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Department: English

Day: TUESDAY
Date: 2020/04/21

Subject: AECC
Class: B. A (P), Second Semester. Section 1
Time- 3:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.

For this session as we will be discussing **UNIT 4: Close Reading, Analysis and Interpretation.**

As we have discussed in class prior to this, **Interpretation** means ‘The act of interpreting something as expressed in an artistic performance or A mental representation of the meaning or significance of something’.

Analysis is ‘The abstract separation of a whole into its constituent parts in order to study the parts and their relations or An investigation of the component parts of a whole and their relations in making up the whole.’

In colloquial terms, we can express them both as your idea or the meaning you inferred after the close reading of the text.

The task for this session is to closely read the story given below.

Two Bullocks

Munshi Premchand (D. R. Srivastava)

Jhuri the vegetable farmer had two bullocks named Hira and Moti. Both were of fine Pachai stock, of great stature, beautiful to behold, and diligent at their labours. The two had lived together for a very long time and become sworn brothers. Face to face or side by side they would hold discussions in their silent language. How each understood the other’s thoughts we cannot say, but they certainly possessed some mysterious power. They would express their love by licking and sniffing one another, and sometimes they would even lock horns – not from hostility but rather out of friendship and a sense of fun, the way friends as soon as they become intimate slap and pummel and another; any friendship lacking such displays seems rather superficial and insipid and not to be trusted. When they were released from the yoke after their day’s work at noon or in the evening they would lick and nuzzle one another to ease their fatigue. When the oilseed cake and straw was tossed into the manger they would stand up together, thrust their muzzles in to the trough together, and sit down side by side. When one withdrew his mouth the other would do so too.

On one occasion Jhuri sent the pair to his father-in-law's. How could the bullocks know why they were being sent away? They assumed that the master had sold them. If God had given them speech, they would have asked Jhuri, 'Why are you throwing us poor wretches out! We've done everything possible to serve you well. If working as hard as we did couldn't get the job done, you could have made us work still harder. We were willing to die labouring for you. We never complained about the food, whatever you gave us to eat we bowed our heads and ate it, so why did you sell us into the hands of this tyrant?'

At evening the two bullocks reached their new place, hungry after a whole day without food, but when they were brought to the manger, neither so much as stuck his mouth in. Their hearts were heavy; they were separated from the home they had thought was their own. New house, new village, new people, all seemed alien to them. They consulted in their mute language, glancing at one another out of the corners of their eyes, and lay down. When the village was deep in sleep the two of them pulled hard, broke their tether together and set out for home. That tether was very tough, no one could have guessed that any bullock could break it; but a redoubled power had entered into them and the ropes snapped with one violent jerk.

When he got up early in the morning Jhuri saw that his two bullocks were standing at the trough, half a tether dangling from each of their necks. Their legs were muddled up to the knees and resentful love gleamed in their eyes.

When Jhuri saw the bullocks he was overwhelmed with affection for them. He ran and threw his arms around their necks, and very pleasant was the spectacle of that loving embrace and kissing. The children of the household and the village boys gathered, clapping their hands in welcome.

One boy said, 'Nobody has bullocks like these: and another agreed, 'They came back from so far all by themselves: while a third said, 'They're not bullocks, in an earlier life they were men. 'And nobody dared disagree with*this.

But when Jhuri's wife saw the bullocks at the gate she got angry and said, 'What loafers these oxen are, they didn't work at my father's place for one day before they ran away!'

Jhuri could not listen to his bullocks being slandered like this. 'Loafers, are they? At your father's they must not have fed them so what were they to do?'

In her overbearing way his wife said, 'Oh sure, you're the only one who knows how to feed bullocks while everybody else gives them nothing but water. Jhuri railed at her, 'If they'd been fed why would they run off?'

Aggravated, she said, 'They ran away just because those people don't make fools of themselves spoiling them like you. They feed them but they also make them work hard. These two are real lazy-bones and they ran away. Let's see them get oilseed and bran now? I'll give them nothing but dry straw, they can eat it or drop dead.'

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When the bullocks put their faces in the trough they found it insipid. No savour, no juice--how could they eat it? With eyes full of hope they began to stare toward the door.

Jhuri said to the hired hand, 'Why the devil don't you throw in a little oilseed?'

'The mistress would surely kill me.'

'Then do it on the sly.' 'Oh no, boss, afterwards you'll side with her.

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The next day Jhuri's brother- in-law came again and took the bullocks away. This time he yoked them to the wagon. A couple of times Moti wanted to knock the wagon into the ditch, but Hira, who was more tolerant, held him back. When they reached the house, Gaya tied them with thick ropes and paid them back for yesterday's mischief. Again he threw down the same dry straw. To his own bullocks he gave oilseed cake, ground lentils, everything. The two bullocks had never suffered such an insult. Jhuri wouldn't strike them even with a newer stem. The two of them would rise up at a click of his tongue, while here they were beaten. Along with the pain of injured pride they had to put up with dry straw. They didn't even bother to look in the trough.

The next day Gaya yoked them to the plow, but it was as though the two of them had sworn an oath not to lift a foot--he grew tired beating them but not one foot would they lift. One time when the cruel fellow delivered a sharp blow on Hira's nostrils Moti's anger went out of control and he

took to his heels with the plow. Plough-share, rope, yoke, harness, all were smashed to pieces. Had there not been strong ropes around their necks it would have been impossible to catch the two of them.

Hira said in his silent language, 'Its useless to run

away Moti answered, 'But, he was going to kill you.

'We'll really get beaten now.

'So what! We were born bullocks, how can we escape beating!'

'Gaya's coming on the run with a couple of men and they're both carrying sticks.

Moti said. 'Just say the word and I'll show them a little fun. Here he comes with his stick!'

'No, brother!' Hira cautioned. 'Just stand still.'

'If he beats me I'll knock one or two of them down.'

'No, that's not the dharma of our community.'

Moti could only stand, protesting violently in his heart. Gaya arrived, caught them and took them away. Fortunately he didn't beat them this time, for if he had Moti would have struck back. When they saw his fierce look Gaya and his helpers concluded that this time it would be best to put it off.

This day again the same dry straw was brought to them. They stood in silence. In the house the people were eating dinner. Just then a quite young girl came out carrying a couple of pieces of bread. She fed the two of them and went away. How could a piece of bread still their hunger? But in their hearts they felt as though they had been fed a full meal. Here too was the dwelling of some gentle folk. The girl was Bharo's daughter; her mother was dead and her stepmother beat her often, so that she felt a kind of sympathy for the bullocks. The two were yoked all day, took a lot of beatings, got stubborn. In the evening they were tied up in their stall, and at night the same little girl would come out and feed some bread to each of them. The happy result of this communion of love was that even though they ate only a few mouthfuls of the dry straw they did not grow weak; still their eyes and every cell of their bodies filled with rebelliousness.

One day Moti said in his silent language, 'I can't stand it any longer, Hira. So what do you say, tonight we'll break the ropes and run away!'

'Yes, I'll agree to that, but how can we break such a thick rope!'

'There is a way. First gnaw the rope' a bit, then it will snap with one jerk'

At night when the girl had fed them and gone off the two began to gnaw their ropes, but the thick cord wouldn't fit in their mouths. The poor fellows tried hard over and over again without any luck. Suddenly the door of the house opened and the same girl came out; the bullocks I lowered their herds and began to lick her hand. Their tails stood up while she stroked their foreheads, and

then she said, 'I'm going to let you go. Be very quiet and run away or these people will kill you. In the house today they were talking about putting rings in your noses.

She untied the rope, but the two stood silent.

'Well, let's go: said Hira, 'only tomorrow this orphan's going to be in a lot of trouble. Everybody in the house will suspect her.'

Suddenly the girl yelled, 'Uncle's bullocks are running away! Daddy, daddy, come quick, they're running away!'

Gaya came rushing out of the house to catch the bullocks. They were running now, with Gaya fast behind them. They ran even faster and Gaya set up a shout. Then he turned back to fetch some men of the village. This was the chance for the two friends to make good their escape, and they ran straight ahead, no longer aware by now just where they were. There was no trace of the familiar road they'd come by. They were coming to villages they'd never seen. Then the two of them halted at the edge of a field and began to think about what they ought to do now.

Hira said, 'It appears we've lost our way.'

'You took to your heels without thinking. We should have knocked him down dead right on the spot.'

'If we'd killed him what would the world say? He abandoned his dharma, but we stuck to ours.

They were dizzy with hunger. Peas were growing in the field and they began to browse, stopping occasionally to listen for anyone coming.

They had scarcely eaten a couple of mouthfuls when two men with sticks came running and surrounded the two friends. Hira was on the embankment and slipped away, but Moti was down in the soggy field. His hooves were so deep in mud that he couldn't run, and he was caught. When Hira saw his comrade in trouble he dashed back. If they were going to be trapped, then they'd be trapped together. So the watchmen caught him too. Early in the morning the two friends were shut up in a village pound. The two friends stayed tied up there for a week. No one gave them so much as a bit of hay. True, water was given to them once. This was all their nourishment. They got so weak that they could not even stand up, and their ribs were sticking out. One day someone beat a drum outside the enclosure and towards noon about fifty or sixty people gathered there. Then the two friends were brought out and the inspection began. People came and studied their appearance and went away disappointed. Who would buy bullocks that looked like corpses! Suddenly there came a bearded man with red eyes and a cruel race; he dug his fingers into the haunches of the bullocks and began to talk with the clerk. When they saw his expression the hearts of the two friends grew weak from what their intuition told them. They had no doubt at all as to who he was and why he felt them with his hands. They looked at one another with frightened eyes and lowered their heads.

Hira said, 'We ran away from Gaya's house in vain. We won't survive this.'

Without much faith Moti answered, 'They say God has mercy on everybody. Why isn't He being merciful to us?'

'To God it's all the same whether we live or die. Don't worry, it's not so bad, for a little while we'll be with Him. Once He saved us in the shape of that little girl, so won't He save us now'

'This man is going to cut our throats. Just watch.'

So why worry! Every bit of us, flesh, hide, horns and bones, will be used for something or the other.

When the auction was over the friends went off with that bearded man. Every bit of their bodies was trembling. They could scarcely lift their feet, but they were so frightened they managed to keep stumbling along--for if they slowed down the least bit they'd get a good whack from the stick. Along the way they saw a herd of cows and bullocks grazing in a verdant meadow. All the animals were happy, sleek and supple. Some were leaping about, others lying down contentedly chewing their cud. What a happy life was theirs! Yet how selfish they all were. Not one of them cared about how their two brothers must be suffering after falling into the hands of the butcher. Suddenly it seemed to them that the road was familiar. Yes, this was the road by which Gaya had taken them away. They were coming to the same fields and orchards, the same villages. At every instant their pace quickened. All their fatigue and weariness disappeared. Oh, just look, here was their own meadow, here was the same well where they had worked the winch to pull up the bucket, yes, it was the same well.

Moti said, 'Our house is close by!'

'It's God's mercy!' said Hira. 'As for me, I'm making a run for home!' 'Will he let us go?'

'I'll knock him down and kill him.'

'No, no, run and make it to our stalls, and we won't budge from there.'

As though they'd gone crazy, joyfully kicking up their heels like calves, they made off for the house. There was their stall! They ran and stood by it while the bearded man came dashing after them. Jhuri was sitting in his doorway sunning himself. As soon as he saw the bullocks he ran and embraced them over and over again. Tears of joy flowed from the two friends' eyes, and one of them licked Jhuri's hand.

The bearded man came up and grabbed their tethers. 'These are my bullocks: said Jhuri.

'How can they be! I just bought them at auction at the cattle pound.'

'I'll bet you stole them,' said Jhuri. 'Just shut up and leave. They're my bullocks. They'll be sold only when I sell them. Who has the right to auction off my bullocks?'

Said the bearded man, 'I'll go to the police station and make a complaint.'

'They're my bullocks, the proof is they came and stood at my door. in a rage the bearded man stepped forward to drag the bullocks away. This is when Moti lowered his horns. The bearded man stepped back. Moti charged and the man took to his heels, with Moti after him, and stopped only at the outskirts of the village where he took his stand guarding the road. The butcher stopped at some distance, yelled back threats and insults and threw scenes. And Moti stood blocking his path like a victorious hero. The villagers came out to watch the entertainment and had a good laugh. When the bearded man acknowledged defeat and went away Moti came back strutting.

Hira said, 'I was afraid you'd get so mad you'd go and kill him.' 'If he'd caught me I wouldn't have given up before I'd killed him.'

'Won't he come back now?'

'If he does I'll take care of him long before he gets here. Let's just see him take us away!' 'What if he has us shot?'

'Then I'll be dead, but I'll be of no use to him.'

'Nobody thinks of the life we have as being a life.'

'Only because we're so simple... In a little while their trough was filled with oilseed cake, hay, bran and grain, and the two friends began to eat. Jhuri stood by and stroked them while a couple of dozen boys watched the show.

Excitement seemed to have spread through the whole village. At this moment the mistress of the house came out and kissed each of the bullocks on the forehead.