

**Short Fiction in Indian Literature**  
**Prof. Divya A.**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology – Madras**

**Lecture – 11A**  
**Plotting and Ideology in R.K. Narayan's A Horse and Two Goats - II**

Hello and welcome to this lecture on R. K. Narayan's A Horse and Two Goats. The angle of interpretation that I am going for in this lecture is the culture clash. We saw certain indications as to the clash in cultures that is the east and the west through the arrival of this Western figure in khaki and American trader in coffee and his arrival does cause certain complication in this particularly placid village seed in Greedam.

**(Refer Slide Time: 00:59)**

Muni and the American

- ◆ Muni talks about his faith in the priest
- ◆ “who can see in the camphor flame the face of the thief, and when he is caught...” He gestured with his hands a perfect mincing of meat”
- ◆ American talks about chopping wood

Distinct lifestyles of each of the men

Rough justice and spiritual faith

So we have the complication in the conversation that happens between Muni and the American. So the American who has a vehicle that has broken down on the highway comes down to seek some help from this villager Muni and he sees him sitting on the pedestal of a massive statue of a horse and a warrior and he picks up a conversation with this old villager. As they talk, it becomes evident that the American is very much interested in the horse statue the clay horse the terracotta horse.

Whereas Muni is completely unaware of the motivations of the American and he thinks that there is this guy who has come down to this village to inquire about a crime that has happened in the border between his village Greedam and Kuppam, the neighbouring village.

So he assures the American that he does not have to worry, if they find any bad guy hanging about in the village.

They will make sure to find him and tie him up and hand him over to this American. So he continues that narrative of this kind whereas the American is clueless about what Muni is talking about. So Muni says that our temple priest can see in the camphor flame the face of the thief and when he is caught he gestured with his hands a perfect mincing of meat. So Muni kind of, tells the American that if the thief is caught he would be chopped up.

That is why he makes that gesture with his hand. The American mistakes him to think that he is referring to chopping wood and it is very interesting that there is a huge difference in the way of life of these two figures and their lifestyles are very distinct and while this American spends his free time in chopping up driftwood and using that wood to set a fire roaring in his fireplace.

We have this old villager Muni who talks about the powers of the temple priest in finding out the bad guys and the rough justice that is handed over to these criminals. So on the one hand we have this rough natural justice that is happening to all these criminals in this village, on the other hand we have this very comfortable lifestyle of this American who enjoys his time in front of the fireplace.

**(Refer Slide Time: 04:21)**

American

- ◆ Wants to buy the statue of the horse
- ◆ Convinced that Muni is the owner of it
- ◆ "I don't want to seem to have stopped here for nothing. I will offer you a good price for this,"

"Presiding over their wares"

Now it is very clear that the American who wants to buy the statue of the horse is convinced that Muni is the owner of it. How does he arrive at that assumption? He thinks that in India

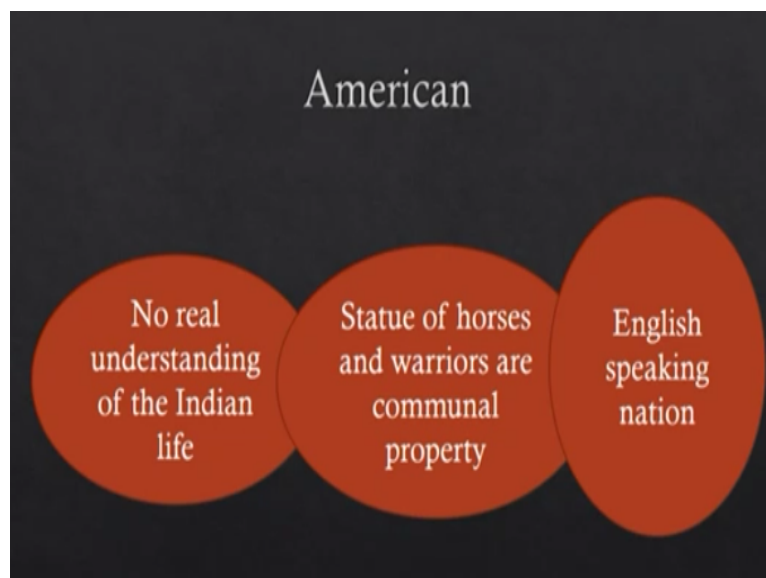
the tradesmen, the people who sell stuff they preside over the things that they are displaying for sale. And he thinks that Muni is presiding over his rear which is the statue of the horse and the warrior and therefore he thinks that he is the owner of these goods.

So he says that I don't want to seem to have stopped here for nothing, I will offer you a good price for this. So we need to remember the fact that the American is by the side of Muni quite by accident. If his vehicle had not broken down by the side of the highway, he would not be having this conversation with this villager Muni. But the other very interesting thing is that he wants to make his time well-spent while he is there by the highway.

So he says that I will buy something here, I do not want to have stopped here for nothing. So every minute, every duration that he expends is important for this American in terms of the potential money values or some kind of commodity that he could purchase. So he wants to make good use of this time that he spends by the side of the highway talking to this villager. He says that you do not have to worry, I will give you a good price for this particular statue.

What is very interesting here once again is the fact that the Americans have, particularly this American in this village quickly makes assumptions, he makes quick judgments and he also wants to make a quick purchase through this villager. So that is also made evident through this conversation, through this narrative that he has with Muni. So he has stopped by the wayside, but he also wants to make good use of the time that he spends there.

**(Refer Slide Time: 06:56)**



Further information that we can derive about the American through his time with Muni are these. One thing is that, he has no real understanding of the Indian life. He does not know that the statue of horses and warriors are communal property, because they have a spiritual, cultural value for the village, in which these clay statues are set up. All he knows that in India people speak English and he can get by, he can travel through the country using the common English language between him and the local.

So he has a very minimum understanding of life in India and which is why he makes all these false assumptions about the statue of the horse, which he thinks is for sale by this particular old man.

**(Refer Slide Time: 08:08)**



So Muni is apparently the owner of this set of souvenirs that is what the American understands from his observation of Muni with these two statues. So he wants to buy these souvenirs particularly the statue of the horse. And he does not know that it has a specific religious significance and Muni realizes that the American is interested in the statue and he tries to tell him about the context of this particular statue of the horse.

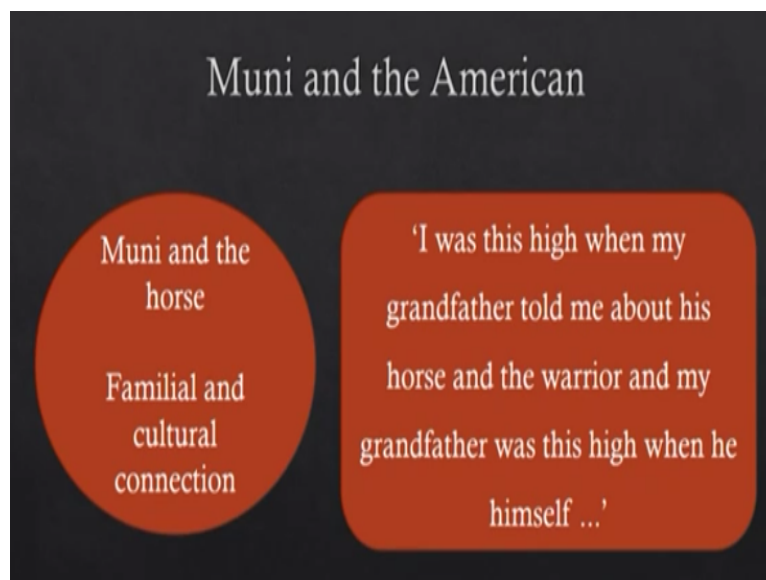
He says that this horse is our guardian and it gives death to our adversaries to our enemies. So we can see two widely different approaches in conjunction with this particular statue of the horse, the clay horse, the terracotta horse, for the American it is a souvenir that he gets from this country, which he can transport and place it in his home and be proud of it. And for Muni it signifies the protection that the villagers receive from this religious entity.

So once he understands that the American wants to know about the statue of the horse, he tries to trace the antiquity of the horse statue and says that you know his grandfather got information about the horse from his grandfather and so on. While he gives this narrative about the ancient nature of this whole statue the American very interestingly admires the language of this old man, Muni.

He says your language sounds wonderful. I get a kick out of every word you utter here and he gestures to his ear. And again what struck me when I read those words of the American praising the language is the mellifluous is stimulating language of Muni is that the American adores the outward sounds whereas he has no idea about the inner content of the ideas, inner content of the message that he is trying to communicate.

So what is interesting about the reaction of the American here is the appreciation of the language, the sounds of this old man Muni when he has no idea what the sounds mean, communicate and suggest to the listener. So his appreciation is for the outer things. His appreciation is for the form rather than for the content and that tells you something important about the American here.

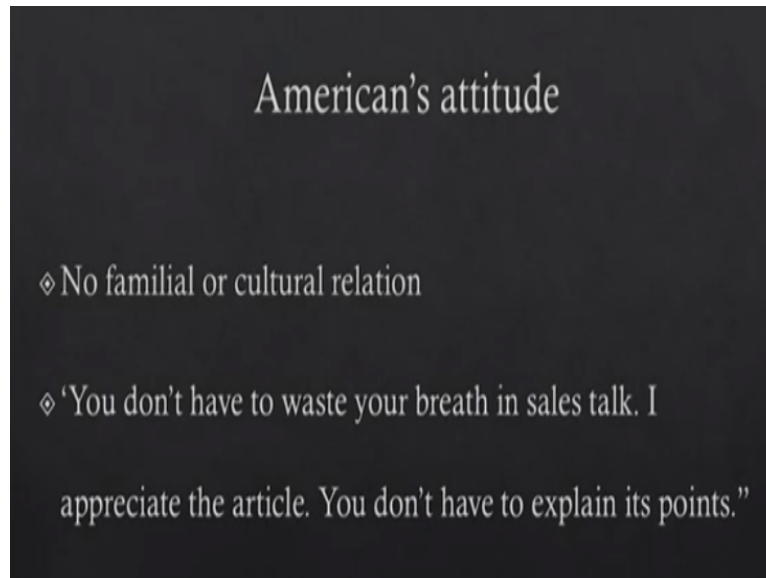
**(Refer Slide Time: 11:37)**



So Muni tries to tell the listener about his connection with the horse by tracing his grandfather's information that has passed down from his grandfather and so on. So there is a kind of a familial and a cultural connection between Muni and the villagers and the statue of the horse and the warrior. And this is the connection, the familial connection that is there between Muni and the statue.

I was this high when my grandfather told me about his horse and the warrior, and my grandfather was this high when he himself. So you can see how he connects this continuity, the relationship that they have in terms of this particular horse, that this horse statue has seen several generations and it has been there for a very, very long time, almost a continuous presence protecting guarding this village.

**(Refer Slide Time: 12:35)**



On the other hand, the American has no familial or cultural relationship with this terracotta clay statue of a horse, and he is fascinated by that and he constantly has this word marvellous to express his admiration for this particular statue. And on hearing Muni talk about the horse, he says you do not have to waste your breath in sales talk, I appreciate the article you do not have to explain its points.

Again a very significant set of ideas here that the American himself reveals to the listener or to the reader here. So he tells us pretty directly that he is not interested in listening to the merits of the horse through Muni. He says I understand the horse completely; I completely appreciate it. But we do know that, since he has no connection familial or cultural, he will not or understand the significance of the statue here.

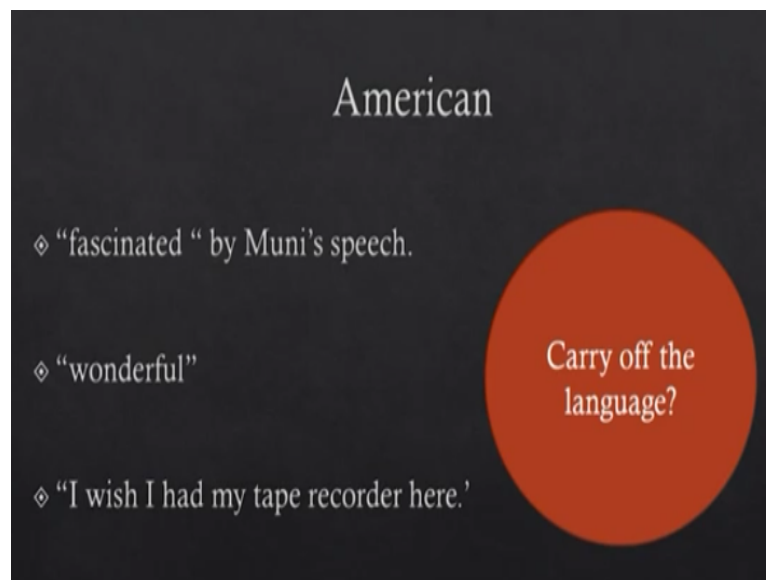
So we need to ask this question which I suggested just a second ago, what exactly is the extent of his appreciation. So he also says that he can do a sales talk better than anyone else for this particular statue of a horse. And that is very surprising as I said because he has no

idea about the cultural significance of the statue of the horse and all he can really appreciate is the colour coding on the statue and the external appearance of it.

So from the point of view of the colour he says that it is a marvellous combination, again the word marvellous is repeated, a marvellous combination of yellow and indigo though faded now. And again he is very amazed at the people's deft creation of these flaming colours. On the one hand he completely understands all the merits, all the fine points of this horse statue. On the other hand, he is struck, he is amazed and he wonderingly asked how on earth did you people come up with this brilliant combination of yellow and indigo.

So what is the secret that seems to be his question. So he claims to know everything, at the same time revealed his ignorance too, and that tells you a lot about the Americans understanding of the Indian world. And just because he is a trader, he is a businessman he and he thinks that he is capable of any and every kind of sales talk possible.

**(Refer Slide Time: 15:57)**



So what are the stuff that he is struck by, this American from New York is these. He says that firstly he is fascinated by Muni's speech and he thinks that it is wonderful and he also wishes that he had his tape recorder here. And this suggestion is also very, very significant in the sense that we can ask this question, does he also want to carry off the language to somehow lift it from the context here, from Muni here, record it and take it away just as he wants to take away, carry off this particular clay statue in the middle of nowhere in India.

**(Refer Slide Time: 16:50)**

## Muni's faith

◇ “At the end of Kali Yuga, this world and all other worlds will be destroyed, and the Redeemer will come in the shape of a horse called Kalki; this horse will come to life and gallop and trample down all bad men.”

The shopman and  
Muni's brother-in-  
law.

So while this American is apparently disinterested in the sales point of view for the horse and telling us that he sees this horse as a commodity, Muni's talk or narrative tells us about the immense amount of faith that is invested in this terracotta figure. And that has been standing through the ages through several generations at least, and this is the message that he wants to communicate to the American.

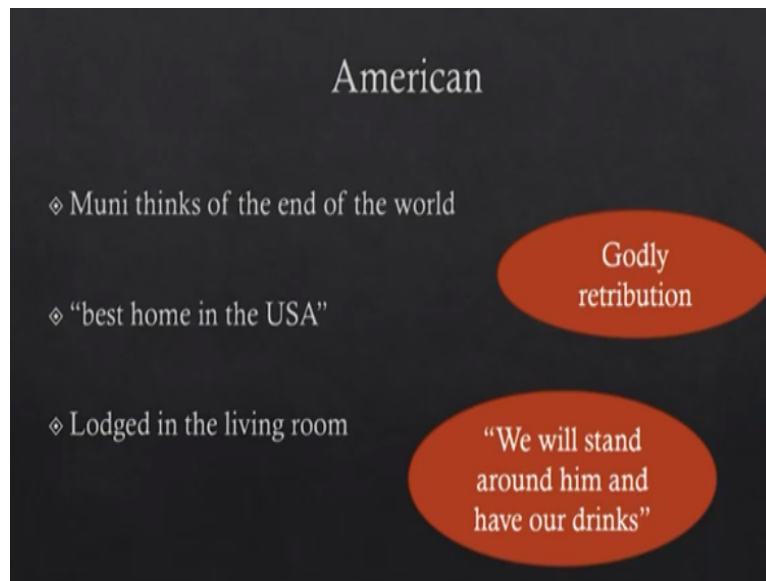
He says that at the end of Kali Yuga this world and all other worlds will be destroyed and the redeemer or the savior will come in the shape of a horse called Kalki. This horse will come to life and gallop and trample down all bad men. So he has this belief and faith that at the end of this Kali Yuga the Saviour will come and the rescuer of humanity will come to kill all the bad people and save all the good people.

This statue this clay horse will also come to life and it will gallop across the Indian space saving all the good people. And he thinks that this horse will trample down people suggest the shop man and Muni's brother-in-law who had tried to set fire to his house long ago. So all these faith and wish fulfilment are woven in this narrative and the American has no idea whatsoever about the cultural investment.

The spiritual investment that these people have in terms of this statue of a horse. He was to buy this beautiful marvellous, novel commodity and take it away.

**(Refer Slide Time: 18:53)**



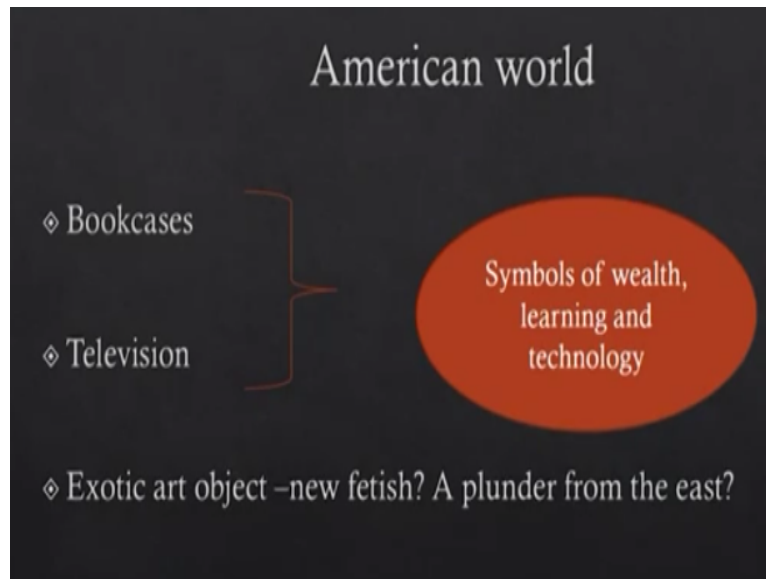


So Muni thinks, of the end of the world while he is placing the horse in the context, in the larger context of the spiritual world, while he does that the American thinks about parties and he says that once that statue is lodged in his living room by shifting the bookcases and by moving away the TV during parties, we will stand around him we will stand by his side and have our drinks.

So the contrast could not be more striking on the one hand we have the end of the world, the apocalypse with this huge figure of a horse, galloping away, saving the good people and trampling the bad people. On the other hand, we have the statue of a horse in a living room in New York with people around it having their drinks. In the two narratives that we get from these two people the American and the old Indian villager.

So one thinks about godly retribution the other figure thinks about the social impact it will have when he has parties at his home and he says that it is the best home in the USA for this particular statue of a horse.

**(Refer Slide Time: 20:25)**



So as I mentioned before the bookcases and the television will make way for this terracotta statue in this American's home in New York and these two items the bookcases and the television suggests or active symbols of wealth and learning and technology and these make way for the entry of the exotic art object from the east. We can ask this question is this the new fetish or is this a fetish in the long line of fetishes that plunderers from the west took from the eastern regions, the oriental region.

**(Refer Slide Time: 21:21)**



Now the end of the world theme persists in Muni's narrative, in his conversation or in his monologue to which the American is a listener. He presents the horse as a saviour of the good, the good humanity, the good people in humanity, and he kind of offers the power of punishing the wicked, the criminals to this figure of a horse. And he also believes, has a lot of faith in priests and gods who can also dole out punishment for crimes committed by people.

So it is a very different world that Muni inhabits to the world of this American trader. So Muni goes back to his understanding of the local tradition, his cultural past and the cultural past of the community to talk about avatars. And he is really on a roll, he suggests that he informs the American that Vishnu has had several avatars and he was also a great fish in one of the avatars.

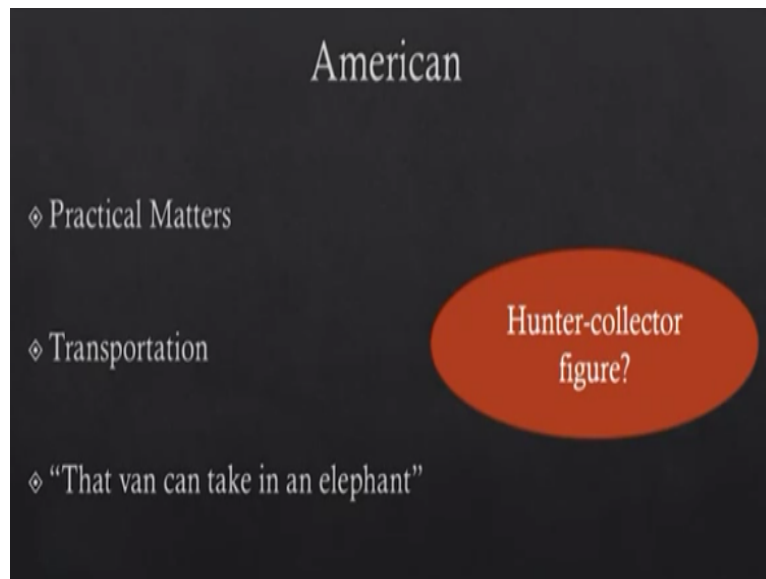
It is very interesting and comical to see him sharpen the tale that he tells about the various avatars. So the narrative seems to get bigger the second time around it is almost as if he is kind of vetting the sharpness of the story and expands the breadth of the story as he narrates it to this listener who seems to have no idea of what he is talking about. So as Muni does this storytelling, we realized that the present world the really complicated present world of Muni with issues of poverty and barrenness falling behind and it is considerations no longer seem important to him.

Whereas the past is what becomes very, very vital for Muni and apparently in his understanding the listener too. So his past is his own personal past as well as the cultural traditional past of the community. Every now and then, he has to digress a little bit and answer questions suggest what he thinks is a question about coffee from the American but then he returns to the theme of the avatars.

And as I mentioned before he talks about Vishnu's avatar as a great fish, Vishnu's avatar as a wild boar in order to rescue planet Earth from a demon, which took it away and again the horse and the mythical reappearance of the horse as a live one which is again a saviour of humanity, all these expressions of faith in this really powerful God are part and parcel of the faith of the community in India, and it all these ideas just have no impact on the American.

So which is why we really have two people talking at cross-purposes here in this story whereas there is no common understanding between the two. And the other important thing is that fish and boar and horse all these creatures of the natural world are invested with spiritual faith by the local population, whereas to the Westerners, to the foreigners, these are representations of these creatures become just art objects really pretty useful, really pretty aesthetic objects that they can display in their homes which have a lot of display value in social settings.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:58)



So the American, what are the basic characteristics of this American, they are these. The American is more interested in the practical matters of life, such as in this context how does he transport this big statue, this life-size statue of a horse, how does he take it home. And he thinks that he is going to cancel his flight and then he is going to take a boat back, he is going to sail back and the immediate transportation.

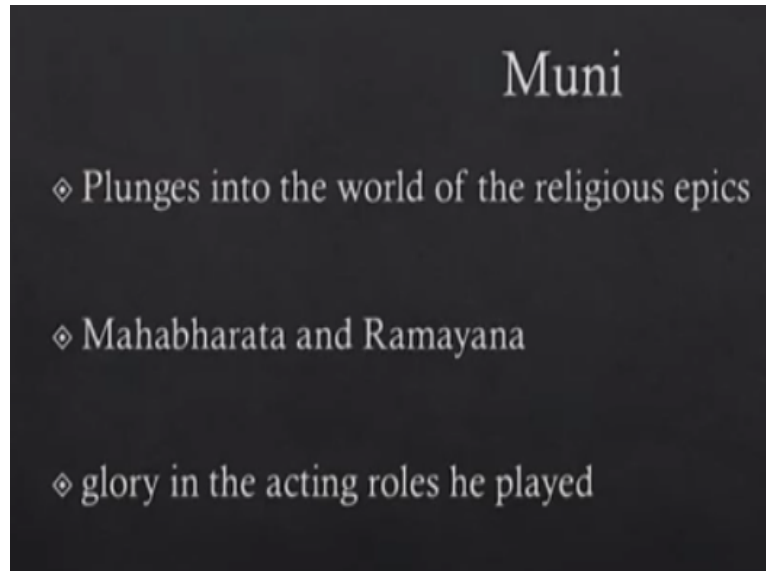
How is he going to take it away from this space near the highway, and then he says that the van you know his vehicle can be used for that. And he tells Muni that that van can taken an elephant, again that idea that the American just take away things and creatures from this land is significant, because people have been coming to this country as hunter collectors, as part of this contingent of Empire or colonizers and who have taken away the wealth of the nation and sometimes wealth is also in all these animals too.

So let us come to Muni's philosophy he has a very simple philosophy which is that God will always save us whenever we are troubled by evil beings and which is perhaps why his narrative goes around all these mythical and religious texts and issues and he narrates his past glory in village dramatics and he tells the American, that he has played the role of Goddess Laxmi and Sita because he had a really good voice.

And he is really enchanted by that past that rich traditional spiritual past, where he could also get some kind of glory by participating in the place put up by the village. And he also mentions that sometimes even a very important European official would come by to look at

all the theatre. So perhaps one of the reasons for Muni's narratives about all these traditional aspects of India is that he believes that probably this American would also be interested in the past of India.

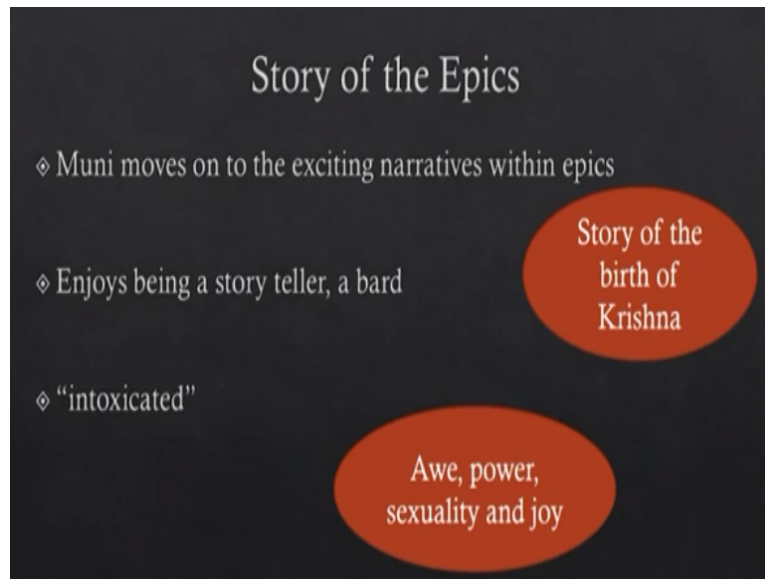
**(Refer Slide Time: 28:39)**



So Muni dwells deeper and deeper into the world of the religious epics and he asks the American do you know about the Mahabharata or do you know about the Ramayana. And as I mentioned a little while ago he does get a lot of reflected glory in talking about all these epics in which he played a part when they were dramatized in the local community.

So this narrative that he offers to the American now is a kind of an escapist route, which allows him to go back to that particular time where he played the part of Sita, where he dressed up he wore a sari and makeup and all the jewels and so on. So it presents him in a really very exciting light to himself and which he luxuriously enjoys.

**(Refer Slide Time: 29:54)**

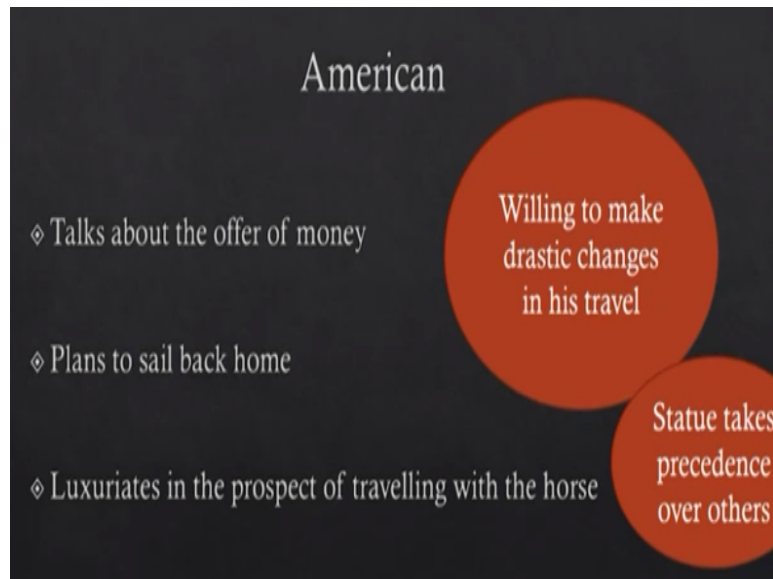


So Muni moves on to the exciting narratives even within the epics and he really seems to be, he really is excited by his own storytelling in fact, and we can really sense that he enjoys being a storyteller a bard. And in fact the narrator suggests that he's intoxicated by his own narratives and he tells the story of the birth of Krishna, and he also talks about the dance of Krishna over the head of a multi-headed serpent, and things like that.

So he becomes really excited and intoxicated and there is a lot of awe and power and sexuality and joy in these narratives and even though these narratives do not have any impact on this American who is right there by him, we can get a sense that these narratives will have an effect on the readers both in India as well as across the Western countries, the English reading country, English reading population outside of India.

They would also get a sense of the enchantment that Muni himself feels while he is going back to those days of the dramatics that he put up about, that he helped put up in the village community. So we just get brief windows, short narratives about all these epics.

**(Refer Slide Time: 31:36)**



So that cultural slice has been offered to this American with no real impact but to other Americans and other English reading public would definitely enjoy the fascinating forays or entries into the Indian epics, the Indian spiritual tradition. And the American right here on the story world talks about money and he really wants to come to the crux of the matter. And he tells Muni that he is going to change his travel plans and he is going to travel by ship back to America instead of by air.

And all these drastic changes tell how, to what extent these Americans can go to, to make sure that they enjoy the commodities, they enjoy the art objects that they take away from all these different countries on the globe. And in fact when he talks about his journey in a cabin on a ship, we can see that he really enjoys that prospect that fantasy he almost luxuriates in that prospect of travelling with the horse.

That enjoyment can be compared to the enjoyment that Muni derives through the narratives about myths and epics and religious narratives about Lord Krishna and other things. So there is a comparable enjoyment, but the sources are drastically radically different for the American, he has this fetish for an Indian art object within quotes because that is what he thinks it to be.

However, for an Indian, that horse statue is connected to the ultimate rescue that is going to happen at the hands of the redeemer who comes at the end of the Kali Yuga and other connections, and other associations with Ramayana and Mahabharata and all the avatars of

Vishnu and so on and so forth. So we can see very, very widely different associates of enjoyment for these figures these male figures.

**(Refer Slide Time: 34:04)**

American's desire

- ◊ Ready to dismantle the horse
- ◊ Seeks Muni's help in carting it away
- ◊ Muni enquires about his progeny with "appropriate gestures with his hand"

Not sure if Muni has agreed to the bargain

So the American is ready to dismantle the horse and what is important for us to notice is that, even though this American is not sure if Muni has agreed to the bargain he is willing to take it away. So we can see that he is really determined to get this horse's statue and he thinks that he can convince Muni too. And that is the ego of a trader there on this particular story and he even seeks Muni's help in carting it away and Muni is totally clueless even until at this point.

He inquires about the Americans progeny and he makes appropriate gestures with his hand, and the American mistakenly thinks that sign of the fingers refers to financial issues about the money that he seeks from this particular guy. So when Muni is asking about the number of boys and girls how many of them are married and was it difficult to find a son-in-law even in his country the American thinks that Muni is talking about the matters of trade the purchase.

He immediately takes off his wallet and shows him a 100-rupee currency note and that really gets the attention of Muni that currency note the appearance of that note really puts a different spin in the mind of Muni.

**(Refer Slide Time: 35:47)**



## Crisis

- ◇ Initially thinks the American is asking for change
- ◇ Village headman cum Moneylender
- ◇ "he can even change a lakh of rupees in gold sovereigns if you prefer it that way; he thinks nobody knows, but dig the floor of his puja room and your head will reel at the sight of the hoard. The man disguises himself in rags just to mislead the public."

And he thinks that initially, funnily Muni thinks that maybe this American is asking for change and he is really struck by the hilarity of the situation because he usually deals in coppers and nickels, very small amount of money, and he has only seen currency notes in the hands of others. So this particular exchange again highlights the poverty in the life of Muni and Muni tells the American that if he wants change he has to talk to the village headman who is also the moneylender in the village.

And Muni says that he can even change a lakh of rupees in gold sovereigns, if you prefer it that way he thinks nobody knows but dig the floor of his pooja room and your head will reel at the site of the hoard, the man disguises himself in rags just to mislead the public. So he tells him he gives him a lot of information about the moneylender and the moneylender is apparently the wealthiest man there and he hides his wealth under the boards of the pooja room.

There seems to be a close association between and the spiritual side and the monetary side there in this particular context of the moneylender. The other significant thing is that, Muni tells the American that the village headman dresses in rags just to give the impression that he is poor. So that dramatics is also an interesting thing to note about this particular character and further Muni informs the American that the village headman also thinks that he and his goats are responsible for the missing pumpkin with the creeper in the fields of the village headman.

Which is why Muni saying if you want change you just go and talk to him by yourself, I will not accompany you, because I am not in his good works because he suspects me and my goats for doing something to the pumpkins in his field. So again there is a slight suggestion that this particular village headman thinks that Muni is a thief. So we need to keep that information in mind to bring it out later to make other comparisons.

So when Muni is talking about this particular embedded narrative about the village headman he makes, he points to the two goats which are grazing by, and the American looks at the goats and goes to them to pet them out of politeness, out of courtesy and immediately Muni thinks that funnily, that this man this Americans interested in purchasing his two goats. He makes that quick connection because the Americans really apparently interested in his goats.

So that courtesy which is what the American is thinking that he is offering to Muni is mistaken as the interest of a buyer. So we have really a big cultural mismatch quite evident in this scene, and it leads to further complications.

**(Refer Slide Time: 39:17)**

The slide has a dark background with the title "Muni and his reputation" at the top. Below the title are three bullet points, each starting with a diamond symbol. To the right of the bullet points is a red circle containing the text "Courtesy misjudged".

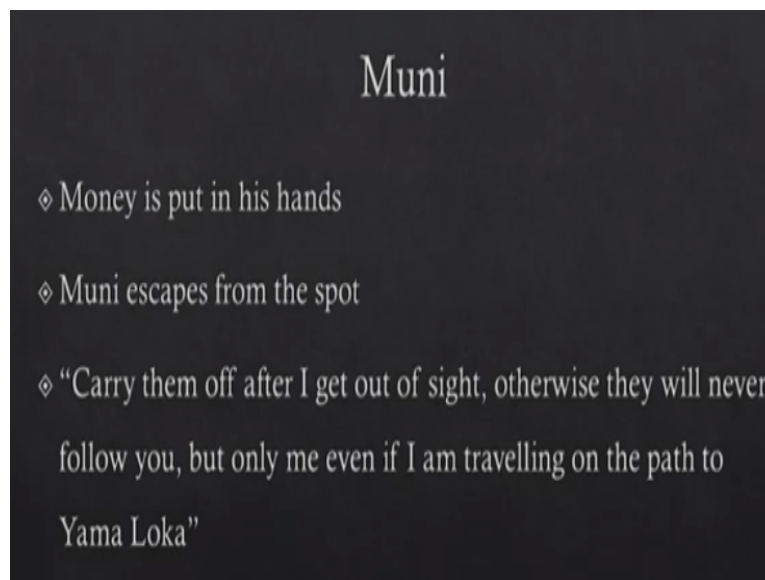
- ◆ Village headman thinks Muni and his goats have stolen "the pumpkins with the creeper"
- ◆ American pets the goats out of politeness
- ◆ Cultural mismatch evident

Courtesy  
misjudged

So that chasm, that gulf, that break between an eastern mind and a western mind is at the crux of this narrative. That is the crisis of this narrative. So Muni as soon as he sees that a 100 rupee note, he is elated, he is delighted, he is almost jumping for joy on the inside, because his dream of a lifetime was about to be realized. He understood that the red man was actually making an offer for the goats.

So his dream which he remembers when he sees the currency note is to set up a shop by the side of the highway and make a living out of it, and because he really enjoys being there out in that border to the highway. And he expresses that to himself when he sees that there is a chance for sale of the two goats. So the American thrusts the money into the hands of Muni and he says that it is yours or if you have a partner you can share the money with him or her.

**(Refer Slide Time: 40:27)**



Muni sees that he has to get out of that space as quickly as possible, because he knows that the two goats will not follow this red man, this American, and he tells the American that you know let me first leave the spot and then you transport them and Muni gets away and he says that carry them off after I get out of sight, otherwise they will never follow you but only me even if I am travelling on the path to Yamaloga.

So it is a very funny way to express the loyalty of the two goats, Muni tells the American that even if I am travelling to hell, these two goats would follow me. So please make sure that you collect them once I leave. So the American mistakenly thinks that Muni has gone to get help from the village in transporting the statue of the horse to the van, and he waits for a while. But then he gets some help from a passing truck he pays the people on the truck to help transport the statue.

He also gets the fuel from the truck and he departs with the statue of a horse and that was the end of the American that is the last time we hear about him. Muni blissfully goes home and he opens the door, he shuts the door and stole up softly to his wife as she squatted before the

lit oven wondering if by a miracle food would drop from the sky, Muni displayed the fortune. So it is very significant to note that when Muni quietly goes by the side of his wife.

She is silently sitting there asking for a miracle, because she could not manage to get food for her husband and in judging by the past, she really wanted to provide him with the evening meal as is her will not. Muni what he does is he shows her the fortune and the wife's reaction very comically is that have you been stealing, how on earth did you get that much money. The question is why did she think of his stealing at the very first instant.

Why is her immediate thought to be robbery or thieving on the part of Muni? Does he have precedents for that, should we think about the pumpkins with the creeper. So all these things or all these events, previous events are crop up in our mind when this question is asked and the other important thing is there was no food at home for the two people. That is a very important and this fortune this 100 rupees that he gets from the American seems to save the day and the future for these two people.

So he tells his wife that he has sold two goats to a red man, to a white man, and while he is telling her this and the two goats come home and that is it the wife is really annoyed and irritated and angered and Muni really touchingly and pulls the goats by the ear and quizzes them why did not you go with that red man he is the new boss for you. So while that is happening the wife says, if you have thieved the police will come tonight and break your bones do not involve me, I will go away to my parents.

The last line again it is very funny because these two people are very old, in this event and when she says that I will go away to my parents, she acts as if she is a young bride. And the question that we can easily ask that she even really have anybody because the villagers suggest that the third person narrator suggests that they do not have anybody to care for them. Again that rhetoric of the threat in her statement there when the police come to beat you up do not involve me, that threat is always there.

It is kind of funny to notice that too and the wife trying to associate herself with her with that even husband, but heart of hearts we do know that she really cares for him as is communicated to us through the third person narrator through the past of Muni. So what do

we make of this cliché the difference between the two, the American and the Indian, the South Indian are the Tamil speaking Muni, what do we make of these two.

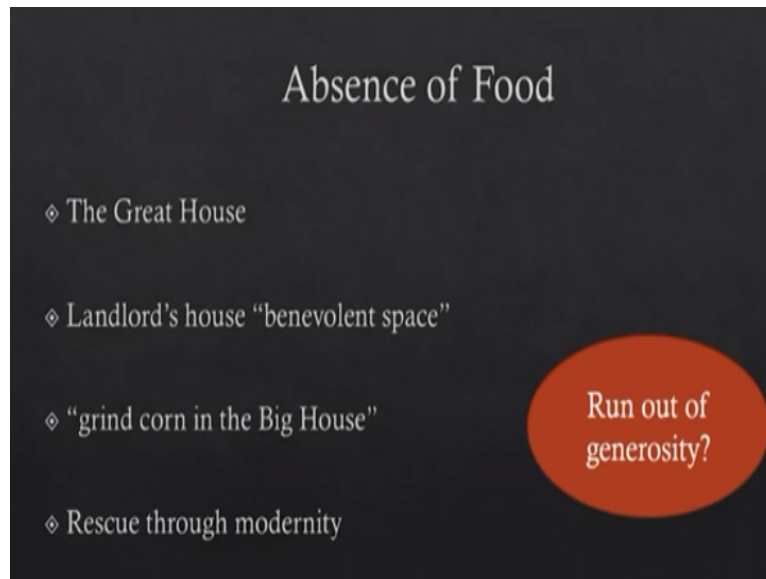
We can see that the American in his interaction with the local clearly breaks of a faith, a belief in the local tradition by taking away, by bringing away the clay horse to America. So he does a sort of cultural thieving, because Muni and the people of the village are the owners of this cultural property and they do not know that is being stolen by this American and that is one way to look at it. The other way to look at it is this.

Through the horse, through the statue of the horse, the greater the good God has resolved the financial problems of this aged couple, this barren couple who are on a very minimum bare existence. So this could be seen, fortune of a 100 rupees could be seen as a god given windfall and we need to remember Muni's philosophy that, God will always save us. So it could be seen in that positive light too.

Now I want to go back to that last notion, the last idea that is there when we see Muni's wife in front of a lit oven and hoping for a miracle to happen in terms of the appearance of food for them. It is important to note that when there was a lack of food, Muni's wife used to go to the great house, the big house, the landlord's house, on whose benevolence many of the villages thrived.

So she is used to going there to grind corn in the big house and thereby get some money or some food stuff to make a decent meal at the end of the day.

**(Refer Slide Time: 47:25)**

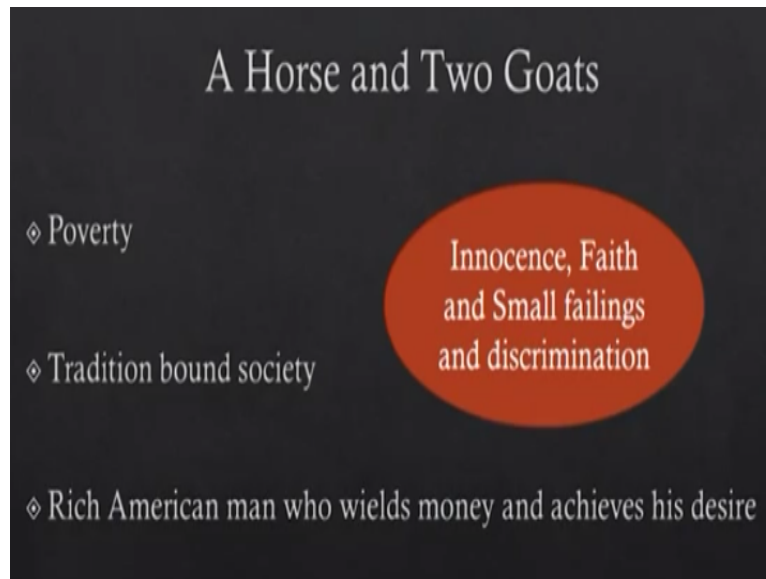


But today at this moment in the evening at home, she does not have anything, so our question is, has the great house has the landlord's house run out of generosity and once again I am reminded of Kamala Das's Summer Vacation where we had nanny amma going to Muthachi's house asking for the opportunity to grind aval or the old grandmother and she is irritated by that.

But so all these connections come to our minds when we look at this last seen at Muni's home and we are also reminded of Budhia and other figures, who are really hard pressed to get help from the big house, the great house, the landlord's house in the village. So rescue does not seem to happen through the great house in this context, in this particular story, but rescue comes through modernity through the figure of the American, through modern transportation, through modern travel, through interest in the East.

So Muni and his wife seemed to be saved by this American whose vehicle breaks down in the highway.

**(Refer Slide Time: 48:51)**



So other larger issues that are there for us to take note of and speculate on and think about deeply are these, the issue of poverty, there is a lot of poverty in this village, there is scarcity, there is famine, there is no rain for the village and they just scraped by in terms of drinking water, they allowed to take a part of water from the well of the great house and the village headman seems to have a lot of money, whereas the rest of the villagers seem to be on the margins of poverty.

We also realized that this is a very tradition-bound society, there are narratives about wives, there are narratives about God, there are narratives about priests that the villagers have great faith in. That is something that is there in this story as a major concern and we have the innocence of Muni that is evident in several moments in the story beginning with his belief about his age and we have seen a lot of faith in God and we see the failings of humanity.

We also see discrimination because the people discriminate against this old couple Muni and his wife because they are barren and we also see that the rich American stands for the power of wealth, and wealth that can really get what it wants and wealthy people can achieve their desire and easily walk away. So all these major concerns and themes are evident in this story. Thank you for watching I will continue in the next session.