has been taken from “The Concise Kamasutra”. Let us read the lines so that you can get a sort of semblance. “Under the warm coverlet my woman sleeps on/ I am drenched in the intractable scent of hair.” The lines are very smooth very simple. “The notion has often crossed my mind /I should crumple it up like a handkerchief. That I could press to my face from time to time/ meanwhile wakeful hand peel the skin off the night/ I drink from her tongue in the dark/ our breath tips the room over to one side/ the tight hardwood floor groans under the slew of discarded clothes/ we shut the whole untidy threadbare world out. Dogs telephones even the small indifferent rain.”

I mean here the poet actually refers to a sort of union, fine, refers to a sort of longing a longing when they actually unite. “As you untie your long flowing hair in bed,” we have already said the poet at times becomes very senseless. “It spreads so slowly and colors the sheets/ leaving behind a pool of black/ caught in the red glare of the lamp light./ You turn towards me disturbing the pool/ hands and tongues lose no time in spinning their moist web. /And we fall into their delicate net./ Day breaks; the window empties its pail./ Of light over us waking us up./ It is our sweat now that colors the sheets./ It is the clean scent of your hair in the morning/ that keeps me awake and I am unable to rise.” So, there are several romantic touches and sensuous details are also there you can read it at your own leisure and find out the beautiful meaning that is hidden within.

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General Themes and Characteristics of his Poems

- ❖ Representation of Indian ethos
- ❖ Sense of loss and despair
- ❖ Identity crisis
- ❖ Alienation from own culture and tradition
- ❖ Against racial prejudice and the imperialistic mindset
- ❖ Linguistic dilemma
- ❖ Cultural dilemma

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If we can have a look at because we have already discussed the world of R Parthasarathy or we can find out why R Parthasarathy should be included and should be considered as a major Indian English poet, is because we find the representation of Indian ethos abundant in majority of his poems.

There is of course, a sense of loss and despair. The poet is sandwiched between the identity of language, identity of tongue and the identity of culture. Alienation from his own culture and tradition makes the poet sad. The racial prejudice and the imperialistic mindset which actually is a result of the colonialism. The poet is actually a rebel against that. The linguistic dilemma that prompts poet to lose are the tree of language which actually shelters and the poet is found in a cultural dilemma.

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**Critical Views on Parthasarathy**

- “Although Parthasarathy’s poetry is more openly autobiographical than Eliot’s, he edits and revises it to achieve an impersonal distance, through coolness of tone, regularity of form, economy of language, and by the juxtaposition of images which situate his own life in the context of the colonialism, the decay of the grandeur of the Indian past and the ossification of Tamil culture along with its accompanying modern vulgarity.” (Bruce King)
- It is a moot point whether the poet has been actually able to achieve all that he promised... a general impression of disjointedness... fails to be a national odyssey, it does have evocative passage recording a personal peregrination.” (M.K.Naik)

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It will not be fair if we do not take some of the critical comments about Parthasarathy’s views. Many of the poets, some of the critics have criticized Parthasarathy and they have said whether Parthasarathy was able to or not in this regard what M K Naik said is—“It is a moot point whether the poet has been actually able to achieve all that he promised a general impression of disjointedness.”

So, Naik finds a sort of disjointedness, but then this can be considered to be a sort of opinion which is not quite favorable, but then he fails to be a national odyssey. Of course, he did not want a sort of national odyssey he actually wanted a sort of regional odyssey where Tamil was too much on his mind. It does have evocative passages recording a personal peregrination. So, whatever be there, but there is a personal journey there is a personal peregrination.

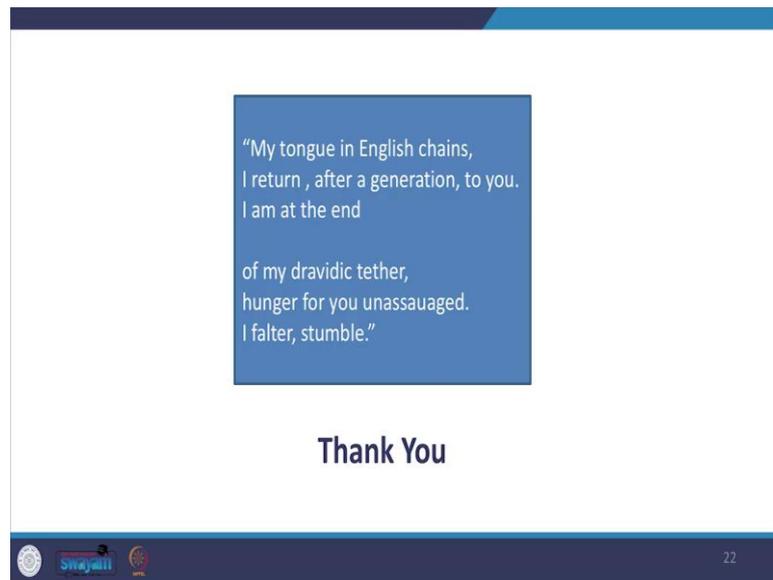
And what Bruce King says can be a very beautiful you know a comment about the poet—“Although Parthasarathy’s poetry is more openly autobiographical than Eliot’s, he edits and revises”. My dear friends, *Rough Passage* was revised several times like T. S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*.

But then this revision was done by Parthasarathy himself whereas in the case of T. S. Eliot, we find there were many people who actually made certain revisions. Parthasarathy edits and revises it to achieve an impersonal distance through coolness of tone, regularity

of form, economy of language and by the juxtaposition of images which situate his own life in the context of colonialism.

The decay of the grandeur of the Indian past and the ossification of Tamil culture along with its accompanying modern vulgarity. Now having discussed the poetic oeuvre of R. Parthasarathy or Rajagopal Parasarathy; it is time to bring this lecture to an end, but not without Parthasarathy's own lines.

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Where he says--- "My tongue in English chains/ I return, after a generation to you/ I am at the end of my dravidic tether/ hunger for you still unassuaged/ I falter I stumble." And what can give him an established home nothing but his own culture, nothing but his own language, nothing but his own identity. And with his own identity only he can claim what he had thought of because all his ambitions that he had been soaring high and flying kites perhaps where false and that is what the poet has himself realized.

With this we come to the end of this talk. Thank you very much, I wish you all a good day ahead.

Thank you.