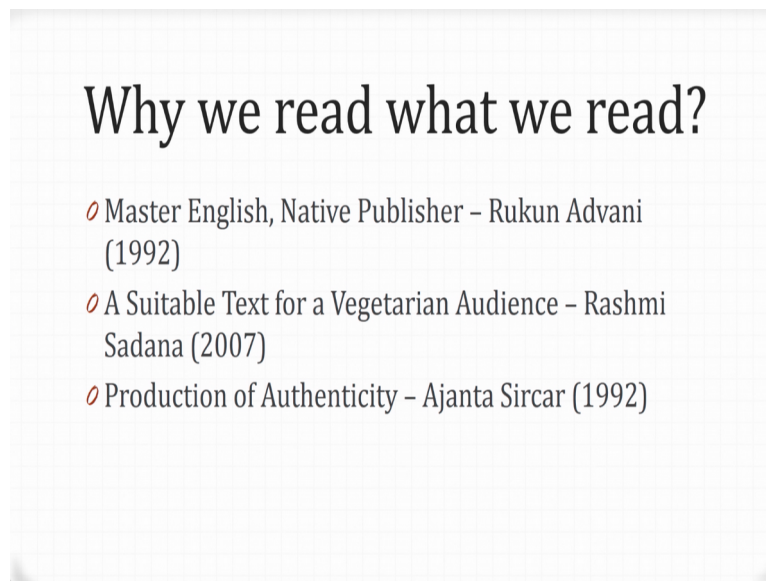


**Indian Fiction in English**  
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**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology - Madras**

**Module - 11**  
**Lecture - 38**  
**Indian Fiction in English - Positioning Literary Studies**

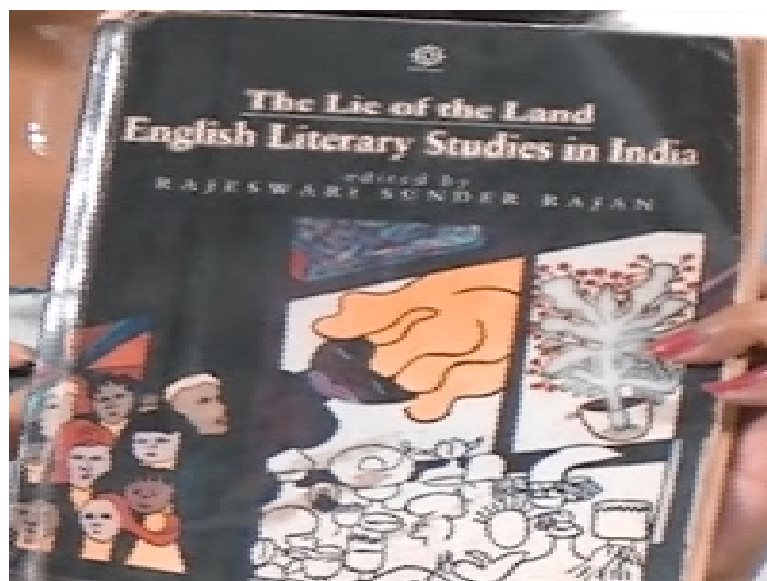
So, these are the 3 essays that we are going to take a look at today.

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Master English, Native Publisher by Rukun Advani. It is a 1992 essay which also appeared in this collection.

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This is called the Lie of the Land. This was edited by Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan. She is one of the leading critics of Indian Writing in English. Then there is a 2007 essay, A Suitable Text for a Vegetarian Audience. This is by Rashmi Sadana. This appeared in 2007. And Production of Authenticity by Ajanta Sircar, which again came out in 1992. We will be looking at Ajanta Sircar's essay to, as part of the discussion on Sadana's essay.

So, these 3 works, I have tried to bring together these, through these 3 essays, primarily to try and respond to this question, Why we read? What we read? Yeah. This is, we are not talking about reading outside the academic framework, talking about reading as in the kind of exercise, the academic literary exercise that we do within the disciplinary framework as part of your courses, as part of curriculum.

How certain kinds of things have been prescribed and certain other kinds of texts are being left out. And this is also a question that we tried to address, such as part of your presentation. Some of you have realised that it is easy to get hold of material, while presenting a text. There are a lot of people who have written about certain things. It is easy to present them within a framework.

For example, when certain other takes are boughten, for example when we discussed Temsula Ao or even when we discussed Zelaldinus by Allan Sealy, we have realised that due to various reasons there is an impossibility to fit them within the predominant framework. And there are also texts which are well known certain texts, even in fact to know heatend us, which happens to be a Booker prize winning fiction, that is not as well-known as some of the other texts.

So, what are these determinants? And these are certain questions that we have been trying to address. And I think these essays, they do not really try and answer this question entirely, but they give us certain tools to begin to access this question. Certain different, they lay certain kinds of inroads to try and approach this question. So, Rukun Advani's essay;

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## Rukun Advani's essay

- ◊ From the publisher's perspective - 1992
- ◊ Master English, Native Publisher: A publishing Perspective on English Studies in India
- ◊ Publishing and literary studies - a reciprocal relationship
- ◊ Indian publishing - ideologically uncommitted, difficult to position ideologically

It is a 1992 essay which is written from the publisher's perspective. I should also give you a context and do why this essay was included in this collection. This collection in the beginning, when they give the introduction to this collection which is called the Lie of the Land, and the subtitle is English Literary Studies in India. So, this entire volume looks at the way English Literary Studies have emerged, evolved and what is the current status and ask many questions about the shaping of English study's curriculum.

And this is how the introduction goes to this entire book. The essay is in this volume, address the issue of English Literary Studies in India, most specifically in the Indian University. And it goes on to say the official study of English in India has a history of over a 150 years, and eventually one of the objectives of the essay. The present volume is an attempt to challenge the status quo.

And they do tell us, what are these certain kinds of status quo which are being maintained. I think now that we are almost nearing the end of this course, we are also in a position to think about what are the contours, what are the frameworks within which we have been having the discussion. Which are the major texts that we always access. What kind of secondary materials are being made available. Which one do we consider more valid than the other.

We too have a fairly good idea of what this status quo to a very large extent needs. So, coming back to Rukun Advani's essay. This is titled Master English Native Publisher with a subtitle A Publishing Perspective on English Studies in India. So Rukun Advani, at the time of writing this essay, he was an editor with the OUP Oxford University Press. The, and also,

he is also a quite well-known writer in terms of his, he writes lot of mostly on hilarious topics and not considered as a canonical Indian English writer but a known writer.

And in this essay Riot at the beginning if you have the essay with you, you can see it right at the, in the first paragraph that, he says the relationship between publishing a Literary Studies is a reciprocal one. Given the existence of particular varieties of publishing, particular varieties of literary activity are made possible. I think it is rather self-explanatory. So, he is drawing a very direct connection between publishing activity and literary studies in India.

And this is something that he maintains throughout this essay that Indian publishing as far as literary studies is concerned. He argues that it is ideologically uncommitted and very difficult to position it ideologically. Even in hind-sight if you look at that set of works that are coming out, he argues that there is no overriding ideology which is driving the set of writings. And this is entirely from the perspective of the publisher.

He of course, you know, if you read through the essay in the first 2-3 pages. In fact, he is mocking the literary establishment. He is mocking them for the kind of jargons that they are using that is one when he begins talking about Indian publishing the background, foregrounded. That it is all a, you know, a playful use of all of these language. He deliberately tries to down play the entire critical establishment.

The first sentence, it is now customary before embarking on such projects. You see how he is been using the inverted commas everywhere. It is now customary before embarking on such projects, an interventions to emerge from clouds of mystification by foregrounding one subject's position within the discourse or as might be said conversationally introducing oneself.

And this is, you know, he deliberately mocks the way literary criticism is being done and he goes on to say that the publisher's perspective is entirely different. And he particularly makes this case with respect to OUP and says, can you come to page 114, in the second paragraph, the last line. The broad character of Indian publishing and some of the differences from it that define a publisher like the OUP has quite a lot to do with the relationship between Indian publishing and English Literary Studies in this country.



So, throughout this discussion keep this in mind, this is a context in which he is discussing. He is not talking about all kinds of works that have been published by OUP, but he is talking about this certain body of work, particular kind of body of work which is being produced, which is the English Literary Studies. And he goes on to say a lot of nice things about OPU. Saying it is a non-profits kind of a thing.

When he also clarifies what he means by non-profit, that it does not mean that it is, the publishing activities are unprofitable, but the profits are ploughed back into further publishing industry. That is what he means by non-profit. And he talks about the ethical bases on which they work and also some amount of the kind of frills that they enjoy. He gives some details about that. We will not go into the details of it.

And in, come to page 117. He tries to make a distinction between the giant publishing houses such as OPU and the set of publishers whom he calls as committed publishers. He does not obviously name any of those only occasionally he makes references to Sage, Kali and similar publishing houses like OUP. So here when he talks about committed publishers, he says that here are a certain set of publishing houses who may have in a overt ideology, they may remain committed to a certain causes.

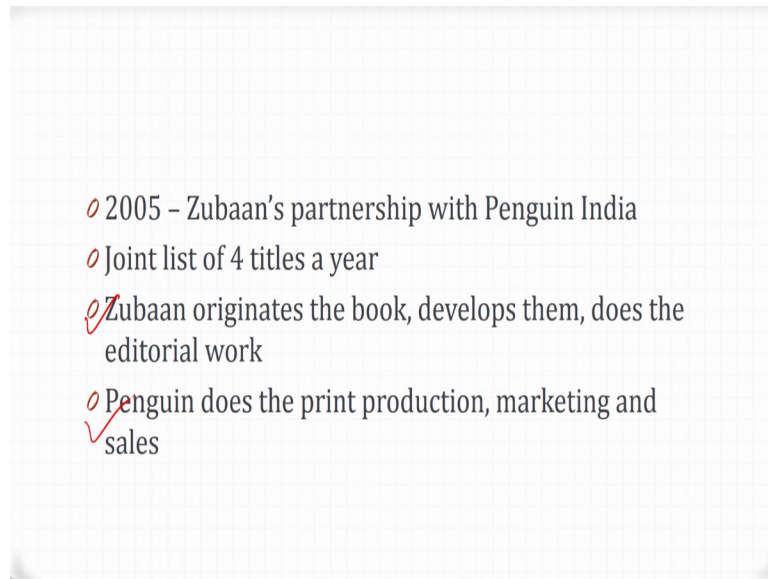
But he also thinks that they do lack something in comparison to these huge publishing houses such as OUP. And he says in the beginning of page 117, admittedly the overt ideological positions of some Indian publishers are clearer than those of the bulk, but it is an unfortunate fact that these more committed publishers have seldom insignificant in terms of a recognisable publishing programme, marketing ability and staying power.

Or alternatively they were had to, they have had to circum to the pressures of an imperfect market to stay alive, whereby their distinctive character has begun to seem diluted. This is not to undermine the importance of small uncommitted publishers. On the contrary the heroism of such enterprises, the, and frequently the significance of their publishing within a culture so fiercely oppositional is sometimes almost incredible.

But (( )) (09:25) within which such activities are unfortunately solitary, sporadically visible and usually short lived. This is the only mention that he makes about these committed publishers vis-a-vis the publishers the giant publishers such as OUP according to, who

according to Rukun Advani does not work with any kind of specific ideology. Yeah. And few, Rukun Advani does not mention any particular publishing house.

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He does not take the name of any of the publishing houses, but if you look into some of the ways in which these small publishing houses with very focused, committed ideology. How they also had to partnership with certain giant houses. Zubaan is one of the best examples of that. This is something that which is being showcased in Zubaan's website itself. They began this partnership with Penguin India in 2005.

This was the idea that they will together publish joint titles of at least 4 titles per year. So, this is how the division works. Zubaan originates the book, develops them, and does the editorial work. And Penguin does the print production, marketing and sales. This is precisely also addressing the gap and the lack that Rukun Advani is pointing out. Because these publishing, these small committed publishing houses, sometimes they may not have the energy to do this kind of vast marketing. So that aside. And he comes back, he brings back the discussion to the academic publications of OUP.

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## OUP's academic publications

- o Found a receptive audience in India
- o Dominant consensus of what constitutes educational rather than commercial literature
- o Ideological position of among most Indian academics  
- a philosophy of quietism or aloofness

And OUP as we know, if we take the case of English Literary Studies, this is one among those reputed, peer reviewed, committed publications and it is the kind of work that they bring out, are also accepted rather uncritically. Because this is from one of those bastions of English language and literature. So he, Advadni makes these claims about OUP's academic publication that they have found a receptive audience in India.

And also at some place, you know, he says this, they have also found an international audience because of the kind of work that they have been doing and if it is not ideology driven, if this is not about certain political or even apolitical commitments, how do they make this decision. And he says, it is based on the dominant consensus of what constitutes educational rather than commercial literature.

And this is in fact quite important what constitutes educational material. So, it is like, Advani takes it for granted that there is a consensus about what can constitute educational material as far as literary studies is concerned. And this consensus seemed to be rather uncritically say accepted by a publishing house such as OUP. And he also says it is not that they have not been trying to be attentive to the different nuances of political positions or different kinds of articulations within this consensus.

And he says for whatever best that they could understand, it is as if the most Indian academics do not have any ideological position at all. And mostly this is what he says, at best they are driven by a philosophy of a quietism of aloofness. We do not find the overtly participating in any kind of ideological commitment or battles. We can of course differ with

him but we will just move on for now. And he identifies these different kinds of market as far as English Literary Studies is concerned.

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And when you are thinking about the English Literary Studies, do not narrow this down to Indian English Fiction alone. Think about the course structure that you are following. Think about the various kind of things that are being introduced to you through this syllabi and through the curricular. And also the range of things that the universities across the length and breadth of this country are also following.

So, there is this anthology market. He talks about how the English in this Anthology Market, English Language and Literature Markets are seen as one and the same thing. There is hardly any distinction being made between English Language and English Literature. If you, and this is, he also says this is also because even when language, English language is being taught right from school days, this is also done through passages from literature.

So, there is an overlap and not much of an effort has been made to bring out the distinction. And the other thing is that, this is very much driven by universities and syllabi. And come to page 121. He talks about, you know, there are, this in fact gives us a lot of details about how the profits work, and how they make money from this educational market.

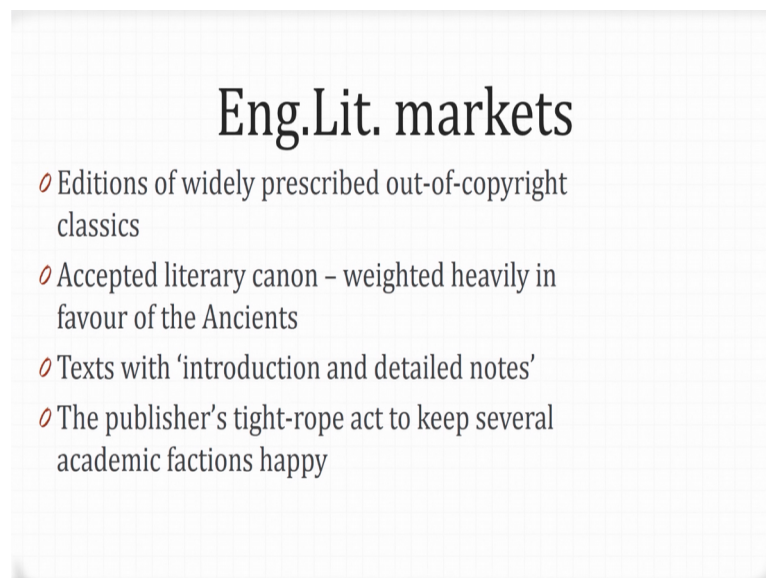
And in page 121 he, there is a paragraph which begins talking about the profit margin on such anthologies somehow, somewhere, half way through, do you see the sentence beginning whereas he would have to sell a library hardback at his own risk and spend money on

warehousing it for several years. Our prescribed anthology comes under the category of a no risk publishing because he knows he cannot lose on his investment and because he knows exactly how soon he will recover his investment. Which is why there is lot of politics behind the text being prescribed.

Some of them are for political reasons, some of them are for economic reasons. Like he points out an anthology, that too a prescribed anthology by a university. That is, that falls under a no-risk publication. Why is it a no-risk publication? All the students who are registered under that university, they will buy it. There will be a larger market for it. There will be the secondary material which will get than produced.

So, it is a larger market which emerges based on how the university prescribes a particular kind of text. So, the, then the next set, you know, which he calls critical editions and financial editions. That is what he also calls as the Eng.Lit. Markets;

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Which we are obviously familiar with in different varying degrees. And he says the Eng.Lit. Market is a, quite a thriving one. And this, come to page 122. Yeah, he talks about the out of copyright classics which are mostly also prescribed by universities across. Novels of Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, Dickens, Dorjelian, D.H. Lawrence, so and so on.

If you take, if you go and take a look at the syllabi and curricular of at least some 10, 20 universities all over India, you can find that it is pretty much a same set of texts which they would be, may be there would be 1 or 2 which would be, which may jet out, which may jar,

you know, in comparison to the others. Otherwise it is pretty much a similar range of texts which are being discussed. So, he talks about the market for these editions of widely prescribed out of copyright classics.

And out of copyright means you do not have to make an effort to get the copyright again. And he says that this is worked quite well for the publishing houses because most of the prescribed texts have been from these out of copyright classics. So, they do not really have to make an effort to get the copyright of the recent works. And there is also the market for the text with introduction and detailed notes. There would be as soon as the text is prescribed.

We are talking about a typical university. And there, that very moment a set of scholars, a set of reputed academics would come together and they will also bring out another edition with annotated notes. These are, this is how the market works. And he says, it is not that again OUP or a publishing house like that; they are not attentive to the different political readings which a text can lend itself to.

But they also have to do this tightrope act because they want to keep all the factions happy. One cannot have an entirely radical reading of a text because, that may totally disappoint a number of people who are into the conventional reading of things. But one cannot entirely have the conventional reading alone but many may, because many may find that they have not been included the new kinds of readings or the new kinds of challenges.

So Advani is saying, it is not as if we are unaware of these things happening but we also want to make all academic factions happy. And then there is this literary market;

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## Literary market

- o Library hardbacks
- o Smallest in terms of its turnover value
- o The lack of good quality research monographs
- o due to the somewhat peculiar status of English studies in India – a reasonably large number of mediocre students?
- o The literature studied here is that of England and America
- o Should include translations of regional Indian classics

Where you know, this is mostly focussed on the library hardbacks and he says in terms of the turnover value, it is smallest and he also talks about certain limitations as far as this segment is concerned. The literary market, the market for library hardbacks. And he says while this is of much strategic importance. It is very important. Though the turnover is very less it is important to bring out these, you know, the library hardbacks of different works.

And it also ensures the academic relevance of a publishing house such as OUP. But he says there are certain limitations. He says there is a lack of good quality research monographs coming out from India. There are certain reasons that he outlines for that. And the first reason he says is, it is due to the somewhat peculiar status of English studies in India. He says reasonably a large number of mediocre students are the one who come to pursue English studies.

So, he says a large number of mediocre students come to pursue English and the second one is even worse. They finally go on to teach. So, there is an impossibility of bringing out good quality research monographs. And this was written in 1992 and today we are in 2018. Do you think this is a relevant argument that he is making? There is a certain truth value to what he is saying, if you are only looking at skills and merit in a particular way.

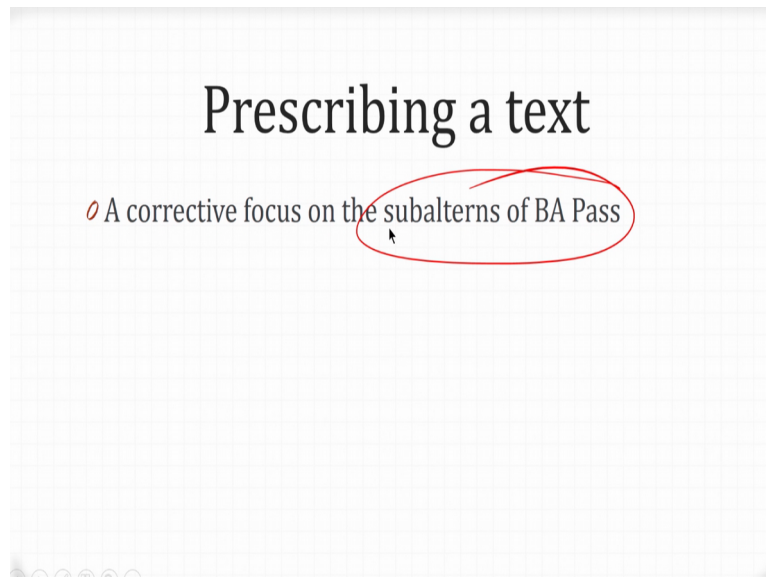
That is what he is doing. He is talking about the high achieving ones who clears certain kinds of entrances; who make it big in the job market. And mediocre, in what sense he uses mediocre; that has not really been spelt out in this essay. But this is the generalised claim that, he makes. We will, we are not agreeing with him but we will just move on with the essay.

And he says one is the lack of good quality of research monographs due to the lack of good students and the lack of good teachers. There are no good academics here.

As far as English Literary Studies is concerned. This is what Rukun Advani is saying. And the second thing that he says is that the literature that we study here are that of England and America. So, even when someone wants to bring out a good academic work and a good research monograph, they would rather get it published outside India because the market here may not work in favour. In fact, Rukun Advani he himself had published, he did a PhD.

He published one of his thesis I think, into a book. So, I do not know well that fared. And yeah. And he is saying, may be the way ahead is to include translations of regional Indian classics as well. So that, there is a wide market and there is a better quality, does not really go into the details of any of these arguments that he is making and how to come out of this loop that English Literary Studies according to him has fallen into. So, since we need to move on. So, finally he says when there, when a text is being prescribed a corrective focus is, should be placed.

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Do not think that he is using subalterns in the way that politically you are familiar with. He is talking about the subalterns of BA passes as far as a typical university system is concerned. He says when a text is being prescribed also keep in mind this large mass of students who are coming in. The prescribed text should also meet their demands. Again you know, it is not an essay where he outlines all of these things.

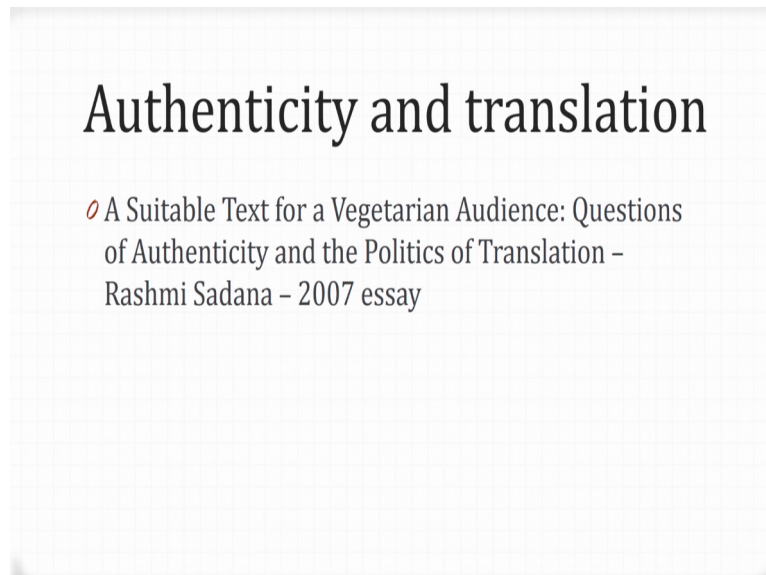


And he talks about how there are lot of changes coming in but that is really been, the change is not been powerful enough to bring a change in the entire publishing scenario. And he is saying again from the publishing point of view. If a group of academics do come together to say rework the curricular or the syllabi or the demands of the educational system; then perhaps on the publishing houses will also take a step forward to completely challenge everything.

So, here the crux of this essay is that he is at some level arguing, this is an apolitical field altogether, English Literary Studies. And the publishing is not determined. The kind of books which are brought out, the decisions behind bringing out certain kind of texts. It is not driven by any kind of ideology but via broad consensus. And lot of details are being supplemented. But some of those may have some of those details also may have become relevant in the contemporary because, we have come a long way from 92 till the contemporary.

So, I want to juxtapose this essay. This is from the publishing perspective arguing that there is no politics at work. I want you to now take a look at the 2007 essay;

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By Rashmi Sadana, which is again, which is an essay entirely based on academic reading and this is scholarly work. So, the essay is titled as A Suitable Text for a Vegetarian Audience: Questions of Authenticity and the Politics of Translation. Just as said the context be the first couple of lines we will read together. This is something which happens at the Sahitya Akademy.

In 2000 Kiran Nagarkar's novel *Cuckold*, won India's top literary prize, The Sahitya Akademy Award, for best original work in English. Yet the accolade seemed to alienate him further from his prized readership in his home state of Maharashtra. The novels emplaced that he initially established Nagarkar as an acclaimed author. Where written originally in the Marathi language. He went on to write more Marathi prose but then made a mistake of writing 2 novels in English.

*Ravan* and *Eddie* 1995 and *Cuckold* in 1997. How might be characterised the competing loyalties and claims to authenticity in India's contemporary multilingual field. This essay argues that postcolonial English has come have less to do with the relationship between coloniser and colonised and much more to do with internal language politics and competing nationalisms.

So here, the essay talks about the mistake that Kiran Nagarkar has done. Think about the first novel *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. That has been described as a false start. Now also recall the many anxieties that Raja Rao had while writing in English. He did not want his act of writing in English to be presented as a betrayal of the nationalist, the cause. Language also becomes a way in which one talks about nationalist loyalties.

How one defines one's identity with respect to the nation. And those are certain things that we have already taken a look at here. Rashmi Sudhana is telling us. Not, it has become as if the battle is not between the colonised language and the use of the colonisers language and the use of that language. But it is between the way language is used within this subcontinent in the postcolonial scenario. And she will shortly show us how. And here, there are a, she;

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- o The Marathi literary establishment saw Kiran Nagarkar's switch from writing in Marathi to writing in English as a kind of betrayal
- o The apparent 'crime' of having written in English

This essay is structured in a very unique way. She begins by discussing Kiran Nagarkar and his, the reception of his work in the Marathi establishment after he started writing in English. And in the second half of the essay he moves on to the novel by Vikram Seth, A Suitable India, A Suitable Boy. And how the translation of the work from English to regional language had operated within a different politics altogether.

And she is trying to bring in the questions of translation, the question of language and tie it up with how, by a larger critical tradition itself as formed. So here, she begins by talking about how Kiran Nagarkar switched from writing in Marathi to writing in English was seen as a kind of betrayal and he was also accused of have having committed a crime of having written a, in English.

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## How does bilingualism work?

- o When it comes to evaluating an Indian writer?
  - o Writing in English
    - o Competent mostly/only in English
  - o Writing in bhasha
    - o Loses legitimacy and credibility when one shifts to English?

So, here is this interesting thing about how bilingualism works in India, in the contemporary. When it comes to evaluating an Indian writer, most of the writers who are writing in English, which is most of the writers who we have already taken a look at. It appears as if they are competent mostly or only in writing in English. And there is no question of the bilingual aspect coming in to play most of their cases, because their education and their background, their lived experiences, all tell us a different story as far as their familiarity with the native languages are concerned.

But on the other hand, the Bhasha writer. One could think of a number of Bhasha writers who are competent in both languages; U.R. Ananthamurthy, the Kannada writer. He is written in both Kannada and English. O.V. Vijayan the Malayalam writer; he translated his own iconic work. What is that? Yeah, The legends of Khazak, as it is known in the translation. He translated his own work from Malayalam to English.

There will be, and Kiran Nagarkar of course. He was an established Marathi writer and he, until he lost his legitimacy when he moved to writing in English. One could come across a number of such writers who are fairly well received writers in their local native traditions but they also have proficiency of writing in English. But the moment as far as the critical establishment of Indian Writing in English is concerned, the moment the Bhasha writer begins to write in both these languages, it is as if, they lose their legitimacy and credibility as far as their local audience or the local establishment is concerned.

Of course, there is a way in which the Indian writer in English, he has access to fame. He has access to wealth. He can make a living out of that. He is an, he or she is an international celebrity. Those things remain entirely inaccessible to the Bhasha writer. But the moment the Bhasha writer makes this crossover to writing in the other tongue as well, he realises that he or she realises that, even the native turf which otherwise seemed very sure in terms of the audience in terms of reception, that also becomes a little shaky.

This is something that Kiran Nagarkar talks about it. In fact, you know the, and the Sahitya Akademy. You come to the second page of the essay. He explained how the publishers sent 36 review copies to various Marathi newspapers and journals. Not a single review of the book has appeared in the 4 and a half years that have gone by. A complete rejection of this work as far as the Marathi is, Marathi critical establishment is concerned.

The last line, If you do not acknowledge an author's work, it ceases to exist. And that is what had happened with him as far as a Marathi literary establishment is concerned. And this is again drawing your attention. The first point that this essay Rashmi Sahana makes in his essay.

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The language battles in India. Now it has got less to do with the relationship between coloniser and colonised and much more to do with internal language politics and competing nationalisms. Think about the language riots which happen. It was not between English and Indian languages. It ceased to be. English ceased to become the colonisers language. It became one of the Indian languages and one of the fierce battles which were fought during the 1960s and 70s. It was between Hindi and Tamil.

There was a very acute divide between the North and the South as far as the imposition of a certain language was concerned. And it is within, it is from such a context that Rashmi Sadana is addressing this entire politics which works in the, as with respect to translation and language. And this is how English language is being seen.

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# English language

- o global literature
- o Second mother tongue
- o Urban elite

Today it is a global literature. In Indian context we do not, we no longer see that as an alien tongue. And that is also a language which unites us in multiple ways. You take out that language and we do not have a medium to communicate with each other. And it has become the second mother tongue. This is also been seen as the language of the urban elite. Lot of the privileges are associated with language.

Language also means English language also means access to certain spaces. It also means the definition of your identity in particular ways that it ensures certain privileges. It ensures that you access certain privileged spaces today. Let us try and understand Sahitya Akademi stands for.

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# The Sahitya Akademi

- o "A space where struggles over cultural authenticity are staged, where linguistic choices are defended, promoted, and derided, where the regional trumps the national and yet is continually subjected to it"
- o National Academy of Letters - 1954

This is the National Akademy of letters as you all know, this was established in 1954. And Sadana gives an interesting description for Sahitya Akademy because most of these debates that she talks about, they were all staged in the Sahitya Akademy. This a space where struggles over cultural authenticity are staged, where linguistic choices are defended, promoted, and derided, where the regional trumps the national and yet is continually subjected to it.

So, this gives a totally different equation to the language games which are at work. So, let us do this exercise very quickly together. You will begin to see that;

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## Sahitya Akademi Awards

Year	Author/Text
1960	R K Narayan ✓
1964	Raja Rao ✓
1965	Verrier Elwin ✓
1971	Mulk Raj Anand ✓
1978	Anita Desai ✓
1980	Srinivasa Iyengar ✓
1982	Arun Joshi ✓

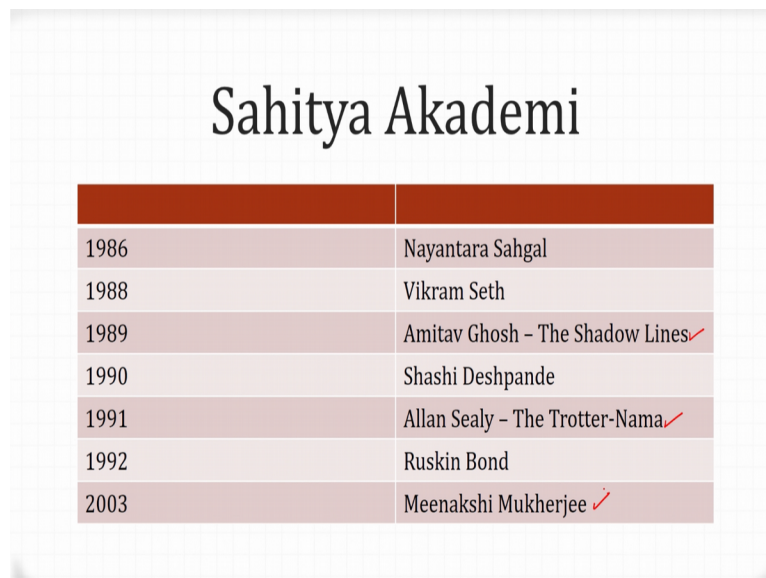
Most of the works that we have been taking a look at. Though we did not make this choice of a text based on whether they have won the Sahitya Akademy award or not; we find that there is an uncanny similarity between their works that have won Sahitya Akademy Award and the ones that have become a part of cannon, part of literary cannon, as far as Indian Writing in English is concerned.

We have done most of, there are a few writers whom I have left out in-between. Almost every year an English writer was given the Sahitya Akademy Award from 1960 onwards. There are just a few exceptions here and there. This has not been given. You will find, if you search online, you will find the entire list. So, let us take a look at the writers whom we have done. At least one novel we have done from Narayan Raja Rao.

Barrier Elwin, I do not know if you remember when we were talking about the strange case of Billy Biswas. I do not remember whether I mentioned it or whether Suma mentioned it. One of us did draw your attention to. How that was the time, the setting of the novel is also from the time when the various anthropological debates were being staged between Barrier Elwin. And Barrier Elwin is in, British writer who lived in India for a long time.

He is an anthropologist. So, he has been talking about how to incorporate the tribals into the mainstream and argued that, you really do not have to really do that and just Leave them alone. So, he was, in that sense, he is part of the discussions of critical establishment. Mulk Raj Anand of course. Anita Desai, Srinivasa Iyengar the critic Arun Joshi we discussed.

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Year	Winner
1986	Nayantara Sahgal
1988	Vikram Seth
1989	Amitav Ghosh - The Shadow Lines ✓
1990	Shashi Deshpande
1991	Allan Sealy - The Trotter-Nama ✓
1992	Ruskin Bond
2003	Meenakshi Mukherjee ✓

Nayantara Sahgal, we did not discuss it. But her's is an emergency novel which is part of the cannon. Vikram Seth A Suitable Boy, Shadow Lines, yes. Shashi Deshpande. We just made a passing mention of her while talking about the women writers. Allan Sealy's Trotter-Nama, Ruskin Bond's again; he was just mentioned here and there but of course all of these are familiar names, familiar authors. Meenakshi Mukherjee as a critic.

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## Sahitya Akademi

2004	Upamanyu Chatterjee ✓
2005	Arundhati Roy ✓
2013	Temsula Ao ✓
2017	Mamang Dai

Upamanyu Chatterjee, Arundhati Roy, Temsula Ao and Mamang Dai is of course familiar to at least some of you. So, that is this uncanny similarity between the authors and critics who won Sahitya Akademy Award and how they also found their rights. Not as if, there is a conspiracy at work. This happens rather inadvertently because this is how the critical, this is how critical traditions and canons operate in work across literary traditions.

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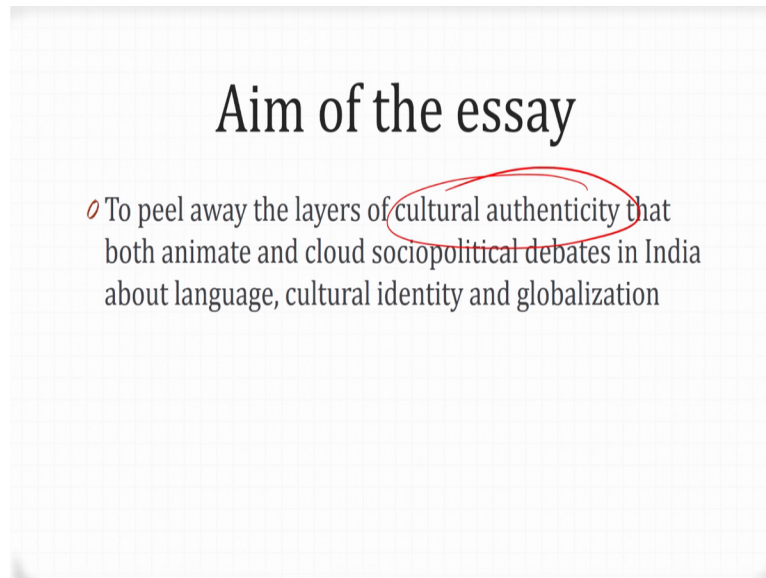
## Literary language

o As a barometer of cultural authenticity

So, Yeah. This is not something, you know, she does not make that argument at all. I thought that this is interesting to take a look at, Sahitya Akademy Award winners and the text that we are familiar with. So, coming back to Sadana's essay. She says literary language has generally been used as a barometer of a cultural authenticity as far as critical authenticity within India is concerned. We also have this rare distinction of having a literary tradition in multiple languages.

This is not something that many literary linguistic traditions across the world can boast of. So, ours is a very problematic complicated territory as far as language and literature is concerned. The moment we begin to talk about, the moment we begin to talk about literature it becomes difficult not to address questions of language because literature is written in language and which language, whether it is a translation. It becomes a complicated territory altogether when we talk about language and literature in India. The aim of this:

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It is rather late into the essay that Sadana tells us about the aim of this essay; To peel away the layers of cultural authenticity. She keeps talking about this term. Layers of cultural authenticity that both animate and cloud social political debates in India about language, cultural identity and globalisation. This is an essay which brings together many aspects. She is in fact trained in English Literary Studies.

She is an anthropologist and a historian has done lot of interesting works at the intersection of all these disciplines. So, she also is able to take an interesting take on literary studies and its reception. That is something she also comes to talk about directly towards the end of the essay.

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## What are these debates about?

- o Caste ✓
- o Class ✓
- o Religious considerations ✓

It is a rather long essay we will not go into the details of everything. Just some of the things I will put forward before you. She says that these many debates about language. These many debates about which text is more authentic than the other text. This is not always about language. This is not always about the merit of a text. On the contrary, this is about caste, class and religious considerations and certain instances she talks about.

And if we also recall the discussions that we have had yet; though that was not necessarily always about caste or religion. If you think, if you recall, how we found it difficult to talk about Temsula Ao's work within this literary critical tradition. That is a clear case that it is certainly not about language. It is about many other things. The debate is not about whether the author is writing in English or not.

Whether the writing, whether the author is writing in English to cater to certain demands which have been put forward by this tradition. And she says, and here is where I want you to very deliberately draw a, you know, parallels between rather, you know, the contrast between Advani's essay and from the publisher's perspective. And Sadana's essay from a reader's critics perspective.

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# What is at stake?

- o Ideology
- o NOT authenticity
- o India's cultural production – yet another stage on which its modernity is tried and tested

She says, what is at stake is in fact ideology. Authenticity is a term. Merit, literary merit, authenticity; these are just convenient terms. She does not say pseudonyms but I am using that term. This is just a nice way of, a euphemistic way of talking about many things which are otherwise uncomfortable. So, she says, what is at stake is certain kinds of ideology and it is not authenticity.

And she says India's cultural production and particularly this, the writings which are coming out from India. It is yet another stage on which its modernity is tried and tested. So, there is an inadvertent way in which somebody, it could be a body of an establishment like Sahitya Akademy, it could be the publishing house, it could be the curriculum, it could be the university syllabi. So, or it could be all of these things together.

They are always ensuring that, the projections of modernity are always in the right way. It always becomes convenient somehow to talk about a writer like Raja Rao and place him at the beginning of Indian Writing in English than, talking about a writer from, say from the Northeast. Because at some level the story, you do not have to labour too much to position Kanthapura and Raja Rao because it is always, already about nation, about Gandhi, all the right kind of elements are there.

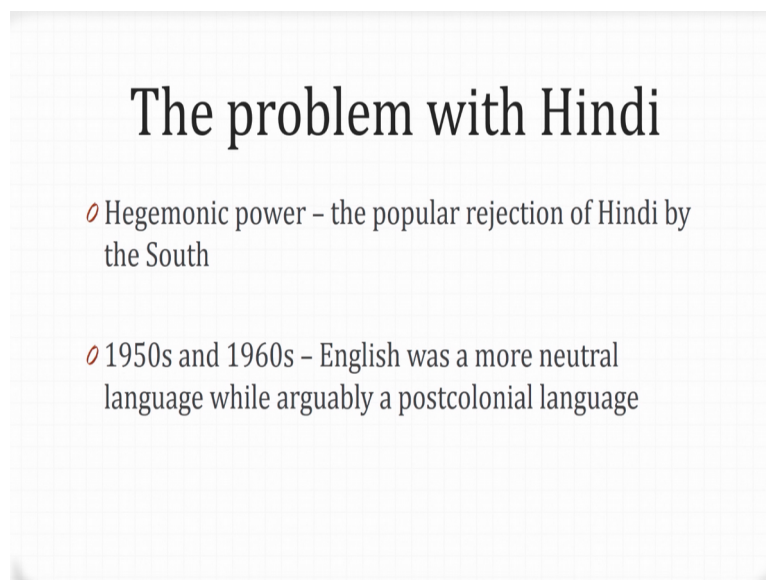
But there have been writings from the margins written in English as well, but we do not make an effort to bring them into this critical oora. If you take the example of Gandhi and Ambedkar; Ambedkar also wrote extensively in English. But as part of Indian Writing in English, when we discuss the origins, we talk about the writings of Gandhi; we talk about the

writings of Nehru; but certainly not Ambedkar. But if you, because if you begin talking Ambedkar, yeah that will take us on a different trip altogether.

We may have to march the trumpeter of some other ideology altogether. So that can be kept in the margins. So, as an additional point, may be those things can be mentioned. But they should not be allowed to come and take the centre stage of discussion at any point. Which is why, again coming back to an author like Temsula Ao; when we talk about her, our history the trajectory of the literary tradition is going in a certain way.

And there is a writer who is always been a writer whose history, whose traditions have always been in the margins and in order to situate her, we may have to unsettle and reorient many things that we have been discussing as part of mainstream. So, coming back to this essay. She now comes to a totally different thing altogether;

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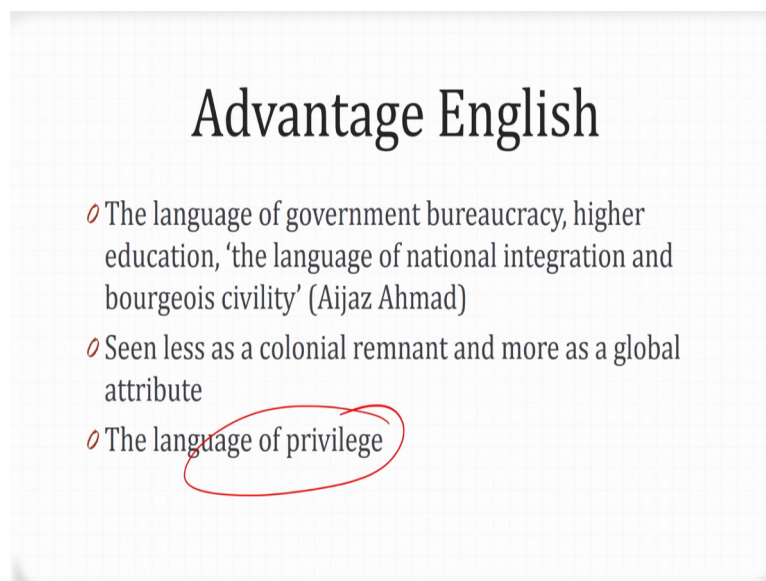
And makes it fit very well with the ongoing discussion. She talks about the problem with Hindi. So far, the discussions have mostly been about most of the other discussions that we have been having about Indian Writing in English. Whenever we talk about language we talk about English versus Bhasha. She brings in a different battle altogether. And she begins by talking about Hindi as a language.

She talks about the hegemonic power that Hindi enjoys in a different way. And about, you know, she draws attention, she asks us to recall the popular rejection of Hindi by the south and how in the 1950s and 60s English began to be considered as a more neutral language. In

fact, when the language bill was passed, that was on the basis of these sort of many things which were happening in the 1950s and 60s where English began to be seen as a more neutral language whereas Hindi was seen as being imposing another kind of hegemony within the nation.

And yeah. So, one needs to begin to look at these language debates and the kind of validations that they begin to give to us in a different framework altogether. Not English versus Bhasha anymore. She is saying it is, this also operates within the internally in a different way altogether. So, what is the advantage that English;

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What is the advantage that English gained over the others. During this point it became the language of government bureaucracy, higher education and to quote Aijaz Ahmad. It became the language of national integration and bourgeois civility. And again, think about what Rushdie said. Writing in English is more national, it is global whereas Bhasha is parochial. It has narrow concerns it does not know how to rise above the many limitations which are also regressive.

And this began to be seen as a less; less is a colonial remnant and more as a global attribute and more importantly it began to be seen as a language of privilege. So, this is a complex terrain that we are talking about. Difficult to sides and say which is more morally right and which is more ethically acceptable. And it is in this context that Sadana brings in the idea of translation.

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# Translation

- o English and Hindi
- o The question: NOT why people choose to write in English?
- o BUT how English and Hindi are contained and deployed

She brings in this question of English and Hindi. Both are languages of privilege in different ways and she asks this question, why is it that people, why is it, what is the reason that people choose to write in English or not to choose in, to write in English. What is the reason for choosing one language over the other? And she says it is no longer important to ask why are people writing in, it is, she is trying to argue that it is no longer important to ask this question about why people are writing in certain languages or not.

That is a rather dated question. But the question should be reframed in such a way. The concern should be reframed in such a way that we should begin to ask, how English and Hindi are a contained and deployed in this space. And due to the nature of the limited kind of discussions and texts that we have been bringing to this class. We have, we are really not able to talk about any language other than English. Right. Yeah. Because from the beginning we have, talking about, since the course itself is titled Indian Fiction in English.

There is a way in which it becomes convenient to talk about English versus Bhasha. English as a coloniser's language. How English becomes global. It also a convenient way of setting aside the many internal debates as far as the language issue is concerned. So here this essay, from this point of time onwards is asking this question, how English and Hindi are contained and deployed as far as the space Indian Fiction in English is concerned. Now when she begins to talk about A Suitable Boy;

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## A Suitable Boy – Vikram Seth

- 1993 – internationally published
- Koi Accha-sa Ladka – 1998 – Hindi translation by Gopal Gandhi
- Seth's own authorizing – 'gains in translation' – redefines the authorship of his own text – willing to give part of his claim of authorship to the Hindi translation

This perfectly begins to make sense. A Suitable Boy; this is Vikram Seth's 1993 novel which was internationally published. And we have taken a look at this. We can also see the kind of advance that he received in 1993. Oh! some atrociously filthy amount which we cannot even imagine. What kind of a, can you. Are you able to locate that place where he, where she talks about the advance that he received?

I think it was some in 1993 it was 375 thousand dollars. That was way back in 1993. I do not know how much does that come to. More than a crore. Yeah. So, it was a much, it was a much talked about affair, in a much talked about affair that Vikram Seth receiving this money not after having written it. This was the advance for writing it. Not counting the kind of revenues that this generated. Not counting the money that he got from the copyright. So, that is a different thing.

So, in 1993 this was internationally published. And in 1998 a Hindi translation came out. It was called, Koi Accha Sa Ladka. The translation was by Gopal Gandhi. And contrary to, now, you know, again juxtapose this with Kiran Nagarkar's complaint at the beginning. That the moment he started writing in English he was delegitimised by the Marathi literary establishment.

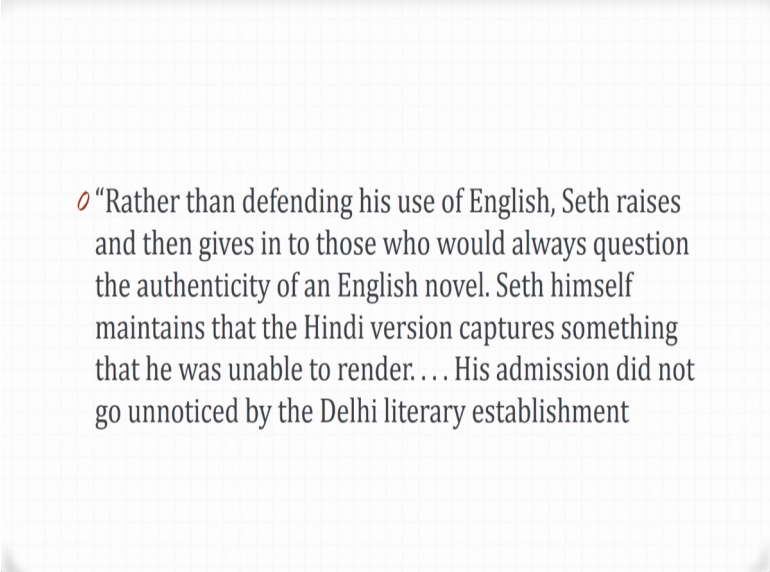
Something entirely different happened with Vikram Seth. The moment the English Hindi translation came out in 1998, it was immediately accepted by the literary establishment. Seth becomes Seth himself. He authorises this saying, the work has actually gained in translation. He did not have a single negative thing to say about the translation. He also, he said in,



through this process he was in a certain way ready to even share the credit with the English translation and Rashmi Sadana says not with the translator.

Gopal Gandhi, we did not hear much about him but about the translation. Giving the credit to the language. He says, he was willing to give a part of his claim of authorship to the Hindi translation, thereby saying, I could have written this Hindi as well. Because this is a text perhaps which would gain in translation when this is reproduced in Hindi. So, this is what Rashmi Sadana says.

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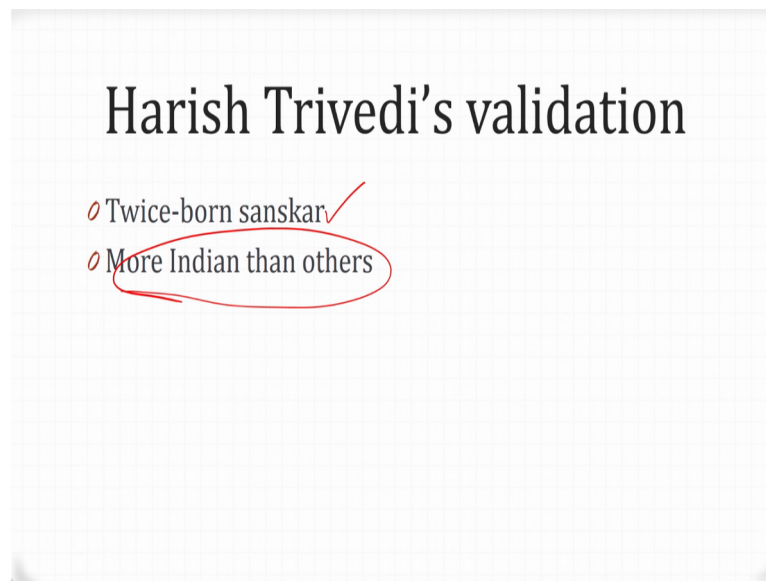
o "Rather than defending his use of English, Seth raises and then gives in to those who would always question the authenticity of an English novel. Seth himself maintains that the Hindi version captures something that he was unable to render. . . . His admission did not go unnoticed by the Delhi literary establishment

Rather than defending his use of English, Seth raises and then gives into those who would always question the authenticity of an English novel. Seth himself maintains that the Hindi version captures something that he was unable to render. His admission did not go unnoticed by the Delhi literary establishment. And he is till date one of the Indian English Writers who receives this uncritical admiration and critical reception from various non-English Literary establishments within India.

This is something I want you to keep this in mind. This is something that Rushdie or an Arundhati Roy could not achieve at all. They have always been considered as outsiders. But Vikram Seth, in spite of the kind of fame, the kind of wealth and celebrity status that he has and in spite of the many different worlds that the Bhasha writer and the Indian English writer inhabits, there is a way in which the English work and the Hindi translation have been able to come and sit together.

Yeah in fact, Seth received an even higher amount rather recently. I think this one also talks about it. There was another work of him also which again, got this. This was in 2005 I think, it is in the page 13 of this, Seth has received 1.3 Million Pound advance from Time 1 a books for his memoa Two Lives in 2005. Second one, these are advances, these are the, this is not the amount which he received after having written the book. Yeah, and I do not think even, there is a single Indian Bhasha writer who can even lay claims to this sort of an achievement. And this Hindi translation which came out. It also received the validation of many;

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Indian English critics. Harish Trivedi is a postcolonial critic. He said the Hindi translation is good because it has this twice-born sanskar and Indian English Fiction itself was always known as twice-born fiction. That is the term that Meenakshi Mukherjee gives to him. This twice-born, does that indicate anything? Yeah. Who's typed twice-born? Yes. It is a very direct reference to the upper-caste who has been twice-born. Directly borrowing this from the caste hierarchy.

And this work A Suitable Boy by Vikram Seth for the same reason Harish Trivedi argued. This has been considered more Indian than others. He specifically mentions Rushdie and Arundhati Roy who could not achieve this status. And she brings in another interesting twist to this. So, there is a Suitable Boy which has got global recognition, global attention. It has been a huge commercial success. A Hindi translation which is validated by the Hindi Literary establishment. Now there is another thing which comes in to intervene in this debate. Enakshi Chatterjee wanted to translate this work into Bengali.

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# Lost in translation!

- o Enakshi Chatterjee - Bengali
- o Hindi translation - had left out some descriptions of leather processing that appear in the original novel
- o "religious considerations' for a 'largely vegetarian audience'
- o Predominantly upper-caste, Brahmanical audience

So Enakshi Chatterjee thought she would take a look at the Hindi version as well because that is the language that she would connect emotionally with. She wanted to read the Hindi version as well. It is then that he realized, she realised that the Hindi translation had left out some descriptions of leather processing. It was also talking about the Jhamar workers the Jhamar castes and leather processing. The Hindi translation had omitted that entire section.

So, Enakshi Chatterjee was also addressing an audience as part of an event in Sahitya Akademy. She said, may be this was done for religious consideration for a largely vegetarian audience. This is the term that Enakshi Chatterjee had used. So, who is this largely vegetarian audience. That is the refers to predominantly upper-caste Brahminical audience.

And while Enakshi Chatterjee felt that, a translator does not have the right to omit certain things she said, she has also been thinking of using some of these liberties as a translator because in the beginning there is a reference to the town Brahmapur in A Suitable Boy. She says to a Bengali audience describing the town Brahmapur and it is the, you know, talking at length about the relevance of the term and all. It could be, it would, it may not come across as a being authentic.

Because every Bengali knows what Brahmapur is and what are the connotations to that. So, she says that, when she is addressing the Bengali audience may be she will use that liberty to avoid those segments as well. So the, Sadana brings our attention back to this point. The certain segments which are lost in translation. So, she also asks these questions about;

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- Translating texts as a 'moral practice'
- What are the fundamental rights of the translator?

Whether translating texts can be seen as a moral practice that; does the translator have any responsibility? And what are the fundamental rights of the translator? Yeah. Can the translator make the work into an entirely new work altogether or, he or she just stick to whatever has been written in the original one. And again, tidies up with the validation that the translation received from the author himself.

He also must have felt, yeah perhaps, it is ok to remove certain segments because what if that causes a, what of that causes a totally disturbing thing when it is given to a largely vegetarian audience. So, what is at stake here. In Sadana's own words;

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## What is at stake

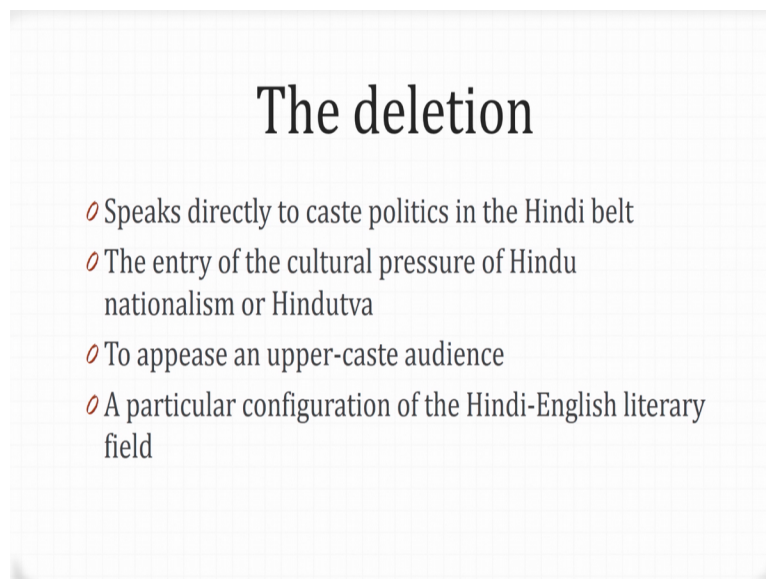
- In the portrayal of dalits in a midle-brow Indian English novel and its Hindi translation?

In the portrayal of Dalits in a middle-brow Indian English novel and its Hindi translation. So, there is this Indian English novel which talks about caste. Not centrally and it is not as if Seth

is endorsing the Dalits being looked upon the middle class, but at the same time she is asking this question. Sadana is asking this question: What is that stake in the portrayal of Dalits in a middle-brow Indian English novel and its Hindi translation?

Here we are even beginning to wonder whether some of the things that Rushdie said in his introduction. Are they beginning to sound true at certain levels because in the English one can afford to have certain things in the English work. But the same sort of things cannot be included in the Hindi translation of the same text. So, this deletion Sadana is talking about.

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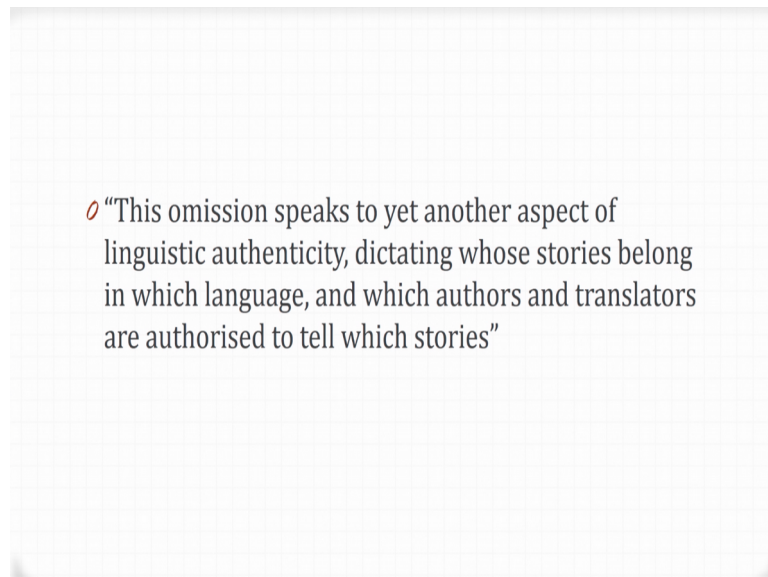


There is an extensive section where she talks about, which part has been deleted and the details of that which you can take a look at later point. Sadana exclusively talk about this act of deletion and she says this deletion speaks directly to the caste politics in the Hindi belt which she also refers to as the cow belt. By extension or the leather workers the Jhamar caste; they cannot be included into the mainstream of a narrative which is being discussed.

And she also talks about how this is again indicating the entry of the cultural pressure of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva. This is again a text, a essay which was written in 2007 when these sort of debates are just beginning to be staged in the literary and cultural scenario. And this deletion Sadana says is a very overt deliberate effort to appease an upper-caste audience. And finally, there is a, it also showcases a particular configuration of the Hindi English Literary field.

Something which otherwise does not get talked about at all. It is mostly about English versus Bhasha, but she is telling us that other kinds of alliances can also be formed on the basis of not just language but on the basis of certain kinds of audiences, certain literary traditions and very importantly on the basis of caste, class, and the privileges associated with it. And in her own words.

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The omission speaks to yet another aspect of linguistic authenticity dictating whose stories belong in which language and which authors and translators are authorised to tell which stories. This is pretty much self-explanatory and it also opens up the possibilities of asking many different questions. As far as the Indian literary tradition is concerned. And this is how she begins to end this essay. She talks a little bit about her methodology, her approach that she has taken in this, an analysing this, these, different kinds of texts and the different sort of things associated with it.

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- o "Literature reflects and represents, but it is also produced and consumed under particular social and political conditions"
- o An ethnographic approach to the study of literature
- o The question of literary analysis from one of hermeneutics to the meaning of everyday life

She says literature reflects and presents, but it also, it is also produced and consumed under particular social political conditions. She says, unless one moves away from this hermeneutic approach towards literature. The meaning making the interpretative process of just looking at the text for what it is. She says, these sort of interesting things will be presented to us if you just step out and look at the social and political conditions in which it has been produced.

Again, we do not have much time now. But do think about this in the context of what Advani also said from the publishers point of view that they are not able to see any politics in it. Because it is very overt. It is not an overt kind of thing at all. And she Sadana also talks about the advantages that you would get if you have an ethnographic approach of the study of literature looking at the material conditions, looking at the extra literary things, looking outside the text and see how it has been received, how it has been presented in various contexts.

And finally, the question of literary analysis, moving from hermeneutics to the meaning of everyday life. And in most of your presentations I would also say that this is an attempt that you have been trying to make, to step out of the text and see what it has been doing to the literary establishment or from where these stories are being told, who's stories are being told, from where, through what kind of context. And about the questions of language.

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## The questions of language

- o What does English allow that Hindi apparently does not, and what might this have to do with Sethi's writing the novel in English in the first place?

(Is Rushdie right after all?)

What is English allow Hindi apparently does not. What made this have to do with Seth writing the novel in English in the first place? So, asking this, also this questions right Rushdie write after all.

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- o English ~~the language~~ of liberation for dalits
- o Chandra Bhan Prasad - 'Macaulay as the father of Indian modernity'
- o English as the goddess to be worshipped - "Come to me, I will empower you"

So English on the context has also been seen as a language of liberation as far as the Dalits are concerned. There is this Dalit thinker and activist Chandra Bhan Prasad who said Macaulay is the father of Indian modernity and not Ram Mohan Roy. Because an English, he said, there should be a temple for English because English can be worshipped as a goddess and whatever this goddess would say is, come to me and I will empower you. So the, these are the different politics, these are the different contexts within which Indian Writing in English, its tradition and these things operate. I hope to be able to continue with this when we meet again next. Thank you.