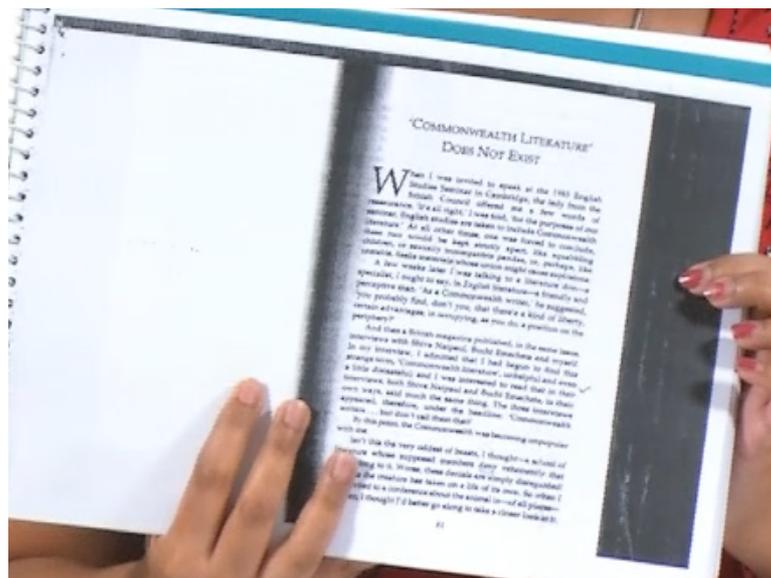


Indian Fiction in English
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Module - 12
Lecture - 43
Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist

Primarily what we will do today is, take a very quick look at this essay;
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Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist. Yeah. It is by Rushdie. It is part of your course material. Even if you have not taken a look at it or if you do not have access to this it is fine. We are not really discussing the essay, but I am thinking that this essay in fact, either it can be used as an entry point to many issues related to English Literary Studies, about Commonwealth literature in general, about the way we use certain terms to talk about particular kinds of literature.

And he opens up the, what do you call, he opens up the site called English Literary Studies in multiple ways. So, it is a useful essay in that sense. We may or may not again agree with many of the things that he says. And the other thing is that I thought it is rather fitting to begin with Rushdie and end with Rushdie. And because uh, regardless of the controversial statements, or the, regardless of the some of the baseless claims, even that he makes.

He has opened up a lot of avenues. There are a lot of questions that he began to raise. It is not as if he is the one who began to identify this as a problematic site and began to ask these

questions. But the questions assumed validity and legitimacy the moment Rushdie began asking them. So that is the usefulness of his intervention in this space called English Literary Studies and particularly related to Indian fiction or Indian literature.

So here, he uses this term Commonwealth Literature. Before we come into a, before we start talking about this essay I want you to think about how Indian Fiction in English as a course is positioned in this larger programme that you are doing. So, this is you are doing a course and a postgraduate course in English Literary Studies, where there is a certain way in which the centre is defined. That is very clear.

The historical sense which is given to in a very extensive fashion. It is about British literature, the traditions which are being projected as the artstick, the critical tradition. Those are primarily and very significantly British. So, that is the starting point that you begin with and though you will be looking at many other things like Indian literature, postcolonial writings and new ways of looking at literature; in some form or the other, the centre remains the same; the English literature, the proper British literature, that is the centre.

And this is further validated by, let us take the case of exams like UGC. It is not as if Indian literature is the centre of what is being tested in those exams. Again, it is about English literature and some of the things which are there in the periphery. So, when you think about the structure of the course, the programme that, the academic programme that you are doing; at the centre we have English literature studies, where there is a fixed canon.

Starting from Joser and Shakespeare and we do not again significantly do not do much from the modern, if you think about the, you know, the way your own courses are structured, we did not do much of the British writing in the 20th century. But nevertheless, look at the trajectory, there is a foundation, there is a setting and to this newer forms of literatures are introduced.

If you are asked after the end of your course, if you are asked about how much you know about Indian literary traditional or Indian critical tradition, apart from perhaps 1 or 2 term papers that you may or may not have worked or some presentation that you heard; we may not know much about Indian literature or Indian critical tradition. And we keep going back to

the Western frameworks to access the text. We keep using Western frameworks to do, you know, lit-crit. To do a literary criticism of any of the words which are available to you.

And whenever you departing, you also need to centrally state that we are moving away from the dominant paradigm which is, we give it to you. So, this needs to be, this is the context which I want you to be aware of, as and when we progress with this discussion. So, if we take a look at the range of texts that we brought to this class starting from Rajmohan's Wife. I will quickly read out the list to you, so that you can also think about the discussions that we had as part of these novels.

Rajmohan's Wife, Kanthapura, Waiting for the Mahatma, Untouchable, yeah that belongs to a different, the earlier face in some sense. Then we have Heat and Dust, The Strange case of Billy Biswas, Cry the Peacock, Midnight's Children, The Shadow Lines; and we have 2 novels by Allan Sealy, Trotter Nama and Zelaldenous from 2 different historical frameworks. There is Ice Candy Man, God of Small Things, Riot, The Hungry Tide, Laburnum for My Head, English, August, Remains of the Feast, White Tiger and Between the Assassinations; then Inheritance of Loss.

So, this is the very vast corpus of writing we brought to this class and as the title of course suggests, this can be conveniently put under Indian Fiction in English. And occasionally we spoke about how whenever Bhasha literature is also being introduced, whenever the linguistic question is being used, whenever certain regional variants of this Indian Fiction in English is also brought in; for example: the writings from the Northeast.

There are certain difficulties for including, we not so sure of the framework, yeah, so on and so forth. But the moment you introduce, you bring a new term, not a new term, an old term which is still in currency, Commonwealth literature. You can put everything inside this. You can, the region does not really matter, the kind of writing does not matter, the theme does not matter.

And Commonwealth literature is, I hope you are all familiar with the term. It is about the kind of literature which is come out from the nations which were under the Commonwealth, nations which were under the British Monarch's rule. And this also excludes British

literature. This is not including British Literature, all nations which were under the British Monarch's rule – Britain.

So, the right things which are produced from Britain, it is still considered as English literature. And there are certain ways in which Commonwealth literature is also, it also become synonyms to English literature. So, it is a, it is not a very well-defined category, very well-defined space of literature. So, but, yeah, this is also been taken for granted in multiple ways.

So what Rushdie is doing is, he is unpacking this term, this category, Commonwealth literature and prompting us to think about many inconveniences which are part and parcel of this category. That Commonwealth literature and that is what the essays begins, the title of the essay is Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist and towards the end of the essay he says, maybe I should rephrase this and say Commonwealth literature should not exist, because it does exist.

And this is in some length he is, it is not like coming across, giving for the new category, but he is saying this category has problems. And he shares some instances from his own writing experiences, from the experience that he gathered from other writers to prove that, to illustrate that, this is not a useful category anymore. And that this is again another way of, the another way of sustaining this sort of the colonial grip on literature and literary studies to a very large extent.

So, he starts talking about, how you know, in the, in a very typical way he begins, just like he began the introduction to the Vintage Book of Indian Writing, where he shares a personal anecdote first. Here also he shares a personal anecdote where again there is an intersection between the Rushdie as an, as a writer, as a creative writer and certain academic interventions.

If you recall, the introduction that he wrote for Vintage Book of Indian Writing; he, there also he begins with a question that an, a possibly a research student asked him, what fundamentally is the point of *Midnight's Children*. So always you know, there is a way in which Rushdie, many of his other writings as well, he tries to show us a contrast between what is really out there as literature, as the set of works produced by particular writers,

vis-a-vis the interpretations or the vis-a-vis the spaces which are created for this body of writing to exist in academic, a research-oriented context.

And he more often than not he has been extremely dismissive of these new, the academic based approach towards the set of work, because he always, sometimes rightfully also argues that it is a delimiting way of looking at literature in general. So, here he begins with the, a seminar that he, where he was invited to speak. This was a 1983 in Cambridge. And there, the seminar was on English Literary Studies, English Studies.

And the organiser it seems told him it is ok, now we are, now our understanding is that English studies and Commonwealth literature, they are one and the same. Because English the, that is how it is put over here. The seminar organiser or somebody from the British Council, she says, it is alright, for the purposes of our seminar, English studies are taken to include Commonwealth literature.

So, he begins by saying, at all other times English literature is separate, Commonwealth literature is separate. There are certain ways in which conveniently they are brought together. And that is where you know, he begins to, the, it is that entry point he uses to talk about the complexities, the political nature of these terms as well. We think about the term Commonwealth literature the term Commonwealth, it does not have any literary import to begin with.

It is, it very evidently suggests, the political nature of the nations which are being brought together. And Commonwealth in the sense, the well-being of, the common well-being; wealth is used in that sense. So, it is a political category and when a political category is used to include certain kinds of literature, there will be limitations, because that the category in the first place is formed as a political category, but the moment literature comes in, it just seems to neutralise the political element of it. Everything can be a part of it.

If you think about what is part of Commonwealth literature it is rather easy. You do not have to debate much. R.K. Narayan is part of it, Rushdie is part of it, O.V. Vijayan is part of it, Anita Desai is part of it, Temsula Ao is part of it, everyone is part of it. Even those nations such as, Pakistan is not strictly speaking a Commonwealth Nation. And politically it does not

qualify as a Commonwealth nation but the writers from Pakistan are also considered as Commonwealth writers.

South Africa, yeah, it is not a Commonwealth nation at all, but writers from South Africa are also part of Commonwealth literature. So, these are certain uncomfortable questions, which often are not raised in academic spaces. And he also indicates throughout this essay that writers are more conscious of this. This collapsing of their identities and their writings into a single category; writers are often conscious of it.

They always protest that, but that protest, that denial of a certain identity is never seen as a positive thing. It is reported in the media as a negative thing. The academics are more cynical in their approach towards these denials. So he says, we are not really taken seriously when we try to deny this category or reject this category. And this is, though he is talking always about, in this essay about Commonwealth literature, I think it is a useful way to look at most of the categorisations which exist within literary studies in across.

He does know, many of the, he gives certain examples of Shivan or Naipal and Bhujji and Chata and Sonal Rushdie himself denying this thing, this category of Commonwealth literature. And he says it was reported in the newspapers. There were 3 interviews which appeared under the headline, Commonwealth Writers, But Do Not Call Them That. So, he is very uncomfortable with this sort of, the frivolous way in which media and some of the literary community as well, the way they talk about it.

And moving on, we will just talk about a couple of more things. And he says whenever these writers got together as Commonwealth writers, they began to realise that they have more differences than similarities. There were very few things that could bring them together. And they were all uncomfortable again with this idea of them being clubbed together as Commonwealth writers.

He gives these examples, 2 examples. Anita Desai from India and the Kenyan writer, Ngugi N G U G I hm. So, he, Anita Desai we all know about her and Ngugi started writing in English and he is a Marxist writer as well. And his political views are very pronounced. And then he switched to writing in Swahili. So, he is talking about a Commonwealth literature conference, where Anita Desai's work is presented and Ngugi's work is also presented.

And this is how Ngugi's work is presented. He is a committed Marxist writer and overtly political writer who expresses his rejection of the English language by reading his own work in Swahili with the Swedish version read by his translator, leaving the rest of it completely bemused. But this sort of a complexity is not there linguistically speaking when it comes to Anita Desai, it is presented in English.

It comfortably and conveniently can be fitted into this Commonwealth category. There is another additional complication, Anita Desai. She says, Anita Desai spoken whispers, that her novel is the novel of sensibility. So here is a term, which is trying to include the works written in English + the works + the, a writer who can possibly write in English, who has written in English, but now he is rejecting English and writing in Swahili and refusing to translate that to English.

He, his translate, he translates that into, gets it translated into Swedish. And he is apolitical tool. And we have Anita Desai who is an apolitical writer, that is how she describes herself. And her work is about sensibility. That is what she talks mostly about and we did see that as well, as we were discussing it. So, this diversity is totally lost over there. And both of them are sitting there together and both of them are Commonwealth writers but there is nothing in common.

There is nothing that they share in common, not even the language. So, he is beginning to question, on what basis is this literature formed, Commonwealth literature. Is it only about national identity and can we have a set of literature solely based on national identity? And he is also trying to get to a definition of Commonwealth literature and the most commonly available definition he shares that with us.

He says, it is that body of writing created in the English language by persons who are not themselves White Britain's or Irish or citizens of the United States of America. I do not know whether Black Americans are citizens of this Bazar Commonwealth or not, probably not. It is also uncertain whether citizens of Commonwealth countries writing in languages other than English, Hindi for example, or who switch out of English like Ngugi are permitted into the club or asked to keep out.

Here again in, when we look at Commonwealth literature from the, from our vantage point. If we are talking in India, we are talking about Commonwealth literature, it is easy to put in O. V. Vijayan, easy to put in Amarati writer. But, when we are at the centre again, when we are at the literary centre of Commonwealth literature and talking about Commonwealth. When we are at the centre of English Literary Studies and talking about Commonwealth literature, it is unlikely that the regional writers will make the final cut as Rushdie says, in the other essay.

May be a Premchand can be fitted in, Tagore can be fitted in, many others, may be they cannot be fitted in. So, he says this is a very patronising definition. Then this is a definition that he has called out from many other academic context. This is how the space has been defined. And it is again, it is not to say that the idea of Commonwealth literature continues to be uncontested.

There have been questions raised and there are a lot of people, in postcolonial writers many have identified the need to come up with perhaps another category. And Commonwealth literature is too, it sounds very distinctly colonial and also patronising. It negates many things that post colonial writings are about to say. So, if you, I also want you to recall all those debates that we had in this class about English Bhasha divide about Hindi Bindi, one among the powerful languages within India and sharing the platform with English.

And also about English literature versus Commonwealth literature now. So, is it easy to zero down on one acceptable definition or in a one acceptable compartmentalization of works. And say these are the boundaries. If you fall within this boundary you belong to this category and if you do not make it, you are outside all together. And he says this is in 1983, even at that point of time, when they were all sitting together and talking about Commonwealth literature, none of them liked it, none of the writers liked the term being used.

But it is, it would not be right to say that now the term is not being used at all. Commonwealth literature, in fact it is even course which is offered in many countries. If you look at, you know, some of the competitive exams and if you are trying to look at the syllabi, comparative literature, commonwealth literature. All of this is part of it. There have been voices trying to critic it, but we have not entirely done away with that.

So, Rushdie is saying, they all were, none of them liked it. It was an unlikeable term and it was more like an exclusive ghetto. And he may be in the other essay, in the introduction to *Vintage Writing*, he is also subscribing to the same sort of, the same kind of, what do you call, he is also making the same mistakes which now he is accusing the others of, he also had created a ghetto of Indian writing, Indian literature. That is a different thing all together.

But he says here, this ghetto, the formation of this exclusive ghetto will always make sure that English literature is at the top run. And this is something that he very clearly says towards the end of the novel. He says, the term Commonwealth literature itself, it was invented to delay the day when we rough beasts actually slouch into Bethlehem. This is his drawing from Ath's poem, *The Second Coming*, where he talks about the day when the beast will slouch into Bethlehem.

So, he is talking about these writers who are fitted against and work placed in a lower rang of hierarchy compared to English literature and says that, the term itself was invented to keep us in this exclusive ghetto. So, if we have a term such as Commonwealth literature, it will always be possible to talk about English literature as being the centre, as being as the top occupying the top slot in the hierarchy and no matter how good one is, he or she will always be a Commonwealth writer.

May be Rushdie is also beginning to, in some ways beginning to feel that, it does not feel so good to be accepted as one of the greatest writers, but still he is not a British writer. There are of course a few anthologies which talk about Rushdie as a British writer because he is a British National. But we also know that the most common convenient slot that he occupies is that of a postcolonial writer or a post-modern writer or one of the Commonwealth writers.

So, this is, this almost seems like a trap out of which they can never come out. There are lot of, in fact you know, Kenyan writers, Latin American writers, who are perhaps as good as or perhaps better than the English writers. But when we talk about English Literary Studies not just in our own context, not just in the subcontinent but in a, as a global phenomenon English literature, English Literary Studies, there is the centre which continues to hold, it seems as if.

But Rushdie tells us towards the end that, it is time to admit that the centre cannot hold. There are certain moves of course but still if you think about a course in English literature

graduating with an B.A with a B.A or M.A. from any part of the world without having done Jhosour or Shakespeare or the conventional British literary history. That is unimaginable.

If you have an M.A or B.A and if you have the audacity to go and tell somebody, I have specialised in non-British English writing. That is the focus of my studies. That will not really be accepted. You are of course free to research, you are of course free to move away and take electives, but the centre remains the same from the time English Literary Studies was introduced in this country.

I think, you know, you should take a look at, there is this essay by Gowri Viswanathan where she talks about the beginning is of English education in India. How there were political as well as humanist ideas driving this thing behind introduced English education and her format has remained pretty much the same. Which, what kind of text make the cut and what kind of text are excluded.

We do not have to really travel 3 centuries to, 2 and a half centuries to find out what exactly happened. We can still go back to the Victorian attitude and the Macaulay's minute and whatever, Gawandi sensibilities during those periods and it pretty much remains the same even today. And I really have not come across any University which is worth its salt, which is offering a course in English Literary Studies, without offering these texts.

I am really not saying that we need to do away with these causes, but unless the centre is moved to move away and, you know, make a way for other spaces or unless we are willing to look at this as a one large circle without any particular centre. The centre can keep shifting. Unless we reach their, many of the discussions that we have in the periphery, may not really pull much water.

Rushdie himself in this essay talks about him being asked about his own position of writing from the periphery. And he was certainly very very uncomfortable with that. And this is in 1983, when he had not yet won the Booker and The Booker of Bookers and the Best of Bookers. But even today, this is 2018, even today when we think about Rushdie. Yes, there is again a way in which he can be pushed into the periphery.

And if that is the case with Rushdie, think about the many other writers. It is very unlikely that they will make it to the centre or even to the significant parts of those peripheries. And if we think about women writing, if we think about Dalit writing there is no way that anyone could, occupy that space in any way. But the flip side of Rushdie's arguments, the flip side of Rushdie's concerns is that it is always about finding his own position and his, and his ilc.

Rushdie and his ilc. Finding their position in terms of the centre periphery thing. But he is not really, we, I am not really come across any writing by him or any interview by him where he is using this legitimising power of his discourse to include the ones who really really in the periphery, again, you know, Northeastern writing or Dalit writing, or women writing.

So I, so while this is useful way to begin talking about the many complexities which are inherent in this field; maybe one should also be willing to push this forward and talk about the many more things which can be included as well. Not just limiting one to the in English Indian writers who are writing in English. Because here also Rushdie is mostly speaking for the Indian writers who are writing in English, who are part of Commonwealth literature.

So just like, there is a tokenism that he does. Of course, he talks about Premchand, Ananthamurthy, who have produced good work in Indian literatures. He just asked these questions again in a very peripheral sense and moves on to other things. And there is one instance that he shares here. He talks about a Gujarati novelist, Suresh Joshi.

And uh, he told me that, Suresh Joshi it seems told Rushdie, that he could write in Hindi but he felt obliged to write in Gujarati because it was the language under threat; not from English or the West, from Hindi. So, Rushdie is certainly aware of, he is alert to these many debates which are happening internally. Perhaps more aware than the regional writers themselves, about the complex hierarchy which operates in terms of language.

And he is, also it is some though not directly also telling the regional writers that, it is not necessarily about English versus Bhasha, it is also about the hierarchy and the privileges which are associated with Indian English languages in variant degrees. So, Suresh Jhoshi says the threat is not from English, not from the West, but from Hindi. In 2 or 3 generations he said, Gujarati could easily die.

And the comparison that he made, Suresh Joshi the Gujarati writer. The comparison that he made was with, to the state of Czech language under the yolk of Russian. That is what the Milan Kundera had those concerns about what will happen to Czech language because now, this is 1980s, because it was under the Russian control.

So, he is at some level, Rushdie of course does not do it systematically, but he is also trying to do an interconnected reading of literature, which is not nationality based, which is not based on the language in which it is written, which is not based on the reach which is not really based on the target audience. He is trying to do a more inclusive way of looking at literature. He even uses the term world literature in some point.

He says perhaps that is the world, the world literature is also a field in which lot of debates are happening now. About how to include works which are truly world literature. So, there are lot of debates in terms of translation, in terms of comparative literature about moving away from National literature towards transnational literature. All of this is happening. So, he is saying maybe we may have to move in those directions without really spelling out what those directions are.

And one thing he also says is, I will just read out; so perhaps I should rephrase myself, Commonwealth literature should not exist. If it did not we could appreciate writers for what they are whether in English or not. I think it applies the, this really this is applicable for any kind of literature that we talk about. If you are, if you think about the rise of the novel and novels that you dealt with, from that course onwards, there is a framework which is imposed onto any category.

Because a category cannot exist without a framework. And again, it is a very Utopian thing to wish away all those categories. We may not be able to do that, but one thing we could do is to be alert to those possibilities. So, he says, this is a limited, limiting category because, if it did not, we could appreciate writers for what they are, weather in English or not, we could discuss literature in terms of its real group.

He again does not say what these real groupings are. 1 example that he gives is, which may well be National, which may well be linguistic, but it may also be international based on imaginative affinities. That is a category we do not really have. Perhaps, you know, 1 thing

that I can think about is Magic realism. It somehow includes writers who are from different nationalities. It is more about the style of writing, it is more about the postcolonial response in certain overt or covert political ways.

So, Rushdie is saying, maybe the way forward is to, not to just do away with the national and linguistic categories, but also include, something like imaginative affinities. And he says, and as far as English literature itself is concerned, I think if at all English literatures could be studied together, a shape would emerge which would truly reflect the new shape of the language in the world.

And we could see that English literature has never been in a better shape because a world language now also possesses a world literature, which is proliferating in every conceivable direction. So again, coming back to the first point that I began with, about the course, the way the courses structured. I cannot think of a single course which is shaped in this way, which will include all kinds of literatures which are in, which are, which is produced, all kinds of literatures produced in English.

All writers were capable of writing in English. Because unless a course or even an anthology. There are certain demands of a framework. You need to have a boundary. To these are practical concerns as well. But perhaps, you know, if there is a course which just talks about English, again there could be many other challenges which would be part and parcel of that. But I find these suggestions useful in the sense that, one really would not know unless you are willing to take a step in that direction.

Bringing in, if you think about the, let us again come back to the text you are familiar with. How about certain, a set of text written in English from say Indian literature and some text produced or translated into English from world literature, a set of writings from postcolonialism, again 20th century fiction. And yeah, and certain text from this course itself and few from comparative literature and there are also Kanyanian literature, Latin American literature. These are certain categories which exist.

So, what if we bring all of those together. It is certainly a challenging task, a very daunting task. And we would be totally at loss as to what is the critical material that you would use. Which is that 1 approach which can include all of those. And now if you again take into

account the different literary periods, the contexts; it becomes for the complicated. So, either you need to be able to talk about literary periods as a contemporary writings in Indian, contemporary writings in English language.

There has to be some way in which they can be brought together, some nomenclature is always needed but the point is that, that should not continue to be a limiting category. There is a, there are lot of, you know, I think that I have mentioned this earlier in the previous courses as well. There are lot of Dalit thinkers and writers, Dalit critics who begin to argue that the idea of the centre should not be there at all.

If at all you feel that, even in terms of Dalit writing, the moment a Dalit anthology is brought out, when you begin to notice that there are set of writers who begin to occupy the centre; one should be willing to totally displace that and bring in newer texts, newer discourses. The same can be said about Northeastern writing. If you take any anthology from, of writings from the Northeast, we know the writers who are included in that.

And we know there is Temsula Ao, we know there is Tilottama Sharma. So, there are these, Tilottama Mishra, we know that there are certain set writers who would always make it. So, I do not know how far this is possible, but I think this would be possible only if one is willing to maintain this constant dialogue with the institutions which are legitimizing, the institutions which are canonising this, by revamping the syllabi or including newer approaches.

Not always perhaps banking on, if you are talking about this course. We always start with Srinivasa Iyengar's story. So, if there is a different starting point to that, can we include more text? Yeah. May be there are some of the ways in which you also should be willing to open up the courses and, you know, open up the ways in which we begin to approach the discipline, approach this space from an academic point of view.

Otherwise, as Rushdie says in his, many others would also agree perhaps. This has become a very redundant exercise. If this is not constantly being unpacked and if, you know, 25 years back somebody who did English Literary Studies, if they were doing certain texts, set of texts and 25 years later and 25 years from now if we are all doing the same set of text, it should not be something that we are proud of. Yeah. There should be a need to constantly reinvent the, and put new things inside the box. Okay? Yes. I think I am done.

“Professor - student conversation starts” Okay, anything that you would like to add? Yes Ranjini. Mam so, would you say that the (()) (36:49) of English literature in general is suffering from a lack of an acceptable structure that can be used to organise this kind of idea? Because you said that the idea of the centre is not something that all writers are (()) (37:04) So, in what way can we actually categorise or should we not attempt and exercise categorising?

I do not think that is possible at all, know? If we bring in a range of texts, there will always be a hierarchy in some form or the other. Yeah. Whether texts or individuals or critical traditions or whatsoever, it is if you bring in a set of texts, hierarchy is inevitable. It will always be there. But maintaining that hierarchy as something which is carved in stone. I think the problem starts there using, because though Rushdie is raising these questions and this is 1983, Rushdie is still a valid voice. Yeah.

Rushdie is able to, Rushdie can afford to make many of these claims and Rushdie can afford to, I mean get away with many many things. He has actually done that too. But is the same kind of voice available, is the same kind of voice available for, let us say any of the leading writers in any of the Indian languages? They can speak for perhaps their own language, their own contemporary writers.

Hear look at the, Rushdie emerges as a spokesperson for not just Indian writers in English, he is the spokesperson for Commonwealth writers from different parts of the world. And occasionally he also speaks for English literature. So, there is a very convenient fluidity which is associated with his own status. But coming back to your question Ranjini, I really do not know whether such a, because if you layout any text, any set of text before us, all of which can be non-canonical, but again I suspect, there will be a centre again.

There will be certain kind of text which may have more significance in some form or the others. And whenever we are thinking about these things in an academic context which has a definite structure, in terms of the, there are these bodies like UGC, Sahitya Academy, examinations, these are all systems. And moving out of these systems and doing academics is not a viable option. You come back to those, right?

Maybe you will do your research on some writer who is very very obscure, whose politics is not acceptable in the conventional sense, but the medium, the root that you used to enter that academic space, this is again conventional. You go for a PhD interview, you are first being tested on whether you are aware of the existing domain in critical tradition. How good is your knowledge of the centre?

The of the knowledge of the centre equips you to engage with the works on the periphery. That is how it works now. And if you, I think the better known, the centres which are giving out this kind of knowledge. If you take the instance of Oxford and Cambridge, it is amazing the kind of, how invested you know, they are in the traditional, the maintenance of the centre or the core.

They go really deep into, choses studies, into old English studies. It is not as if, and they have other courses for including the ones in the periphery. The proper Eng-Lit course, the purity of that is maintained in a wonderful way. It is, you know, it is amazing. It is, we really would be, I think within our context at least, we are not in that invested in maintaining the core. But there you still have scholars who are working on old English language and who are again, you know, doing a culture studies kind of work on the works which were produced during the old English period.

So, I think in multiple ways, this is getting reinforced in many ways. If this is also, I suspect the reason why something like digital humanities is being looked down upon. Because that entry, the entry of technology is always liberating in a certain way. Because we, you begin to see that, when technology enters, it is very disrespectful towards canon. This has happened in, at all times.

In, when Book was first introduced as a technology. We suddenly realised anyone could get a book published. It was not just about knowing the right kind of circles, being in the right ghetto or the courtyard. So, technology has always been done wonders which the artists or the academic settings could never do. So, I do not know, may be, there are different possibilities and just like the world really, the world of the books, where the world of letters were reoriented with the entry of the book.

Perhaps a similar sort of a thing may or may not happen at different points of time. And of course, we need to admit that even from the peripheries, a lot of interesting questions are being asked. It is unlikely that, if you go to a good University and go through their dissertations, it is very unlikely that you will still continue to find scores of work on Shakespeare or on romantic poetry.

There is a way in which people are very deliberately trying to move away and make English literature a more inclusive space and also about the idea of the text is being increasingly contested. And a lot of discussion about how these tools, the tools that you, the training that you received as a student of literature should also equip you to do many more interesting things in this larger field. Okay?

And I think in terms of research we have come a long way, academic research. Even a, even in the postgraduate level, at least in some of the good places, people have been away to move away from just a literary criticism towards some more research-oriented work. Willingness remove away from the text and looking at the extra literary aspects of it and etcetera.
“Professor - student conversation ends”