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**INTRODUCTION TO MODERN INDIAN DRAMA**

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Good morning, let us now continue our discussion of Mahesh Elkunchwar's plays by discussing another play that he wrote which in English is translated as The Old Stone Mansion. The play unlike Elkunchwar's earlier plays does not deal with you know abstract philosophical ideas of existential unease or existential crisis, but you know is more, this is one of his play which is more grounded in a particular social uneconomic reality.

The play itself was inspired by the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's last play called the Cherry Orchard, in the Cherry Orchard you have an aristocratic Russian land owner who returns to her family state which includes a large you know and well known Cherry Orchard, and just before the, it has been auctioned to pay the mortgage, right, so she returns with family to state just as the Orchard has been auctioned to pay the mortgage.

The land owner is not very you know doesn't take any action to you know save the state, and allows the sale of the state to the son of a former surf, and the family eventually leaves to the sound of the Cherry Orchard being cut down, so the story itself is reflective of larger social and political and economic transformations, you know, in around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the rise, the middle class and the evolution of surf them in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and of course a declining power of the aristocracy.

So you see a very clear impact of influence of check of his play The Cherry Orchard on Mahesh Elkunchwar's play The Old Stone Mansion where again you have characters representing social and economic transition in the starters of landed Brahmins in ruler Vidarbha and Maharashtra.

So you again just like the Cherry Orchard Mahesh Elkunchwar deploys characters in the play that who represent different ages, different historical and social and effect of economic ages across generations, so if you look at the opening description of the stage directions, this again gives you a sense of how of the, it's a description of the dilapidated ancestral home of the Deshpande's in Vidarbha, so the stage elections, the description goes like this or the ancient respectable but dilapidated mansion of the Deshpande's of Dharangaon, a small village somewhere in Vidarbha, there is a veranda in front and a bedroom to the left, to the right of the

veranda is a room which also serves as a drawing room, a middle room beyond the veranda and a suggestion of more rooms for the behind.

A number of chairs old half broken assorted, stand on the veranda and the swing, a very old carpet on the floor, a few bolsters in a sorry state, a carved mahogany bed and a magnificent mirror in room A, there is an antique iron \_3:56\_, old steel chunks are piled in the middle room behind the veranda, the apron of the stage is the courtyard.

So you see the dilapidated and broken and this state of The Old Stone Mansion which is in the state of disuse, and you also have for example the Dadi, the oldest member of the family who is constantly calling out to her son Venkatesh, whom she doesn't know is dead, so the play begins with the death of the patriarch Venkatesh, and his mother who seems to have lost her mind is constantly calling out to her son thinking that he is still alive, right, so the Dadi herself seems symbolize a forgotten age, an age which has been bypassed by time.

And then you have many other characters, for example Prabha who is you know Venkatesh's daughter, you have Ayyi who is Venkatesh's widow, you have Ranju who is the eldest son, the eldest grandson that is the patriarch son Bhaskar who have, the patriarch has 3 sons Bhaskar, Sudhir and Chandu, and Bhaskar's wife, the elder son's wife is called Vahini, and younger son Sudhir's wife is called Anjali, and Bhaskar and Vahini have a son and a daughter called Parag and Ranju, and Sudhir has a son called Abhay who does not appear on stage, but we know that he is somewhere in Bombay when his parents come for the patriarchs funeral back in Vidarbha. So these are the characters of the play, and Chandu of course a last son is unmarried and he is the one who actually takes care of his parents, and does all the menial labour on the farm, so you see you know suggestions of the impact of modernization on the village, so for example Ranju is this young pre-cautious girl, Bhaskar's daughter Anju who is exposed to the outside world through magazines like filmfare or the radio and she often listens to you know film songs on the radio.

You also have Vahini who is you know a very disapproving mother she doesn't like the way Ranju is spending a time, she wants her to study just about enough to find her a bride room, and so she wants to actually get her married, and you also have you know the introduction of characters like Sudhir, the younger brother and his wife Anjali, and there is a you know a clear description of the class and the caste difference between Anjali and the others, so the Anjali is a Konkanastha Brahmin, and she seems to live up to her the reputation of a caste community, because she is fair, she is well educated, she is beautiful, she works and she is not probably very familiar with the ruler life styles, you know, she doesn't really know what it means to actually work hard in the field, so work out and do hard labour, she is not exposed to the son very much, so she is perceived to someone who is you know wealthy, comes from the very comfortable family, but also he's probably a little elite distance snooty, that's a suggestion that is given there, and in fact her son Abhay seems to as it where inherit or genes because he is somebody who is you know looks a hard working studies well as done well in school, he is also you know a cricketer, so much to the contrast of Bhaskar son who is Parag, who spends a lot of his time just you know rooming around, he waste away his time you know on alcohol and drugs.

So there is a clear contrast between Abhay and Parag, and so of course the encounter between Sudhir and Anjali and Vahini and Bhaskar suggest you know certain very clear differences in their life styles and you know, so for example you see the, on page 139 you see for example the Vahini's perception of her sister-in-law Anjali, she says looks she is a Bombay girl born there, leave there before marriage and after, and daughter of Konkanastha, how could she born with your people, now don't say or do anything till the writes are over, right, so they've all come, they've gathered together for to finish the, complete the funeral rites of their father.

And Vahini also says that they came by taxi, you think they travel by bus like us, so there is this perception that they are fairly comfortable and there is a very clear social difference between Sudhir and Anjali and Bhaskar and Vahini who have spent all their life in the village.

What is also interesting is the tractor, that's always stationed in the courtyard of the, in the front of the house and many of the actors the characters who step in and out of the house are often, their path is often obstructed by the tractor, its sets in old rusted tractor which is no longer used and the tractor itself becomes a symbol of the eminent social and economic decline and changing fortunes of the Deshpande household as they lose their traditional land it starters and no longer have you know the kind of power, the ritual and economic power that the ones had, but so the play is also set within the larger context of certain transformations that I have let to the erosion of the ruler fabric of the village with for example laundry forms, the introduction of laundry forms and redistribution of land among caste groups who have been landless or have worked as landless laborers on upper caste landlords lands.

So the land that was once that Deshpande's ones possessed, I had reduced her shrunk and now they've a smaller piece of land where it is not very economical to actually have a tractor and you know use a tractor to actually cultivate a small patch of land, so they don't but they still retain the tractor as a symbol of their, of while ritual power, economic power right, so it's the tractor is on ever present on stage as a symbol of the empty and hollow, social and economic starters of the land in Brahmins.

There is also suggestions that there are many other caste groups, lower caste groups in the village who have you know resorted to other kinds of professions like the brewing of illicit you know alcohol and liquor, some of the people who use to work for the Deshpande, Deshpande is the cooks have, or washer man have moved to the city of Bombay for better you know employment opportunities and so there is a change, a transformation in the social and cultural fabric of the village.

You also have for example Prabha, Prabha is the patriarch daughter, she is the only daughter and she is the sister of Bhaskar sister, her perspective also is significant because she perceives also the change, the shift in the control of the household from you know her mother to her eldest sister in law Vahini, and she in turn feels rather neglected and powerless in the hands of Vahini's presence in the household because she is also someone who always inspire to be educated to work, she is obviously she is trying to escape the stifling patriarchal atmosphere of the household, she wants to make her own fortunes about, she is not able to, till the very end, so she does feel betrayed and lost in that dilapidated house, so you have instances of this for example on 141 where Prabha says I must leave off whatever comes, you brothers throw me

now, you had all right, you will take your share and go off to Bombay, but let me tell you Sudhir, she is telling her Bombay brother Sudhir, it's not even 5 days since Tatiya ji died, 5 days and Vahini has changed already, the house keys moved instantly into her keep, and Ayu went instantly into the shadows of the backroom when Tatiya ji was alive you couldn't hear Vahini's foot in the veranda, but within 5 days her orders are heard away outside the veranda, right, so this captures the sudden shift and power and the growing visible presence of Vahini in the household as the eldest daughter in law.

And you also see again on scene 2 of tit for tat 143, thus the discussion around the tractor, right, so Sudhir asks Bhaskar wonders if the tractor can be sold in the city, and Sudhir says who would want to buy a tractor in Mumbai, and anyhow there isn't much left of it now, it's half buried in the ground, every time I come it's sunk a few inches more, the body is rusted and routing, Bhaskar nobody is used in 20 years, Sudhir money down the drain you should have sorted long ago, Bhaskar do you think we dare suggest any such thing to Tatiya ji, Tatiya ji is there father, the patriarch who just died, it was nothing but a vim, we'll buy a tractor, we'll buy a tractor he went on, and bought it one day, fine, we thought it might be useful, nothing of the kind, first of all our land was tilt by tenants, now the landlord has bought a tractor, he tilt the land himself he thought, they were dead set against it, whoever it could break down all the time, once broken it state that way, right, so the acquisition of the tractor 20 years ago made the other caste groups who wants to work in their lands feel that now they would, they don't have a job, they won't need to tell the land of the Deshpande's anymore, so they probably decide to move away, probably go over the city if possible in search of employment.

Then Vahini says you think you get in good mechanicals in the village, so there it stands, Sudhir you could have hire it out to other landlords, Bhaskar who has got that kind of land around you, 2 to 5 acres, 12 is the limit, who needs a tractor for that, it's not as if I didn't lie, but people should be able to afford it, mind you I had already told Tatiya ji that we should buy 15 buffalos instead of the tractor and start a diary, right, so this of course is a very revealing of the transformations in the social caste fabric of the village where land reforms have been introduced, and they have you know a smaller patch of land now 2 to 5 acres, 12 is the limit he says, and who needs a tractor for a small piece of land, it would have been more profitable Bhaskar says if they had bought 15 buffalos instead of tractor and started a diary, then Ranju says why didn't you buy a Porsche car instead, remember Ranju is one of the young girls who aspires to make it big, she wants to probably, she has a dreams of leading a rich and free life and which doesn't happened towards the end of the play.

And so again Vahini says that the Deshpande is decided to be modern and put a tractor there, forget about usefulness, as long as we can make a show off wealth, so we have the tractor in front and palanquin at the back, right, so it's just an empty show of wealth, they want the others to believe that the Deshpande's are wealthy, they don't depend on other caste groups tilt the land, they were attracted to tilt the land and so therefore they are modern.

And then of course there are other suggestions of example of cook who left the Deshpande household to work for a restaurant at the bus stand, so the opening up of restaurants and you know in the village of course is again the sign of the impact of modernization in the village, so even though the cooks father and grandfathers spent their lives in the Deshpande kitchen, now

he couldn't care less, he belongs to a new generation of people who wants to make his own living by working in a new restaurant that has been opened in the village, and they also getting well paid for it, so they get more salaries then they ever did working for Deshpandes.

The house also is bound by the rights of pollution, just after the funeral Ayyi is very concern that the house should be purified of the pollution of the death, so she is very concerned about, she still observes these rituals rights of pollution and you know that comes with death.

Now the interesting thing is that Bhaskar, the eldest son of the family who has never the left the village, who has worked on their ancestor land, and who is now the patriarch of the family, refuses to actually acknowledge the fact that they have long lost their financial and social status in the village, they no longer have the same status they once had, so he is very stubborn, and he insists on actually having a very lavish funeral for his father, but so he is determined to actually retain stick on to the ritual and social reputation they once had when they've actually lost a lot of land and wealth because of the new land reforms.

And the new found mobility of other lower caste groups from the village to the city, so he wants to be very extravagant on the father's funeral rights, even though he can't afford it, and he even asks his brother Sudhir for money, but Sudhir doesn't have any money because he has spent all his money, his money is all locked in you know paying back the mortgage on his house in Bombay, so the interesting thing is that Vahini and Bhaskar assume that Sudhir and Anjali lead rather comfortable, if not lavish life in Bombay, but they don't realize the difficulties of living in a city where everything is a lot more expensive, and you know so you know they hardly find time to for themselves, so all they do is they work from day to night trying to make ends meet, trying to pay off their loans, trying to pay off the mortgage and so you know they don't realize that the Bhaskar's family don't realize their financial struggles, because they assume anybody who is in the city must be well off, must be comfortable but they don't have a sense of urban property, so you know it's a long so just like how Bhaskar and Vahini believe that or assume that Sudhir and Anjali are very comfortable and wealthy by living in the city, Ranju also has this false impression of the modern world of consumerism and she you know, the way she listens to the radio or later on she elopes with her English tutor, she learns English from her tutor but she is not able to speak English very well, but she wants to be able to learn to speak English as a sign of class, and so elopes with her tutor only to be deceived by him, so these are the perceptions which are very interestingly built up in the play where you have a ruler landed family which has these, or rather positive illusions about the city of Bombay where they think is the city of fortune and wealth.

Then there is another character who doesn't actually appear on stage who is Bansilal, Bansilal the grosser it, who wants only vegetables but as now actually become rather wealthy and he has his eyes on the land in the Deshpande's, so he knows that the Deshpandes are in debt and so he is you know waiting for them to sell the land to him, so obviously has some new found wealth, he has become rich, so that there is a discussion of that on page 145 where Vahini says forget old and new, you can put where the groceries in the store room, where Chandu bhauji brings them, you must get the groceries today, do you hear Chandu bhauji, which is Vahini telling her brother-in-law Chandu to bring vegetables, Chandu says I will, Vahini and Deva's chopped the firewood but not brought it in the rascal, Chandu I'll bring it in, Vahini to Bhaskar you better

send Chandu Bhauji to nagar mall for the groceries give him a note, Bhaskar why, what's happened? Chandu, Bansilal is asking for arrears, so they have, the Deshpande are so sunk ridden with debt that they haven't paid their own vegetable seller, the amount that they owe him, Vahini to Chandu bhauji went to get 2 boxes of matches yesterday he sent them back, Bhaskar tell that burger that Dharangaon to Deshpande's have never died on their debts, so what if Tatiya ji's dead we're all here, tell him I'll sell the tin of the roof to repay him, when this fellows father came from Marwar with nothing but a lotta, he made his home in our stable, he has forgotten those days now, why did you take what that 2 bit man said, so Bhaskar is defuses to acknowledge to the fact that he is no longer as wealthy he used to be, and he doesn't you know command or enjoy the same ritual and economic power that he once had in the village, and now he is determine to sell off if the roof of his house, I mean literary sell off the house if he has to repay the what he owes the vegetable seller.

And then he also asks Bhaskar to ask Chandu to ask Sudhir for seven to eight hundred rupees for the funeral ceremony, and Sudhir says I don't have that kind of money, where will I produce so much, right, so they can't believe that you know he, Sudhir is not able to afford cannot given the share money to actually conduct the funeral rites, and then page 149 Anjali describes their financial constraints in the city, Anjali tells Prabha that he is Deshpande through and through talking about Sudhir plus he has high BP, you think it's all fun and game for us, but let me tell you only we know how we manage, pull the sheet over my head, over your head and your feet are uncovered, pull it down and your heads uncovered, first it was a battle to find a two room flat, now it's a battle to pay off the loan at least here you own the roof over your head, and the foot comes off the land, right, so you see the irony, the ironic oxide there that you know Deshpande are death ridden, they still have the small piece of land from which they gets, they are able to grow a few things, and they are able to, and they have their own house, but in the city it's a comparative raters where you will say it's terribly expensive, because they are high much, higher standard of living and they struggle with great difficulty to actually rent or find a small the two room flat on rent, but then they have to also pay off the loan on their house, so it's not easy for them, and Prabha doesn't believe her, doesn't believe Anjali when she says that she is poor despite the fact that she is, and Konkanastha Brahmin.

There is also no electricity in the Deshpande household which is interesting because they don't have any electrical appliances, they don't have any access to agricultural technology in the village, and so they are not even tried to get let's say TV connection or electric connection in the house, so you see that in some sense they also trying to, they're still living a life that has now long disappeared, and they refuse to acknowledge the fact that times have changed, right, and that they no longer command the kind of wealth and power they once had.

Acts, they have seen 3 of act, one again describes the possibility of Ranju having an affair with her English tutor, and Ranju seems to be extremely restless and flighty character, she doesn't seem to enjoy living in the house very much, she wants to escape, this constant impulse for the younger women of the house to escape the suffocation of living in a dilapidated dying house in a dying age as it where, then you know the similarly Parag his brother, her brother Ranju's brother is again a boy who is waste, he's always spending, he spends hours outside the house roaming around you know consuming alcohol, he's a drunk, he has a drugs, he doesn't study, right, and so there is a contrast being made between Parag and Abhay who is a seems to be very

you know hard working young men who was now also participating in the cricket tournament, so we don't see Abhay on stage, but there is this impression built that he may be like his mother, extremely promystic and so it is a very clear you know divide between the rule and the urban, and a lot of this perceptions are imagined, this imagine divide between the urban and the ruler where the urban has made incursions into the village and those who live in the village have this false perception on those who are living in the city as people who are well off, who are comfortable, who are educated, who are in upper class, upper caste too and so on.

There is also this perception that those people who live in the city are you know are liars, right, they distort things like Anjali, people don't believe Anjali when she says anything, she always think that she is trying to deceive the Deshpande family because she is too tight fastened, right, she is too miserly to give away any money, right, so there is this the impression of those who leave in the city are wealthy, but they are also very tight fastened and they are not generous.

Then the beginning of act 2, you have a description of how things have not changed in the Deshpande household, so they don't have TV, so Vahini says that this place has no entertainment for, no entertainment for children they get bored poor souls, when she start sniffing and sniffing I say go, don't waste the life out of me, therefore into Ranju the wrestlers daughter the first, Sudhir also has his own TV now, he has bought his own TV so he stopped going to see watch films outside, and Ranju is fascinated by the fact that uncle has bought TV and she wishes that she had a TV, and Anjali says that you can buy anything in Bombay on installment, but Vahini cannot afford a TV because she doesn't have an electrical connection at home, Bhaskar says not dark or anything, it's not dark despite the fact that they don't have electricity, it's all the question of habit, we don't find a dark and you think it's any good having a connection, for days of the week there is no power, people install pumps in place of their water wheels, now they're regretting it, half their orchards have dried up, government is happy because it is given electricity to the village and the people are happy because they have connections, but if you ask me there is more loss than gain in it, so Bhaskar is a man of the old age, he refuses to change with the times, and he insist that it's, there is more loss than a gain, people have lost more they have gained by installing pumps in place of water wheels.

So you know on page 164, 165, Bhaskar is very anxious to show to the world that they are wealthy and privileged, but despite the fact that they have actually lost many of their precious, you know brass buckets, they have sold many of their bath vessels in order to redeem their debts, right, they have sold two copper vessels, you know and then she says that we didn't make a fortune out of them as in fortune out of selling all these old pots and bands, let me assure you when we sell old pots do you think we can go out into the open market with them like others, it's all hush, hush by the back door, we mustn't show cracks in the first order must be, right, so he doesn't want to actually show the reality to the world that they are actually on the brink of bankruptcy and poverty.

The question of honored reputation is very important, Sudhir says that we just somehow managed with both of us slogging from 7 in the morning till 9 at night, still you won't see as much as the drop of butter or milk or curds in our plates even one day of the year, we should try and living in Bombay and copying every step cost money, right, so they, it's not like as Sudhir has leading very comfortable life, he struggles for the lot more in the city then these people

struggle in the village, then it's Prabha's turn to express her disappointment and disenjoyment with her life, because her father did not let her go to college in Amaravathi, and now she wants to go to you know, to college but then the Deshpande girls she says won't supposed to live anywhere by themselves to study, all for their family prestige and honor, never mind if our lives were reduced to dust, right, so women have no choice but to keep up the honor and prestige of the family and not step out of their household, so they have no freedom whatsoever, so Prabha also wants an educated husband, but then she is Bhaskar dismisses her wishes and desires, she says Prabha says let's write first stop me from the study and then blame me for it, won't you as brothers responsible in anyway? You Sudhir every time you came here you said you look for a match in Bombay, you never found me, found time for me to do it, you couldn't even manage the simple thing like sending books, don't think I'm bunting to get married, it's done with now, it's too late, but don't think that will stop me from holding the mirror up to your faces.

In fact Chandu is the only one in the entire family who is unquestioningly loyal to his parents and to his family, he takes, he sacrifices his own personal life, his own happiness, he is not married, and he takes care of the entire family, he does all the hard level of bringing vegetables of tilling the land of cleaning the house and so on.

So Bhaskar as you said earlier is zero hellbent on filling the entire village on the thirteenth day of the funeral because he wants to, he wants the entire village to believe that he is that you know he is, he upholds his ritual and caste power, right, then Bhaskar decides to mortgage the Orchard for to perform the funeral rites, they initially think of giving out the gold, the gold jewelry of the family, but then Vahini refuses, he said she refuses to give the answers from jewelry of the family, but then Sudhir is unwillingly to actually kept the farm mortgage, because the farm belongs to all 3 brothers, so Sudhir says the Orchard will not be mortgaged, when have we ever been able to redeem mortgage land, this strip of 12 acres is all that remains, let's keep it, we never be able to buy such fertile land again and also if I suddenly need money in the future, I must have my share of the land, right, so Bhaskar is very upset and you ask him what share of the land are you talking about, considering you spent all your, I have spent so much of money on your education and sent you, you know to study outside and now you're working in Bombay, you have no right, you're entitled to your share of the land, Sudhir recommends him, someone says that it was Tatiya ji, it's in their fathers money that he spend it, was not Bhaskar's own money, but it was their fathers wealth money that he spent on Sudhir's education.

Sudhir said Tatiya ji spent the money, Bhaskar says you are talking about right Sudhir, but you are forgetting education, you think it came at no cost? Sudhir says Tatiya ji spent that money, Bhaskar only name, you know that as well as I do, he passed on the whole responsibility of education, your marriage to me and sat back, did that cost nothing? And here you are demanding your share. Sudhir look bhau, I've had this thrown at me a little too often, my education my marriage, now let me tell you something, you didn't spend out of your pocket for education and marriage, didn't I have anything here 20 years ago? Wasn't the enough land in my name? Expenditure on me came from the income of that land, but that ended 20 years ago, since then you've been living off that income, what about that? Why go on with I did this, I did that, rubbish, did you ever give me a single paisa from my land or even a measure of grain, so Sudhir



seems to be you know taunt between his these two worlds of you know working away in the city is become an urban dweller or been, and now he wants also wants his share of his loyalties, ties to the family, but he also has ties to the land, to the ancestor land, and he demands his share of the land.

Bhaskar said you should come and take what's yours? Sudhir how he beggars to come and take rings, the question is whether you're big hearted enough to give me anything, earlier I used to spend my need here, but you kept hinting, I was saving my salary staying here, so I swore not to come too often and even when I ended not to stay for too long, I kept away for years at a time, but you couldn't stand it either, why you're calling me greedy then? Bhaskar then return saying are you through? Yes I agree with everything you say, I didn't give you your income, neither cash nor grain, true, but did you ever feel like asking me once in all these years how the land was doing, I took Ayyi to Amaravathi for operation, I had to set up house there for 2 months, then came Tatiya ji's illness you think that didn't cost money? Sudhir the same thing again, why do you think it was your money that you spent in Ayyi and Tatiya ji, everything belong to them, why do you make out that they were obliged to you? Bhaskar, so then Bhaskar come here once and see for yourself, if they harvest good one year, it's bad for the next 3. Sudhir, how can it be a bad harvest on such well water land? Bhaskar then the land went to tenants, we had to fight it out in the law courts, then we need to hearing was announced I had dropped everything and rushed to Amaravathi, I lost so much money during that from top to bottom they were all Brahmin haters every one of them, didn't allow a single verdict to go in our favor, winning and dinning top top officials isn't something I can do, you don't know how difficult it is for Brahmins to survive as farmers nowadays, so this is a reflection of the larger reality of Brahmins who are now no longer the rich landlords they once were, and the fact that they now have to also confront an entire bureaucracy of Non-Brahmins, people who also hate Brahmins for the kind of rich, social and cultural capital that they have and had, and so that's the new social reality of the land in Brahmins of Maharashtra.

Sudhir, so how do the others manage? Bhaskar, have you seen how, there was 7 Brahmin families in this village, 3 left long ago, there is no one left to light a lamp in their homes of the remaining 4, 2 are priest and 1 a teacher, all deep in debt, so all the Brahmin families who had once lived in the village and now deep in debt, many of them have actually left the village, right, in search of better fortunes.

With us the façade is big and then debts are big, other caste are doing fine, they opened a liquor shop and soon they've built a large house, this is the new fortunes of the other caste groups in the village, some have bought trucks others are in brokerage, and there is always politics as the last resort, are we capable of doing any of these things? Times have changed, but our expenses remain unchanged, festivals, family rituals, annual death rites, you have left all these to me and gone off, the Ganpati Gauri festival alone cost a good 700 to 800 rupees, right, so Bhaskar has not changed the times, he still wants to spend on festivals, on family rituals, on annual death rites, while the other caste have actually gained a new mobility, they've opened a liquor stores and they have built large houses on their earnings, they've also bought trucks and some of them are in brokerage, and then this politics.

Then Bhaskar says I don't mean to sell the entire place, we'll mortgage just the part at the back that's broken, we talked and talked but never got around to repairing it, now it's sinking, Mansilal had his eyes on it for years, in fact he is offered to buy it, so the grosser offers to buy the back part of the house, the broken part. And redeem the money that the owe the grosser, but the problem is that the back part of the broken part of the house the back is in their mother's name, Ayyi's name, so while the front part of the house belongs to the four siblings, the three brothers and the sister, the father the patriarch who died had planned to build a 2 room flats on Ayyi's portion, the mothers portion of the flat and rent them out, but that does not happened, right, and so now they've decided to actually sell Ayyi's share of the house to redeem their debts to the, to Bansilal, and Bhaskar also asked Sudhir to actually share the expenses of paying Bansilal back.

Ayyi is also willing to actually share her, sell her share of the house for the welfare of the family even though her son Chandu doesn't want Ayyi to sell her share of the house, he in fact offers to sell or in fact transfer his own share of the farm land to his mother, right, but then his mother will not have it.

And finally of course they decide to sell the orchard, the back because that's the only way that they can actually make money to redeem their debts, and the two women Prabha and Ayyi have an interesting conversation towards the end of act 2 where they you know Prabha wishes that she had, she could get access to the family jewelry to her share of the family jewelry and sell it off and you know, and use the money to actually move away from the family with her mother, take care of the mother and probably find the job, so but that doesn't happened because Ranju and her tutor, they steal the family jewelry and they escape with it, right, they eloped and of course the tutor of course betrays Ranju and then she has to be brought back by Sudhir secretly in a taxi so that the other you know people in the village don't actually discovered that Ranju has run away with another man, so he brings her back in a private car to save the face of the family, right.

And Prabha of course is defeated women, it's clear that now women have to accept certain foregone possibilities of freedom, and there is, now they have to you know Prabha has no choice but to accept the fact that she will never have the opportunity to move away from the family and live her own life, so even her attempt to actually get hold of her share of the ancestor jewelry lost ones Ranju and her tutor elope stealing the jewelry with them, so there is also a very poetic scene before the theft where Anjali, I mean Vahini is wearing, slowly wearing the ancestor jewelry that Bhaskar gives her, and she imagines, she can imagine, she can feel the burdening and the prestige that earlier daughters-in-law like her of the Deshpande family bow, you know as they wore the jewelry they were marked as upper caste Brahmin daughters in law, right, so they bow the prestige and honor of the family, and that's what Vahini imagines actually slowly wearing the jewelry, but then she has to remove it because they have no choice but to at some point sell the family jewelry much to their own you know unhappiness, so they are not willing to do it because for them the honor and prestige of the family which is now no longer backed by economic wealth, rest in those jewels, right.

So the whole idea of gold is also being contrasted to the idea of hard money of cash which has the certain liquidity, a certain mobility, a certain exchange value, but then gold itself is just dead

wealth, right, it just remains fixed, it has no growth, it has not diminished and so it just remains this fixed immobile metaphor, hallow metaphor of the social and cultural starters and honor of Deshpande family.

So just to look at a few of the passages, one of course is the conversation between Ayyi and Prabha, on Prabhas mixed lost opportunities to study and to get a job, Ayyi says Prabha I had set a contented farewell to happiness long ago, when I saw I wasn't meant to have it, once you willingly give up what one cannot have, but Prabha wants to study, she wants to stand on her own feet, she said I don't want to look to anyone for charity, let me go to Amaravathi, Ayyi says what did Bhaskar say? Prabha, let him say what he likes. Ayyi, don't you understand, it will divide you bit by bit, and when they are done they will throw you away in the side like junk, they're putting up with you now because you work, what will you do when you're worn out, those two cannot see beyond their wives and children, Ayyi, love always runs forward dear, I have no expectations from anybody, all I ask is that God close my eyes soon, but my heart is heavy for Chandu, he toils like a beast per soul, he has no education, no wife, no children, no one he can call his own, he stayed single because he won't married, this time a whole future he might be sick in pain, the worry ease me up inside.

And whom do I have Prabha asks Ayyi, Prabha we really ruined your life dear, you were the cleverest of them all, and you loved your studies, but that was his nature, nobody could act against his word, for him it was just one thing why two girls need education, how much I pleaded with him I swear to God I did, times have changed now, so many girls of her age have gone ahead and studied, they work, they earn, I admire them so much, but we village people just didn't have the vision in those days, right, so this is again an instance the illustration of how the Deshpande's have not changed with the times.

Then this is later on Prabha hopes to get a share of the ancestor jewelry and so that she can sell it and use the money to make a, I mean to get a job, move, find the house and then get a new job and probably give tuitions to make ends meet.

Then on 188 is the moving scene where Vahini slowly wears a jewelry that, advances her for the jewelry of her ancestors, and she feels blessed to be a link in the line of Deshpande's, of the lineage of Deshpande's as the daughter in law who will, I mean inherit all the, actually get to wear all the ancestor jewelry.

And then later on 190 when they discovered that Ranju has a eloped with the, with her English tutor and taken all the jewelry along with her, right, so there is the entire family is shocked and they lament the loss of the jewelry, they don't know what to do.

And finally Sudhir manages to bring Ranju back who was been deceived by the English tutor with great difficulty in a taxi, and Bhaskar is very grateful to Sudhir for having brought here back in the privacy, the safety of the, of a private car, so that the elopement does not become knowledge, he promises to take, Sudhir promises to take Parag along with him but he does not for which Parag is actually quite disappointed.

And so finally the play ends with them having lost the gold which is the only connection they had to their ancestral, the link that they had with their ancestral reputation, but there is no freedom to be had, I mean the play does not end on the note of freedom, it actually ends on the note of destruction, because the Orchard is being you know chopped down, cut down and obviously and there is a bulldozer that is raising the entire, all the trees in the Orchard, and that's when, then the play ends when as the Orchard is being auctioned and sold off, and so that is the last link that they have to bare to a particular age to the land in you know reputation starters they once had, so that's how the play ends.

And so in some sense this is the play also ends on a similar note to Anton Chekhov's play, The Cherry Orchard which also ends on a note of destruction which is again symptomatic symbolic of the larger social economic forces of transformation in Russia with the decline of their restocracy, the evolution of soft term and the raise in the middle class, and in this case of course the transformation in the landed status of the ruler Brahmins of Vidarbha, Maharashtra and the rise of other caste groups, and also the mobility of social caste groups from the village to the city in search of better opportunities, but also the play seem to suggest that the city is not always a better or brighter alternative to life in the village because we can see from Sudhir and Anjali who also seem to have, in some sense they are very false sense of status because they enjoy on one hand, the elitism of being Bombay dwellers, like the apparent class distinction of being city dwellers, and of course Anjali also being an upper caste Konkanastha Brahmin who has access to education and so, there is certain impression that the Deshpande's have of this couple, but there is also the sense that they are also constrained by their own lives in Bombay struggling to make ends meet working for hours in order to actually, pay off the loans and mortgages on their flat on their homes to actually buy a 2 bedroom flat in the city, so the city is not being then pitted as a better alternative to the village, but they both seem to have their own, they're both trapped and bound by larger socio economic transformations, so that's the discussion of Mahesh Elkunchwar's The Old Stone Mansion.

We will be back with the discussion of another play by Mahesh Elkunchwar called Reflections, which belongs to a later phase of his career as a playwright. Thank you.

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