

TAMARIND HISTORY Part – 1
Professor Dr. Divya A
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Length: 41:35

Sundara Ramaswamy's Tamarind History. It is a landmark Tamil novel. And it is a much celebrated and much translated work in Tamil literature. It is a distinctive voice in terms of narrating a particular world. So, we will see what that is. So, before we get into the story *per se*, I want us to contextualize this novel from a literary perspective and we have a very useful literary device, a very useful literary device through which we can see the world of this novel.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:12)




So, this is from a review by Kalyana Raman and the review is titled Living and Dying. It's easily available online, I have used most of his ideas here in this PowerPoint show. So you can think about it when you closely read the novel. So, he says 'Among the many narrative modes prevalent in pre-modern India, the Sthalapurana or place-legend, enjoys a special stature.' Place-legend, the legends associated with a particular place. The story of the place, Sthalapurana is a pre-modern indigenous way of storytelling.

'Sthalapurana is traditionally associated with a local temple and tells the story of how the temple came to be built on that site'. So, temples are very significant institutions, edifices in pre-modern India and continue to be till this day. So, the story of that construction is usually associated with this kind of narrative Sthalapurana.

So, 'Sthalapuranas inevitably feature kings, queens or hermits and involve divine visitations in one form or another. What we might learn about the place and the people who live there is incidental' - secondary compared to how that institution, that sacred institution came into being. So, you can see how Kalyana Raman is trying to link Tamarind History to this kind of indigenous way of storytelling, right?


(Refer Slide Time: 02:56)



Sthalapurana

When the modern novel came to India in the late nineteenth century, the *sthalapurana* provided a ready framework of story-telling, except that, instead of god, a society in transition was the protagonist. This format facilitated multiple plot-lines that could be woven around a community of people who were confined not just by geography but also by tradition, livelihood and modes of feeling.

Living and Dying: A Review of Sundara Ramasamy's "Tamarind History" (Oru Pullamaratthin Kathai). The Book Review, August 2014. Volume XXXVIII, Number 8, Page 15. The Book Review Literary Trust, New Delhi.



So, he says, 'when the modern novel came to India in the late 19th century, the Sthalapurana provided a ready framework of story-telling, except that, instead of god, a society in transition was the protagonist.' So, what takes the place of significance is a society itself instead of a particular deity associated with the particular secret institution.

So, 'this format facilitated multiple plot-lines that could be woven around a community of people who were confined not just by geography but also by tradition, livelihood and modes of feeling.' So, what is particularly peculiar to this kind of story-telling is, is the feature that you can have multiple plot lines, right? Traditionally in a big novel you will have a main plot and then one or two subplots at the most. Traditionally. But in the case of this kind of Sthalapuranas, where a society becomes the hero, you can have many characters, you know jostling, finding their own place and identity with their own distinct narratives, branching out across the canvas and the landscape of that particular society.

So, when you read Tamarind History, you will understand that Damodara Aasan is not going to be central protagonist until the end, until the last page of the story, right. He is going to feature in a couple of chapters and then vanish and then somebody else will come and tell us their stories and their relationships with other characters. So it is a multi-plot, episodic work

that we will witness when we read these pages. So, it is a kind of a, in some sense, it is a culture shock to go back to this kind of 20th century Tamil novel which was highly innovative when it first appeared back then.

So, its episodic nature takes a bit of time for us to get used to and I think Sundara Ramaswamy leads us into the novel in a very crafty way. I am using the word crafty for lack of a better word. So, it is a world which is connected by tradition, livelihoods and modes of feeling, right, instead of one particular individual, expressing a set of ideas about life, right? So, there is multitudes, plurality. So, what Raman does here is that he compares Sthalapurana of Indian tradition with the other kinds of regional literatures to give us a sense of the kind of similarity of narratives located, anchored, in a particular region or place.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:20)



Sthalapurana

The *sthalapurana*-like framework did well in America, where the self-consciously democratic emphasis on the 'little man' (or woman) naturally led to a plethora of small-town narratives. Famous works such as Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1916), Sinclair Lewis *Main Street* (1920), the many tales of Faulkner set in the mythical Yoknapatawpha County (1930-60), and Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon Days* (1985) testify to America's endless fascination with the dynamics of small town existence. Closer to our time, we have had Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Macondo* enthralling us with its magic




‘The Sthalapurana-like framework,’ he says ‘like framework did well in America, where the self-consciously democratic emphasis on the little man or woman naturally led to a plethora of small-town narratives.’ So, it seems to have peculiarly done well in America, where there is apparently a lot of emphasis on the little man, the every man, right? So that in turn leads to a lot of small-town narratives, or narratives anchored small towns.

The parallel would be the 19th century realism in Great Britain. You can have narratives, you, do have narratives about Manchester, say, in a, narratives which focus on the north of Britain, north of England and Elizabeth Gaskell immediately springs to mind, right? As a regional writer who captures the industrial life of those regions. So, this is not very-very peculiar to India, we do have parallels across the seas as well.

So, and he lists out examples, right? Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, Faulkner and we have like Garrison Keillor and so on and the last one is Marquez. So, he just kind of traces the kind of regional literature through American small-town narratives, so that we get, we can put Sundara Ramaswamy in a world map of literature in terms of regional writing. So, he comes back again to the Indian context and sees what happens in the rest of the regions in the Indian nation.


(Refer Slide Time: 08:21)



Sthalapurana and Indian literature

In India, however, our literary tryst with small communities appears to have been short-lived. We have several novels and short stories by RK Narayan set in the fictional town of Malgudi, OV Vijayan's *The Legend of Khasak* (1969) and *The Saga of Dharmapuri* (1985), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) among the more well known books.

In most Indian languages, though, place-centred narratives have been few and far between. Except in historical narratives describing a remote past, place was seldom the leading protagonist in Tamil fiction. Literary fiction tended to be more about existential and moral questions faced by individuals, and in later days, about class and caste conflicts.



‘In India, however, our literary tryst with small communities appears to have been short-lived. We have several novels and short stories by RK Narayan set in the fictional town of Malgudi, Vijayan's *The Legend of Khasak* and *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, then Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*’ and these seem to be the most well-known of such kinds of regional writing.

It just occurs to me now that, I think it would be useful to compare this writing, this novel with, RK Narayan's ‘*The Guide*’. It'd be a fantastic comparative study, to look at the way in which the story of a society is told through multiple characters and compare it with Narayan's Raju, and how he kind of narrates the society through its own eyes. Through the, you know, central figure of Raju. Be a fantastic exercise.

‘In most Indian languages, though, place-centered narratives have been few and far between. Except in historical narratives describing a remote past, place was seldom the leading protagonist in Tamil fiction. Literary fiction tended to be more about existential and moral questions faced by individuals,’ Raju and the guide, ‘and in later days, about class and caste conflicts.’

Although, I mean if you read Tamarind History closely, you will see how class and caste also play a major role in complicating and souring the relationship between the characters in the small town, right, and gender is like absent. We'll come to that right. Next one please.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:28)



Sundara Ramaswamy's *Oru Pullamarathin Kathai* (1966), which gave us the 'local' history of a traffic junction in Nagercoil town of southern Tamilnadu, belonged to this loosely defined *sthalapurana* genre.

Also published in the same year was Krithika's *Vasavechvaram* (1966), a fictional village created by the author to critique the sexual mores and hypocrisies of men and women who inhabited the eponymous village.



So, this as I said was published in 1966 as 'Oru Puliyamarathin Kathai, gave us the local history of a traffic junction.' So, it seems to be about a very-very local place, a particular place in Nagercoil town of southern Tamil Nadu, but you can see as you read that history of the local world, you can see the connection to larger nodes across India, right? How symbolic and how representative this becomes of the entire country in progress. So, if you want to place it, if you want to kind of place the literary context, we can say that it loosely belongs to the genre of Sthalapurana. So, in the same year Krithika's novel Vasavechvaram was also published in 1966, and it also critiques 'the sexual mores and hypocrisies of men and women who inhabited that eponymous village.'

And you can see the parallels between this novel by Krithika and Oru Puliyamarathin Kathai, the Tamarind History, right? Trade, the complexities of trade, the competition between traders, social climbing is a major concern of tamarind history, but the other concern which is not usually talked about is this one which is you know attached to Krithika's novel which is sexual mores and hypocrisies.

So, that is also a central concern in Tamarind History and depending upon which concern you prioritize, that seems to be the, the most talked about or most spotted subject matter of this particular novel.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:25)



"Oru Puliamaratthin Kathai has been hailed as a classic, a novel read keenly by successive generations of readers even today. It has also been translated into English and several Indian languages."

"Oru Puliamaratthin Kathai has been translated into English (*Tale of a Tamarind Tree*, Penguin India, New Delhi),

[Hindi](#) (*Imli Puran*, Nilakant Prakashan, [New Delhi](#)), Malayalam (*Oru Puliyamarathinte Katha*, D.C.Books, [Kottayam](#))

and into [Hebrew](#) language (by Ronit Ricci, Hakibbutz Hameuchaud Publishing House, [Tel Aviv](#))."



So, it has been much translated, so I've just given you, some, some of the languages into which it has been translated- Hindi and then we have a translation into the Hebrew language as well. So, this is a novel which has been read by the Europeans as well and the translation that we are reading is by Blake Wentworth, and he teaches Tamil in Columbia University. So he's an interesting academic to check out.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:01)



"A New Novel"

Oru Puliamarathin Kathai^[21] (*The Story of a Tamarind Tree*, 1966), his first novel, was well received as a work that proved to be a new experience both in form and content, extending the frontiers of Tamil novel and creating new perspectives.



So, I talked a little bit about the innovative form, the loosely episodic nature of the narrative which seems to be centered on just this particular object of the tamarind tree. So, everything is connected to that particular tree and there is no big plot with a logical sequence of events culminating in a climax. That kind of a structure is primarily not there. And so, this is innovative in that regard.

So, there is a kind of a de-centering of the emphasis on one particular individual from particular caste or class and gender too, and that idea is de-centered. So, that in itself is an unique attribute of this novel.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:50)



Tamarind History

- Popular in academic and non-academic circles
- 1966
- Landmark novel in Tamil Literature
- Stylistically, structurally and culturally very important

➤ Biography of the tree
➤ Biography of the Tamil society and the nation



So, as I said, it is very popular within the academic and the, and outside of the academic circles too and important stylistically, structurally, culturally and it seems to be the biography of the tree, the narrative of the tree, the tale of the tree. But it is also the tale of Tamil society as well as in a larger way, the tale of the Indian nation, which is trying to find its feet after independence. So, lots of big ideas are connected to this very regional, simple spot in a small town, deep in the south.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:25)

Tamarind Tree

"This is the story of the tamarind tree living and dying"



So, this is what Sundara Ramaswamy says 'this novel is about a tree, living and dying.' So, let us see what exactly is the tale about.

Okay Chapters 1 and 2 are the areas which I want to focus for today. What do you make of that? In some sense, the opening chapter is like the opening of the Hollywood movie you know, the Hollywood movie from the 90s, late 80s, 90s and 2000s you begin in the middle of the crisis, right? There's a big bang opening right, and then you know events will level out and then we will just enjoy the pace and then there is again a build-up. So, when you read the first chapter, there is a shock, right? There's almost a culture shock, to me at least when I read it, and then I kind of thought about it and tried to connect it with other narratives in the west and other literatures from different parts of the world. And I could find connections between what happens in this particular text and other narratives.

Let's first talk about the gist of the first chapter. What happens? The gist of the first chapter is a female girl Chellatayi is seduced, right, and in second chapter, we see her committing suicide. She hangs herself in a branch of the tamarind tree.

This is the gist, (you know) this is the heart of the matter of the first two chapters. A young woman, a young unmarried woman, a very beautiful young woman is seduced by an attractive, tall, handsome, young man, one night near the tamarind tree. And then nobody knows who he is, he seems to be a stranger who comes out of nowhere and this woman Chellatayi is obsessed with him after that incident and she claims to be pregnant and then one fine day, she declares that this man has been killed by a cobra. Nobody can find the body, nobody can find any, you know hints about the cobra whatever and then she is broken by that loss and commits suicide by hanging herself naked on the tamarind tree.

So, that's how the first two chapters unfold and this is a story told by a very important character called Damodara Aasan to a bunch of young lads, right? We, we are not told about the age of these boys, we can kind of assume that they are adolescents who are hooked by the story telling capacities of this Aasan, this man is like a pied piper to them, right. So, they just follow this man around begging him to tell stories and he is quite a character, right? Very burly, you know with a lot of provado and peculiarities and then he offers this tale to these young boys, right?

What do we make of this, what do we make of this tale? I want to read a little bit from the first chapter, so that we kind of enter that world and then we'll talk more.

To page 1, 'There is no road that does not end at the base of the tamarind tree.' There is no road that does not end at the base of the (tamarind) all roads seem to come here. It seems to be at the centre of a big network, right, of roads and parts. 'It was an ancient tree, it was an ancient tree scared with age. Were you to stand and look at for a minute or two, it looked just like an old woman with hair like a puff of cotton and eyes that clouded over. She is hunched with the insults of age and now indifferent to everything else as she relives the old pleasure of choosing from all that lies buried within her heart.'

Fantastic analogy with an old woman and kind of reminds me of Kamala Das's 'Summer Vacation'. If you look at that story, at the beginning of that story, we get a rich description, which compares the thicket of trees to the old woman at the centre of the tale, bent with age withered with age, similar metaphors evoked here. And more visceral, 'an old woman with hair like a puff of cotton' unkempt-like, you know, 'and eyes that clouded over,' can't see properly, I mean its old age, right?

She is not just old but she is, she's been insulted over the years, 'hunched with age', humiliation, there is humiliation there. Written, hunched into the tree as well. Hunched with the insults of age, and now indifferent, right? It is as if human being, an aged human being is

compared, is described. We do not see it as a description of a tree so much as it is a description of a human being, an old human being and the place of that old person in society towards the declining years.

‘From the time that it first sprouted so many years ago, the tree lived with dignity until yesterday. Even today, a living thing can sometimes grow old and fade away, if it is simply left to itself but the demands of humankind never let big promises fade away and come to nothing. People destroyed the tree and it now lies rotting away where it once stood.’

So, we have a narrator who knows about the past, the present and the future surrounding this tamarind tree. So you will know more about the character of the narrator as you read the story. People destroyed the tree, the developmental policies of the society are responsible for, you know, desecrating, destroying this particular spot, this particular tree.

And what is the function of this particular tree, what did the tamarind tree really do? ‘Did it simply do on standing there? Did it rise up as a silent witness to all the human kinds past times without taking part in any of them or did it affect them? What did it really do apart from just being there watching people's laughter, tears and tears that were passed off as laughter, their self-interest, sacrifice, self-interest that was caught up in sacrifice, jealousy and the pity resentments bound up in affection?’

And if you kind of follow the plot very closely, you can figure out what kind of narrative function that this tree has played in the novel. How far is the tree implicated in the plot complications of this particular novel, right? How does it set the ball rolling in terms of bringing about the climax and resolution? So, you can also follow that. How do people view their narratives of jealousy, sacrifice around the tree? How do they view their legends around the tree, to what effect, to what purpose, right? So, all these are cultural trajectories of people from this particular point in society, can be kind of unravelled through this reading.

Page 3, ‘The site where the tamarind tree once stood indeed became deserted. Now, even without the tree standing at the crossroads, people still go on, the traffic still goes on and who wants to wander like they did before around the place, empty now where it once stood.’

So, he tells the story from the moment where the tree is standing there very much and the tree is gone and later on too. So, it's a kind of a mapping out of a story of a people from the point of view of the tree and later when the tree is no longer there and so on, right. ‘It's an essential principle to live life without being consumed by the way we push and shove each other just for

self-preservation. It is an essential principle, to live like without being consumed by the way we push and shove each other just for self-preservation. The tamarind tree teaches us the lesson that the people who actually follow this rule always seem so reluctant to teach it.' What does he mean here?

Let's talk about Damodara Aasan, he says, 'I put no faith in any power beyond man alone. Man is himself Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer.'

He plays some massive emphasis on the capabilities of the individual and does not believe or does not lay a lot of faith in any other power outside of the individual, right? And the narrator here says, 'There was a reason for infatuation but Aasan, we were infatuated with this storyteller. It was not as if he had some magic potion, the man was a wealth of stories.' He was full of stories, a treasure trove. 'Can one person really hold that many stories? My god, so many stories, so many stories, so many fantastic characters, so many twists and turns in the course of his mind. After talking with him for two or three hours, then coming home to rest, all the endless characters in his stories would come dancing to life in our minds. I can hear the sound of his voice in my ears, even now.'

So, he does have some kind of magic and that magic is called storytelling. And I am reminded of all the tales from Nagamandala, right? The proliferation of storytellers and we try to probe what was the function of storytelling. What is the nature of storytelling? And if we probe deeply we can see connections, cultural connections between those tales told by you know Kannada people through their folk and the tales told by Damodara Aasan in Nagercoil, right?

So, there are similarities, the external act, the external stuff may be different. External activities may be different but the internal compositions, the cultural composition, the psyche seems to be closer between the peoples living across this landscape called India, right? So we will probe that shortly.

So this man is fascinating because of his ability to enthrall all these young men, right? And he is also very playful towards these young boys and he plays games with them. There are some examples on page 5 and these boys try to bribe by giving him betel nuts and, you know, bidis and other stuff, you know, buying him food to make him talk. And I want to just pick up on the first story, the first story that Aasan says to these boys. What is the first story? It's about a poisoner, right? It's about a poisoner, a woman who poisons her husband, right? It's on page 6. 'It was this you see, that the bitch gave to her own husband to kill him. Can women really have the heart for something like that? True, the fool got into her head, to marry some other

guy but she went ahead and did it and it is not like her husband was maimed or crippled or anything you know, blind or something like that and he was not the type to keep another woman on the side' and so on and so forth.

He seems to be well off. He is generous, he feeds a lot of people, he gives big fees. 'Anyway he went to the market in Vadasery to buy some draught animals. He bought two bullocks as grand as Arabian horses and few lengths of jasmine garlands for the dammed women to wear in her hair just the way she liked. Then he went home. He thought she was giving him milk and he went ahead and drank it, puked up blood a few times, end of story.'

It's an exciting narrative, (you know) you can see how the boys of that age would be hooked by such tales- tales of betrayal, poisoning, generous husband, bitch of a woman and things like that. It is a heady combination, right? It's a fantastic set of characterizations which would do the job of capturing the imagination of these boys who after that follow him around like puppies, right? They just lap this story up. And you want to think about the nature of these tales, the nature of these tales.

I wanted to kind of go back to the logic of that, that woman who poisons her husband, who seems to be checking all the boxes of an ideal husband. Rich, gets her jasmine, very generous, has a good name in society, why on earth, and he's not maimed, why on earth would that woman want to poison the husband, right? It doesn't make sense, but you do not care about the sense, right? I was talking the other day, in one of my classes that the truth value is not significant, the truth value of tales are not significant, the logical aspect of tales are not significant. There's something else, there's something else, subtext which is very very influential, which is what the ideology of the story is all about, right? So, there's an ideological function, a cultural function to these tales.

Okay so let us keep this tale in mind and let us go to the other tale. Okay page 12, so the act of seduction is over and the man is being chased, the stranger is being chased, right? And Damodara Aasan says, 'I ran after him too, if I had only got my hands on that guy, don't you think, I would have ground him into the dust right then and there? Who would have believed it, his pace was incredible, just incredible!'

Alright page 12, 'Finally once the stranger reached the woods he seemed to disappear, leaping over a waist-high anthill as easily as if he were jumping over a grinding stone.' He seems to be super-human in his agility, in his nimble movements right? He seems to be a god. 'Never in my life have I seen anything like it! A man like him moving so fast so easily, a man! He was a

golden god. He was a golden god. His arms were so long, it seems like he could touch the ground.'

And then we have Chellatayi being you know obsessed with him. And the farmers kept her away from the fields, right? She is a tainted woman, right? She is a tainted woman so they keep her away from the fields, 'the crops would have failed. If she touched the crops, the crops would have failed.' So, this tells you about the belief system of this particular culture, right? So, 'the crops would have failed yet that did not seem to bother her in the least. She simply remained at home.' So, she seems to be, she seems to be a rebel of sorts, right? She did not bother but that kind of social ostracization, she simply remained at home. And you have an extensive description of her physical beauty, right? Very graphic at moments. So, my question is what, what is the function of that kind of description, right? Is it gratuitous? Or does it have a purpose? So, we cannot find the dividing line between these two. So, we need to think about that, right?

What do you make of her attitude? She claims to be pregnant and she you know asks people to buy toys for her, you know, baby and things like that. What do make of that? That fantasy, that fantasy of Chellatayi is troubling, right? That fantasy of Chellathai should be thought about.

Chapter 2, page 17, 'As long as there was a hint of life in his throat for him to tell stories, a few people in front of him nodding the heads with pleasure and a plug of Jaffna tobacco, it seem to us as a miseries and killers alike would bow down before him, him being Aasan, then vanish without a trace. He was a consummate artist. He was a consummate artist keeping watch against the emptiness of our times,' this is the important idea. 'He was a consummate artist keeping watch against the emptiness of our time, simply by telling us story and never succumbing to it.'

What do you make of this? Is it the emptiness of our times or is it something to do but distracting ourselves from a certain set of realities by telling all these tales, right? There is massive exaggeration in the tales of Damodara Aasan. There also seems to be a lack of reality to some of these tales. But that is not the point, right? The point is, is he able to hook the reader, hook the listener, alright? So, 'keeping watch against the emptiness of our times' is a phrase that we want to keep in our mind and think about. Why is it the emptiness of our times? We have nearly got independence, there is so much optimism, there is so much faith in the future. The country is progressing with the help of other western powers, right? What is the problem? We need to think about that.

Now I'm going to move to the final section. 'I looked at the tamarind tank and what I saw then is as clear today as if someone had engraved it on my heart. The ladder came floating along in the water like a temple float at the Suchindram festival. Chellatayi lay stretched out. A kerosene lantern was raised over her head. The boy with the bad leg sat right by her head trembling, his eyes wide but terror. I mean it, the scene was straight out of a nightmare.'

I'm not going to read the next section. But you can read it for yourself and you can imagine that scene. Her body has been brought down from the tree and she, and the body has been laid out on the ladder and that ladder is floating on the tank, right? There is water surrounding the tamarind tree and they bring the body out and there is a boy with a bad leg, a boy who is limping with the lantern, right? He sits on the ladder and they're all coming out, right? It's a bizarre scene and we have onlookers gazing at the naked body of that young woman, and we have Damodara Aasan giving this graphic description of that body and he is cursing her because he thinks that that body is no longer useful, right? He says that, 'where is the dog that would even touch her now?' Where is the dog that would even touch her now? Why should somebody touch her? That seems to be the question that begs to be asked but you know he is full of vituperatives against her, right? Against that act of hers which makes her body useless. So, if you read this section and the previous description of her body, you can see the amount of male gaze consuming her body.

So, and we have realized that there are disturbing elements in these legends, right, woven around that tree, and there are other small narratives connected to this death and you know, if you go back to that, you will realize that apparently she was a sacrifice offered. And, and that in itself becomes a tale, so, which tale is the real tale, right? Which one do we buy? Which one do you kind of accept and endorse, right?

Somebody comes down to cut down the tree, you know, a man who was hoping to marry her. He is so infuriated by that loss that he wants to go and cut down the tree and Damodara Aasan is just in time to rescue the tree and he comes up with the set of tales again. So again, a proliferation of tales. And they are like Hydra's head, they keep cropping up, you know as soon as you cut one, there is another, right? And Damodara Aasan says that you know there is a demon living inside the tree. And this woman Chellatayi is an offering, a sacrifice you know, offered to keep the demon at bay, so do not disturb the tree, right? If you do and then all hell will be let loose on your family.

So, what is the truth then? Did she really sleep with that stranger, was she really seduced, was she really pregnant, did the man really die and was she a sacrifice? So many tales and at the end of it, at the bottom of it, as a subtext is this problematic gender relationship, right? Which is being clothed in the name of legends and folklore and consumed by young boys and, and offered by older males who lust after the body of such young women. So, there is a kind of a network, a mesh, woven between members, certain members of the society which keep the fabric afloat, alive. And pass it on from generation to generation, right? So, we should be able to at least sense that, we should be able to sense that complicity, the complicity of patriarchy which comes up with such narratives, which maintains the status quo as it is and keeps passing it on to generations to come, right? So, if we are aware then we read this novel in, in the way it should be read.

Okay, I am going to stop here and then we'll unpack other aspects. And we wouldn't get such disturbing episodes in the rest of the novel, so this is just like a one-off. We have momentary, re-visitations of problematic gender identity in the novel but not to this extent. Chellatayi is one off, right? So, the rest of the novel tells you about, you know, other aspects of life such as competitions in trade, you know things like that. Competitions between shopkeepers and so on. So, don't give up on the novel, it kind of picks up pace and you get a bigger canvas, you know, a bigger breadth of this society and there are more issues other than gender which are being offered to you for your analysis, right.