

Twentieth-Century Fiction
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Lecture - 56
The Chess Players - Part 1

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THE CHESS PLAYERS

It was in the times of Wajid Ali Shah. Lucknow was drowned in sensuality. The big and small, the rich and the poor – all were sunk in it. Some were engrossed in dance and music; some just revelled in the drowsiness induced by opium. Love of pleasure dominated every aspect of life. In administration, in literature, in social life, in arts and crafts, in business and industry, in cuisine and custom – sensuality ruled everywhere. The state officials were absorbed in fun and pleasure, poets in descriptions of love and separation, artisans in *zari* and *chikan* work, businessmen in dealings in *surma*, perfumes and cosmetics. All were drowned in sensual pleasures. No one knew what was happening around the world. Quail fights were on. Rings were being readied for partridge fights. Somewhere the game of *chatur* was being played, with its attendant shouts on the winning throw. Elsewhere a pitched chessboard battle was on. From the king to the pauper – all were engrossed in these pleasures. So much so, that if beggars received money in alms, they preferred to spend it on opium or its extract rather than bread. 'Playing games like chess or cards or *ganjifa* sharpens the mind, improves mental faculties and helps in solving complex problems.' Such arguments were being forcefully advanced. (People subscribing to this thesis can be found even today.) So if Mirza Sajjad Ali and Mir Roshan Ali spent most of their time sharpening their wits, how could any thoughtful person take exception. Both of them were hereditary *Jagirdars*, free from the worries of a livelihood; they enjoyed their good food without having to work at all. What else could they do?

Every morning, after breakfast, both the friends would spread the chessboard, set up the pieces and engage themselves in the tactics of chessboard warfare. They would forget whether it was noon, afternoon or evening. Repeated messages from inside that food was ready were ignored, and the cook was forced to serve food right there in the room, as the two friends continued their play. There were no elders in Mirza Sajjad Ali's family; as a result the game was played in his *darwan khana*. However, members of Mirza's family were far from pleased. Not to speak of the family, even the neighbours and servants made uncharitable comments: 'This is an inauspicious game and can ruin families. God forbid that anyone should get addicted, for it makes a person unfit to do anything. It's a serious disease.' Mirza's begum was so hostile to the game that she would seek out occasions to berate her husband. But she rarely got this opportunity. The game would begin while she was still asleep, and Mirza would come inside only when she had gone to sleep. However, she would expend her ire upon the servants. 'Are they asking for paan? Tell them to come and take it themselves. Have they no time for food? Go and throw it to them. Let them eat or cast it to the dogs.' But face to face she was helpless. She wasn't resentful against her husband so much as against his friend, Mir sahib. She had named him Mir, the spoilsport. It is possible Mirza, to save his own skin, also threw all the blame on Mir



So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Twentieth Century Fiction. Where we will begin with a new text today, which will also be the last text for this course, which is Munshi Premchand's short story, The Chess Players, which we will obviously read in translation.

Now, before we begin with the text as always, we will look at the cultural context which produced this particular text, what were the parameters, the cultural parameters, the social parameters, the political parameters which were instrumental in terms of producing this text. So, in other words we need to historicize the text, so looking at the historical location of the texts in the context of culture.

Now, as in the case with most of the text we have done so far you know we find that the context supplies a lot of information about the text, the context not just determines the matter in which is there in the text, but also the manner in which it gets written, it gets represented. So, both matter and manner of each text they are context sensitive in many sense.

So, for this particular text we find that this is obviously a pre-independence text. This was the setting of this text, it is right around the Sepoy rebellion, and this was still the time in which the company, the East Indian Company they were ruling and they had they were like basically they came in as traders as you know. They came in as a mercantile presence and then, they began to get more and more involved in politics in terms of lending money to the kingdoms, and lending money to the different you know dynasties which is ruling different parts of India and in that process getting more and more political clout, right. So, it was one of the first multinational companies in the modern sense of the word, of the term.

Now, the East Indian Company is a very important presence in this particular short story. I mean, it just it never really appears as a character, but it is always there as a spectral presence about to enter the story and it does enter the setting of the story towards the end.

Now, some of you would know there is a very fine film made on this short story, a film by Satyajit Ray, it is called *Shatranj ke Khilari* which is the original title of the story and we read this in translation hence the name chess players. But *Shatranj ke Khilari* is the original name of the story based on which is the film, a very fine film.

And I do recommend it quite heavily. It will give you lots of interesting insights into the politics of representation and how do you take a text and adapt it into a film, and what are the changes that you do in a film. It is a different medium of representation, and what happens when matter travels across media, print media to the cinematic media. So, what are the refractions that take place? What are the bends, and diversions, and departures which take place when matter travels from one medium to another medium? So, the that film is a very good study as well of that meta politics of representation

But coming back to this text which we will begin in a moment. I spend some time talking about the context as well and as I mentioned, but I think it is important for us to locate it and historicize it before we really dive into the text per se.

Now, this is the setting is Lucknow as you know and this is the time of Wajid Ali Shah who is the last Nawab of Lucknow, who was deported after this East Indian Company took over, he was deported to Calcutta and he came over to Calcutta with his entourage. So, I mean that is how Calcutta began to have some kind of a Nawabi influence in terms

of culture, in terms of food, etcetera, for instance the Calcutta biryani which we have today was something which travelled from Lucknow.

So, again that that is a marker food marker, material marker which is also reflective of political change, of political shift. So, the entire shift of biryani from Lucknow to Calcutta is obviously reflective of the political shift from of Wajid Ali Shah from Lucknow to Calcutta, where he was essentially sent off poor and imprisoned by the British.

Now, we find that among other things there is also a very fine study of economic shift because what we see here is a transition from a feudal economy to a mercantile economy to a more capitalist economy if you will. So, the feudal economy where money is controlled essentially by some feudal lords who have had the money come to them through inheritance essentially without having to do any work whereas, the rest of the people around are starving or are peasants, the farmers, or serfs, etcetera that was something which happened in medieval England for instance. And we find that with the renaissance that economy had shifted in England to a certain extent it began to become more and more mercantile, more and more capitalist in society. And obviously the East Indian Company is a very pervasive presence as a capitalist enterprise, a money-making mercantile enterprise, a company essentially, a multinational company as I mentioned.

Now, the transition from the feudal economy to a capitalist economy or in other words in the case of story more specifically speaking the transition from the Nawabi economy to the company economy is something which we see happening in Shatranj ke Khilari or the chess players. And if you look at the film we find that it is a more graphic description of that kind of a shift because towards the end of the film you find the army of the company is marching in and obviously the army constitutes mostly of Indians who are paid mercenaries working in that army. So, they are marching in Lucknow to take over Lucknow, whereas the feudal lords of Lucknow are fleeing the houses, they are fleeing the forts, fleeing the palaces.

And the game of chess which is the central activity in the story it becomes a very important metaphor, a metaphor for inaction, a metaphor for a very narcissistic, self-absorbing inaction. So, you know chess playing becomes a micro activity which takes away the tension for all real macro activities. So, we find the two men over here they get

completely absorbed in this game of chess and endlessly playing games of chess, completely oblivious to what is happening in the house, what is happening in the kingdom, what is happening in the political setting and that becomes a very interesting reflection or the very narcissistic, almost pathological absorption that the feudal lords began to have at that upon the time which was obviously quite detrimental to the economy, quite detrimental to the politics, quite detrimental to the entire running of the state as it were.

And again, if you take a look at the film by Satyajit Ray, *Shatranj ke Khilari*, we find that the way the Nawab is depicted in that film he is someone who is obese, is quite almost certainly hedonistic and he is a lover of pleasure. He sings songs, he writes shayaris, he flies kites, he hymns songs and different kind of melodies at different points of time. So, he is essentially from the point of view of the capitalist mercantile control system, he is quite symbolically and quite stereotypically speaking the effeminate leader.

So, his effeminacy is something which is portrayed in the film quite sartorially as well. He is wearing oversized cloaks, oversized gowns all the time whereas, if you contrast that with the dress the British are wearing the company people are wearing, they are cut to precise measurements.

So, it is almost even sartorially, if we take a look at the film, even sartorially we find that there is a degree of excess in what the Nawab is wearing. He is wearing excess clothes, he is wearing oversized gowns, oversized cloaks, he is wearing oversized thrones, the spectres and everything is oversized around him. The crown is oversized, the throne is oversized, the cloak is oversized, the gown is oversized. Whereas, with the British or the East Indian Company people when they come in and there is a lovely scene in the film where they are having a meeting we find that British officers are shown to be wearing a very cut and precise garments. Tailor made for them, it is not like one big size.

So, again that is reflective of the utility driven economy of the company policy and the excessive economy of the feudal policy. So, everything is excessive with the feudal control whereas, everything is very utilitarian and pragmatic and sort of utility driven to a certain extent and precision driven when it comes to the company perspective of controlling the economy.

So, that contrast is running throughout the film, that contrast is also there in the story. Now, in that kind of a setting, in that kind of a tension or conflict of different kinds of cultural systems, cultural codes, etcetera, the game of chess becomes important, the game of chess becomes a very symbolic ludic activity, right. So, ludic is obviously playful, l u d i c.

Now, what that ludic activity does? What that ludic landscape does? It takes away attention of these people from the real political landscape. So, they are always obsessed with saving the king on the chess board. They are always obsessed with saving the fort in the chess board. They are always obsessed with saving the soldiers in a chess board.

Now, that sort of pseudo proxy activity of saving kings and queens and pawns and you know forts in a chess board, it becomes a complete departure from the real activity of any engagement with the real king, with a real fort, with a real quality of kingdom etcetera.

So, the game of chess becomes the departure from reality and that departure becomes more and more obsessive. Almost pathological in quality. And we find that throughout the story the two men Mir and Mirza they you know they just run away from everything you know from responsibilities, from house responsibilities, from family responsibilities, from you know political responsibilities and they just keep company and they continue to play the games of chess endlessly.

And this endless playing of games of chess in the story becomes obviously as I mentioned a departure. But also in a way it becomes a reflection of a certain kind of masculinity and it is a very complex story, it is a very interesting story to read from the point of view of masculinity studies. For like just mentioned there are two kinds of masculinities at play at conflict over here. One is obviously the hedonistic playful masculinity which is you know excessive, pleasure loving, irresponsible. And on the other hand, we have the other kind of masculinity coming in, the utilitarian masculinity you know and you know it is driven towards production, precision, control, protection etcetera. So, all these different kinds of masculinities are at war with each other.

And if you take a look at the film, we find that towards the end of the film there is a boy character, an adolescent boy from Lucknow who was supposed to be serving these two feudal lords playing chess. But instead of going to them straight away, he looks at the

army of the company marching in and that sight of the army marching in becomes you know fascinating for him and he is absolutely fascinated by that side, by the spectacle of the army coming in and he is obviously becoming a consumer in certain sense of that kind of masculinity, that order of masculinity literally marching in and also symbolically and spectacularly marching in the kingdom to take over. And that will become the new order of masculinity, the new order of politics, the new order of economy which is obviously controlled by men entirely. And hence it is an interesting collusion between masculinity and economy over here.

Now, instead of that what we have here among the Lucknow people is that they are absorbed in chess, they are absorbed in opium, they are absorbed in alcohol, they are absorbed in all kinds of intoxication which is again very pleasure loving. So, we have this pleasure principle versus a production principle, they are at war with each other. And obviously the pleasure principle is going to lose, it is a Lotus Eater lifestyle where they just drink nectar all day and do nothing, that kind of a lifestyle is you know is depicted over here. It is a bit like decadent Rome, where you know everyone is just alcoholic and you know drinking and intoxicated in different kinds of activities.

So, we have you know the example of Lucknow which is very decadent, very feudal, is drowned in sensuality as we are told, everyone is drunk or playing chess or being irresponsible or being pleasure loving, writing poems, flying kites, etcetera. The entire economy is geared towards pleasure, building you know pleasure monuments, pleasure parks etcetera whereas, people around are starving, lot of discontent among the farmers, among labourers, among people who are not getting paid, the soldiers are not getting paid. So, you know that there is that discontent that's completely disregarded and it is complete denial of any discontent and it is a complete drive towards pleasure is what makes Lucknow a very hedonistic and very vulnerable as well.

So, the fall of Lucknow in the story is just a natural fall. The company does not really have any conflict militarily speaking. So, there is no real war which happens there is no resistance whatsoever. In fact, the soldiers flee from the Nawab and join the British army in some sense because you know that is the only way they can get some sustenance for their families, that is the only way they can get paid, that is the only way they can have some wages, some you know money for their labor. Whereas, the Nawab over here in the story is completely oblivious to what is happening militarily and he does not even know

the soldiers, does not even know the political subjects. He is completely disconnected from reality and this disconnect from reality at a bigger political at a macro political scene is that disconnect is in a way domesticated by the game of chess.

So, the game of chess which takes place in the house in a household is an example of the bigger disconnect, is a reflection, is a microcosmic reflection of the bigger disconnect from reality that is there in the political scene. So, you know in that way the game becomes very political as well. It is political because it is apolitical, it is political because it is a departure from politics, it is a departure, it's a runaway, it is an escape from politics, in that sense it becomes political as well because as you know apolitical is also a very political position. So, you know if someone says I am I do not know have a stand on this that obviously becomes a stand in some sense, right.

So, the game of chess or the Chess Players is a setting, the title of the story is obviously reflection of the certain kind of subject, certain kind of hedonistic, self-absorbed pathological subjects, pathologically pleasure loving subjects which are on the way out, who are on the way out, decadent, very decadent, very drowned in all kinds of sensuality and very irresponsible and very ludic as well, excessive ludic, pleasure loving, hedonistic and that kind of economy, that kind of masculinity which is again collusive with the economy that is on its way out, right.

So that, the game of chess over here becomes among other things it is also a production of procrastination, right. You keep producing procrastination, just so you do not have to do any real work. You keep procrastinating through games of chess. So, another game starts which means there is another time between, that you are inventing to keep you away from real work, right. So, again it is the way in a way like I said it is a production of procrastination at a very symbolic level which again is connected to the real political level because that is exactly what was happening in the political scene. There was no real engagement with any urgent issues, everything was being procrastinated, everything was diverted away to some pleasure narrative, right, just so nothing got done, nothing got really materialized.

So, this is the setting of the story, the political, cultural setting in which the story is situated. And also, the film as I mentioned, if you take a look at the film, it is a very useful film to look at because it is an excellent adaptation in some sense of the you know

entire attention, the political, cultural, gender attention. There is also very strong gender element in the story. We find that a woman in the story essentially, they're trapped, they're prisoners of this political regime of inaction where nothing gets done, where the men, irresponsible men do not have any duty towards a household, domestically, politically, culturally, nothing gets done, so they become more and more discontented. And we find the woman over here they are very repressed in a sense that you know their agency obviously is unavailable, I mean there is zero agency to women and they essentially get more and more frustrated.

So, the arrival of the company in this in some sense may be seen as a reversal of that situation or frustration. Maybe the women get more agency when these people go away. We do not quite know that that indication is not there strongly. But there is a very clear indication, a very clear message in the story that women in this Lucknow setting, in this very hedonistic feudal Lucknow setting, the woman are extremely helpless, extremely agency-less and they get more and more angry with the men for not doing anything politically, for not taking up any political action, for not taking up any household actions.

So, again the relationship between spaces is very important in this story. What does not get done in the house also does not get done in the bigger political scene. So, the house over here becomes an important scene, important space as well because the men over here they are quite irresponsible towards their own house, and the irresponsibility towards the household spaces, the household features is again a reflection the irresponsibility of the bigger political space, right.

And so, all the responsibility, all the energy that they have is directed towards this ludic landscape of the chessboard, the playful landscape of the chessboard. That is the only landscape in which any energy is diverted or you know focused on, everything else is just diluted, nothing gets done in the house, nothing gets done in the political scene. So, that setting the woman become very helpless, women become very agency-less, and they become very frustrated. So, the frustration of the woman becomes a very important gender perspective in the story.

So, the frustration is also erotic in quality. There is no relationship, there is no conjugal relationship, this man and this woman. It is also very interesting angle that one can explore. The two men in the story who keep playing chess all the time there is no

indication that they have any children. So, again the lack of productivity also spills over into a biological sphere. They do not even engage in conjugal activity in a proper sense you know and that you know that obviously makes them extremely not just hedonistic, but also unproductive.

So, unproductivity or non-productivity becomes a very important symbol in the story and that non-productivity is there in the economy, it is also there in the erotic economy in this story. So, even at a conjugal, sexual level it is completely unproductive, there is no relationship at all between the men and the wives. And all that they do, the two men, they continue playing chess all the time. And you know if we can extend that narrative further, then a game of chess almost becomes something like a homoerotic bond between these two men, and they just run away from the families, they steal away from everyone and they meet clandestinely almost like a rendezvous of lovers to continue playing the game of chess.

So, again it is like two men who are using the game of chess to produce proximity, to produce intimacy and that is how this intimacy and proximity continues forever taking them away from this heteronormative you know productive principle of economy, sexuality, familial duties, etcetera, right. So, that that is the long and short of the story that we need to bear in mind for the purpose of this particular course, right, ok.

So, with a little time we have for this session let us dive in the text and see how the content of the text just corroborates the discussion we just had. So, this should be on your screen now, The Chess Players by Munshi Premchand. I am going to read out the first section from the screen and you can follow it from the screen as you hear me, ok.

It was in the times of Wajid Ali Shah. Lucknow was drowned in sensuality. The big and small, the rich and the poor all were sunk in it. So, again the whole idea of being drowned in sensuality is the opening of this particular story. Everyone is sinking in sensuality. I mean everyone is just full of pleasure all the time. Everyone is intoxicated different kinds of sensuality art, you know alcohol, opium, etcetera and we are given here little description of the kinds of sensuality which were there prevalent in Lucknow at that point of time.

Some were engrossed in dance and music, some just revelled in the drowsiness induced by opium. So, again opium becomes an important metaphor an important symbol over

here. It is an instrument of numbness. It is something which is going to numb your nerves and again make you unproductive, make you lethargic in quality. So, opium will induce lethargy in you, opium will induce a sleep in you, opium will induce intoxication in you, and that induction into intoxication is something which is obviously pathological, obviously non-productive and you know it takes away from the principles of production and productivity and you know takes you towards principles of pleasure.

So, again we find the entire focus is towards the production of the pleasure principle rather than the productive principles. The opium becomes a very key symbol, right at the beginning of the story.

And then we are told, love of pleasure dominated every aspect of life. So, you know hedonism was the only principle around. In administration, in literature, in social life, in arts and crafts, in business in industry, in cuisine and custom sensuality ruled everywhere. So, that was the meta narrative, right. In administration, in politics, in art, in culture, in business and industry everywhere people were just interested in being in finding pleasure, in enjoying pleasure. So, it became a complete economy of enjoyment rather than any economy of responsibility of productivity, right. So, that is an interesting description right in the beginning that we see. Sensuality ruled everywhere. So, that becomes the ruling principle, the meta principle.

The state officials were absorbed in fun and pleasure, poets and descriptions of love and separation, artisans in zari and chikan work, businessmen in dealings with in surma, perfumes and cosmetics. So, again you find that none of these things which are described over here, if we look at the material markers, surma, cosmetics, perfumes, zari, chikan you know love and separation, you know fun and pleasure none of these things are necessary.

So, the non-necessary condition of the material is important for us. All these materials are excessive in quality. These are materials that you go for when everything is taken care of, right, when the necessity is taken care of, then you go for these pleasure principles, these pleasure activities, these pleasure markers. So, when do you use perfume for instance? You use perfumes when all the other needs are taken care of, when food is taken care of, shelter is taken care of, basic clothing is taken care of, then you go for things like perfume, then you go for things such as surma, and cosmetics, right.

So, the entire economy as you can see is geared to its excessivity and that excessivity is important for us to understand because you know that that takes away the entire focus on necessity. So, it is a very non-necessity driven economy. It is a complete economy which is driven towards excessivity. It is a production and consumption of excess which is taking place over here and that will be the downfall of this kingdom, that will obviously that is the marker of the decadence of the kingdom, that underlines the decadence that excessivity principal, ok.

All were drowned in sensual pleasures. No one knew what was happening around the world. So, again that sensuality and the excessivity also produces insularity. It cuts you off from everything around the world. It cuts you off from any real engagement, with anything real outside this little you know sensual bubble that is Lucknow, right. So, Lucknow becomes a little sensual bubble where everyone is drowning and sinking in sensuality, excessivity, etcetera, whereas, there is a complete disconnect from reality and from any real engagement with any real world outside.

So, as you can see that it becomes a very soft target, a very low hanging fruit for the company to take over, the East Indian company to take over. They just come and take it over just territorialize it, own it completely because they have obviously invested lots of money to the kingdom. The Nawab had borrowed money presumably in enormous amounts from the company and is not in a position now to return the money.

So, it just becomes the financial transactions like you know bank taking over you know a defaulter or something like that. So, there is no resistance whatsoever. And that is how the East Indian Company operated at the beginning as we know. It was a very mercantile enterprise they would lend money to all these kingdoms and then ensure that all the kingdoms have become defaulters and then they will just take over the kingdom.

So, you know before it began, before it became a fully military organization, it was since essentially a mercantile organization and it operated and took control and took ownership and territorialize everything through these mercantile processes, ok. That is something which is important for us to understand today looking back at the history of imperialism, ok.

So, what kinds of sensual pleasures were going on? Well we know no one knew what was happening in the real world outside. So, quail fights were on. Rings were being

readied for partridge fights. Somewhere the game of chausar was being played, with its attendant shouts on the winning throw.

So, we have bird fights, we have pigeon fights, we have some kind of dice game happening on the streets all the time. So, if we take a look at the streets, the visual narrative over here, imagine or visualize, the streets of Lucknow where everyone is just shouting and gambling and there is a lot of gamble going on with bird fights etcetera. So, no real work is getting done. So, every, the entire focus of the economy, the entire focus of the energy is towards gambling, towards intoxication, towards sensuality etcetera but obviously none of it is part of the linear productive principle of you know economic or administrative control, ok.

Elsewhere a pitched chessboard battle was on. From the king, from the king to the pauper, all were engrossed in these pleasures. So, much so, that if a beggar received money in alms, they preferred to spend it on opium or its extract rather than bread. So, again this becomes a very important marker that if a beggar got money by begging some alms, some money given to that person that money will be spent buying opium rather than bread. So, the preference for opium rather than bread becomes very important. Because as I just mentioned a little while ago, that bread would be a marker of necessity, a marker of nourishment or necessary nourishment whereas, opium over here becomes a marker of excessive nourishment, sensual nourishment, is something to do to your body at an excessive level, right. It is an intoxication, psychedelic in quality etcetera.

Now, the preference for opium rather than bread becomes a very important marker. And again, look at the way in which the degree of condensation takes place, right. So, you know it is just everything is condensed together into these little material markers which is reflective of the bigger macro economy going on, the macro operations going on in the economy.

So, what Premchand is telling us, what the narrator is telling us here is that you know that if a beggar in Lucknow gets money that he will go and buy opium or its extract, if the money is less he will buy an extract of opium or the money is more he will buy real opium, but not bread. And that preference, that bias towards opium rather than bread is reflective of the bigger bias over here, the bigger political macro cultural bias towards sensuality, towards hedonism, towards pleasure rather than towards necessary things, ok.

Playing games like chess or cards or ganjifa sharpens the mind, improves mental faculty and helps in solving complex problems. Such arguments were being forcefully advanced. So, you know people started consuming the knowledge they believed that you know playing games like chess or you know gambling or cards they sharpen the mind. So, you know just play it. So, there is some justification, some pseudo knowledge, some pseudo theory justifying all these activities in some sense. So, let us all sharpen our minds or wits or faculties rather than doing mundane things.

People subscribing to this thesis can be found even today. So, again it cut back in current time and narrator is telling us you know, such people who subscribe or consume these beliefs can be found even today. So, if Mirza Sajjad Ali and Mir Roshan Ali, so Mir and Mirza are the two people over here the two protagonists in the story spent most of their time sharpening their wits, how could any thoughtful person take exception. So, there is an ironic tone over here saying that if Mirza and Mir they play chess all the time that is just sharpening their wits how would why would someone object to it, right. Both of them were hereditary Jagirdars, free from the worries of a livelihood; they enjoyed their good food without having to work at all. What else could they do?

So, again and I will stop here at this point. But this is an excellent example of how the feudal economy worked, the very dynastic feudal economy where people just get rich because they happened to belong to a certain family. Money would just percolate, money would just keep coming in because there is some land somewhere in which some farmers are working and they have to pay off some money because they are working on the farm. So, that money comes into these people and there are several such farms, several such lands in the parts of the kingdom, so they do not have to do anything at all, they can just live off the ancestors' land. They can just live off the ancestors' property and do nothing at all to do for their own livelihood, right. And all they can do all they need to do is be needless, all they need to do is being hedonistic and superfluous.

So, the entire idea of the superfluous consumption becomes important or conspicuous consumption becomes important. They are always intoxicated, they are always playing chess all the time. They are smoking hookah, they are taking opium, they are drinking alcohol, they are playing chess, they are gambling. So, none of these activities as I mentioned, relate or correspond to any productive principle. They are all driven towards

the pleasure principle because they do not have to be productive all the time, you know they can just be pleasurable because the money is just going to come in anyway.

And it is the sense of entitlement that this economy generates is something which characterizes their masculinity. That they do not really have to answer to anyone, neither to the wives, not to their subjects, nor to their children, to no one because there is this money coming in all the time. And that entitlement generates a certain set of characters which inform these personalities; and that is the I mean we look at Mirza and Mir as two bodies, two individuals, but what Premchand is going to tell us is that these people are very that they exemplify perfectly, the bigger macro economy, the bigger macro cultural condition of Lucknow at that point of time which is the setting in which the story is situated. Where the company is going to come in and as I mentioned Lucknow is really a low hanging fruit. It is all it takes is a takeover, financial take over.

There is no military resistance at any level whatsoever, right and that becomes the setting of the story and this is right before the Sepoy rebellion because as I know that the Sepoy rebellion made one significant change that the company rule came to an end in India and the queen took over. So, when we tell today, when you say it today that the British ruled India for 200 years we need to be bit careful about dividing it because for the first 100 years it was the company rule, the company ruled it you know they like I mentioned, they ruled it through financial transactions, through lending money and making the kingdoms defaulters and then taking over the kingdoms. It was a very easy process. And in the process, they generated an army, they generated a territory, it became more and more territorialized through army etcetera.

But after the Sepoy rebellion in 1857, the company rule officially the company rule officially came to an end on the Queen of England took over and that was when England as a country ruled India. So, it is technically speaking England rule for 100 years and the company ruled for the first 100 years. So, that is the setting in the story. And this story is situated at the cusp of these two regimes. So, it is between the company rule and the queen rule. It was right before you know the Sepoy rebellion would take place. So, that is the setting, the historical location of the story which we believe we described in some details.

So, from the next lecture we just move on with the text and see how the content of the text corroborates, and it is reflective of the political cultural conditions which would take some time to describe. So, we will continue with this in next lecture.

Thank you for your attention.