

Literature for Competitive Exam
Prof. Aysha Iqbal
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Module - 07
Lecture - 27
Postcolonialism

Welcome friends. The other day we were looking at some of the luminaries of Indian writing in English. So, we looked at people like Rajarao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, their works the way Nissim Ezekiel could address the questions of identity and language, in a very humorous way and then R.K. Narayan he is very simple, but very profound tales on the human condition Raja rao and Mulk Raj Anand and his take on India and it is poverty. But where does this entire or the earlier Indian writing in English, where does the tradition come from? And how do we locate it? How do we situate it? So, we today we are going to talk about constitute of post colonialism the theory the notion the idea of post colonialism.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:15)

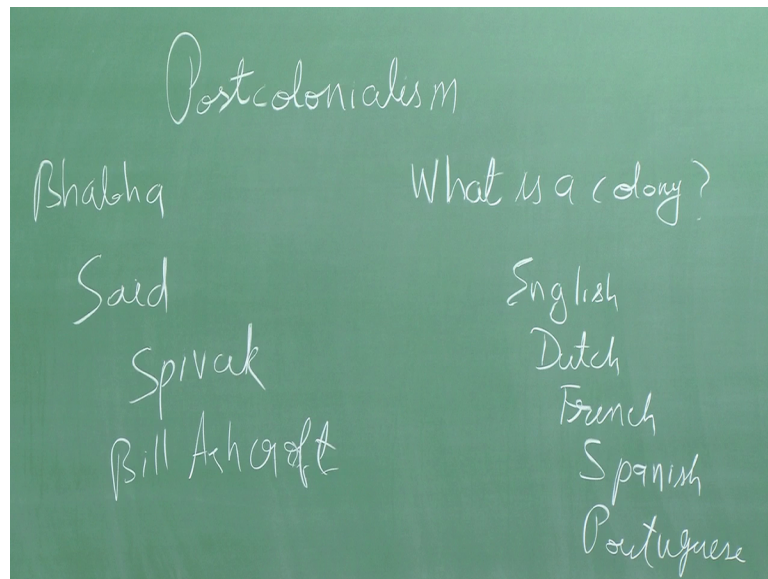


And with particular reference to our own Indian writing in English as well as south Asian writing and Asian writing to some extent. As a student's of post colonialism or people who are more into research and readings, particular an broadly as a student's of literature. Whatever literature you are doing whether you are interested in American

literature or Australian, Canadian or British literature or Indian writing or south Asian writing. You have to know what is post colonialism and these are the key names.

So, today we are going to talk about post colonialism and how it has impacted, what are the key theories key names, and how it has impacted the south Asian writing, the Asian writing particularly were the colonies work and also Indian writing in English to be more specific. These are the key names here is Bhabha, Said, Spivak and Bill Ashcroft, the empire rights back there are many more. I am sure as the student of literature you know or you have some acquaintance some familiarity with these names, we are also going to look at what is a colony India was a colony.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:40)



And these were the colonials, not just in India necessarily, but wherever there was a colony particularly the English the Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. So, across the globe these countries had established colonies for our IT of reasons.

So, before we start today's talk please, look at this particular video, I am sure this video will help you understand the overarching concepts of post colonialism is, overarching notion of post colonialism.

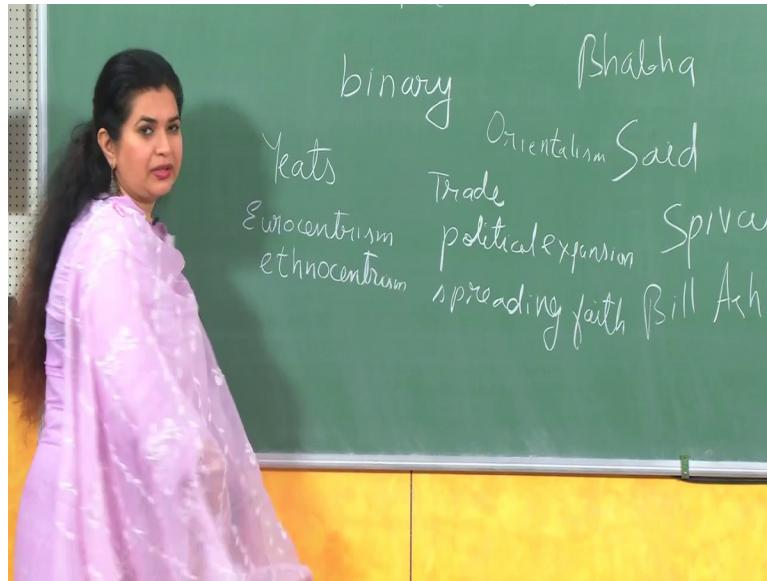
(Refer Slide Time: 03:24)



So, please take a look at this particular video. This is a warm up quite a well done lecture, whether a lot of key ideas and key theories discussed. What is post colonialism? Post colonialism is a fact or a state of being a colony, we were formerly colonized. So, this is a state of being a colony it is the cultural condition, it is a cultural condition that you are a postcolonial society. Which see this is the word that you will come across in day to day readings. They know escaping this term because half of the world was once colonized or may be more than that.

So, those colonies or those countries that were once colonized they live in a cultural condition of a post colonial society that is what we mean. Now colonialism refers as you are saying earlier to the period when the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French and the British were expanding their overseas or their territories in overseas countries. Now these western nations they travelled foreign wide to establish their colonies over a number of countries and number of nations, for a variety of reasons reasons could include trade route to increase political power, and particularly in several cases, one of the reasons was to spread their faith, so three reasons for the establishment of colonies: trade, political expansion, and spread of spreading faith, three reasons, three main reasons.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:17)



And what did it all lead to when they came and when they so, not just in India, but also in Africa, also in parts of let say, Canada and Australians. So, these are all post colonial countries. Now what happened when the so called colonials arrived on the seen, there was exploitation of land, resources, and also local people and over all exploitation of land resources and the local people. Of course, the colonies the so called colonies were created by subjecting the natives the locals to the western oppressive rule, and taking away the land not just the land, but it has other far reaching implications also.

So, postcolonial theory as we talk about, in general terms is concerned with the immediate and long term effect of an post occupation of not just the land and the resources, but also of the minds and culture of native people. How native people local people were affected? And what did this act of colonization do to their, not just to their resources the economic resources, but also to the language to the cultural to their over to their overall way of life? Now the post colonial theories enter text. Let us we have talking about basically we are not talking politics, we are talking about literature. So, a text, a literally text and when post colonial theories enters a text. They enter it through a specific critical lens, or read the text over particular post colonial way.

Now, that critical lens or post colonialism ask certain uncomfortable questions. And ask the readers or tease the readers the readers who are us that. So, to analyze and explain the effect that colonization and imperialism or the expansion of power had, or continues to

have on people and nations. So, whenever you read a text, always ask, and this is what see I am trying to connect all this to what we did the other day, and what we are going to do in the subsequent classes. Extension of power, What does it do? Or what kind of kinds of effect do these things have on peoples mind, and peoples land, and people's culture?

So, a post colonial reader a person who reads the text, would looked for the effects, overt as well as covert effects of colonialism, and how they are address through the plot setting characterization and language. Now one of the key text of post colonialism and is called is advert size, Orientalism, advert sized said when you read literature with the perspective of Orientalism in mind. You would for instance understand, let say W.B. Yeats, the great Irish poet and his two Byzantium poems, sailing to Byzantium and just Byzantium, and what do these poems do? If you look at, see these are great works of literature.

But if you apply the critical lens suppose colonialism and this is what most post colonial writers or thinkers would say, that these two poems combinedly collectively provide an image of Istanbul, which is the eastern capital of the form roman empire. And how does, how is that image constructed in Yeats? It is east is identified with laziness, sensuality, mysticism which is not that spiritual mysticism we talk about the positive, in positive terms, but rather the exotic mysticism.

At such movements Yeats adopts an ethnocentric, the so called ethnocentric or Eurocentric vision. So, these are other terms that you should know. And of course, you should know this concept also the other, when writer treats one raise of group of people something very different from his people, then you are othering them. This concept is also there which is implicit in the works of all these theories the othering. But we were talking about Yeats is W.B. Yeats, his Byzantium sailing to Byzantium.

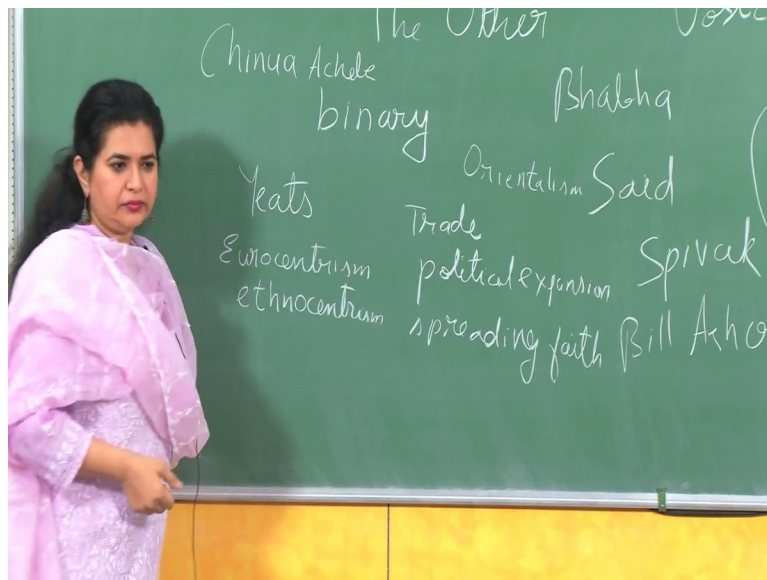
And we are talking about the concept of euro centrism, please note down. Ethnocentrism, my way of life is better than yours, my raise is better than yours. Those are the ideas that come through very strongly according to post colonial critics in sailing to Byzantium and Byzantium. So, what happens is, you seen the east in Yeats's case the capital of the Roman Empire that is Istanbul. So, what are you doing? You are looking at the east or seeing the east as an exotic other, which is the commonly establish term, the other is not just a noun or sorry not a noun, but a grammatical category, it is the other in capital O,

always you write it in inverted commas. So, the other which becomes the contrast or it is a foil to the dominant person or dominant raises own persuades, see your othering.

Now, Yeats being a member of the protestant ruling class in Ireland, so a white a ruler belonging to the Protestantism in Ireland. He is a colonizer as well as colonized; see Ireland was also Ireland also has a very tragic history. They were parts of Ireland you know it is still being controlled by the Great Britain. So, Yeats being a member of the ruling class in Ireland has a dual identity, he is a colonizer he is also the colonized, and when we recognize such double identities, it becomes one of the strengths of the post colonial perspective, we have to understand the person who is colonizing us he is also colonized by others.

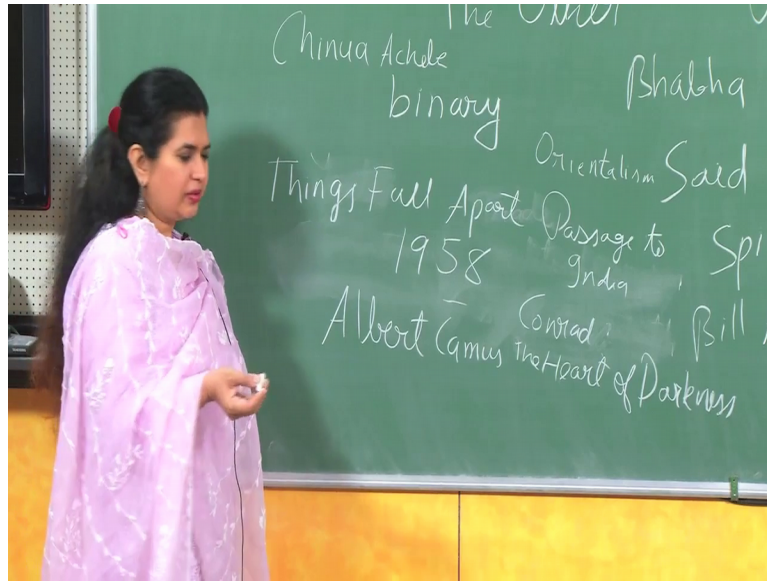
So, it is a very interesting reading that is what the idea is. So, please go through sailing to Byzantium and Byzantium. Yeats is an impotent writer any way, with or without post colonialism, you must take a look at Yeats when you appear for if you plan to appear for your English for competitive exams.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:45)



Then another writer who is of immense value to us is the Nigerian writer Chinua Achele, the Nigerian writer Chinua Achele. He published in 1958 a work called things fall apart in 1958, not 68, but in 1958.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:09)



Now this work was criticized by one of its earlier critics or reviewers, for affecting to identify with African villagers, while achieving his own education and his job was in the capital city of Lagos.

We should make him it is like you know imply identify with the values of the so-called civilization. Again civilization in inverted commas, suppose it will be brought to Africa by Europeans. So, again I am talking I am asking you to look at the dual identities. See these kinds of questions may appear, the notion of post colonialism or any or new criticism or post modernism that we have been discussing, now and then, during the course of practicing several items that may appear for exams, is just that this can also appear in some way and some sort for your exams. So, it is good to know what is post colonialism, but it is also important to know that if you get a passage from things fall apart or sailing to Byzantium.

And if the next question asks that what theories do these works subscribe to. So, then you should be able to identify. So, that is the whole purpose of this particular class. People like Achebe or Yeats have been also have been accused of harboring or having double or hybrid identity so, this is what is important. Now the shift in attitudes in the 1980s and 90s was towards post colonial writers, seeing themselves as using particularly African, Indian, south Asian, Asian forms supplemented with European derived

influences, rather than as working completely within European genres and frame works ok.

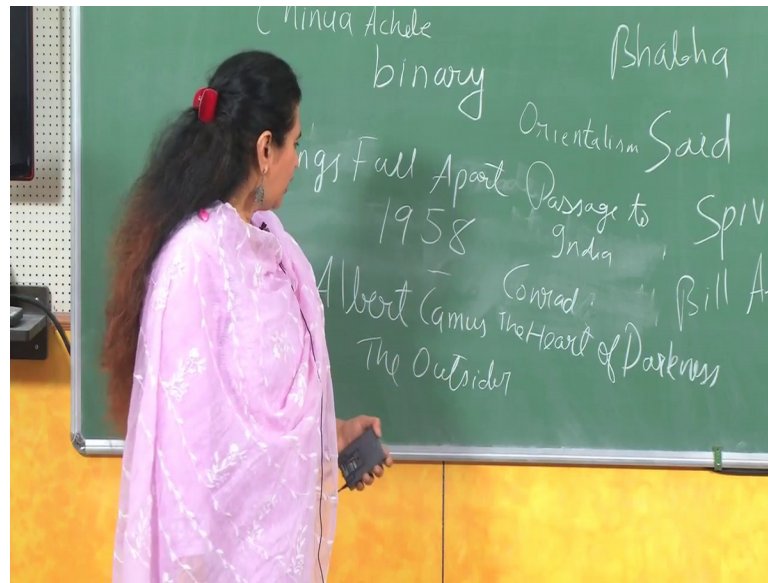
So, they tried to by the 80s and the 90s people is started from these countries the former colonies, experimenting with themes and ideas, became more highbred. Now you should also know that post colonial literature seems to begin with the un questioning acceptance of the authority of the European models, especially in the novel. And the with the ambition of writing works that will be master pieces entirely in this tradition. Some of the earlier writings that we were talking about yesterday they belong to that period. 80s, 90s changed the game, for south Asian and Indian writing in English. So, please remember the earlier versions were more like modeling themselves on the along the European tradition. The theme plot etcetera, characters may be from our own native sources, but the model was essentially European. This is called the adopt face of colonial literature, since the writers aims and the writer that we were talking about the other day.

The ambition was to adopt the form, and the assumption is that this kind of form has a universal validity. Now critics often discuss the representation of Africa in Joseph Conrad's the heart of darkness or of India in E.M. Forster's a passage to India, and also of Algeria in Albert Camus the outsider. So, one has to look at what are the representations that is being talked about. So, in your exams perhaps this could be one of the may be a descriptive kind of question, the heart of darkness is a standard text an extreme favorite, very favorite of examiners from any part of the world.

So Conrad's, Joseph Conrad's heart of darkness, these are movie called apocalypse now based on the heart of darkness and which deals about the impact of colonization in Vietnam.

So, it deals basically with the Vietnam war and the after matafield so the heart of darkness which is Joseph Conrad's, Conrad, Joseph Conrad the heart of darkness. And then you have E.M. forester the passage to India and then you have Albert Camus the outsider, Camus the writer of the fall, most famously Nobel prize winning author the outsider.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:08)

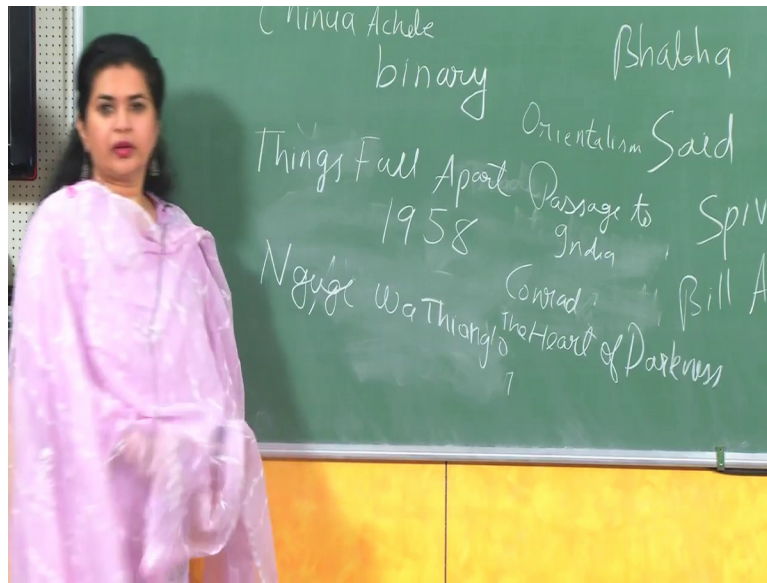


Again critics have also found elements of post colonialism in a works such as Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe now see Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe at the time of it is writing at the time of it is publication, I am sure that it is a post colonial work of course, the concept itself was not in existence at the time of Defoe's the publication of Defoe's work, but I am sure that Defoe was not even thinking of such ideas.

Now but critics today, like we were talking about that when it is a new theory, but it is this theory gives us enough critical tools or ideas to approach the older earlier pre existing text. Using the theory of post colonialism we can approach the older earlier pre existing text. For example, we have what we have done with particularly the heart of darkness and also passage to India. Now what happens in Robinson Crusoe, you all know that story of Robinson Crusoe? Man cast away, a cast of it is in some after a shipwreck and marooned on an island for several years. And then what happens? Crusoe's attitude towards the land upon which he is shipwrecked and towards the black man he sort of colonizes who becomes a slave, and become Crusoe calls him man Friday.

So, the man becomes his sort of a slave, and this is what happens to Ariel and Caliban also, in Shakespeare's the tempest. So, critics have done postcolonial readings of these texts. Chinua Achebe and Caniel author Ngugi Wathiongo also have written a number of his stories, recounting the suffering of colonized people.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:49)



So, you should know things fall apart is a classic by Chinua Achebe and another important canine writer Ngugi Wathiongo. If you have any problem with spelling with my handwriting please look these names up you will find them. These are very popular names and vary easily available.

Now, in particularly in things fall apart Achebe details the devastation that occurred when British colonist began moving England from the Nigerian course and he narrate the destructive events that let to the deads and slave men ravaging of thousands of Nigerians when the British impose their imperial government. Achebe points out the negative effects and shifting ideas of identity and culture cause by the imposition of western religion and economic models on Nigerians during the colonial rule. So, all these works you can relate to particularly the early literature and writings in Indian English ok.

Extreme poverty in Kuley and untouchable in Mulk Raj Anand; so we have So, works So, these are all the results of the imposition of certain way of life on another way of life. When we do post colonial literature we should also know the terms first world, second world, third world, fourth world etcetera, when nations are question by critics, because they reinforce the dominant position of western cultures, populating the so called first world culture. So, this critic includes the literary cannon histories written from the perspective of the first world cultures. So, for example, a post colonial critic might question the works included in the canon, because the canon does not include works by

authors outside western culture, this is something that has been extremely debatable for quite a while in recent times.

The existence of the canonical literature, top ten books, top hundred books, top ten films, top hundred films, and the question is that why do these so called compilations anthologies, canons they include works majorly by those artist and writers who are in the west. Not from the Middle East, not from the south Asia, not from any part of Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, this is the question. Things are now changing, but very slowly. So, what we have been talking about post colonialism is simply a lens through which we study literature that is set in colonized countries or deals with post colonial issues. So, when you approach early Indian writing in English please think accordingly, please make your own judgments accordingly. Again going back to the heart of darkness which is one of the text which is continuously subjected to post colonial scrutiny of late.

So, journey of someone called Marlow through the African jungle in search of the European captain Curdes and this mirrors Conrad's own experiences in the Congo. Now this talks about European exploitation and the book also deals with issues such as imperialism, capitalism, race, gender equalities that were very much at the fore front of the twentieth century European mind.

Now Conrad's Emyvalen treatment of these issues is extremely representative of the way they were treated in any number of European discourses of the time. Heart of darkness is the text that can be use to understand how image of Africa was projected as the other world, the other world it is the antitheses of Europe. And therefore, antitheses of anything that is civilization in other words it is un civilized. The Place were mans intelligence and refinements are mocked by the triumphant imperialist. In order to understand more of these ideas you should read Achebes an image of Africa, racism in Conrad's the heart of darkness.

And similarly you can look at Canadian literature, which also deals with idea of post colonialism, contemporary Canadian literature of course, highlighting shifting political social economic ideals, cultural ideals. It is necessary for a students who are interested in the areas of English, and Canadian literature to understand or to recognize the constructs of identity. What happens to the identity? What happens to the notion of affiliation, or complicity with the hegemonic institutions of European colonialism, on North American

new colonialism. So, what happens? And now coming to one of the most important writer said his Orientalism is one of the foundational studies of the post colonial theory, along with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha and their works.

Now, these theories postulate that English culture exist not simply as the expansion of So called higher culture, higher order culture, but as the reflection of a massive enterprise of hegemonic, domineering influence and self validation, they self validate themselves that we colonized you for your own good, it was in your own interest that we colonize you. Now you must understand that the designation post colonialism has been use to describe writing and reading practices grounded in colonial experience occurring outside of Europe, but as the result of European expansion, expansion sorry and exploitation of the other worlds. There is a term called binary, this is the world white oppose to black, good oppose to bad, savage or civilize oppose to savage.

Now, Edward Said in his Orientalism describes that the west construction of the orient projects all the things all ideas that the west considers negative. This means there is a complete dichotomy between the east and the west. So, the west is good and lightened and masculine while the east is evil and dark and ignorant and feminine. So, all these negatives they construct a kind of image of the orient. Now in the context of globalization, the problematic histories and political functions of literary nationalism, all these assume new meaning and urgency. So, we can therefore, persist that an ideal for example, Indian or Canadian literature they remain a vital site where we can look at discussion of complex socio political relations.

So, in the aftermath of globalization that is important. so whatever has been going on writings that have been happening during the last thirty years also. So, let us start from late 80s on words and then you will find that there is a strict there is a very perceptible shift and questioning of certain kinds of ideas and model. So, these writers who belong to this category, they are no longer following the European models. So, the other day when we looked at the earlier writings they were still adopting to the language in the model and the style of the colonizers. But later on as we move on and in more recent times we find there is a marked shift.

So, keeping all these factors in mind knowledge of native cultural traditions and patterns of behavior must be taken in to considering or consideration before exploring the impact

of colonial conflict. So, this is what we find in most writings that come after, whether they are south Asian, whether they are Asian, whether they are Indian so, all or even Asian American. So, when we look at our next group of text we were going to look at these, we are going to look at them through that lens of not just post colonialism, but also liberalization and globalization. Before ending please take a look at this slide, some recommended reading for you, literature and nonfiction.

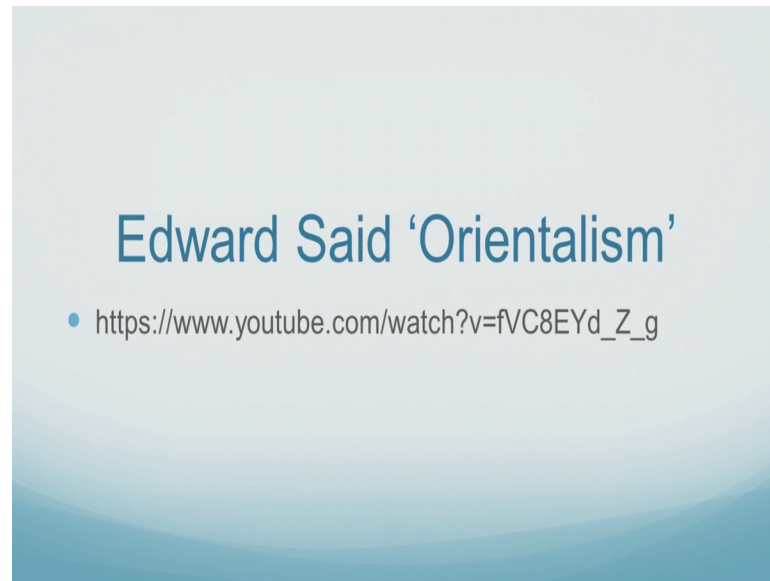
(Refer Slide Time: 34:32)

Literature and non-fiction

- Chinua Achebe - *Things Fall Apart*, 1958
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o - *The River Between*, 1965
- Ruth Praver Jhabvala - *Heat and Dust*, 1975
- Kazuo Ishiguro - *The Remains of the Day*, 1988
- Michael Ondaatje - *The English Patient*, 1992
- Arundhati Roy - *The God of Small Things*, 1997

So, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongos the river between Ruth Praver Jhabvala, heat and dust Ishiguro's the remains of the day, Ondaaje's the English patient, Arundhati Roy's the god of small things.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:57)



And then also look at this particular video, Edward said he is discussing his Orientalism on this particular link.

Thank you very much.