

**Modern Indian Writing in Translation**  
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**Week 3 Lecture 2: Gold from the Grave (Part - 2)**  
**Length: 49:06**

Student: Good morning. Today we are going to start the second section of Gold from the Grave by Annabhau Sathe. And “Bhima had tied a muffler around his head, over that he had put on a hooded cloak-like covering made of sackcloth, which he cinched at the waist. Carrying a pointed crowbar, he was walking with big strides. It was pitch dark, but he felt no fear. A Sari, one petticoat and the blouse, dates in the morning was all he had on his mind. He was in a wild mood today. There seemed to be a certain amount of tension in the air and it was getting denser by the moment. A pack of jackals ran past him, a snake crossed the path and slithered away. An owl hooted in the distance adding to the eerie atmosphere. Nothing moved in the desolate jungle. Straining to catch every sound Bhima drew near the village in which the moneylender had died. He sat down and surveyed the surroundings. All was silent in the village, occasionally someone would cough, a lamp winked in a hut.

When he saw that there was nothing to be worried about. He slipped swiftly into the cemetery and started searching for the new grave of the moneylender. Pushing aside shattered pots and battered biers, he jumped from this grave, he jumped from this grave to that, he advanced from row to row looking carefully for the moneylender’s grave. Clouds filled the sky, they deepened the darkness. Then abruptly lightning shone, dancing in the nooks and crannies of the clouds. It looked like it would rain. That made Bhima panic.

Worried that he would not be able to find the new grave if it rained. His search grew frenzied, he began to sweat, he felt he was losing his mind. By midnight he had searched the whole burial ground, from one end he reached the other end and slumped to the ground distraught and confused. The wind was building up, it rattled the old poles and broken biers. It was almost as if someone was gnashing his teeth.

Then a fearsome snarling erupted out of the night. Something was snarling, sobbing and scraping at the mud. Fearfully, he moved towards the sound. It died out at once, but almost immediately he felt as if someone was dusting his hands and feet, and he got startled. He stopped abruptly. Fear ran like an electric current through his body and struck him right inside his head. For the first time in his life, he was afraid.

Student: I will continue the reading. In the next instant he got a grip on himself when he realized what was actually happening. He felt somewhat ashamed that he had been so scared. The new grave was closed by, 10 to 15 jackals were busy digging it up as they had scented the dead body. As stones had been placed on the top of the grave, they had start, they had started tunneling it into it from all sides. As they scraped away the earth, they snarled and snapped at each other. Each one was desperate to be the first to get at the corpse.

Bhima was enraged by the side of the jackals. He took a giant leap and landed right on the top of the grave. He began lifting the stones in the grave and hurled them at the pack of jackals. In the face of the sudden onslaught the jackals retreated. Determined to dig up the grave before the jackals renewed their assault on it, Bhima began scraping away the mud. The jackals only momentarily deterred, attacked him.

In a fit of madness, one of the jackals pounced on Bhima. It bit him and leaped back. Excitement and anger surged through Bhima's body. He had wrapped his hand in the sacking, he had been he had brought with him. He removed the sacking and grabbed hold of the crowbar. And the jackal that had bitten him returned to the attack. He brought the crowbar down on his body with all this tremendous strength. The Jackal yelped and died. Bhima began digging up the grave once more. The remaining jackals attacked in a solid snapping (mess) mass.

A desperate fight broke out, Bhima launched to the snarling animals with his crowbar. The jackals were coming at him from every side and he was getting bitten all over his body, but his flailing crowbar was finding its mark as well and he was wounding the jackals every time he connected. And so, battle was joined between this modern Bhima, heir to the legacy of Kunti's son Bhima and the jackals. He struggled with all his strength. If he was going to have a meal tomorrow, he needed to get to that corpse.

Nature was asleep. Mumbai was resting, the village was quiet. And in that burial ground the clash over gold and corpse was reaching its climax. Bhima was attacking and felling the jackals who yelled in agony every time they were hit. Even as some were wounded, others dodged the blows and bits Bhima who moaned and cursed every time a bite was taken out of his flesh. Curses, growls, screams the sound of the crowbar making contact with the jackals. All this mayhem sent tremors through the ceme, cemetery.

After a really long time, the jackal stopped attacking and retreated into the darkness. Taking advantage of this, Bhima removed the remaining mud from the grave. He wiped the sweat from his face. He jumped into the grave. At that the jackals again charged him. He began furiously lashing out at them once more, and finally managed to drive them off. As the last of the animals scurried away, Bhima got hold of the body, shoved his hands under its armpits and scooped it out of the straw in which it had been wrapped.

As the man had been dead for a while, his body was stiff and unyielding. He leaned it upright in the grave and began examining it for loot. He found a ring on this finger and pulled it off. It had an earring in one ear, which he clawed off. There would definitely be some gold in the mouth. He tried to insert his fingers into the corpse mouth, but its jaws were clenched, tight.

Quickly, Bhima took the crowbar and pried open the dead man's mouth. Propping it open with a crowbar, he inserted his fingers into the open jaws. Just then, the jackals which had been skulking unseen in the darkness began howling in unison. The wailing and howling woke the village dogs, which began barking and running around. The commotion woke up the villagers. Somebody yelled, 'The jackals are eating the body, come on.'

Student: "Afraid that the villagers would find him robbing the corpse, Bhima hurriedly put the ring he had stolen inside his pocket and began rooting around inside the corpse's mouth. He yanked out the crowbar that he had used to prop open the mouth without remembering to extract his fingers first. The dead man's teeth clamped down on his fingers like a nutcracker on a betel nut.

Bhima writhed in pain, he could see the men from the village approaching with lanterns. Desperately he tried to extricate his fingers. When they would not move, he became furious with the corpse, he swung the crowbar at the dead man's jaw. The blow only succeeded in jamming his hand deeper into the dead man's mouth. He felt the corpse's teeth cut into his fingers. He froze thinking, this is a real ghost. Today, it will catch me and hand me over to the people who will kill me because I am desecrating this body or they will hand me over to the police.

As all this went through his head, Bhima lost control and began to savagely attack the corpse. 'Pimp, let me go!' he began to yell before he realized any noise would give away his position. He struggled on in silence. The villagers were drawing close. Bhima forced himself to calm down to think. He realized what he must do. He pushed the crowbar back into the jaw

of the corpse, levered them apart and slowly pulled out his fingers. They had been almost bitten through.

Cradling his wounded hand with the other one, he leaped out of the grave and ran into the night. When he reached home, he had a high fever. His wife and daughter wept when they saw the state he was in. A doctor was summoned, and he amputated two of Bhima's fingers. The same day news arrived that the quarry was resuming operations. Hearing this, the elephant-like Bhima started sobbing like a small child. He had lost two of his hill breaker fingers for the sake of gold from the grave."

Professor: Hello. Thank you, Shweta, thank you Saurav for joining me for a discussion on the second section of the story, where we have real action going on, very ghastly, gory, wild action going on. So, I want to begin with Shweta and ask what her thoughts are on some of the things that are going on here.

Shweta: Well, I think it's set up very well. It leads up to it beautifully. And there's also, there's a line that says 'he feels somewhat ashamed that he had been so scared.'

Professor: Yes, yes.

Shweta: Which, which shows that, at least the readers are supposed to feel scared, I don't know about Bhima. But he's also described as an elephant-like man, as if fear is alien to him. And then says he got a grip on himself. And then the scene with the jackals is, is unexpected, to say the least, and it's also very, you know, one man against 15 jackals. It leaves you with a sense of very pointed heroic action, although it might not be heroic in that sense because he is actually robbing a grave.

Professor: Yeah, yeah. Okay, just let me just go over the ground that you have mentioned, starting with, he doesn't want to feel scared. So, he is a mountain like man, an elephant like man, and he wants to retain his courage in the face of great odds. And when he realizes that this is a bunch of jackals attacking a corpse, he feels really embarrassed by the fact that he has been worried by these wild animals that is one thing. You are quite right.

And we will talk about the heroism, I mean, there is heroism in the sense that he is really putting up a big fight against these really wild creatures who will not let go of this corpse, right? It is a battle for food, in some sense, it is a battle for food for Bhima because if he

loses, he will not get the gold, the daughter will not get her dates and the kitchen fires in his house might go out.

For the jackals, its food, again, very literal raw food for them. So, we have a kind of a struggle for survival going on here, captured really very intensely. And I want to go back to the early sections where we kind of see the parallel between Bhima and the wild animals, kind of gradually inserted into the text for the benefit of the readers. So, if you go back to the section, 'clouds fill the sky, they deepen the darkness, then abruptly lightning shone dancing in the nooks and crannies of the clouds', very eerie atmosphere, you know, very threatening moment in terms of the natural elements.

It looked like it would rain that made Bhima panic because if it rains, he will not be able to get at the corpse, everything would, the scene would turn into a big pile of mush, right? So, his search grew frenzied, worried that he would not be able to find the new grave if it rained, his search grew frenzy. That frenzy. I am interested in that adjective of frenzy, it kind of connects him metaphorically to this bunch of wild animals, which are frenziedly attacking that new grave which has been, you know, set up there.

So, we can see that really subtle parallels, you know, are beginning to be drawn by the narrator between Bhima and the wild animals. And look at this statement on 110. 'It rattled the old poles of broken biers, it was almost as if someone were gnashing his teeth, gnashing his teeth in anger'. The idea of anger, the concept of anger is very very, you know, stridently running through, this text as a whole there is a lot of anger on the part of Bhima, even the elements seem to be angry even all these inanimate objects seem to be you know, kind of gnashing their teeth. Lots of personification of angry things are littered in the story.

I wanted to come to Saurav and ask him what are the ideas that he found striking in this section?

Saurav: Yeah, so the yeah so, towards the middle of the story, when we have the dialogue between him and his wife going on and when we see that how desperate he is to collect gold from the grave like, he smashes the skull and he breaks the jaws, breaks the bones and all. So, one might think that he is become greedy of this new-found gold reserves and all.

And also when the fight between the jackals and Bhima ensues like one might think that this is because he has grown up greedy after getting so much gold. Like you can think that he might even come another day and get it when there is no problems, when there are no jackals,

he can get it from another person's grave. But towards the end of the fight between the jackals and Bhima, what he said is that, if I do not get this gold, I will have to sacrifice my meal for the day.

Professor: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. It is an interesting point Saurav, the point that he does not want to wait, I like that idea. And once again, it reminds me of that fairy tale about the golden goose, the goose that laid the golden eggs. You need to be patient, you just have to bide your time, but he is not willing to do that. And of course, he has a set of reasons for just kind of rushing through and trying to get at the gold.

There is this element that he has been turned into a greedy man by the amount of gold he is able to easily get at the end of the day. He says that previously I used to get just two rupees, and with those two rupees he was happy, he was content, that is what the narrator tells. If we go back to the earlier sections of the story. Let me briefly go back to that, page 107, “on finding work and shelter, Bhima was happy. As he put his bull-like might to work he seemed to almost challenge the hill. He lifted his pickaxe and the hill would recoil. And as his sledgehammer rose, the dark rock face would flinch.

The contractor was happy with him, Bhima too was contented as he was getting a way”, so he was getting by on the little amount of money that he used to get from breaking stones. Now, he has been turned into a really greedy person because he gets 10 rupees, if he gets a piece of gold from a corpse. So, that element of greediness changing the contentment that is in that man is there. We cannot kind of argue against that. So, you are quite right there.

Saurav: Yeah, but my point is that, like you can say that he is greedy, but I think he the poverty and the desperate, because he is a skill, he is skilled is to break the stones, but he does not have a job there. He tried out many jobs in Mumbai and the suburbs also, but he did not get a job. So, I think he is more than being greedy, he is being like poverty and despair is leading to the brutality that he is doing.

Professor: Yes, correct, correct.

Saurav: Rather than, like I would, I think that this, this aspect of poverty and despair is more than the greed or something.

Professor: Yeah. Okay. Yeah. I agree. I agree. There is greed, there is a severe, harsh, bleak poverty there. And there is one other element that I want to add, which is the element of

anxiety. The anxiety that things would change drastically, which is what happens, with the quarry, it kind of suddenly shut down one fine day. So, that disruption to normalcy which could happen any moment could also fuel his desire to get at the corpse, today now before it rains, so that he can get at the gold and you know, make some money, feed the family, you know make the kitchen fires going.

So, that anxiety and desperation, you use the word despair that is also there, so, there is there is this fear, there is this fear that any moment things might change for the worse and that is what is kind of pushing him to desperate things. Anything else you want to draw attention to in terms of this section?

Shweta: This is probably very uncalled for superficial textual analysis, but I noticed that the author seems to use the words 'rave' and 'madness' and 'anger' in conjunction with Bhima a lot. Bhima does not talk, he raves and rants and moans. Then he on page one naught, page 109, he felt as if he was losing his mind, he is distraught, he is confused. It is, it's as though this entire story is this one period in his life when a sudden madness descends upon him, and it is only with the crying at the end that he sort of returns to normalcy.

Professor: Interesting, interesting. The crying is very interesting, I will come back to that. You are quite right in the sense that he is portrayed as a very angry burly man. So, he does not talk normally, it is always irritation, raving, and it can be described as a kind of a madness, quite right. And the crying at the end of a turns him into a like a small child, he started sobbing like a small child, maybe that is the moment of realization that he had been too greedy, that he had been acting in a mad way.

But the resolution seems a bit out of place, at least to me. Personally, I would leave you know, leave you to think about what it, what kind of sense you can draw out of that resolution. You know, we have intense action going on for quite a while in the text. If you look at the battle scene, I would call it the battle scene. Like the scene that we have in the great epics, very extended battle scene. If you just count the paragraphs allotted to describing the scene, there are one to many. Compared to the domestic scenes of the child playing or the wife cooking, these scenes are very extended.

And as soon as this battle scene is over, we have a small paragraph, which kind of very quickly you know tidies up the plot and says that okay, he kind of cries because he is lost two of his fingers and and he feels sorry for that loss because he cannot go back to regular normal

decent day job at the quarry. So, I feel a bit you know, a bit of a feel a bit unsettled with this kind of ending but I that is open to interpretation. You can offer your thoughts, but I want to go back to the earlier section.

Once again, you know the narrator is very consciously trying to draw the connection between Bhima and the wild animals. Look at that statement, there “Bhima was enraged by the sight of the jackals. He took a giant leap and landed right on top of the grave”. Look at the agility, the agility with which he makes the jump and that turns him into a jackal, you know, into a wild animal. So, that parallel is also very clearly offered for us. “In a fit of madness, one of the jackal pounces on Bhima, it bit him and leaped back. Excitement and anger surged through Bhima”, excitement and anger. He is thirsting for blood, he is thirsting for gold, he is thirsting for a big fight as well.

So, once again, we can see that animalistic qualities coming to the surface of this man who wants to provide for the family. So, when he is really pushed into the corner, he turns back as into an animal and faces the rest of the world, right? So that idea is kind of, you know brought to the fore there. And further down, “and so the battle was joined between this modern Bhima and to the legacy of Kunti’s son Bhima and the jackals. He struck out with all his strength. If he was going to have a meal tomorrow, he needed to get to that corpse. Nature was asleep, Mumbai was resting, the village was quiet and in that burial ground the clash over gold and corpse was reaching its climax.” What is interesting about that narration there? It is interesting because we have the narrator's viewpoint forcibly presented to the reader there. He does not let the reader come to his or her own conclusions. The narrator wants to put his two pennies worth of, you know, ideas into the text and wants the reader to look at the story in this particular way.

And he is not allowing the reader to draw conclusions between the two contrasts of life. He says Mumbai was resting but this man was fighting. You know, the village was quiet, but this man was fighting with the animals. Everybody was asleep, nature is asleep, but he is you know, awake fighting with elements of nature. So, he is kind of teaching the readers to look at the story in this binary ideas. Look at it in a binary fashion that is what he is telling the reader. And that is a very kind of old fashioned way to tell a story, you kind of nudge the reader and say look at it this way, instead of leaving the reader to make up his or her own mind, so that is interesting there. And the comparison to the Bhima of the epics and this one any thoughts there?



Saurav: I think the author uses the draws comparison between Bhima of Mahabharata and this thing, mainly because of the physical strength and physique of Bhima. Because like, he is mentioned like Bhima like an elephant, in the end and saying and then there is much detailing given about his skills for breaking stones and all those things. One was the physical.

Professor: Physical strength is the primary connection between the Bhima of old and the and the contemporary Bhima, but that there are other interpretations as well maybe I would invite other students to kind of offer their comments. (Shweta if you do you have)

What about the context of legacy, property, desperation, starvation, do, can we see a comparison there going on? The wandering Pandavas, you know, the Pandavas who wander through the forest and they scavenge for food at moments of their lives, maybe a parallel could be there too.

Saurav: It could be there, like if you, if you see M.T. Vasudevan Nair's, Second Turn which is an interpretation of Mahabharata that is from Mahabharata from Bhima's point of view. And then towards the end when they go for a journey, it is shown that it is Bhima who helps others when Panchali falls down, nobody else cares for her but it is Bhima who does. So, maybe that looking at from that point of view maybe that caring attitude or the concern for those who are near to him that could be one thing, but just a vague interpretation.

Professor: Yeah, yeah, the strength, interpretation. Absolutely, absolutely the strength, no no, you do have a point there is a sense, there is a lot of domestic responsibility on the shoulders of this Bhima from you know Gold from the Grave. His logic, his rationale is that he is doing all this in order to provide for his family, one petticoat, one blouse and a couple of dates is what he kind of wants out of this gory business. So, the domestic responsibility could be a parallel, even though you are drawing your interpretations from contemporary readings, so that is, that is very interesting too. All right. Thank you for your thoughts, Shweta and, Saurav.

Thank you Suma for joining me. I am inviting you to offer your comments and thoughts on the rest of the story, which is going to finish up the action for us.

Student: Ma'am, towards the end of the story, we actually see that he is suffering for what he is done. So, is it something like, it is not like his actions are justified because he was poor, it is some other kind of, it is not like he used to rob gold from the corpses because he had a family, because he had to support his family, if that is the case, then he should be happy

towards end. I mean, it seems as if like, you know, he is done something wrong, because, like, the author is putting to us in such a way that we feel like he is suffering for what he is done like he is. So, I really think maybe it has to do with the larger moral picture rather than just his individual stance on.

Professor: Yeah, yeah, I agree. It is a very interesting point. And it is an instinctive reading, something we kind of generally forget in our urge to go for a lot of critical, analytical concepts. I am glad you brought that up there. This is a story and it has a moral like the old fashioned stories do.

You can you can see the story as a kind of a universal story of greed too, if you want, so if this is a story of universal greed, there is remorse at the end of it, there is a kind of, you know, a conscience-stricken man presented to the readers and he says that I have lost two of my hill breaker fingers for the sake of gold from the grave.

So yes, he has been punished for being greedy too, by you know poetic justice, by the Gods, who take away two of his fingers. So, that is kind of perhaps a just punishment. So you are quite right there. And I want you to think also about another section in the story where when he is pushed into a corner, he thinks about conscience. I will give me one example. The first example would be that he is frightened. He thinks somebody is there, and he suddenly sees these wild animals digging at the grave and he kind of feels embarrassed.

And the second example, a better example would be on page 111. When he, when his hands when his hand is caught inside the mouth of the corpse. He felt the corpses teeth cut into his fingers. He froze thinking, this is a real ghost today, it will catch me hand me over to the people who will kill me because I am desecrating this body or they will hand me over to the police. So, once he feels that he is caught by a corpse, he thinks there is, this is a real ghost. Previously, he thought that there is no ghosts. You know, all human beings are ghosts, all human beings in this suburb are ghosts, but now he realizes, or he is forced to realize his conscience, his fear, makes him believe in it. So, it is a very interesting human psychology I would think, you know, when you were in deep trouble, you will pray to God before that you will just be blissfully walking about forgetting about your, you know, duties to the, you know, the sacred God.

So, he here believes in the ghost, for a moment when he thinks he is caught. So, perhaps you know, since he has lost two of his fingers, does he feel sorry? Or does he genuinely feel

sorry? Should we take this as a universal story with morals, like the fairy tales or like the stories of ancient days, or we should see it as a realistic episode from the life of a man who is very poor, who is, you know, breaker of stones and who has suddenly turned into a robber?

So is this realism for you? Or is this a universal piece of narrator, a cautionary tale of greed and punishment? So, it is up to us to make our minds up as to which is which. What makes sense for you, is what is ultimately of use from this story, I would think.

And look at the way, I mean once he kind of calms down. If you go back to that page 111 again the previous paragraph, “afraid that the villagers would find him robbing the corpse, Bhima hurriedly put the ring he had stolen inside his pocket and began rooting around inside the corpse’s mouth. He yanked out the crowbar that he had used to prop open the mouth, without remembering to extract his fingers first, the dead man’s teeth clamped down on his fingers like a nut cracker on a betel nut, Bhima writhed in pain.”

This is, if you take this literally, you would see that he is stupid, he is not conscious to very logically take out his, you know, hand out of the mouth. And he becomes very wild and thinks about ghosts and all that. And when he has calmed down, he inserts the crowbar again and then he very carefully takes out his hand. So, if when he is calm, he works well like you know, he works logically. When he is agitated, he kind of reacts illogically that is one very simple reading.

But if I go back to the symbolic reading, you can see that the corpse is putting up a fight in a sense, symbolically the people with vested interests are trying to strike out against this man who is looting their property. So, it is a kind of a symbolic retaliation.

Student: And also the reference to nut cracker on a betel nut is very interesting. It seems like both are together.

Professor: Yeah, it is a very funny metaphor I would think and once again, I am reminded of what Catherine said the other day about you know, the presence of routine things you know, the reference routine things, but here if I if I kind of put a twist to it, you can see really horrifying things being metaphorically compared to things which we use in our day to day routine. Nutcracker, Beteles, you use for your, you know, pleasure, you know, you use your nutcracker to crack a betel nut, consume it, and kind of while away your time. It is, you know taking betel is a kind of a harmless you know enjoyment that that many people undertake.

So, the comparison is jarring. Here, we have a gory scene, a dead body biting the hands of a man and that action's compared to a nutcracker cracking a betel. If I go back earlier as well, there are other scenes where you know, we have broken biers being compared to the gnashing of teeth, broken biers, indicating death and you know, the ultimate full stop, everything is finished. But now we still have life, gnashing of teeth and so on. So, the metaphorical references are very, very interesting in the story. Something that we need to pay attention to, yeah.

Professor: Welcome Sanchar. Now, what I want to do is compare Gold from the Grave with The Blue Light by Mohammed Basheer, and talk about the parallels that we have in these stories. Let us begin with the thematic parallels, what are the thematic parallels that you can draw on in terms of these stories, anything that occurs time and again, in both these stories?

Sanchar: I think most importantly it will work in terms of the setting also, like there is always a interplay of light and darkness in the stories, so I think that thematically the element of light and darkness is kind of, it correlates to both the narratives. And then there is,

Professor: Yeah, you are quite right we have like come descriptions of the night sky in both the stories and the play of light and darkness. Yes.

Sanchar: And there is always like the predominance of the darkness more in comparison to the other. The most important and significant thing to look at it is there is an eerie experience in the initial start. Like on the basis of theme also if we say in this story it is not really that much what we talk about this ghostly or experiences of the bizarre. But back in The Blue Light in the initial stage we have a little bit of setting or explanation about the setting which can foresee or it presupposes that there is something going to happen in terms of this ghostly existence and everything.

But here it is more like a narrative of the society. So, in this story, although we have a more direct and explicit encounter with the dead, where that back in the other story there is nothing called corporeal, it is more like the spirit, but here it is more corporeal. But here the story is, I mean, this gold from the grave is constructed in such a manner where there is more realism in terms of society, poverty, despair.

Professor: Yeah, yeah, okay. There are a lot of things that I can go back to and kind of tweak if I may, you are quite right, in the sense that both the stories are Gothic. Both the stories have supernatural elements in them. And if you look at The Blue Light, the super

supernatural is kind of affirmed in a sense, and here the supernatural or the Gothic or reference to the ghost becomes a bit more complex than that because what we have is an urban Gothic, in Gold from the Grave.

So, you are quite right in pointing out that this story is an attempt to capture the harsh realities of life, poverty, unemployment. And it also captures the psyche of a man who is driven to madness because of all these societal factors. And the ghosts and gold in the grave become more symbolic conceptual. There are moments in the story when people realize perhaps the ghosts have really come back to harm us like, for example the narrator thinks that okay, this ghost is just attacking me, but it's momentary and there is no affirmation of a spirit world, whereas in The Blue Light there is.

The Blue light is more personal in a sense, it is slightly romantic, more personal and less threatening, less threatening to the life and emotions of this particular male narrator. Yeah, quite right. So, what are the other parallels? For me, let me just point it briefly maybe you can comment on my opinions.

We have male narrators. For all the stories that we have read, be it The Hunger for Stones, The Blue Light or Gold from the Grave, the stories are centered on the male, and things happen to them, things happen to them and in the Hunger for Stones he is forced to go to this you know, old palace and he has a set of experiences. There too we have supernatural happenings going on centered on a female spirit or ghost from the past.

So here too in The Blue Light, again a male narrator, and Bhima is a hero for us in Gold from the Grave. So, there is a lot of investment on the males experiences, what happens to the male at different points in time, at different spots in Indian society, from the colonial to the 1950s independent India. So, that that's very very interesting. And if you look at the male as being in the center of the narrative, we have the female being pushed to the margins. Even though they return, come back to kind of haunt, you know, the center in some sense, especially in the case of The Blue Light. What are your thoughts on this?

Sanchar: Here like, back in the other story, there was a female and there was a male protagonist actively, but actually, there was another protagonist, which was I mean, who was unseen. I mean, Bhargavi was always the invisible one who is there at the backdrop of the story. I mean she is kind of the center who is moving the entire narrative rather we are expecting how we are presupposing we have some preconceived notions about her. So,

whatever the narrative, I mean what, in whatever trajectory the narrative is moving on, it is basically somewhere or the other influenced by that of Bhargavi, the characters who are speaking to the other characters.

Professor: Yeah, quit right.

Sanchar: So basically, yeah, I mean, in a much more active sense, in a much more apparent sense, the protagonist is male, but I think that we cannot really completely deny the fact that there is also a presence of the female. I mean, yeah, in that sense, if you also can say that she literally becomes a ghost presence there who actually stays behind the narrative, she is unseen yet she is actually adding to the narrative.

Here the female I mean, there is nothing like that the lady who is a wife, she appears for a very brief moment there only as a, as a didactic character who comes and tries to set things right for Bhima. But such is the abysmal and despairing situation for Bhima who has become a thief by force not by choice that he has to go more beyond morality and didacticism to lead on, and lead on for the sake of survival.

Professor: Yeah, yeah, very good, interesting thought. I want to go back to The Blue Light first, what you said is quite right. She is a strong person, even though she is disembodied, not physically being present, she is spiritually present. And whatever the narrator does is in reaction to the fear associated with that virtual presence, isn't it?

So, I would agree with you in that way in the sense that she is very powerful until the middle of the story, when the narrator is constantly trying to appease her. At some point he just loses interest in Bhargavi because he feels that okay, he has done whatever needs to be done and she is quiet you know harmless, she is not going to attack.

And after that, there is a lack of interest in Bhargavi narrative, he is constantly working on this project quite. And then, towards the end of it, we see her gratitude through the light that she offers for the narrator. And we also need to remember that Bhargavi is also a victim of this society, victim of the societal structures that kind of force her into suicide unconsciously, subconsciously, indirectly. Nobody is saying, okay, commit suicide because you failed in love, but she is kind of, you know, impelled to do it, for certain reasons, for reasons of dignity and other things. So, she is a victim who comes back to haunt and terrorize the men, and therefore she is present in a very very odd way in that story. Very good.

Let us move on to this one. You are quite right, she is the, in Gold from the Grave, the wife of Bhima is the voice of reason, of the conscience of the society. And if you look at the story in a moralistic way, as a moral, we can go back and say, she did tell you that this is a wrong thing, you know, she did tell you not to do this, she did tell you that this is not right and see what is the result of not kind of following her reasonable advice. And he loses the two fingers.

So, she is in the margins and then maybe we can also say that the reason, the voice of reason is in the margins as well. So, can we just go back to The Hunger of Stones and talk about the female there, if you want to Sanchar, very briefly? I would call it the colonial Gothic, the colonial Gothic.

Sanchar: Well, yeah, I mean, the stark difference between this female character and that female character there was that it was a figment of illusion there in Hunger of Stones, here it is more of reality. The problem is this one, I mean, if we find out the complexity here is back there the female character's presence was not something which is connected to reason, I mean, it is something alienated from the real experience of life from the narrator there.

So, she comes as a kind of a, if I may say like, it is a figment of a dream, it is like a trance, who comes from the past, like I have already, I always kind of hope to see it like this way that she is a figment from the past, she comes back in the present, she tries to relate or she tries to draw a chain or a string from the past and the present and trying to connect with the narrator.

So, there is something more transcending, more evolving in terms and description of that character is not really I mean, we cannot really bracket it within the idea of a ghostly presence or a trance. It is more complex than that because there are colonial past there. There is a history of the nawab, there is a history of torment, there is a history of torture, and then there is a history of erotic ideas regarding the scape. Here, it is more like as I said, it is more, if I may say it is more to the to the grass root levels of life.

Here the character is, she is just a normal character who has seen the roughness of life, the complexities of economic lifestyle finance, and she is seeing that things are difficult here, who is purely tensed and stressed about her husband who has got a to a crooked path unconsciously.

Professor: Yeah, yeah, very good, very good. Let me just pick up on some of the interesting things there. You're quite right in saying that the figure in the Hunger of Stones is an illusion.

She is part of a hallucinatory trajectory, she is a figment from the past, she is, quote unquote a “ghost from the past”. And she is also a kind of an imagination of this narrator where he kind of projects all his erotic desires onto her. And we also are told that she could perhaps be a victim, a slave and kind of, a slave for the pleasures of the ruler. So, she is a victim as well as an object of lust. And so that is how we can figuratively see her.

In the case of *The Blue Light*, she has a more romantic aura in the past, in the present of the story, she is a more romantic aura. There is a tenderness on the part of the narrator towards her, there's less of lust and more of romance, in the case of the writer-narrator in *The Blue Light*. And if you look at *Gold from the Grave*, she is more realistically drawn, as you pointed out, she knows the harsh realities of life and she is kind of tied to the kitchen fires and things like that.

So, we are kind of going gradually towards the realistic landscape where we get more flesh-and-blood women and drawn in the in the narrative lives that we get from these stories. So, yeah, interesting ways to compare all these women in these stories. So, the oriental narrative is something that we need to remember because there are also criticisms which say that Tagore has portrayed all these narratives with regard to these oriental slave women in order to kind of pander to the tastes of the western readers, and so on.

So, there is a kind of allure in the depiction of all these beautifully-described slave women in *The Hunger of The Stones* story. So, we need to remember all these perspectives, and also remember the date of publication of this story. It goes back you know, into colonial times. Thank you so much Sanchar for your valuable thoughts.

Professor: So hello, again, I want to say something about translation, theory and practice. And the ideas that I have are suggestions that you can think about, and try to find out an answer by comparing by re-reading several versions of a particular story. So, some of the things that you can keep in mind is this idea of binary opposition, between the metropolitan center and the periphery, the regional peripheries, between the English language and the regional language or the vernacular language and and see how is the vernacular placed against the metropolitan language or the English language.

So, that binary opposition is something that you can keep in mind and try to see whether they remain as oppositions or is there some kind of dialogue going on between these two spheres or multiple spheres as well? And we also need to ask this question to whose advantage does



the translation take place? To whose advantage does the translation take place? When a text is translated, who are the beneficiaries? What kind of benefits do we accrue from these translations? So, that's something we need to think about.

The other point that I wanted to draw your attention is to a work by Susie Tharu. Susie Tharu and K Lalita, Susie Tharu and K Lalita, who write in their anthology, *Women Writing in India*, who write that, "we preferred translations that did not domesticate the work either into a pan-Indian or into a universalist mode, but demanded of the reader to a translation of herself into another social historical ethos."

Let me repeat that quotation, "we prefer translations that did not domesticate the work either into a pan-Indian or into a universalist mode, but demanded of the reader to a translation of herself into another social, historical ethos." In other words, what these two writers are trying to do in their work of translations is that not offer universalist ideas in their translation but also try to, who try to retain the regional grain of the translations. Not kind of portray the translation as representing a whole homogenous culture or idea, but stay truthful to the regional differences, the cultural differences and the differences in lifestyle and the way they look at the world. So, there is a drive to retain individuality of the regional writers, regional women writers here.

The last point that I wanted to point out is this idea of familiarization versus adaptation. What happens in a translation? What happens in the translation? Do the translators, do the translator familiarize the text for the reader? Familiarize a different world, a different regional culture for the reader? Or adapt the regional culture in order to suit the taste of the reader?

You got to be very careful about the differences, familiarizing an alien regional culture to another regional cultural or metropolitan culture that is one thing, or adapt the regional culture in order that the reader is not offended, in order to present the reader to suit the case of this metropolitan reader, foreign reader, a reader from another regional part of the country.

So, which is the right way to go about in terms of translation? Should we forcibly adapt? Should we change societal structures, points about you know, interesting cultural habits in order to appease somebody who is from a higher, you know, metropolitan sphere? So, these are some of the questions that we want to think about in terms of translation.

Thank you for watching.