

# The Lost Jewels

Rabindranath Tagore

- “This a story of greed and it reflects on the relationship between a husband and wife and their loveless marriage.”

- The narrator sitting at a ghat when he meets the schoolmaster.
- The schoolmaster asks him a lot of questions and the narrator says he gives the school master a false name.
- The schoolmaster starts narrating the story of one Bhushan Saha who used to live in the house in which he narrator claims he is living now.
- Bhushan Sahan was a educated rich man who had a beautiful wife called Mani.

- Bhushan and his wife lived alone. They did not have any children.
- Bhushan loved his wife a lot and showered her with affection and jewels.
- Mani took this for granted and did not value her husband's love.
- Once, Bhushan's business suffered a loss and he wanted to raise some money by giving his wife's jewels as security.

- Mani however does not want to part with her jewels.
- Though Bhushan is hurt he decides not to talk about the jewels further.
- Bhushan loved Mani but there was no intimacy between them and therefore he found this conversation uncomfortable.
- The schoolmaster suggests that Bhushan's "modernity" had made him too gentle. He should have ideally commanded his wife to give him the jewellery.

- But Bhushan would not do that. He would think that if his wife did not trust him with the jewels he had no right to them.
- Mani did not understand Bhushan. She thought he would force her to part with them.
- So Mani consults her cousin Modhu.
- Modhu, who is lazy and greedy, suggests that she takes the jewels and goes to her father's house.

- Modhu and Mani undertake this journey together by boat.
- Mani does not trust anyone including Modhu so she wears all her jewellery so that someone would have to kill her before taking the jewels.
- Modhu, who is the assistant steward on Bhushan's estate, leaves a letter for the chief steward informing him that he was taking the mistress to her father's home.
- The chief steward informs Bhushan who is upset that even though he did not force her, Mani does not trust him.

- Bhushan thinks that once she has left the jewels she will come back.
- Some days pass but neither Mani nor Modhu return.
- Inquiries are made which bring the news that both of them never reached Mani's father's house.
- Efforts to find them were in vain and Bhushan lost hope of ever finding his wife. He was in despair.



- One rainy evening during Janmashtami, Bhushan was sitting by the window looking outside when he heard the jingling sound of ornaments.
- The sound seemed to be coming from the ghat towards the house. Bhushan heard loud knocks. He tries to open the door but wakes up.
- He realises he has been dreaming.
- He is so desperate that he feels that even a dream of Mani is better than losing her altogether.

- So next day he sits again and waits hoping he will see the same dream again. He has decided to wait till he sees Mani.
- But when the sound comes close he cannot control himself and calls out to her and wakes up again.
- The third day he asks all the servants to leave. he leaves the door open and lies in wait. This time he controls his excitement and waits till the sound comes closer.
- he opens his eyes to see a skeleton standing in front of him wearing gold ornaments. The skeleton's eyes seem to be living.

- The skeleton extends its hand toward Bhushan as if calling out to him.
- Bhushan gets up and follows it as it leads him down to the river.
- Together they go into the river. Bhushan wakes up as his feet touch the river. He slips and falls and drowns.
- Here the school master ends his story.

At last he asked me: “Don't you believe this story?”

I asked: “Do you?”

He (the schoolmaster) said: “No; and I can give you one or two reasons why. In the first place, Dame Nature does not write novels, she has enough to do without —”

I interrupted him and said: “And, in the second place, my name happens to be Bhusan Saha.”

The schoolmaster, without the least sign of discomfiture, said: “I guessed as much. And what was your wife's name?”

I answered: “Nitya Kali.”

- Nitya Kali - a name of Ma Kali
- Nitya Kali means the eternal chaos.

# The end!?

- because he has lied in the beginning how do we know that whether his wife's name is really Nitya Kali.
- this raises a lot of questions
- Is the story's Bhushan real or fictitious?
- is the the mystery man really Bhushan Saha?
- did the school master make up the entire story or only a part of it?

- “the complex questions regarding this issue indicate that there are multiple possible interpretations of the nature of truth and fiction in this ending.”
- “such ambiguity invites varied response from readers and this open ending is a mark of post modern narrative strategy.”
- “thus playing on truth and fiction the author allows the reader to wander into whichever realm he chooses.”

# Genre/style

- A story within a story
- Gothic fiction/gothic horror - combination of both horror and romance
- postmodern narrative strategy (late 19th century onwards)
- open ending - readers' imagination is asked for- allows various interpretations
- “emotional effect and ending remain inconclusive”



- the end is frustrating to some people -“thats it?”
- we have been told what to think- this is the end - this is the moral - this is what the author is trying to say.
- so the lack of a definite ending is very annoying
- the point is to break out from old ways of looking at things at try to think on your own - you get to decide the end.
- like the film inception

# Greed

- Basically the theme of greed is explored through Mani and Modhu
- Greed only leads to downfall
- Mani's love for her jewels does not bring her happiness
- it ruins her marriage and it eventually leads to her death
- *Note: at this point it does not matter if you believe whether the schoolmaster's story was true or false*

# Conventional marital values

- explored through
  - the opinion of the school master
  - the relationship of Bhushan and Mani
- the school master laments about the loss of marital values
- he uses bhushan and mani's marriage to prove his point

- his idea of marriage is rooted in the conventional patriarchal system
  - husband should be dominating
  - wife should be submissive
- But in the modern world this structure does not hold e.g.. Bhushan and Mani's marriage
- he feels that changing this structure is the reason for Bhushan and Mani's failed marriage

# Title

- The point to consider is that what is meant by 'jewels'?
- what is lost here?
- is it the material ornaments that were Mani's prized possessions?
- Or is it the life that vanished as easily as the jewels?

- for Mani - the lost jewels are her jewellery
- for Bhushan - the lost jewels are his wife since he thought of her as a precious jewel

# The School Master

- loves story telling
- takes on the role of the narrator as he recounts the story of Bhushan Saha and his wife
- gives his version of the story
- Intermingles with the story are his ideas on marriage and the role of husband and wife

- His opinions are chauvinistic and orthodox which are typical of that era
- his reliability as a narrator is under question from the beginning as he is eager to narrate a story which took place long before he lived in this place
- the ending of the story re-asks this question



# Bhushan Saha

- representative of the cultured Bengalis of the 1800s
- educated, rich, led a luxurious life
- friendly with British
- His modern education and beautiful wife were a drawback - he would not be able to care for old traditions (which the school master thinks are necessary for a happy life)

- too gentle, too submissive to his wife
- did not have control of his wife and business
- loved his wife but there was a distance between them
- the love had not built up trust
- “incapable of god-given barbarity, he only could be upset with her unfair behaviour, never angry.”

# Mani

- “ woman who belonged to that ancient age which persists through all time.”
- beautiful, yet insensitive; self centred and greedy.
- her only love was for material possessions
- did not recognise, appreciate or reciprocate her husband’s love for her.
- the only things that evokes emotion in her is the threat of her jewels being taken away.

# The Mystery Man at the Ghat (the listener)

- Who is this man?
- Is he really Bhushan Saha as he claims at the end?
- Can he be believed?
- If Bhushan Saha died (like the school master said), is he a ghost?

# Symbolism

- Jewels - material symbol of love of Bhushan for his wife
- represent safety in Mani's lonely and barren life

# Irony

- Bushan showers his wife with jewels to show his love
- the jewels are the cause of her leaving Bhushan and also her death

- Sources referred to:
- <http://fictionarium.in/tagores-lost-jewels/>
- [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com)
- ISC workbook

*a deer chooses.....glances lie idle*

A deer rubs its horns against a hard bark to sharpen them. Rubbing them against a soft bark would not help.

The school master compares this to the relationship of a husband and wife.

Men should be dominating. Women have been taught for centuries that they must do everything to bring men under their control. The school master feels that if a man is gentle/submissive or not dominating, then women would have nothing to do and would lead a boring life.



*I suppose youth is best preserved...ice-box.*

he is suggesting that bhushan's wife is cold hearted.  
She is not sensitive.

An insensitive person will never be affected by  
anything so her beauty untouched.

He is comparing the wife to a beautiful doll. The  
beauty is artificial and surface-level.

*for the loving wife...*

a loving wife will force her husband to remember her and he says that continually being reminded that he has a wife would be tiresome (wear out life's bloom).

the school master feels that if a wife is overly loving and attentive to her husband it is a good quality in her but the husband will find it a nuisance.

- *even the high class hero...*
- he is once again being sarcastic about bhushan saha's "sophistication"
- he says that even a high class hero sometimes has to have serious conversations with his beloved about unromantic things like money.
- he compares this conversation to a song that is out of tune and says that bhushan found this conversation uncomfortable.

- *has god given.....*
- once again he is being critical of Bhushan's gentleness.
- he says that god has given man forcefulness and that Bhushan was wasting this god given gift of dominance by his gentle ideals.
- The ideals refer to Bhushan believing that he did not have the right to take his wife's jewels without her consent.

- *as a general rule...*
- as a rule women understand men much better than men understand women.
- but he says that “modern” men are more complicated than even women to understand.
- modern men refers to gentle, non-barbaric men here.
- he thinks that a man being gentle is unnatural. So women (who instinctively understand most men), do not understand these modern men.

- He says that Mani's idea about men was the typical one. she feels Bhushan would not consider her wishes.
- She has not recognised that her husband is different from other men
- The schoolmaster is implying that Mani fails to understand that her husband would never take her jewels without her permission.

- *her blood froze...*
- Mani's life has revolved round her jewels.
- her thoughts single mindedly are focused on saving her jewels.
- saving her husband does not cross her mind
- this adds to what the school master has already said about her. - she is self centered and avaricious (greedy)

- *Mani did not understand...*
- she mistrusted Modhu. Rightly so because he was greedy.
- her mistake was that she put everyone in that category without giving it a second thought.
- Because she understood only greed, she did not understand a person like Bhushan.



- *when he ought to have been angry...*
- once again the school master is talking about how a typical “man” should behave
- god’s rod of punishment is man - simile: man being compared to a rod
- he says that whenever something wrong happens a man is expected to get angry and burst like a thunderbolt.
- if he doesn’t, he is wasting a good given gift.

- *god has arranged...*
- man will get angry for the smallest reasons
- woman will cry for no reason
- the schoolmaster feels that this cycle has been disturbed by “modern” people. He is not happy about this change.

- *bhushan who ought...*
- the schoolmaster says that bhushan should have been born in an earlier so that he would not have been corrupted by the modern ideas.
- unfortunately for him he was modern but was married to wife who was still primitive in her ideas and thats why the marriage was a disaster.
- the schoolmaster once again does not approve of Bhushan remaining silent about his wife's behaviour.

- he looks at all her things and to him they look dead and lifeless.
- Mani was the one that gave them life.
- without her the room is like a grave.

- *Nature seeing an intruder...*
- personification of the darkness
- as if nature has a home and is protecting it from intruders
- Bhushan trying to see through the darkness is being compared to an intruder into the hall of death.

- *bhushan felt as if...*
- he has understood that what he heard was a dream yet he is so desperate that he wishes that the dream could continue.
- he is desperate to hold on to any thing that takes him closer to Mani, even if it is a figment of his imagination.
- twilight fans - in the 2nd book/movie - Bella puts herself into dangerous situations because in those moments she feels Edward's presence. That's why she jumps into the lake.
- Bhushan's condition at this point is similar.