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Module - 12 Lecture - 42 Postcoloniality and its Challenges

Good Morning and welcome to yet another session of the NPTEL course Indian Fiction in English. Today's lecture is titled postcoloniality and its challenges. And we hope to be able to ask a few questions rather enable you to ask a few questions related to the newer kinds of postcolonialities which are challenging the framework of Indian Fiction in English itself.

Let me take back you to a time, the early 1980s specifically 1981 when Midnight's Children was first published. In the British magazine the Granta, an excerpt from Midnight's Children was published. And Bill Buffered who wrote about the, this new kind of fiction was emerging. He had situated Midnight's Children not as an Indian novel but more like a work which was produced within the British milieu.

And this is what Buffered wrote situating Rushdie largely as a British writer, the fiction of today is testimony to an invasion of outsiders using a language much larger than culture. Today however the imagination resides along the peripheries. It is spoken through a minority discourse where the dominant tongue reappropriated, recommended and importantly reinvigorated. It is at last the end of the English novel and the beginning of the British one.

So, the way he had sign-posted Midnight's Children, was as a British novel; a novel which inaugurated in new face in British tradition. Because conveniently in the Rushdie moment, there was the dovetailing of the colonial past and also as often immigrant present. But much later we know how Midnight's Children became a watershed event. And how it changed the scene of writing not in Britain but in India. And how a new kind of postcoloniality was introduced in terms of Indian fiction written in English.

In that context after 17 years, in 1997, when Bill Buffered was writing in another issue of Granta; this was after the success of Midnight's Children was cemented and after Rushdie became introduced as this inaugurator of this new moment. Listen to what Buffered had to say then, what is happening among Indian writers must be unprecedented. He was referring to

a range of new writers which were writing then, the post 1980s, the post 90s; Vikram Chandra, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Ardashir Vakil, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Amit Choudhary, it is a long list.

So, referring to them in 1997 Bill Buffered writes again, what is happening among Indian writers must be unprecedented, they work some of them in an adopted language and often in isolation even thousands of miles from their homeland. But he did not of course, he did not invoke the earlier centre periphery thing in the context of postcolonialism or in the context of situating Midnight's Children as a text produced within the British milieu.

He did not talk about the end of the English novel and the birth of the British novel. Of course, he did not talk about the South Asian societies, the local communities which were discussed in these novels either. It is in this context that I want to draw your attention to postcoloniality and its many challenges especially when we are talking about the multiple frame works within Indian fiction is currently situated.

We have gone through a range of discussions throughout this course. We have identified a number of dichotomies from the beginning of the discussion which we started instantly again with Salman Rushdie and his controversial introduction to Vintage Book of Indian Writing.

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The many dichotomies

- O Bhasha vs. English
- Regional vs. national/international
- O Rural vs. urban
- O Home vs. abroad
- O Colonial vs. postcolonial
- O Commercial vs. literary

We spoke about these dichotomies which separated Bhasha from English the increasing, the widening gap between regional and national or international literatures. The rural urban divide, the ways in which the regional writers identify this land is their home and how

focusing an audience abroad or situating oneself in one of those locales abroad is not seen as authentic enough as far as Indian writers in English are concern.

About the dichotomies between the colonial and postcolonial, about how we find it difficult to negotiate the dialogue between commercial and literary fiction. So, there are multiple dichotomies that we had been paying attention to and we also had discussed how one needs to big past some of these redundant frame works in some of these rather delimiting frameworks.

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Changing paradigms

- O IE writers also affirming their loyalty to 'bhasha worlds'
- Inclusion of 'translations'
- *O* Growing diverse interest of publishing houses
- English becoming less of a colonial remnant and more of an Indian language

The changing paradigms in the current scenario just like Bill Buffered also noticed a shift in the way Midnight's Children gets positioned. These changing paradigms are perhaps the way ahead giving us newer perspectives and newer orientation as far as studies related to Indian Fiction in English are concerned. So, we talk about a new context and the emerging postcolonial situation where we need to be attentive to the various ways in which the Indian English Writers are also affirming their loyalty to Bhasha worlds.

They no longer exist a dichotomy but rather a dialogue perhaps is beginning to emerge. There is a wide world of translation which is opening up. We know about the number of new anthologies which are coming out where the works translated into English are also considered as part of the larger oovrer of Indian Writing in English. And we also find a growing interest, a diverse interest of publishing houses where they have almost begun to not differentiate between the tree and commercial fiction where they are more inclusive about non-canonical works as well.

And we are reminded increasingly that English is becoming less of a colonial remnant and more of an Indian language. So, in these contexts with these shifting paradigms, we also need to address the questions that are, we also need to re-ask the questions that are framed in the context of Indian Writing in English.

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Let me remind you of an earlier discussion where we pointed out that Enakshi Mukherjee had asserted the importance of looking at the story of Indian English Fiction as a genre fashioned by complex cultural determinants. It cannot be a purely literary exercise. So, throughout this course we had been looking at these various determinants, these various complex cultural determinants which were coming together to shape the story of Indian English Fiction.

We looked at canonical and non-canonical works. We looked at the different critical sources the difference secondary material which are also aiding the understanding and also even the dissemination of fiction which is produced. We spoke about the growing influence of the market and how a globalised society has given a different kind of an accent and import to Indian Fiction in English.

We spoke about the role played by various kinds of awards in placing works within contexts and within different institutions. So, it is a complex cultural history also which emerges when we look at the story of Indian English Fiction.

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In the post 1990s of course, taking on, going on with the momentum gained in the 1980s. We find that there is an alternate tradition which also begins to emerge. We find an increasing number of translations, works produced from different regions, from different languages, being incorporated into this large corpus into the last oover of Indian Writing in English. Sharmila Rege talks about the foregrounding of the betrayers of the nation and how the 90s make it possible to talk about gender, talk about caste.

We had briefly spoken about the Dalit writing which is coming in into the (()) (08:09) for instance works such as Bhimayana, a graphic novel which challenges the existing conventions in terms of form, in terms of narration, in terms of contents as well. And there are a number of works by Dalit writers which are getting translated into English. We also spoke about how the Dalits see, increasingly see English as a more liberating language than any of the other Indian languages.

Truth Tales, is a series of anthology published by Kali for Women now Zubaan. And they, their objective was to highlight what lies outside the framework of Indo-Anglian writing and they found the wealth of literature in the regional languages that represent some of the most dynamic trends in Indian writing that had little exposure beyond its region. So, we find the region also becoming a major discourse, a major determinant, a major locus in these new discussions in the context of Indian Writing in English.

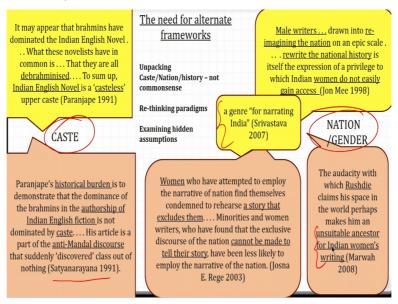
And in the context of writing the nation, we find the writings by women challenging the current understanding of the nation and questioning the understanding of the nation. And

Tharu and Lalitha in their celebrated work Women Writing in India. They argue that it is important to create a platform, create a context in which women's writing can be read. There are these multiple alternate things which are happening simultaneously. Eunice DeSouza's Anthology, it claimed to challenge standard histories.

And Truth Tales, another edition, another volume of Truth Tales, it identified itself as a site of potential rupture. And of course, we have new publishing houses such as Leftward, Navayana, Zubaan, Samya, Sthree, Thuliga; they are all celebrating how minorities claim their writing space in the world. So, there are multiple things happening simultaneously in the post 90s.

It is not just Rushdie's children and it is not just the Ghosh's generation which is dominating the 90s. We need to be attentive to how we would reframe the discourse of Indian fiction in English, given that these newer changes that these newer trends are also reorienting the paradigm.

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Here I briefly draw your attention to the need for alternate frameworks from particularly 2 major points of view, from caste and also from gender. The old conservative approach towards Indian Writing in English, for example, sees that as a casteless space. One of the articles by Makarand Paranjape which appeared in 1991; it is right after the Mandal event. He wrote an article in EPW where he argued, it may appear that Brahmins have dominated the Indian English novel.

What these novels have in common is that they are all debrahminised. To sum up Indian English novel as a casteless upper caste; it is parked of a series of debates between Makarand Paranjape and Satyanaraya. This is, this was featured in the EPW of 1991. And Satyanaraya on the other hand, he began to refute the arguments put forward by Paranjape rather the claim put forward by Paranjape that Indian English Fiction is a casteless space.

Satyanaraya countered it by saying Paranjape's historical burden is to demonstrate that the dominance of the Brahmins in the authorship of Indian English Fiction is not dominated by caste. His article is a part of the anti-Mandel discourse that suddenly discovered class out of nothing. So, these are some of the instances which we can use rather fruitfully and constructively to open avenues for alternate frameworks.

And when we talk about gender, Jon Mee in his survey essay about the works which came out after Midnight, that is how Jon Mee's essay is titled. This 1998 essay categorically stated that male writers drawn into reimagining the nation on an epic scale. They rewrite the national history and to rewrite the natural history is itself the expression of a privilege to which Indian women do not easily gain access.

And Neelam Srivastava's 2007 work which identifies a direct connection between secularism and Indian novel in English. She also identifies this as a genre for narrating India. And instantly she only chose to discuss male writers. And we too find very effective counters from Josna E. Rege's 2003 essay which we had briefly taken a look at in the context of our discussion on Midnight's Children.

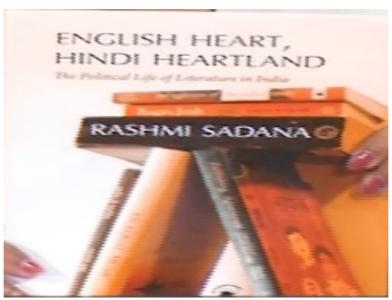
And Marwah's 2008 essay title Edited Out. Rege argues, women who have attempted to employ the narrative of nation, find themselves condemn to rehearse a story that excludes them. Minorities in women writers who have found that exclusive discourse of the nation cannot be made to tell their story, have been less likely to employ the narrative the nation. Marwah is more direct in her attack, the audacity with which Rushdie claims his space in the world perhaps makes him an unsuitable ancestor for Indian women's writing.

So, in these alternate frameworks, the absence of caste, the exclusion of women's writing, these are some of the things that they began to address. So, we need to be attentive to the newer ways in which we can begin to unpack the story of Indian Writing in English and to go

beyond the common sense which has been built into it. To rethink the paradigms and to examine the hidden assumptions which have been part of this critical tradition.

We did take a look at some of the essays which had begun to do that and I do think that these exercises will give a more inclusive image for Indian Writing in English. For this lecture I particularly find Rashmi Sadhana's 2012 work;

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English Heart, Hindi Heartland, the political life of literature in India, useful. And she talks about a dichotomy between English and Hindi. She also places it within a peculiar milieu where it is difficult to see that as 2 different disparate things. What she proposed to do in this book is to bring together writers who are otherwise poles apart, for instance she brings together writers, the Indian English writers which is Rushdie, Ghosh, Seth, anti Desai, etcetera.

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English vs. Hindi?

- English Heart, Hindi Heartland: The Political Life of Literature in India – Rashmi Sadana, 2012
- The anecdote of the pavement bookseller

And the Bhasha writers such as K. Sachidhanandhan, the ones who write in both languages such as Kiran Nagarkar. She brings together all of them together to participate in a central debate about language, about contexts, about the different ways in which they are all seen as Indian writers from, in one critical tradition or the other. She begins her book by narrating an anecdote of the pavement bookseller.

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Only best-sellers

I ask a pavement bookseller what he has for sale, and he replies, "Only best-sellers." I have little interest in best-sellers, but that is about to change. "What makes a book a best-seller?" I ask matter-of-factly. He points to *Difficult Daughters*, the first novel by the Delhi-based writer Manju Kapur. To me this novel is serious literary fiction, and I am happy to hear that it is also selling well. A paperback copy of the book

And that also sets the contexts for her work. She talks about how she encounter a pavement bookseller in Delhi and how he claims that he has only bestsellers for sale. I read except out for you. I ask a pavement bookseller what he has for sale and he replies only bestsellers. I have little interest in bestsellers, but that is about to change. What makes a book a bestseller? I ask matter-of-factly.

He points to Difficult Daughters, the first novel by the Delhi-based writer Manju Kapur. To me this novel is serious literary fiction and I am happy to hear that it is also selling well. She Further talks about these differences between literary and non-literary fiction;

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What makes it a best-seller?

The pavement bookseller explains to me in Hindi that when Amitabh Bachchan asked who the author of *Difficult Daughters* was, as a trivia question on *Kaun Banega Crorepati?* (Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?), the novel started to sell.¹ What became a best-seller certainly also had to do with the perennial best-seller status of the Bachchan brand. If the "Big B" was mentioning the novel and asking who its author was, surely it was worth knowing who she was and perhaps even buying what she had written.

And comes back to the pavement bookseller. She had asked what makes this a bestseller what makes Manju Kapoor's Difficult Daughters a bestseller. Because she was curious to know the version of this bookseller boy. The pavement bookseller explains to be in Hindi that, when Amitabh Bachchan asked, who the author of difficult daughters was, as a trivia question on Kaun Banega Crorepati, who wants to be a millionaire, the novel started to sell.

What became a bestseller certainly also had to do with the perineal bestseller status of the Bachchan brand. If the Big B was mentioning the novel and asking who is author was, surely it was worth knowing who she was and perhaps even by what she had written. So, this is the complex postcoloniality within which is, Rashmi Sadana situates her discussion. And this is a postcoloniality that you also need to be attentive to, when we are talking about Indian Fiction in English in the contemporary. And further Sadana points out,

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o "The boy may well be represented in the books that he sells, but he probably won't ever read them. It is this disjuncture – between the language on the ground, of daily life, and literary representation – that is most relevant to the place and role of Indian fiction in English"

O Indicative of a larger schism in Indian society

The payment boy who is selling the books, she may well be represented in the books that he sells, but he probably won't ever read them. And this is an important point to be noted in another earlier essay. Gauri Viswanathan talks about how there is this young girl who wants to learn English so that she can live in the houses that she is now helping to build. She belongs to the working class and she sees English language as this passport to success.

We have come across a number of discussions which do refer to English language as this vehicle towards modernity, towards better lifestyle, towards a radically new kind of exposure. Coming back to Sadhana, what she probably wants to focus is on this disjuncture between the language on the ground of daily life, of literary a presentation. And this she argues is relevant to the place and role of Indian fiction English.

And this kind of a disjuncture which we can begin to notice in the works written in English, in the practice of English, in the daily use of English; this disjuncture is indicative of a (()) (17:43) in Indian society. And unless one is attentive to these various formations to these different configurations, it would not be possible to do a more relevant contemporary reading of Indian Fiction in English.

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Is the postcolonial framework adequate enough to capture all the challenges and prospects of Indian fiction written in English?
 What are at stake here?

So, the question that we need to ask now is whether the postcolonial framework that we currently employ is adequate enough to capture all the challenges and prospects of Indian fiction written in English. And more importantly, what are at stake here? To answer this question, I draw your attention to 3 instances which Rashmi Sadana also discussed in her book in different context.

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Three instances

- Meenakshi Mukherjee's suspicion of increasing translations into English
- Arundhati Roy writing in English for non-English speaking milieu
- Amitav Ghosh's withdrawal of his book from the competition for Commonwealth Prize

The first one is Meenakshi Mukherjee's suspicion of the increasing number of translations from regional languages to English. The second is an instance where Arundhati Roy talks about her writing in English for a predominantly non-English speaking milieu. And the third is a much-discussed instance, which we also had referred to in one of the earlier sessions. It is Amitav Ghosh's withdrawal of his book from the competition for Commonwealth Prize.

So, how do these 3 instances play a significant role in rewriting the paradigms, in changing the ways in which Indian English Fiction can be read. I am not necessarily saying that these 3 instances have magically rewritten the postcolonial framework but I do believe that these 3 instances can indicate some of the changes which have already come about or some of the changes which are imminent.

These would serve as indicators for us to change in refine and redefined the current paradigms. First, we briefly talk about Meenakshi Mukherjee's discomfort with the increasing number of translations from other Indian languages to English.

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Translations to English

- New possibility, of course
- O BUT "would be another instance when English is privileged as the language of cultural transmission"
- O The power imbalance between English and the bhashas
- O English as the only mediating language
- Mukherjee's earlier works HAD to legitimize her critical interest in Indo-Anglian fiction

Of course, they offer a possibility which she does not dismiss. But she also worries that this would be another instance when English is privileged as the language of cultural transmission. If you are familiar with the many discussions within the context of world literature, this is also something that the critics try to deal with and engage with, that the translations are being made primarily into English. English becomes the only mediating language.

This is all the more relevant in a discussion of Indian literature written in different languages including English. There is a power imbalance that Meenakshi Mukherjee begins to identify between English and the Bhashas. And English emerges as the only mediating language. One would not know whether there are productive strategies to counter this.

But given the fact that Meenakshi Mukherjee was one earlier critic who had to legitimise her critical interest in Indo-Anglian fiction; when she started focusing on this area in the 1970s, given that fact that she herself becomes concerned about English being transformed into a language of cultural transmission. Rather the presence of English as a language of cultural transmission gets further legitimised that comes across as a matter of concern for her.

What perhaps she is trying to tell us that the newer translations, of course they do highlight the possibility of newer dialogues emerging between English and Bhashas. But at the same time, it also has inherent within it, a further restrictive account productive thing. The second instance is Ghosh's refusal.

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Ghosh's refusal

- Commonwealth Writers' Prize instituted in 1987
 and administered by the Commonwealth Foundation
 an intergovernmental organization based in London that represents 46 Commonwealth nations
- Member states most were at some point part of the British colonial empire
- O Ghosh's refusal is a political statement

Ghosh refused to participate in a competition for Commonwealth Writers' Prize. He argued that his publisher had entered his name, submitted his name without his knowledge. Commonwealth Writers' Prize by the way was instituted in 1987. It was administered by the Commonwealth Foundation. It is an intergovernmental organisation based in London. It represents 46 Commonwealth Nations. The member states the most of them at some point part of the British colonial empire. In this context Ghosh's refusal can be seen as a political statement.

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Why?

- It was an outdated, hierarchical and imperial mapping of the world
- O It ignored the literatures of non-English writers who formed the majorieties of these postcolonial societies
- O The historical inflection of the term 'Commonwealth' speaks only of the 'brute facts of time' (colonial domination) rather than a more nuanced view of how people nations, and societies have devoloped over time

Rushdie also had disapproved of this pigeon-holing of writers -"Commonwealth Literature Does not Exist"

Why did Ghosh refuse to be a part of this prize? He argued that it was an outdated, hierarchical and imperial mapping of the world. In the detail letter that was published also very widely he further stated that it ignored the literatures of non-English writers who formed the majorities of these postcolonial societies. And thirdly he had a problem with the term itself, Commonwealth.

The historical inflection of the term Commonwealth, Ghosh further stated, that it speaks only of the brute facts of time. Read colonial domination rather than a more nuanced view of how people, nations and societies have developed over time. Let me also remind you what we discussed at the outset of this lecture about Bill Buffered, first situating Midnight's Children within the British milieu, identifying that as a shift away from English novel towards British novel.

And then 17 years later, identifying the many different ways in which Indian writers are writing in English but still refusing to acknowledge, refusing to deal with the societies that are being written about; this was celebrated as an important moment. It also further helped people to identify Ghosh and Rushdie. Rushdie had written an essay, Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist, a 1983 essay that we shall be looking at in the final session.

Rushdie also had disapproved this sort of pigeon-holing of writers. These are important moments where Indian Writing in English is trying to assert itself in a new postcolonial way. The language cannot be seen as a remnant of the colonial rule, in the same way the tradition also need not be seen as a remnant of the colonial critical practices of the English literary

practices. The third instance is Roy's own reference; Arundhati Roy's own reference to her changing English.

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Roy's changing English

I've spent the last six months traveling across the country, speaking at huge meetings in smaller towns—Ranchi, Jullundur, Bhubaneshwar, Jaipur, Srinagar—at public meetings with massive audiences, three and four thousand people—students, farmers, laborers, activists. I speak mostly in Hindi, which isn't my language (even that has to be translated depending on where the meeting is being held). Though I write in English, my writing is immediately translated into Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Bengali, Malayalam, Odia. I don't think I'm considered an "Indo-Anglian" writer any more. I seem to be drifting away from the English speaking world at high speed. My English must be changing. The way I think about language certainly is.³⁴

She wrote, I have spent the last 6 months travelling across the country, speaking at huge meetings in small towns, Ranchi, Jullundur, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Srinagar; at public meetings with massive audiences, 3 and 4000 people; students, farmers, labourers, activists. I speak mostly in Hindi which is not my language. Even that has been translated depending on where the meeting has been held.

Though I write in English, my writing is immediately translated into Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Bengali, Malayalam, Odiya. I do not think I am considered an Indo-Anglian writer anymore. I seem to be drifting away from English speaking world at high speed. My English must be changing. The way I think about language certainly is. Roy has so far written only 2 pieces of fiction.

That also has enjoyed a permanent reputation for her, as far as Indian Fiction in English is considered, as the International audience also is concerned. But this is an important moment where she identifies herself more as someone who is catering to a non-English speaking public. He identifies her use of language as something which would make meaning, which would aid the process of change.

It also refers to the kind of activism that she is involved in. So, language becomes, assumes a different role altogether and not just a medium which she will use for her fiction. And this move away from the English-speaking world is also to be noted.

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Roy's language

- Imbricated with place and social activism
- The locus of authenticity is small towns causes and the people, the English have-nots
- "becomes necessary to assert one's loyalty and affirm one's politics of location, whether or not it is the actual ground on which one stands"

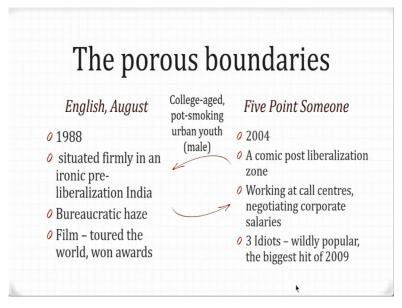
Rashmi Sadana's argument is that Roy's language is imbricated with place and social activism. And this assertion, this, rather this confession from Roy; it also reiterates that the locus of authenticity is in small towns, not just the place but the causes, the people and the have nots as far as English language is concerned. And in Sadana's own word, it becomes necessary to assert one's loyalty and affirm one's politics of location, whether or not it is the actual ground on which one stands.

When we move out of the body of writing which is conventionally understood as Indian Fiction in English. When we move out of the fictional work of Roy and begin to engage with the ways in which she begins to redefine her own use of language and her own locus of authenticity. We begin to see a newer way in which, not just Roy's fiction but this entire world can be read and reread.

Meenakshi Mukherjee's suspicion towards the increasing number of translation to English, Ghosh's refusal of the Commonwealth Prize and Arundhati Roy identifying the ways in which her own language, her use of languages changing, these 3 instances could be sign-posted as moments which would perhaps further aid the process of reinventing the study of Indian English Fiction; of challenging the borders and also redefining the boundaries, the

conventions, the disciplinary frameworks within which it is being currently thought about and taught.

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Drawing to the final segment of this lecture, I draw your attention to the porous boundaries which we need to be further attentive to. If you take 2 novels which Sadana does towards the end of her discussion, English, August by Upamanyu Chatterjee and Five Point Someone by Chetan Bhagat, both were bestselling works on their own rights though they are largely situated in 2 different categories.

English, August is seen as a literary work as a part of the canon. Five Point Someone is seen as a bestseller, a pulsating narrative. It is a bestseller but it is commercial fiction. English, August is published in 1988 and Five Point Someone published in 2004. They both largely and very loosely focus on protagonist who are urban for colleged aged, who smoke pot, they are also male. But there are certain differences which makes it difficult for them to sit conveniently together within the same category.

English, August is situated firmly in an ironic pre-liberalisation in India, but Five Point Someone projects a comic post-liberalisation zone. Of course, that was also one of the reasons why it endeared itself to the urban youth. English, August is also critically placed within the bureaucratic haze but Five Point Someone, it talks about a new liberal India, where these, the youth are working at call centres, they are negotiating corporate salaries, they are inhabiting certain sites which would further accentuate their access to these new worlds with possibilities.

In both these works English, August and Five Point Someone, they both were made into films. The film version of English, August in which Rahul Bose also stared. It had toured the world, it won awards but it did not really resonate with the masses. Five Point Someone was made into 3 idiots. It was widely popular. It was Amir Khan had started in it and it was declared as the biggest hit of 2009.

So, there are certain similarities but there are certain obvious differences which makes it inconvenient for us to look at both with the same lens. And though written in English though written by Indians, we do not conveniently see both of them as part of a canon of Indian Writing in English. One as pointed out before is literary and can be included, the other is commercial fiction.

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- August's English credentials remind him of just how out of touch he is with the rest of India
- O Bhagat's characters how their relationship to English has changed in the intervening years – more are 'in touch' with a kind of English than ever before – a new consciousness about social mobility

Rashmi Sadana in this very brief discussion, she makes a further distinction. In English, August, the character Agastya who is also nicknamed as August; for August, his English credentials remind him of how out of touch he is with the rest of India. And on the other hand, in Bhagat's novel on the contrary. We find that his characters have a changing relationship within English.

It tells us about how more urban youth are in touch with the kind of English than ever before; how these new Englishes are giving a new consciousness about social mobility itself. The point which Rashmi Sadana wishes to pursue further is that, there are 2 different ways in which English language get situated in these 2 different novels which belong to different categories.

But unless one is attentive to both these statements, unless one is attentive to the porous boundaries that exist between these 2 and more open to break down the barriers which do not allow us to locate both within the framework of Indian Writing in English. Perhaps we will continue to remain in a straight jacketed postcolonial reading of Indian Writing in English. And in Sadana's own words;

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O "This awareness does not take census numbers away from the bhashas but in fact creates more porous boundaries between languages, and the thoughts and ideas contained in them" (Sadana 179)

This awareness, this awareness of these porous boundaries, does not take census numbers away from the Bhashas but in fact creates more porous boundaries between languages and the thoughts and ideas contained in them. As also pointed out in one of the earlier section, it is not really about whether Rushdie, Ghosh, Roy, Seth, etcetera are the only canonical figures; it is not really about whether Chetan Bhaghat deserves to be in the canon or not; but it is about these larger questions, about the porous boundaries which are being present to us and it is up to us to make good use of them.

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'A Propitious moment'

It is a propitious moment to be rewriting the literary history of the United States. Two decades of unprecedented scholarship and criticism have excavated lost authors for our reconsideration, delineated literary traditions of which we had been previously unaware, and raised probing questions about the very processes by which we canonize, valorize, and select the texts to be remembered. In the wake of all the new information about the literary production of women, Blacks, native Americans, ethnic minorities, and gays and lesbians; and with new ways of analyzing popular fiction, non-canonical genres, and working-class writings, all prior literary histories are rendered partial, inadequate, and obsolete (Kolodny 291).

("The Integrity of memory: Creating a New Literary History of the United States", 1988)

As we wrap this lecture, I want to leave you with this quote from Anat Kolodny. Her essay published 1988, The Integrity of Memory: Creating a New Literary History of the United States. It spoke about a propitious moment. This is how the introduction to the essay reads. And I feel that, in this introduction we can locate many avenues which we can use to our own advantage, in rewriting the critical tradition and history of Indian Writing in English.

I read to you from Anat Kolodny's essay. This is the introductory paragraph. It is a propitious moment to be rewriting the literary history of the United States. 2 decades of unprecedented scholarship and criticism have excavated lost authors for a reconsideration, delineated literary traditions of which we had been previously unaware and raised probing questions about the very processes by which we canonise, valorise and select the texts to be remembered.

In the wake of all the new information about the literary production of women, Blacks, native Americans, ethnic minorities and gays and lesbians and the new ways of analysing popular fiction, non-canonical genres and working-class writings, all prior literary histories are rendered partial, inadequate and obsolete. It is a very powerful statement and we do have to agree Indian literature, history of Indian literature has begun to address this propitious moment.

We know about literary histories being rewritten, we know about lost authors, forgotten writers being brought to the forale. We know about how the literary traditions are being reconsidered. We know about the difficult challenging questions that are being asked, about the processes by which we canonise or valorise and we also know about the new information

which is being used to reprocess the literary histories of various Indian literatures produced in different languages, from different regions.

But whether this propitious moment has arrived in the field of Indian fiction English, is the right question, is the adequate question to ask now. Unless these new questions are asked, unless this moment is reckoned within an adequate fashion. As Kolodny reminders us, the prior literary histories are rendered partial, inadequate and obsolete. So, unless we deal with this propitious moment Indian Fiction in English as a category also faces this risk of being rendered partial, inadequate or obsolete.

I thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next session which also happens to be the final lecture.