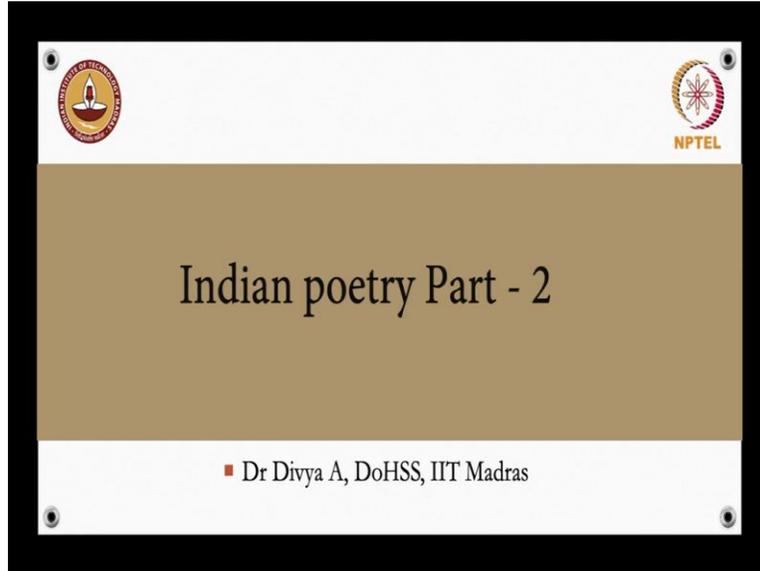


Indian Poetry Part – 2
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Length: 11:20

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Speaker 1: So today, we will be discussing about Dilip Chitre. So, apart from being an important bilingual writer in Marathi and English, he was also a painter and a film-maker. His efforts to popularize Marathi poems in the broad spectrum of Indian Literature is considerable. His *Ekun Kavita* or Collected Poems, were published in three volumes in the 1990s. He published an anthology of selected English poems known as – ‘As Is Where Is’ in 2007 which comprise of his poetic endeavors between 1964 and 2007.

He also published *Shesha*, English translation of selected Marathi poems in 2007. He has also edited an anthology of Marathi poetry from 1945 to 1965. His most famous translation is of the celebrated seventeenth-century Marathi Bhakti poet Tukaram published as ‘Says Tuka’. He was one of the earliest influencers behind the famous Little Magazine Movement of the 60s in Marathi. As an editor, he worked with Arun Kolatkar and Ramesh Samarth in the magazine *Shabda*.

He also worked as an honorary editor of the quarterly *New Quest*, a journal of participative enquiry in Mumbai. He was a member of a three-writer delegation along with Nirmal Verma and U. R. Ananthamurthy to the then Soviet Union, Federal Republic of Germany, and France in 1980 where

he had given lectures and talks. He has also conducted workshops in creative writing and literary translation in Iowa City in the United States. He has written poems like *Ambulance Ride*, *Travelling in a Cage*, and *Felling of the Banyan Trees*.

As a translator, he has translated Hemant Divate's poems, *Virus Alert*. He translated the poems of Namdeo Dhasal, the prominent poet of the Dalit Panther Movement, and he named it *Namdeo Dhasal, Poet of the Underworld*. He also has engaged in documentaries regarding the topic of translating Shakti Chatrabadhay into English. He worked as the director of the Indian Poetry Library, archive and translation center at Bharat Bhavan. His films like *Ardh Satya*, *Vijeta*, and *Godam* are influential landmarks in the growth of modern cinema in India. His poetry has a distinct style with simplistic words, and his writing is sparse, and imagery is immense.

So now, we will be reading Dilip Chitre's *Father Returning Home*. 'My father travels on the late evening train, standing among the silent commuters. Suburbs slide past his unseeing eyes. His shirt and pants are soggy and his black raincoat stained with mud, and his bag stuffed with books is falling apart. His eyes dimmed by age, fade homeward through the humid monsoon night. Now I can see him getting off the train, like a word dropped from a long sentence. He hurries across the length of the grey platform, crosses the railway line, enters the lane. His chappals are sticky with mud, but he hurries onwards. Home again. I see him drinking weak tea, eating a stale chapatti, reading a book. He goes into the toilet to contemplate Man's estrangement from a man-made world. Coming out he trembles at the sink. The cold water running over his brown hands. A few drops cling to the greying hair on his wrists. His sullen children have often refused to share jokes and secrets with him. He will go, he will now, he will go, he will now go to sleep listening to the static on the radio, dreaming of his ancestors and grandchildren, thinking of nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass.'

This poem has an interesting, it has a myriad tones and myriad ideas which are portrayed as a whole in a canvas. It speaks of the image of a father, the image of a father who is embroiled in the regular situations and circumstances of life.

Basically, the side of the father which shows exhaustion, a little bit of disillusionment from life and cynicism, and shows his little emotions and expectation from his family, specifically from his children. It shows the picture of a, of a very normal father who comes back home with books and,

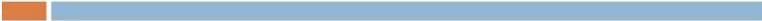
and eatables back from the office when he is coming back home. It is also showing, through the eyes of the father, a picture of the city while he is travelling via train. In the platforms, he is looking at the city around him, he is looking at the people surrounding him and somehow or the other his experiences in the city becomes a picture of how the world around him is going around. So, he is working almost like a camera, and perhaps he is also showing one of the characteristics of how in this world, where the life is pretty much fast and time is kind of less, he has become much exhausted and he is kind of re-coursing to small things like listening to the radio and having some tea outside. So, I think that this poem has become a better commentary of the normal lifestyle of the middle-class people.

Speaker 2: Hello everyone, today we will be talking about 'Father Returning Home'. I will be making a small references to some of the things that have struck me as a reader. So firstly, I would like to talk about how the idea of a person being like caught up in day to day activities is very much portrayed in this particular figure of the father coming back from work. And you can also see that the way in which his travel is, you know, like talked about. So, you can see that he is one among many other kind of people who are undergoing the same journey. So, if you look at him, like the act of him getting off the train like a word dropped from a long sentence, you can see that it actually means like he is one among many other people doing that on a regular basis. And also you can see that, the 'suburbs pass through his unseeing eyes' was also pretty interesting because he is too, in one way of looking at it is that he must be too tired that he is not able to see anything around him and he is too caught up in the day-to-day activities that he is really, he is not able to see anything and he is just engrossed in whatever he is doing.

And also the idea of his shirt and pants being soggy and his black raincoat being stained in mud, it is like a day to day person who is that, really in a hurry and you know, you do not have time to compose yourself and go on a journey, it is like how you ran, like you daily travel and it is a very harsh way in which you live and at last he does not even realize that these are things that are to be taken care of. You can also see that there is one more place in which his chappals are sticky with mud, but he hurries onwards. He does not have time to look at all those other aspects of appearance, etcetera, he has to carry on with his life and...

And also the idea of greying hair on his wrist, it also could tell that he has been, you know, he is an aging person and it has been a very long while and like that, he is, his, like he is a part of these mundane activities for a very long time. And also, I think the idea of static on the radio also is pretty interesting because you actually associate it with a kind of finishing, like something that is uncertain if you notice, it is not like you do not listen to, it is not a program, it is actually like a kind of a thing that it has, it is like, it is almost like an empty thing, you wait for it to get over with.

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Now I can see him getting off
the train
Like a word dropped from a
long sentence.



Professor: Okay, couple of ideas in the poem gives you the conceptual grounding. In fact, Dilip Chitre is kind of telling you this is how you are going to read this; this is how you should read it. So, I will pick up those phrases. One is, a ‘word dropped from a long sentence’. This man is like a word dropped from a long narrative, a grand narrative. He is not part of that narrative, he is estranged, in fact the word estranged appears in the poem itself you know, he is summing it up, the poet is summing it up for us; this is the man who is estranged from this man-made world.

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His sullen children have often refused to share
Jokes and secrets with him. He will now go to sleep
Listening to the static on the radio, dreaming
Of his ancestors and grandchildren, thinking
Of nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass.



And this static again is an imagistic way of rendering the nature of his identity, the nature of his experience, his psychological makeup. Static noise on the radio, there is no meaning, there is no program as Suma was saying. So, this is indicative of his state of mind, his status, his place in society. So, the estrangement is kind of literalized through all these details about mud, sogginess, you know, the unseen perspectives of the world going by. So, it is a, it is a poem that talks about, you know, the loss of belonging to a world.

Reference to books suggest that he is perhaps an intellectual and probably his estrangements stems from the facts that he is too aware in a philosophical sense. He is too aware of this man-made world so that he is unable to be part of this grand machinery. He realizes that he is a cog in the wheel therefore he is not able to belong to that and that would connect to his dreams about nomads, his ancestors and grandchildren, of nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass.

So again, what exactly is Dilip Chitre trying to communicate through that vision of nomads entering the subcontinent? So, he is going back in time, he is going back in time and trying to trace the evolution of mankind on this subcontinent. So this much awareness of his identity across time is part of the problematic.