

UNIT 4

I Never Saw You

Jyoti Lanjewar
Translated by Vinay Dharwadker



4.1 Warm Up

Every child will affirm that mother means love and sacrifice. Every hardworking mother waits for the day when her child will educate himself or herself and reach a better position in life. Mother sentiments run deep in the Indian psyche. For example, in Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Night of the Scorpion" the mother mumbles her thanks to God that the scorpion picked on her and spared her children. As adults, our fond memories of childhood centre around our mother. However, as adults, we also become aware of the hardships faced by our mothers. Like us, the poet expresses her understanding of her mother's sacrifices.

4.2 Objectives

After reading the poem you will be able to:

- Identify various aspects of the life of Dalits
- Analyse vivid images used to depict the life of a Dalit mother
- Explain different meanings connoted by the tone of the poem
- Examine how equivalence affects the meaning of the poem in translation

4.3 Getting Acquainted

A. The Poet

Jyoti Lanjewar (1950-2013) is a prolific Dalit writer and has contributed a lot to Marathi poetry and literary criticism. She is a noted writer, critic, poet, feminist scholar and social activist. She has authored 14 books including four poetry collections and seven books on criticism. In this poem, the poet has voiced her concerns against the injustice meted out

to the backward classes and castes by the dominant classes and castes in society. She is inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's vision and believes that education will help in overcoming the oppressions that exist in society.

B. The Translator

Vinay Dharwadker is the author of a book of poems, *Sunday at the Lodi Gardens* (1994), and an editor of *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry* (1994). He has published translations of modern Hindi, Marathi, Urdu and Punjabi poetry, as well as essays on literary theory, translation studies and Indian English literature. He teaches Indian languages and literatures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he also serves as the Director of the Centre for South Asia. The deep sentiments of the poet-narrator, which have been so richly depicted in the Marathi original, have been maintained in this English translation as well.

C. The Poem

The poem talks about a Dalit mother, who struggles untiringly for the sake of her child's education. She wants to overcome the poverty faced by her in the near future. Not only does the poet present the harsh realities in the life of a Dalit mother due to poverty, but also the social discrimination that constantly oppresses her.

4.4 I Never Saw You

Ma

I never saw you

in a brand new silk sari

bordered with gold

with a string of golden beads

at your throat

bangles and bracelets on your arms

rubber chappals on your feet

Ma

I saw you...

working in a gang of workers

repairing roads
your bare feet burning
on the burning ground
your child in a bundle of cloth
hung on a thorny tree
while you carried canisters of tar
I saw you...
carrying baskets of earth
with rags wrapped around your feet
giving a sweaty kiss
to the naked child who ran to you
on pattering feet
while you slaved for a scheme
of guaranteed daily wages
I saw you...
dragging a chain of tears behind you
pacifying your belly
helping to build the dam at the lake
while your own lips were parched
tormented by thirst
I saw you...
carefully climbing the scaffolding
of a beautiful new house
your feet swollen with pregnancy
carrying loads
of cement and sand on your head
for the sake of your dream
of a four-walled house of your own

Stop & Think

- “I never saw you...rubber chappals on your feet” depicts the longing in the narrator’s heart
- Note the irony that the one who builds the dam remains thirsty ‘with parched lips’

Pause and Proceed

1. The opening lines depict the narrator’s desire to see her mother dressed well. Why do the lines convey a paradox?

2. Comment on the contrasting images of the ‘dam at the lake’ and the mother’s ‘parched’ lips.

I saw you...

late in the evening

untying the little bundle you had made

with the free end of your sari

to bring home salt and cooking oil

putting a shiny five-paisa coin

in my tiny hand and saying

Go eat what you want

holding the baby in the cradle

to your breast and saying

Get educated like Ambedkar

let the basket of labour

fall from my hands

I saw you...

burning the sticks of your body

lighting a mass

of dry crushed sugarcane for fuel

in the stove

feeding everyone else four *bhakris*

and staying half-hungry yourself

saving only a small piece in your pouch

for later

Stop & Think

- Dr. Ambedkar campaigned for social discrimination against Dalits
- *Bhakri* is a round flat unleavened bread eaten in Maharashtra

Pause and Proceed

1. What is the mother's wish for her child that would change her future as well?

2. Why has the word *Bhakri* been transliterated and not translated?

3. What does the phrase 'burning the sticks of your body' refer to? Why does this English phrase sound strange in this translation?

I saw you...

washing and cleaning in four homes

saying no with dignity
to the leftovers offered there
covering yourself modestly
with the same tattered end of the sari
in which you made your countless little bundles
I saw you...

right in the middle of the town-square

roundly cursing

the mother and sister of any man

who dared to walk past you

with a lecherous gaze

I saw you...

walking through a crowd

with a basket-load of fruit

drawing the end of your sari over your head

picking up and raising your chappal

at anyone who pushed you around

I saw you...

at sunset

after you had carried

a mountain of work all day

your feet turning homeward and slicing

the darkness

angrily throwing out the man

who had come back drunk

I saw you...

on the Long March

striding in front
with your sari drawn tightly around you
shouting
We must change our name
bearing the blow
of a police baton on your arm
entering the jail
with your head held high

Stop and Think

- The mother makes haste and is “slicing the darkness” as she needs to come home and take care of her family’s needs
- Her “long march” is similar to Gandhi’s Dandi March

Pause and Proceed

1. The mother does not forget her responsibilities towards her family. Can you explain her actions towards her family in everyday life?

2. In what way is the mother’s March similar to a March for Freedom?

3. What kinds of problems are faced by the mother as a woman?

4. Translate the following phrases into your mother tongue.

‘roundly cursing’

‘lecherous gaze’

‘slicing the darkness’

I saw you...

saying to your only son

who'd martyred himself in a police firing

You died for Bhima

your life became meaningful

telling the officer defiantly

that if you'd had two or three sons

you would've been more fortunate

you would've fought again

I saw you...

on your deathbed cot

counting your last moments

with a gift to charity

the money you had made and saved

by sifting through waste paper

I saw you...

Live in unity

fight for Babasaheb

build a memorial to him

breathing your last with the words

Jai Bhima on your lips

I never saw you

praying with beads

for a brand new silk sari

Ma

I saw you...

Stop and Think

- “I saw you” is a refrain that reveals the different emotions of the narrator—like anger, weariness, sadness, defeat, etc.
- Notice how the male translator is able to understand the sentiments depicted by a female poet. Is this possible because the protagonist of the poem is a mother?

Pause and Proceed

1. The lines ‘I never saw you’ and ‘I saw you’ are juxtaposed. Why? Translate both these lines into your mother tongue and share your thoughts on how they sound.

2. Dr. Ambedkar is referred to as “Bhima” and “Babasaheb”. What is the purpose of using the different references?

3. How would you explain the charity made by the mother during her last moments?

4.5 Recap


- **Remember** how the poem is structured with run on lines and no division of stanzas
- **Understand** the phrases in the translated text and compare them by translating the text into your mother tongue
- **Think** about the steady flow of language which conveys the life of a Dalit woman and understand the cultural aspects of the poem

UNIT 5

It Will Not Stop (AagaduAagadu)

Gaddar

Translated by Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr & Antara Dev Sen



5.1 Warm Up

India is a nation that had primarily an agricultural economy till the 19th century. Due to industrialization and globalization the working population has shifted from traditional jobs in the villages to jobs in cities. Farmers have to compete with global giants to obtain a fair price for their produce. There is no one to represent hardworking traditional workers like farmers, blacksmith and weavers. Don't you think that the struggle for existence of these people needs to come to an end? Read on...

5.2 Objectives

After reading the poem, you will be able to:

- Explain the struggles of farmers and other working class
- Identify images used by the poet to represent the daily life of a labourer
- Describe the syntactical patterns and word order used in the translation

5.3 Getting Acquainted

A. The Poet

Gummadi Vittal Rao (b.1949), popularly known as Gaddar, is a Telugu poet, balladeer and activist from Telangana. The name *Gaddar* was adopted as a tribute to the pre-independence Gadar party, which opposed British colonial rule in Punjab during the 1910s. Gaddar has made memorable contributions to cinema, TV, and stage drama. He captures the attention of the public by discussing the activities of powerful and powerless people. His cultural performances focus on

socio-political themes and have influenced many young people. Like any Marxist, Gaddar believes that society is always in a dynamic state and the working class will never be silent and will revolt against the system for a better life. So, 'Change' is the underlying theme of his songs.

B. The Translators

ParsaVenkateshwar Rao Jr. is a political journalist based in New Delhi, with a particular interest in human rights issues. He has worked for many leading newspapers and news agencies and is also a translator.

Antara Dev Sen is the daughter of Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen and novelist Nabaneeta Dev Sen. She has worked for many leading newspapers and started her own magazine *The Little Magazine*. She is also a literary critic and translator, a newspaper columnist and commentator on the media, society, politics, culture and development.

As journalists, both the translators are able to correlate the poet's sentiments with the real scenario that exists in the country.

C. The Poem

The poem deals with the struggle between the working class and the landlords. Gaddar believes that the continuing starvation and oppression of the working class will result in an armed struggle against the landlords.

5.4 AagaduAagadu (It Will Not Stop)

It will not stop, it will not stop, it will not stop

This war of hunger will not stop

It will not stop

Until the rule of the looters ends

This armed struggle will not stop

It will not stop

The plough that dug the furrows

Says these furrows are mine

The hands that planted the saplings

Say these saplings are ours

The sickle that cuts the crop

Says this harvest is ours

It will not stop

Stop & Think

- Note the battle cry 'It will not stop' which highlights the urgency and the desperation of the situation.
- Observe how inanimate beings speak the language of human-like the plough, the sickle, etc.
- Images of plough, hands and sickle convey a Marxist base to the poem.

Pause and Proceed

1. Why is the phrase 'It will not stop' repeated thrice in the opening line of the poem?

urgency + desperation

2. Explain the images of the plough, the hands and the sickle claiming the furrows, the saplings and the harvest to be theirs.

The blacksmith's fire is flaring up

The potter's kiln is blazing

hom

The maadiga's tambourine goes dhanadhanadhana

announcing the message in drumbeats

It will not stop

Those who were prostrating themselves

are now **sharpening their daggers**

those who said they were slaves

are now sharpening their crowbars *iron bars*

any robbers and looters who come in the way

will be hacked and piled up

oh brother

it will not stop

Stop & Think

- *Maadiga* is a community of Dalits.
- Sharpening of daggers signifies a struggle that is about to reach new heights

Pause and Proceed

1. Can a person's profession be used as a derogatory term? Explain with reference to this text.

2. Why has the translator transliterated words like *maadiga* and *dhanadhanadhana*

3. Can you name a few other social issues that are currently much talked about?

the **swarm of ants** has moved

the **snake's** heart is shaken with fear

the **sheep** have pounced
the **wolves** have turned tail
the **herds of cows** have moved
the **tigers** have begun to flee
It will not stop

Stop and Think

- Notice the animal imagery used in the closing lines.
- Note the increase in momentum from first stanza to the last stanza.

Pause and Proceed

1. What do the various animals in the text signify?

2. Which line in the poem signifies an ongoing battle?

5.5 Recap

- **Remember and list** the forceful or emphatic words used in the text
- **Understand** the mood conveyed in the poem
- **Think** about the poet's use of animal imagery
- **Create** a list of alternative images that could have been used in the text

5.6 Activities

1. Write a poem in your mother tongue regarding the plight of the working class and see what emotions are portrayed.
2. Compare the working class in India with the working class of a developed nation.

UNIT 6

Let's Weave a Dream (Aao ek Khwaab Bunein)

Sahir Ludhianvi
Translated by NirupamaDutt

6.1 Warm Up

Our former president and eminent scientist Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam spoke about dreams: "Dream is not that which you see while sleeping it is something that does not let you sleep." Achieving success depends on the vision that individuals have and on the steps they take to fulfill their vision. As a developing nation, India requires many young visionaries who can blaze paths of success and place India in a prominent place in the global arena. What is the dream that you have for India?

6.2 Objectives

After reading the poem, you will be able to:

- Identify the poet's concern and explain the need for a meaningful dream
- Analyse the symbolism used in the poem
- Describe the dreams of contemporary youth for India's progress

6.3 Getting Acquainted

A. The Poet

Sahir Ludhianvi (1921–1980) was a bilingual Indian poet and film lyricist who wrote in Hindi and Urdu. He has contributed a lot to Indian cinema, in particular, Bollywood films. He was different from his contemporaries in terms of his choice of themes. He did not praise *Khuda* (God), *Husn* (beauty) or *Jaam* (wine). Instead, he wrote lyrics questioning the lack of values and ethics in politics and society.

B. The Translator

Nirupama Dutt (b. 1955) is a well-known Punjabi writer and translator. She works as Features Editor with *The Tribune*. She has published one volume of poems—*Ik Nadi Sanwali Jahi* (A Stream Somewhat Dark)—for which she was awarded the Delhi Punjabi Akademi Award in 2000. She also translates poetry and fiction. As a poet and translator, she is able to capture the nuances in poetry.

C. The Poem

The poem urges the youth of India to weave meaningful dreams in order to pave the way for individual's success and nation's progress. The poet cautions the readers of the consequences of not dreaming and not reaching greater heights.

6.4 Aao ek Khwaab Bunein (Let's Weave a Dream)

**Come, let's dream a dream for tomorrow
or the dark night of these our brutal times
will dig its fangs into our flesh thus**
that our hearts and souls
will never again be able to
weave a beautiful dream
**Although nimble-footed life has always
raced ahead of us**
we have tried our best
to keep the pace with our dreams
Dreams of lips, of curls, of bodies
of finding perfection in words
of a culture for life
of progress for the nation
dreams of prisons, of executions

dreams, dreams and more dreams...

Dreams were the sole possession

Of our youth

Paving the way for all our action

If these dreams die

life will lose its impulse

and be like a hand

crushed beneath a heavy rock

Come, let's weave a dream for tomorrow...

Stop & Think

- Note the imagery of night as a beast with fangs
- Observe the cautionary note of the poet in the opening lines
- Visualise how "nimble-footed life" is ready to overtake us if we are not bothered to progress

Pause and Proceed

1. The poet warns that the "brutal times will dig its fangs into our flesh". What does the poet mean by "brutal times?" Why does he use the metaphor of "fangs?"

2. Comment on the symbolism used in this poem.

3. Identify the similes and metaphors used in this poem

Stop & Think

- Note how the poet proudly mentions that dreams were their sole possession.
- The Urdu word *Khwaab* means either sleep or dream.

Pause and Proceed

1. Poet says dreams are the sole possession of the youth. Translate the poet's description of dreams into your mother tongue.

2. What would happen if dreams die? What is the imagery used in this context?

6.5 Recap

- **Remember** this poem is short but deep in meaning.
- **Understand** the images used in the translated text.
- **Think** about the long lines used in the source and target languages.
- **Create** a list of words and highlight those words where the nuances of the language are brought out.

6.6 Activities

1. Have you noticed the passion with which the poet calls the youth to weave dreams? Can you recall any other poem or film song, in your mother tongue that has a similar message? Explain in English.
2. Could you share your dreams for your individual progress and for India? Suggest simple steps to ensure the success of your dreams.

UNIT 3

Wind (Kaatru)

Subramania Bharati
Translated by A.K. Ramanujan

3.1 Warm Up

Gentle breeze on a hot summer day is most welcome, but think of the havoc a storm can cause. The wind can create and destroy depending on its intensity. In this poem the poet suggests ways of befriending the wind.

3.2 Objectives

After reading the poem you will be able to:

- Describe how the natural force wind teaches life lessons to humans
- Comprehend the constructive and destructive aspects of nature
- Explain how the poet has personified the wind

3.3 Getting Acquainted

A. The Poet

Chinnaswami Subramania Bharathi (1882–1921) was an Indian writer, poet, journalist, Indian independence activist and social reformer. Popularly known as Bharathiyar or Mahakavi Bharathi, he was a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry and is considered one of the greatest Tamil literary figures of all time. His fiery songs kindled patriotism and nationalism during the Indian Independence movement. Bharathiyar wrote on varied themes covering religious, political and social aspects. He was the forerunner of a forceful kind of poetry that combined classical and contemporary elements. His works have remained popular across generations.

B. The Translator

A.K. Ramanujan is a multilingual poet, translator, folklorist, and philologist. He was a polyglot (proficient in many languages) who wrote in both English and Kannada. His poetry uses modernism

in form and content. His translations have helped foreign readers to appreciate Indian texts. His English translations include: *bhakti* poetry from Tamil, *Virasaiva vacanas* (poetic aphorisms) from Kannada, *bhakti* and court literature from Telugu, folktales and women's oral narratives written in the 19th century, and poetry and prose of India after independence.

C. The Poem

Much like the poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Bharathiyar's poems abound with energy and zeal and that element is visible in this poem as well. That the wind can both be a pleasant visitor as well as a source of destruction, is clearly highlighted in this poem.

3.4 Kaatru(Wind)

Wind, come softly.

Don't break the shutters of the windows.

Don't scatter the papers.

Don't throw down the books on the shelf.

There, look what you did—you threw them all down.

You tore the pages of the books.

You brought rain again.

You're very clever at poking fun at weaklings.

Frail **crumbling** houses, **crumbling** doors, **crumbling** rafters,

crumbling wood, **crumbling** bodies, **crumbling** lives,

crumbling hearts—

the wind god winnows and crushes them all.

He won't do what you tell him.

So, come, let's build strong homes,

Let's joint the doors firmly.

Practise to firm the body.

Make the heart steadfast.

Do this, and the wind will be friends with us.

The wind blows out weak fires.

He makes strong fires roar and flourish.

His friendship is good.

We praise him every day.

Stop & Think

- Note the juxtaposing views of the wind.
- Observe how the wind is scolded for being as naughty as a child.

Pause and Proceed

1. In line 14 Bharathiar invites mankind (*Maanidarae*) to build stronger homes. But why is it that the translated text does not have the word man or mankind?

Stop and Think

- Friendship with natural elements will bring harmony.
- The various actions of the wind can be read both as power and as arrogance.

Pause and Proceed

1. Why do you think Bharathiar has personified the wind as male?

3.5 Recap

- Remember the use of various action words throughout the text
- Understand the change in syntax and word order between the original poem and the translated poem

- **Think** about the need for a translation to convey the meaning as well as retain the rhythm of the poem
- **Create** a list of words from this poem that convey both the meaning and the emotion behind the words

3.6 Activities

1. Create a list of words that have multiple equivalents in Tamil. For example 'life' has multiple equivalents in Tamil *vazhkai*, *uyir*, *vazhvu* and so on.
2. Try translating another nature poem from Tamil to English and compare notes.

3.7 Practise to Perfect

1. In the poem *Wind*, the poet addresses the wind after personifying it and provides words of caution to mankind. The nuances in Tamil are evident in the descriptive words used in the poem. For example, *noyinthu* is translated as crumbling. Identify the words/phrases used in the translation to convey various descriptions. (500 words)

2. Identify and explain instances in the original text and the translated text where you feel the words used are not exact equivalents. (200 words)
