Class 11

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English Compulsory : Second

Delight & Wisdom

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CLASS XI

(COMPULSORY) BOOK- II

BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
RAJASTHAN, AJMER

TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DELIGHT & WISDOM

CLASS XI

(COMPULSORY) BOOK-II

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Editors

PREFACE

There are four basic objectives of teaching and learning English in India. These include: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, oral expression and written expression. Reading comprehension forms a major component of learning a language; its teaching and learning become more significant when we find that almost all the prestigious competitive examinations of English language accord a substantial weightage to it. A significant improvement in the teaching and learning of reading skills can be brought about if the course content is interesting and relates to the culture of the learner.

The present textbook, aiming at enhancing the learner's extensive reading skills, consists of ten short stories dealing with universal values deeply rooted in the Indian ethos. The textbook, thus, does away with the problem of cultural alienation. Besides, these stories are equally remarkable for their entertainment values. The juxtaposition of entertainment and ethical values in every text aims at the learner's involvement and participation in classroom teaching. Every lesson includes the text of the story, its summary and a set of comprehension questions of different kinds.

I hope the teachers and learners would find the text book useful for improving the competence of students in English language.

The publication could not have become a possibility without the active contribution of the Editors. I am thankful to all of them.

CONVENER

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God Sees the Truth but Waits

In the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov. He had two shops and a house of his own.

Aksionov was a handsome, fair-headed, curly-haired fellow, full of fun, and very fond of singing. When quite a young man he had been given to drink, and was riotous when he had had too much; but after he married he gave up drinking, except now and then.

One summer Aksionov was going to the Nizhny Fair, and as he bade good-bye to his family, his wife said to him, "Ivan, do not start to-day; I have had a bad dream about you."

Aksionov laughed, and said, "You are afraid that when I get to the fair I shall go on a spree."

His wife replied: "I do not know what I am afraid of; all I know is that I had a bad dream. I dreamt you returned from the town, and when you took off your cap I saw that your hair was quite grey."

Aksionov laughed. "That's a lucky sign," said he. "See if I don't sell out all my goods, and bring you some presents from the fair."

So he said good-bye to his family, and drove away.

When he had travelled halfway, he met a merchant whom he knew, and they put up at the same inn for the night. They had some tea together, and then went to bed in adjoining rooms.

It was not Aksionov's habit to sleep late, and, wishing to travel while it was still cool, he aroused his driver before dawn, and told him to put in the horses.

Then he made his way across to the landlord of the inn (who lived in a cottage at the back), paid his bill, and continued his journey.

When he had gone about twenty-five miles, he stopped for the horses to be fed. Aksionov rested awhile in the passage of the inn, then he stepped out into the porch, and, ordering a samovar to be heated, got out his guitar and began to play.

Suddenly a troika drove up with tinkling bells and an official alighted, followed by two soldiers. He came to Aksionov and began to question him, asking him who he was and whence he came. Aksionov answered him fully, and said, "Won't you have some tea with me?" But the official went on cross-questioning him and asking him. "Where did you spend last night? Were you alone, or with a fellow-merchant? Did you see the other merchant this morning? Why did you leave the inn before dawn?"

Aksionov wondered why he was asked all these questions, but he described all that had happened, and then added, "Why do you cross-question me as if I were a thief or a robber? I am travelling on business of my own, and there is no need to question me."

Then the official, calling the soldiers, said, "I am the police-officer of this district, and I question you because the merchant with whom you spent last night has been found with his throat cut. We must search your things."

They entered the house. The soldiers and the police-officer unstrapped Aksionov's luggage and searched it. Suddenly the officer drew a knife out of a bag, crying, "Whose knife is this?"

Aksionov looked, and seeing a blood-stained knife taken from his bag, he was frightened.

"How is it, there is blood on this knife?"

Aksionov tried to answer, but could hardly utter a word, and only stammered: "I- don't know- not mine."

Then the police-officer said, "This morning the merchant was found in bed with his throat cut. You are the only person who could have done it. The house was locked from inside, and no one else was there. There is this blood stained knife in your bag and your face and manner betray you! Tell me how you killed him, and how much money you stole". Aksionov swore he had not done it; that he had not seen the merchant after they had had tea together; that he had no money except eight thousand roubles of his own, and that the knife was not his. But his voice was broken, his face pale, and he trembled with fear as though he went guilty.

The police-officer ordered the soldiers to bind Aksionov and to put him in the cart. As they tied his feet together and flung him into the cart, Aksionov crossed himself and wept. His money and goods were taken from him, and he was sent to the nearest town and imprisoned there. Enquiries as to his character were made in Vladimir. The merchants and other inhabitants of that town said that in former days he used to drink and waste his time, but that he was a good man. Then the trial came on:

he was charged with murdering a merchant from Ryazan, and robbing him of twenty thousand roubles.

His wife was in despair, and did not know what to believe. Her children were all quite small; one was a baby at her breast. Taking them all with her, she went to the town where her husband was in jail. At first she was not allowed to see him; but after much begging, she obtained permission from the officials, and was taken to him. When she saw her husband in prison-dress and in chains, shut up with thieves and criminals, she fell down, and did not come to her senses for a long time. Then she drew her children to her, and sat down near him. She told him of things at home, and asked about what had happened to him. He told her all, and she asked, "What can we do now?"

"We must petition the Czar not to let an innocent man perish."

His wife told him that she had sent a petition to the Czar, but it had not been accepted.

Aksionov did not reply, but only looked downcast.

Then his wife said, "It was not for nothing I dreamt your hair had turned grey. You remember? You should not have started that day." And passing her fingers through his hair, she said: "Ivan dearest, tell your wife the truth; was it not you who did it?"

"So you, too, suspect me!" said Aksionov, and, hiding his face in his hands, he began to weep. Then a soldier came to say that the wife and children must go away; and Aksionov said good-bye to his family for the last time.

When they were gone, Aksionov recalled what had been said, and when he remembered that his wife also had suspected him, he said to himself, "It seems that only God can know the truth; it is to Him alone we must appeal, and from Him alone expect mercy."

And Aksionov wrote no more petitions; gave up all hope, and only prayed to God.

Aksionov was condemned to be flogged and sent to the mines. So he was flogged with a knot, and when the wounds made by the knot were healed, he was driven to Siberia with other convicts.

For twenty-six years Aksionov lived as a convict in Siberia. His hair turned white as snow, and his beard grew long, thin, and grey. All his mirth went; he stooped; he walked slowly, spoke little, and never laughed, but he often prayed.

In prison Aksionov learnt to make boots, and earned a little money, with which he bought *The Lives of the Saints.* He read this book when there was light enough in the prison; and on Sundays in the prison-church he read the lessons and sang in the choir; for his voice was still good.

The prison authorities liked Aksionov for his meekness, and his fellow-prisoners respected him: they called him "Grandfather," and "The Saint." When they wanted to petition the prison authorities about anything, they always made Aksionov their spokesman, and when there were quarrels among the prisoners, they came to him to put things right, and to judge the matter.

No news reached Aksionov from his home, and he did not even know if his wife and children were still alive.

One day a fresh gang of convicts came to the prison. In the evening the old prisoners collected round the new ones and asked them what towns or villages they came from, and what they were sentenced for. Among the rest Aksionov sat down near the newcomers, and listened with downcast air to what was said.

One of the new convicts, a tall, strong man of sixty, with a closely cropped grey beard, was telling the others what he had been arrested for. "Well, friends," he said, "I only took a horse that was tied to a sledge, and I was arrested and accused of stealing. I said I had only taken it to get home quicker, and had then let it go; besides, the driver was a personal friend of mine. So I said, 'It's all right.' 'No,' said they, 'you stole it.' But how or where I stole it they could not say. I once really did something wrong, and ought by rights to have come here long ago, but that time I was not found out. Now I have been sent here for nothing at all... Eh, but it's lies I'm telling you; I've been to Siberia before, but I did not stay long."

"Where are you from?" asked some one.

"From Vladimir. My family are of that town. My name is Makar, and they also call me Semyonich."

Aksionov raised his head and said: "Tell me, Semyonich, do you know anything of the merchants Aksionov of Vladimir? Are they still alive?"

"Know them? Of course I do. The Aksionovs are rich, though their father is in Siberia: a sinner like ourselves, it seems! As for you, Granddad, how did you come here?"

Aksionov did not like to speak of his misfortune. He only sighed, and said, "For my sins I have been in prison these twenty-six years."

"What sins?" asked Makar Semyonich.

But Aksionov only said, "Well, well I must have deserved it!" He would have said no more, but his companions told the newcomers how Aksionov came to be in Siberia; how someone had killed a merchant, and had put the knife among Aksionov's things, and Aksionov had been unjustly condemned.

When Makar Semyonich heard this, he looked at Aksionov, slapped his *own* knee, and exclaimed, "Well, this is wonderful! Really wonderful! But how old you've grown, Granddad!"

The others asked him why he was so surprised, and where he had seen Aksionov before; but Makar Semyonich did not reply. He only said: "It's wonderful that we should meet here, lads!"

These words made Aksionov wonder whether this man knew who had killed the merchant; so he said, "Perhaps, Semyonich, you have heard of that affair, or maybe you've seen me before?"

"How could I help hearing? The world's full of rumours. But it's a long time ago, and I've forgotten what I heard."

"Perhaps you heard who killed the merchant?" asked Aksionov.

Makar Semyonich laughed, and replied: "It must have been him in whose bag the knife was found! If someone else hid the knife there, 'He's not a thief till he's caught,' as the saying is. How could anyone put a knife into your bag while it was under your head? It would surely have woken you up."

When Aksionov heard these words, he felt sure this was the man who had killed the merchant. He rose and went away. All that night Aksionov lay awake. He felt terribly unhappy, and all sorts of images rose in his mind. There was the image of his wife as she was when he parted from her to go to the fair. He saw her as if she were present; her face and her eyes rose before him; he heard her speak and laugh. Then he saw his children, quite little, as they were at that time: one with a little cloak on, another at his mother's breast. And then he remembered himself as he used to be--young and merry. He remembered how he sat playing the guitar in the porch of the inn where he was arrested, and how free from care he had been. He saw, in his mind, the place where he was flogged, the executioner, and the people standing around; the chains, the convicts, all the twenty-six years of his prison life, and his premature old age. The thought of it all made him so wretched that he was ready to kill himself.

- "And it's all that villain's doing!" thought Aksionov. And his anger was so great against Makar Semyonich that he longed for vengeance, even if he himself should perish for it. He kept repeating prayers all night, but could get no peace. During the day he did not go near Makar Semyonich, nor even look at him.

A fortnight passed in this way. Aksionov could not sleep at night, and was so miserable that he did not know what to do.

One night as he was walking about the prison he noticed some earth that came rolling out from under one of the shelves on which the prisoners slept. He stopped to see what it was. Suddenly Makar Semyonich crept out from under the shelf, and looked up at Aksionov with frightened face. Aksionov tried to pass without looking at him, but

Makar seized his hand and told him that he had dug a hole under the wall, getting rid of the earth by putting it into his high-boots, and emptying it out every day on the road when the prisoners were driven to their work.

"Just you keep quiet, old man, and you shall get out too. If you blab, they'll flog the life out of me, but I will kill you first."

Aksionov trembled with anger as he looked at his enemy. He drew his hand away, saying, "I have no wish to escape, and you have no need to kill me; you killed me long ago! As to telling of you-- I may do so or not, as God shall direct."

Next day, when the convicts were led out to work, the convoy soldiers noticed that one or other of the prisoners emptied some earth out of his boots. The prison was searched and the tunnel found. The Governor came and questioned all the prisoners to find out who had dug the hole. They all denied any knowledge of it. Those who knew would not betray Makar Semyonich, knowing he would be flogged almost to death. At last the Governor turned to Aksionov whom he knew to be a just man, and said:

"You are a truthful old man; tell me, before God, who dug the hole?"

Makar Semyonich stood as if he were quite unconcerned, looking at the Governor and not so much as glancing at Aksionov. Aksionov's lips and hands trembled, and for a long time he could not utter a word. He thought, "Why should I screen him who ruined my life? Let him pay for what I have suffered. But if I tell, they will probably flog the life out of him, and maybe I suspect him wrongly. And, after all, what good would it be to me?"

"Well, old man," repeated the Governor, "tell me the truth: who has been digging under the wall?"

Aksionov glanced at Makar Semyonich, and said, "I cannot say, your honour. It is not God's will that I should tell! Do what you like with me; I am in your hands."

However much the Governor tried, Aksionov would say no more, and so the matter had to be left.

That night, when Aksionov was lying on his bed and just beginning to doze, someone came quietly and sat down on his bed. He peered through the darkness and recognised Makar.

What more do you want of me?" asked Aksionov. "Why have you come here?"

Makar Semyonich was silent. So Aksionov sat up and said, "What do you want? Go away, or I will call the guard!"

Makar Semyonich bent close over Aksionov, and whispered, "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!"

"What for?" asked Aksionov.

"It was I who killed the merchant and hid the knife among your things. I meant to kill you too, but I heard a noise outside, so I hid the knife in your bag and escaped out of the window."

Aksionov was silent, and did not know what to say. Makar Semyonich slid off the bed-shelf and knelt upon the ground. "Ivan Dmitrich," said he, "forgive me! For the love of God, forgive me! I will confess that it was I who killed the merchant, and you will be released and can go to your home."

"It is easy for you to talk," said Aksionov, "but I have suffered for you these twenty-six years. Where could I go to now? My wife is dead, and my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go... "

Makar Semyonich did not rise, but beat his head on the floor. "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!" he cried. "When they flogged me with the knot it was not so hard to bear as it is to see you now ... yet you had pity on me, and did not tell. For Christ's sake forgive me, wretch that I am!" And he began to sob.

When Aksionov heard him sobbing, he, too, began to weep.

"God will forgive you!" said he. "Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you." And at these words his heart grew light, and the longing for home left him. He no longer had any desire to leave the prison, but only hoped for his last hour to come.

In spite of what Aksionov had said, Makar Semyonich confessed his guilt. But when the order for his release came, Aksionov was already dead.

- **Leo Tolstoy**

About the Story

'God Sees the Truth but Waits' is a very touching story which carries the theme of guilt and forgiveness. It is about a merchant named, Aksionov who is sent to prison for murdering a merchant, a crime which he has not committed. As a convict in Siberia for twenty six years, Aksinov meets Makar who is the real sinner and he confesses that it is he who has killed the merchant. When Makar asks for his forgiveness, Aksionov not only forgives him but also says, "May be I am a hundred times worse than you are." He is purged of all desires and silently waits for the last hour to come. The concept of the story of a man wrongfully accused of murder and banished to Siberia also appears in one of Tolstoy's previous works, *War and Peace*.

The author Leo Tolstoy is a Russian novelist regarded as one of the greatest of all time. He is best known for his two novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.* He is notable for his ideas of nonviolent resistance expressed through works such as *The Kingdom of God is within You*, which has had a profound influence on Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

Glossary

adjoining: near, next to, neighbouring
accused of: charged to have done a crime
samovar: container for heating water, used specially in Russia for making tea
troika : small Russian carriage pulled by three horses
alighted: got down, dismounted
betray: reveal, disclose
stammered: spoke with sudden pause and a tendency to repeat rapidly the same sound or syllable because of a speech defect or due to fear, excitement etc.
rouble : Russian currency
petition: a formal written request for getting benefit
in despair: state of having lost all hope
downcast: looking downwards, depressed, sad
convict: a person found guilty of a criminal trial
flogged: beaten severely as a punishment with a rod or whip
spree: when someone spends a period of time
unstrapped: unfastened
blab: tell the secret
stooped: bent forward due to old age or some other body defect
executioner: a public official who carries out a death sentence
long: to have a strong desire or wish
longing: intense desire

COMPREHENSION

A. Tick the correct alternative:

1. Aksionov left the first inn early because-
   a) he disliked to stay there.
   b) he did not want to travel with the merchant.
   c) he wanted to travel while it was still cool
   d) he did not want to pay his bill.
2. "And it was all that villain's doing." Who was the villain?
   a) Aksionov
   b) Makar
   c) the merchant
   d) the landlord of the inn.
3. "I once really did something wrong." What had Maker done?
   a) He had stolen the horse.

b) He had killed the merchant in the inn.
c) He had killed the officer.
d) He had killed the landlord of the inn.

B. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. What bad habits did Aksionov have before his marriage?
2. "That's a lucky sign." What was the lucky sign?
3. What did Aksionov do just before he left the first inn?
4. What did the police officer ask his men to do?
5. What was Aksionov accused of by the court?
6. "The Aksionovs are rich." Who do the words "The Aksionovs" here refer to?

C. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. What reason did the Police officer give for asking Aksionov so many questions?
2. Why did Aksionov's wife faint?
3. What did Aksionov ask his wife to do to save him?
4. Why was Makar making a hole under the wall?
5. Why did Makar disclose that he had killed the merchant?

D. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. Why did the officer think that Aksionov had murdered the merchant?
2. Why did Aksionov think of killing himself?
3. What did Makar tell Aksionov about the murder of the merchant?

E. Say whether the following statements are True or False. Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False in the bracket:

1. Aksionov's wife asked him not to go to the Nizhny fair that day. [ ]
2. Aksionov had two shops and a house of his own. [ ]
3. Aksionov usually spoke of his misfortune. [ ]
4. It was Makar who killed the merchant in the inn. [ ]
5. The fellow prisoners did not respect Aksionov. [ ]
6. In prison Aksionov learned to make boots and earned a little money.[ ]

Living Or Dead?

The widow in the house of Saradasankar, the Ranihat zamindar, had no kinsmen of her father's family. One after another all had died. Nor had she in her husband's family any one she could call her own, neither husband nor son. The child of her brother-in-law Saradasankar was her darling. For a long time after his birth, his mother had been very ill, and the widow, his aunt Kadambini, had fostered him. If a woman fosters another's child, her love for him is all the stronger because she has no claim upon him, no claim of kinship, that is, but simply the claim of love. Love cannot prove its claim by any document which society accepts, and does not wish to prove it; it merely worships with double passion its life's uncertain treasure. Thus all the widow's thwarted love went out towards this little child. One night in *Sraban* Kadambini died suddenly. For some reason her heart stopped beating. Everywhere else the world held on its course; only in this gentle little breast, suffering with love, the watch of time stood still forever.

Lest they should be harassed by the police, four of the zamindar's Brahmin servants took away the body, without ceremony, to be burned. The burning-ground of Ranihat was very far from the village. There was a hut beside a tank, a huge banyan near it, and nothing more. Formerly a river, now completely dried up, ran through the ground, and a part of the watercourse had been dug out to make a tank for the performance of funeral rites. The people considered the tank as part of the river and reverenced it as such.

Taking the body into the hut, the four men sat down to wait for the wood. The time seemed so long that two of the four grew restless, and went to see why it did not come. Nitai and Gurucharan being gone, Bidhu and Banamali remained to watch over the body.

It was a dark night of *Sraban.* Heavy clouds hung in a starless sky. The two men sat silent in the dark room. Their matches and lamp were useless. The matches were damp, and would not light for all their efforts, and the lantern went out. After a long silence, one said: 'Brother, it would be good if we had a bowl of tobacco. In our hurry we brought none.'

The other answered: I can run and bring all we want.'

Understanding why Banamali wanted to go, Bidhu said: 'I daresay! Meanwhile, I suppose I am to sit here alone!'

Conversation ceased again. Five minutes seemed like an hour. In their minds they cursed the two who had gone to fetch the wood, and they began to suspect that they sat gossiping in some pleasant nook. There was no sound anywhere, except the incessant noise of frogs and crickets from the tank. Then suddenly they fancied that the bed shook slightly, as if the dead body had turned on its side. Bidhu and Banamali

trembled, and began muttering: 'Ram, Ram.' A deep sigh was heard in the room. In a moment the watchers leapt out of the hut, and raced for the village.

After running about three miles, they met their colleagues coming back with a lantern. As a matter of fact, they *had* gone to smoke, and knew nothing about the wood. But they declared that a tree had been cut down and that, when it was split up, it would be brought along at once. Then Bidhu and Banamali told them what had happened in the hut. Nitai and Gurucharan scoffed at the story, and abused Bidhu and Banamali angrily for leaving their duty.

Without delay all four returned to the hut. As they entered, they saw at once that the body was gone; nothing but an empty bed remained. They stared at one another. Could a jackal have taken it? But there was no scrap of clothing anywhere. Going outside, they saw that on the mud that had collected at the door of the hut there were a woman's tiny footprints, newly made. Saradasankar was no fool, and they could hardly persuade him to believe in this ghost story. So after much discussion the four decided that it would be best to say that the body had been burnt.

Towards dawn, when the men with the wood arrived they were told that, owing to their delay, the work had been done without them: there had been some wood in the hut after all. No one was likely to question this, since a dead body is not such a valuable property that anyone would steal it.

Everyone knows that, even when there is no sign, life is often secretly present, and may begin again in an apparently dead body. Kadambini was not dead; only the machine of her life had for some reason suddenly stopped.

When consciousness returned, she saw dense darkness on all sides. It occurred to her that she was not lying in her usual place. She called out 'Sister,' but no answer came from the darkness. As she sat up, terror-stricken, she remembered her death-bed, the sudden pain at her breast, the beginning of a choking sensation. Her elder sister-in-law was warming some milk for the child, when Kadambini became faint, and fell on the bed, saying with a choking voice: 'Sister, bring the child here. I am worried.' After that everything was black, as when an inkpot is upset over an exercise-book. Kadambini's memory and consciousness, all the letters of the world's book, in a moment became formless. The widow could not remember whether the child, in the sweet voice of love, called her 'Auntie,' as if for the last time, or not; she could not remember whether, as she left the world she knew for death's endless unknown journey, she had received a parting gift of affection, love's passage-money for the silent land. At first, I fancy, she thought the lonely dark place was the House of Yama where there is nothing to see, nothing to hear, nothing to do, only an eternal watch. But when a cold damp wind drove through the open door, and she heard the croaking of frogs, she remembered vividly and in a moment all the pains of her short life, and could feel her kinship with the earth. Then came a flash of lightning, and she saw the tank, the banyan, the great plain, the far-off trees. She remembered how at full moon she had

sometimes come to bathe in this tank, and how dreadful death had seemed when she saw a corpse on the burning-ground.

Her first thought was to return home. But then she reflected: "I am dead. How can I return home? That would bring disaster on them. I have left the kingdom of the living; I am my own ghost!" If this were not so, she reasoned, how could she have got out of Saradasankar's well-guarded zenana, and come to this distant burning ground at midnight? Also, if her funeral rites had not been finished, where had the men gone who should burn her? Recalling her death-moment in Saradasankar's brightly-lit house, she now found herself alone in a distant, deserted, dark burning ground. Surely she was no member of earthly society! Surely she was a creature of horror, of ill-omen, her own ghost!

At this thought, all the bonds were snapped which bound her to the world. She felt that she had marvellous strength, endless freedom. She could do what she liked, go where she pleased. Mad with the inspiration of this new idea, she rushed from the hut but like a gust of wind, and stood upon the burning ground. All trace of shame or fear had left her.

But as she walked on and on, her feet grew tired, her body weak. The plain stretched on endlessly; here and there were paddy-fields; sometimes she found herself standing knee-deep in water.

At the first glimmer of dawn she heard one or two birds cry from the bamboo-clumps by the distant houses. Then terror seized her. She could not tell in what new relation she stood to the earth and to living folk. So long as she had been on the plain, on the burning-ground, covered by the dark night of Sraban, so long she had been fearless, a denizen of her own kingdom. By daylight the homes of men filled her with fear. Men and ghosts dread each other, for their tribes inhabit different banks of the river of death.

Her clothes were clotted in the mud; strange thoughts and walking by night had given her the aspect of a madwoman; truly, her apparition was such that folk might have been afraid of her, and children might have stoned her or run away. Luckily, the first to catch sight of her was a traveller. He came up, and said: "Mother, you look a respectable woman. Where are you going, alone and in this guise?"

Kadambini, unable to collect her thoughts, stared at him in silence. She could not think that she was still in touch with the world, that she looked like a respectable woman, that a traveller was asking her questions.

Again the man said: "Come, mother, I will see you home. Tell me where you live."

Kadambini thought. To return to her father-in-law's house would be absurd, and she had no father's house. Then she remembered the friend of her childhood. She had not seen Jogmaya since the days of her youth, but from time to time they had

exchanged letters. Occasionally there had been quarrels between them, as was only right, since Kadambini wished to make it clear that her love for Jogmaya was unbounded, while her friend complained that Kadambini did not return a love equal to her own. They were both sure that, if they once met, they would be inseparable.

Kadambini said to the traveller: "I will go to Sripati's house at Nisindapur."

As he was going to Calcutta, Nisindapur, though not near, was on his way. So he took Kadambini to Sripati's house, and the friends met again. At first they did not recognise one another, but gradually each recognised the features of the other's childhood.

"What luck!" said Jogmaya. "I never dreamt that I should see you again. But how late you come here, sister? Your father-in-law's folk surely didn't let you go!"

Kadambini remained silent, and at last said: "Sister, do not ask about my father-in-law. Give me a corner, and treat me as a servant: I will do your work."

"What?" cried Jogmaya. "Keep you like a servant! Why, you are my closest friend, you are my –" and so on and so on.

Just then Sripati came in. Kadambini stared at him for some time, and then went out very slowly. She kept her head uncovered, and showed not the slightest modesty or respect. Jogmaya, fearing that Sripati would be prejudiced against her friend, began an elaborate explanation. But Sripati, who readily agreed to anything Jogmaya said, cut short her story, and left his wife uneasy in her mind.

Kadambini had come, but she was not at one with her friend: death was between them. She could feel no intimacy for others so long as her existence perplexed her and consciousness remained. Kadambini would look at Jogmaya, and brood. She would think: 'She has her husband and her work, she lives in a world far away from mine. She shares affection and duty with the people of the world; I am an empty shadow. She is among the living; I am in eternity.

Jogmaya also was uneasy, but could not explain why. Women do not love mystery, because, though uncertainty may be transmuted into poetry, into heroism, into scholarship, it cannot be turned to account in household work. So, when a woman cannot understand a thing, she either destroys and forgets it, or she shapes it anew for her own use; if she fails to deal with it in one of these ways, she loses her temper with it. The greater Kadambini's abstraction became, the more impatient was Jogmaya with her, wondering what trouble weighed upon her mind.

Then a new danger arose. Kadambini was afraid of herself; yet she could not flee from herself. Those who fear ghosts fear those who are behind them; wherever they cannot see there is fear. But Kadambini's chief terror lay in herself, for she dreaded nothing external. At the dead of night, when alone in her room, she screamed; in the evening, when she saw her shadow in the lamp-light, her whole body shook. Watching

her fearfulness, the rest of the house fell into a sort of terror. The servants and Jogmaya herself began to see ghosts.

One midnight, Kadambini came out from her bedroom weeping, and wailed at Jogmaya's door: "Sister, sister, let me lie at your feet! Do not put me by myself!"

Jogmaya's anger was no less than her fear. She would have liked to drive Kadambini from the house that very second. The good-natured Sripati, after much effort, succeeded in quieting their guest, and put her in the next room.

Next day Sripati was unexpectedly summoned to his wife's apartments. She began to upbraid him: “You, do you call yourself a man? A woman runs away from her father-in-law, and enters your house; a month passes, and you haven't hinted that she should go away, nor have I heard the slightest protest from you. I should take it as a favour if you would explain yourself. You men are all alike."

Men, as a race, have a natural partiality for womankind in general, for which women themselves hold them accountable. Although Sripati was prepared to touch Jogmaya's body, and swear that this kind feeling towards the helpless but beautiful Kadambini was no whit greater than it should be, he could not prove it by his behaviour. He thought that her father-in-law's people must have treated this forlorn widow abominably, if she could bear it no longer, and was driven to take refuge with him. As she had neither father nor mother, how could he desert her?

So saying, he let the matter drop, for he had no mind to distress Kadambini by asking her unpleasant questions.

His wife, then, tried other means of attack upon her sluggish lord, until at last he saw that for the sake of peace, he must send word to Kadambini's father-in-law. The result of a letter, he thought, might not be satisfactory; so he resolved to go to Ranihat, and act on what he learnt.

So Sripati went, and Jogmaya on her part said to Kadambini "Friend, it hardly seems proper for you to stop here any longer. What will people say? "

Kadambini stared solemnly at Jogmaya, and said: "What have I to do with people?"

Jogmaya was astounded. Then she said sharply: "If you have nothing to do with people, we have. How can we explain the detention of a woman belonging to another house?"

Kadambini said: "Where is my father-in-law's house?"

"Confound it!" thought Jogmaya. "What will the wretched woman say next?"

Very slowly Kadambini said: "What have I to do with you? Am I of the earth? You laugh, weep, love; each grips and holds his own; I merely look. You are human, I a shadow. I cannot understand why God has kept me in this world of yours."

So strange were her look and speech that Jogmaya understood something of her drift, though not all. Unable either to dismiss her, or to ask her any more questions, she went away, oppressed with thought.

It was nearly ten o'clock at night when Sripati returned from Ranihat. The earth was drowned in torrents of rain. It seemed that the downpour would never stop, that the night would never end.

Jogmaya asked: "Well?"

"I've lots to say, presently."

So saying, Sripati changed his clothes, and sat down to supper; then he lay dawn for a smoke. His mind was perplexed.

His wife stilled her curiosity for a long time; then she came to his couch and demanded: "What did you hear?"

"That you have certainly made a mistake."

Jogmaya was nettled. Women never make mistakes, or, if they do, a sensible man never mentions them; it is better to take them on his own shoulders. Jogmaya snapped: "May I be permitted to hear how?"

Sripati replied: "The woman you have taken into your house is not your Kadambini."

Hearing this, she was greatly annoyed, especially since it was her husband who said it. "What! I don't know my own friend? I must come to you to recognise her! You are clever, indeed!"

Sripati explained that there was no need to quarrel about his cleverness. He could prove what he said. There was no doubt that Jogmaya's Kadambini was dead.

Jogmaya replied: "Listen! You've certainly made some huge mistake. You've been to the wrong house, or are confused as to what you have heard. Who told you to go yourself? Write a letter, and everything will be cleared up."

Sripati was hurt by his wife's lack of faith in his executive ability; he produced all sorts of proof, without result. Midnight found them still asserting and contradicting. Although they were both agreed now that Kadambini should be got out of the house, although Sripati believed that their guest had deceived his wife all the time by a pretended acquaintance, and Jogmaya that she was a prostitute, yet in the present

discussion neither would acknowledge defeat. By degrees their voices became so loud that they forgot that Kadambini was sleeping in the next room.

The one said: "We're in a nice fix! I tell you, I heard it with my own ears!" And the other answered angrily: "What do I care about that? I can see with my own eyes, surely."

At length Jogmaya said: "Very well. Tell me when Kadambini died." She thought that if she could find a discrepancy between the day of death and the date of the letter from Kadambini, she could prove that Sripati erred.

He told her the date of Kadambini's death, and they both saw that it fell on the very day before she came to their house. Jogmaya's heart trembled, even Sripati was not unmoved.

Just then the door flew open; a damp windswept in and blew the lamp out. The darkness rushed after it, and filled the whole house. Kadambini stood in the room. It was nearly one o'clock, the rain was pelting outside.

Kadambini spoke: "Friend, I am your Kadambini, but I am no longer living. I am dead."

Jogmaya screamed with terror; Sripati could not speak.

"But, save in being dead, I have done you no wrong. If I have no place among the living, I have none among the dead. Oh! whither shall I go?"Crying as if to wake the sleeping Creator in the dense night of rain, she asked again: ‘Oh! whither shall I go?’

So saying Kadambini left her friend fainting in the dark house, and went out into the world, seeking her own place.

It is hard to say how Kadambini reached Ranihat. At first she showed herself to no one, but spent the whole day in a ruined temple, starving. When the untimely afternoon of the rains was pitch-black, and people huddled into their houses for fear of the impending storm, then Kadambini came forth. Her heart trembled as she reached her father-in- law's house; and when, drawing a thick veil over her face, she entered, none of the doorkeepers objected, since they took her for a servant. And the rain was pouring down, and the wind howled.

The mistress, Saradasankar's wife, was playing cards with her widowed sister. A servant was in the kitchen, the sick child was sleeping in the bedroom. Kadambini, escaping every one's notice, entered this room. I do not know why she had come to her father-in-law's house; she herself did not know; she felt only that she wanted to see her child again. She had no thought where to go next, or what to do.

In the lighted room she saw the child sleeping, his fists clenched, his body wasted with fever. At sight of him, her heart became parched and thirsty. If only she

could press that tortured body to her breast! Immediately the thought followed: "I do not exist. Who would see it? His mother loves company, loves gossip and cards. All the time that she left me in charge, she was herself free from anxiety, nor was she troubled about him in the least. Who will look after him now as I did?"

The child turned on his side, and cried, half-asleep: "Auntie, give me water." Her darling had not yet forgotten his auntie! In a fever of excitement, she poured out some water, and, taking him to her breast, she gave it him.

As long as he was asleep, the child felt no strangeness in taking water from the accustomed hand. But when Kadambini satisfied her long-starved longing, and kissed him and began rocking him asleep again, he awoke and embraced her. "Did you die, Auntie?" he asked.

"Yes, darling."

"And you have come back? Do not die again."

Before she could answer disaster overtook her. One of the maidservants coming in with a cup of sago dropped it, and fell down. At the crash the mistress left her cards, and entered the room. She stood like a pillar of wood, unable to flee or speak. Seeing all this, the child, too, became terrified, and burst out weeping: “Go away, Auntie," he said, "go away!"

Now at last Kadambini understood that she had not died. The old room, the old things, the same child, the same love, all returned to their living state, without change or difference between her and them. In her friend's house she had felt that her childhood's companion was dead. In her child's room she knew that the boy's "Auntie" was not dead at all. In anguished tones she said: "Sister, why do you dread me? See, I am as you knew me."

Her sister-in-law could endure no longer, and fell into a faint. Saradasankar himself entered the zenana. With folded hands, he said piteously: "Is this right? Satis is my only son. Why do you show yourself to him? Are we not your own kin? Since you went, he has wasted away daily; his fever has been incessant; day and night he cries: `Auntie, Auntie.' You have left the world; break these bonds of maya (Illusory affection binding a soul to the world). We will perform all funeral honours."

Kadambini could bear no more. She said: "Oh, I am not dead, I am not dead. Oh, how can I persuade you that I am not dead? I am living,living!" She lifted a brass pot from the ground and dashed it against her forehead. The blood ran from her brow. "Look!" she cried, "I am living!" Saradasankar stood like an image; the child screamed with fear, the two fainting women lay still.

Then Kadambini, shouting "I am not dead, I am not dead," went down the steps to the zenana well, and plunged in. From the upper storey Saradasankar heard the splash.

All night the rain poured; it poured next day at dawn, was pouring still at noon. By dying, Kadambini had given proof that she was not dead.

- Rabindranath Tagore

About the Story

'Living or Dead?' is a sensitive story about love, betrayal and superstition. The story traces the journey of a widow Kadambini from a long, caring aunt to a dreaded ghost. It powerfully exposes the oppressiveness of a system that considers a woman as burden the moment her husband dies. The pathos of Kadambini vacillating between the two worlds of living and dead is intensely brought out. A satire on society, the story hints at our callousness also in ignoring a living woman and showing reverence to the dead ones.

The story is written by Rabindra Nath Tagore, a great Indian poet, short story writer, playwright, essayist, novelist and painter. He was bestowed with Nobel prize for literature in 1913.

Glossary

foster: nurture
thwarted: defeated, disappointed
reverenced: regarded with feelings of respect
fancied: conceived by the imagination
incessant: without stopping
scoffed: laughed at
transmuted: transformed, changed
abominably: in a hateful manner
detention: hold, a state of being confined
summoned: ask to come
solemnly: in a serious manner
pelting: anything happening rapidly, rain heavily
impending: about to occur
sago: powdry starch used as a food thickener
clenched: closed tightly
parched: dried out

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. Jogmaya is Kadambini's_____
   (a) Sister
   (b) Aunt
   (c) Sister-in-law
   (d) Childhood friend
2. The place where Kadambini lives with her in-laws is _____

(a) Nisindapur
(b) Ranihat
(c) Durgahat
(d) Mohinihat

3. Kadambini plunges herself into a _____
   (a) well
   (b) river
   (c) sea
   (d) stream

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. Why does Kadambini love her brother-in-law's son so much?
2. Why does the child ask Kadambini to go away?
3. Why does Kadambini leave her friend's house?
4. What is Kadambini taken for after she goes back to her in-law's house?
5. Why does Zamidar decide to burn the body of Kadambini without ceremony?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. Why does the author say, "If a woman fosters another's child, her love for him is all the more stronger?"
2. Why do Nitai and Gurucharan abuse Bidhu and Banamali?
3. What is one of the maid servant's reaction when she sees Kadambini back in the house?
4. Why is Sripati perplexed when he returns from Ranihat?
5. Why does Jogmaya upbraid her husband?

(D) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. Trace the journey of Kadambini from a loving, caring aunt to a dead, dreadful ghost.
2. Discuss 'Living or Dead?' as a story of love and betrayal.

(E) Say whether the following are true or false. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false in the bracket.

1. Kadambini is a childless widow. [ ]
2. The child does not love Kadambini. [ ]
3. A Jackal takes away the body of Kadambini. [ ]
4. The child that Kadambini loves is the son of her brother. [ ]
5. By dying Kadambini gives proof that she is not dead. [ ]

Out of Business

Little over a year ago Rama Rao went out of work when a gramophone company, of which he was the Malgudi agent, went out of existence. He had put into that agency the little money he had inherited, as security. For five years his business brought him enough money, just enough, to help him keep his wife and children in good comfort. He built a small bungalow in the extension and was thinking of buying an old baby car for his use.

And one day, it was a bolt from the blue, the crash came. A series of circumstances in the world of trade, commerce, banking and politics was responsible for it. The gramophone company, which had its factory somewhere in Northern India, automatically collapsed when a bank in Lahore crashed, which was itself the result of a Bombay financier's death. The financier was driving downhill when his car flew off sideways and came to rest three hundred feet below the road. It was thought that he had committed suicide because the previous night his wife eloped with his cashier.

Rama Rao suddenly found himself in the streets. At first he could hardly understand the full significance of this collapse. There was little money in the bank and he had some stock on hand. But the stock moved out slowly; the prices were going down, and he could hardly realize a few hundred rupees. When he applied for the refund of his security, there was hardly anyone at the other end to receive his application.

The money in the bank was fast melting. Rama Rao's wife now tried some measures of economy. She sent away the cook and the servant; withdrew the children from a fashionable nursery school and sent them to a pre primary school. And they let out their bungalow and moved to a very small house behind the Market.

Rama Rao sent out a dozen applications a day, and wore his feet out looking for employment. For a man approaching forty, looking for employment does not come very easily, especially when he has just lost an independent, lucrative business. Rama Rao was very business-like in stating his request. He sent his card in and asked, 'I wonder, sir, if you could do something for me. My business is all gone through no fault of my own. I shall be very grateful if you can give me something to do in your office

What a pity, Rama Rao! I am awfully sorry, there is nothing at present. If there is an opportunity I will certainly remember you.'

It was the same story everywhere. He returned home in the evening; his heart sank as he turned into his street behind the Market. His wife would invariably be standing at the door with the children behind her, looking down the street. What anxious, eager faces they had! So much of trembling, hesitating hope in their faces. They seemed always to hope that he would come back home with some magic fulfillment. As he remembered the futile way in which he searched for a job, and the

finality with which people dismissed him, he wished that his wife and children had less trust in him. His wife looked at his face, understood, and turned in without uttering a word; the children took the cue and filed in silently. Rama Rao tried to improve matters with a forced heartiness. 'Well' well. How are we all today? To which he received mumbling feeble responses from his wife and children. It rent his heart to see them in this condition. There at the Extension how this girl would sparkle with flowers. She had friendly neighbours, a women's club, and something to keep her happy there. But now she hardly had the heart or the need to change in the evenings, for she spent all her time cooped up in the kitchen. The house in the Extension had a compound and they romped about with a dozen other children: it was possible to have numerous friends in the fashionable nursery school!. But here the children had no friends, and could play only in the backyard of the house. Their shirts were beginning to show tears and frays. Formerly they were given new clothes once in three months. Rama Rao lay in bed and spent sleepless nights over it.

All the cash in hand was now gone. Their only source of income was the small rent they were getting for their house in the Extension. They shuddered to think what would happen to them if their tenant should suddenly leave.

It was in this connection that Rama Rao came across a journal in the Jubilee Reading Room. It was called *The Captain.* It consisted of four pages and all of them were devoted to crossword puzzles. It offered every week a first prize of four thousand rupees.

For the next few days, his head was free from family cares. He was intensely thinking of his answer. Whether it should be TALLOW or FALLOW, whether BAD or MAD or SAD would be most apt for a clue which said, 'Men who are this had better be avoided'. He hardly stopped to look at his wife and children standing in the doorway, when he returned home in the evenings. Week after week he invested a little money and sent down his solutions, and every week he awaited the results with a palpitating heart. On the day a solution was due he hung about the newsagent's shop, worming himself into his favour in order to have a look into the latest issue of *The Captain* without paying for it. He was too impatient to wait till the journal came on the table in the Jubilee Reading Room. Sometimes the newsagent would grumble, and Rama Rao would pacify him with an awkward, affected optimism. 'Please wait. When I get a prize I will give you three years' subscription in advance.' His heart quailed as he opened the page announcing the prize winners. Someone in Baluchistan, someone in Dacca, and someone in Ceylon had hit upon the right set of words; not Rama Rao. It took three hours for Rama Rao to recover from this shock. The only way to exist seemed to be to plunge into the next week's puzzle: that would keep him buoyed up with hope for a few days more.

This violent alternating between hope and despair soon wrecked his nerves and balance. At home he hardly spoke to anyone. His head was always bowed in thought. He quarrelled with his wife if she refused to give him his rupee a week for the puzzles. She was of a mild disposition and was incapable of a sustained quarrel, with the result

that he always got what he wanted, though it meant a slight sacrifice in household expenses.

One day the good journal announced a special offer of eight thousand rupees. It excited Rama Rao's vision of a future tenfold. He studied the puzzle. There were only four doubtful corners in it, and he might have to send in at least four entries. A larger outlay was indicated. 'You must give me five rupees this time', he said to his wife, at which that good lady became speechless. He had become rather insensitive to such things these days, but even he could not help feeling the atrocious nature of his demand. Five rupees were nearly a week's food for the family. He felt disturbed for a moment; but he had only to turn his attention to speculate whether HOPE or DOPE or ROPE made most sense (for 'Some People Prefer This to Despair'), and his mind was at once at rest.

After sending away the solutions by registered post he built elaborate castles in the air. Even if it was only a share he would get a substantial amount of money. He would send away his tenants, take his wife and children back to the bungalow in the Extension, and leave all the money in his wife's hands for her to manage for a couple of years or so; he himself would take a hundred and go away to Madras and seek his fortune there. By the time the money in his wife's hands was spent, he would have found some profitable work in Madras.

On the fateful day of results Rama Rao opened The *Captain,* and the correct solution stared him in the face. His blunders were numerous. There was no chance of getting back even a few annas now. He moped about till the evening. The more he brooded over this the more intolerable life seemed.... All the losses, disappointments and frustrations of the life came down on him with renewed force. In the evening instead of turning homeward he moved along the Railway Station Road. He slipped in at the level crossing and walked down the line a couple of miles. It was dark. Far away the lights of the town twinkled, and the red and green light of a signal post loomed over the surroundings a couple of furlongs behind him. He had come to the conclusion that life was not worth living. If one had the misfortune to be born in the world the best remedy was to end matters on a railway line or with a rope ('Dope? Hope?' his mind asked involuntarily). He pulled it back. 'None of that', he said to it and set it rigidly to contemplate the business of dying. Wife, children ... nothing seemed to matter. The only important thing now was total extinction. He lay across the lines. The iron was still warm. The day had been hot. Rama Rao felt very happy as he reflected that in less than ten minutes the train from Trichinopoly would be arriving.

He lay there he did not know how long. He strained his ears to catch the sound of the train, but he heard nothing more than a vague rattling and buzzing far off... Presently he grew tired of lying down there. He rose and walked back to the station. There was a good crowd on the platform. He asked someone, 'What has happened to the train?'

'A goods train has derailed three stations off, and the way is blocked. They have sent up a relief. All the trains will be at least three hours late today...?

'God, you have shown me mercy!' Rama Rao cried and ran home.

His wife was waiting at the door looking down the street. She brightened up and sighed with relief on seeing Rama Rao. She welcomed him with warmth he had never known for over a year now. 'Oh, why are you so late today?' she asked. I was somehow feeling very restless the whole evening. Even the children were worried. Poor creatures! They have just gone to sleep'.

When he sat down to eat she said, 'Our tenants in the Extension bungalow came in the evening to ask if you would sell the house. They are ready to offer good cash for it immediately'. She added quietly, 'I think we may sell the house'.

'Excellent idea,' Rama Rao replied jubilantly. 'This minute we can get four and a half thousand for it. Give me the half thousand and I will go away to Madras and see if I can do anything useful there. You keep the balance with you and run the house. Let us first move to a better locality...'

'Are you going to employ your five hundred to get more money out of crossword puzzles?' she asked quietly. At this Rama Rao felt depressed for a moment and then swore with great emphasis, 'No, no. Never again'.

- **R.K.Narayan**

About the Story

'Out of Buisness', written by R.K.Narayan, narrates the story of Rama Rao who becomes jobless because the company he works for as an agent, collapses. Unable to get any job, he baffles himself with crossword puzzles which never win him prizes. Subsequently, he decides to put an end to his life but by God's grace the train is late and he gets sufficient time to change his mind and decides to begin his life afresh.

The author R.K. Narayan is one of the most renowned Indian writers writing in English. The setting for most of his stories is the fictional town of Malgudi. His novel *The Guide* won him the Sahitya Academi Award in 1960.

Glossary

inherit: obtain from someone after his/her death

bolt from the blue: a complete unpleasant surprise
collapse: an abrupt failure of function
elope: run away secretly
invariably: always
feeble: week
palpitate: beat(heart)rapidly
buoy: make one feel cheerful in a difficult situation
quail: draw back with fear
pacify: appease, to make calm
to wear one's feet out: to walk a lot
atrocious: shockingly cruel
speculate: to believe with an element of doubt, to guess
mope: to be in sad, gloomy mood
loom: appear threatingly
rattling: a rapid series of short loud sound
jubilantly: in a joyous manner
fray: when fibres or threads start to come apart from each other

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. The protagonist of the story is-
   (a) Rama Rao
   (b) Rama Rao's wife
   (c) Rama Rao' children
   (d) the financier
2. The company Rama Rao works for is----------
   (a) Rama Rao
   (b) a mobile company
   (c) a gramophone company
   (d) a television company
   (e) none of these
3. Rama Rao's wife is always waiting at\in
   (a) the door
   (b) the street
   (c) the house
   (d) the railway station

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. Why does Rama Rao's wife withdraw her children from expensive nursery school?
2. Where does Rama Rao start investing his money after his business gets ruined?
3. "All the losses, disappointments, and frustrations of the life come down on him (Rama Rao) with renewed force." Why?
4. Who does want to buy Extension bungalow?
5. What does Rama Rao want to do with the money he is going to get after he has sold the house?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. Why do the children of Rama Rao wait for him with eager faces?
2. Why does Rama Rao demand money from his wife?
3. Why does the train get late?
4. Why is Rama Rao very happy when his wife informs him that the tenants are ready to buy their bungalow?
5. What does Rama Rao decide to do after he has got money by selling the house?

(D) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. Write a note on the unstable world of commerce hinted at in the story.
2. Attempt a character sketch of Rama Rao.

(E) Say whether the following statements are true or false. Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False:

1. Rama Rao's wife feels happy when her husband invests money in cross word puzzles. [ ]
2. Rama Rao commits suicide. [ ]
3. The wife and children of Rama Rao have faith in him. [ ]
4. Rama Rao has a loving wife. [ ]
5. Rama Rao is hopeful every time he sends the solutions to the puzzles. [ ]

The Boss Came to Dinner

Mr. Shamnath had invited his boss to dinner. Neither he nor his wife could pause even to wipe the perspiration from their faces. The wife, in a dressing gown, her tangled hair tied in a knot, her make-up all smudged, and he, pencil and paper in hand and smoking cigarette after cigarette, ran from room to room, ticking off items in a long list.

By five, they had succeeded in putting some kind of order into the arrangements. Chairs, tables, side tables, napkins, flowers, they were all there in the verandah, neatly arranged. Now they turned their attention to the bric-a-brac in the room, either shifting them behind the almirahs or shoving them under the bedsteads. Suddenly a problem reared up before Shamnath. What about mother? Till now neither he nor his wife had thought of it. Shamnath turned on his heels and asked his wife in English: ‘And what about mother?

The wife, interrupting her work, did some hard thinking. 'We'll send her to the neighbours. She can stay there for the night. We'll bring her back tomorrow.' Shamnath, screwed up his eyes and looked at her thoughtfully. 'No, that won't do. I want to give a wide berth to that next-door hag. If mother stays the night with her, she will again start coming to our house. I tell you what. We will tell mother to finish her meal early and retire to her room. The guests won't start coming before eight.'

The proposition sounded right. But suddenly the wife said, ‘But if she falls asleep and starts snoring! Then? Her room is next to where dinner will be served.’

‘We'll ask her to close the door and I'll lock it from the outside. Or, better still, I'll ask mother not to fall asleep. She must keep awake and sitting.’

‘But suppose she does fall asleep. You never know how long dinner will last. In any case, you can't leave the bar before eleven.’

Shamnath threw up his hands in irritation. ‘She was going to visit her brother and you stuck your nose in. Wanted to keep up appearances before your friends. Now what do we do?’

'Tchah! Why should I earn a bad name by coming between mother and son? I wash my hands of this affair. Do as you please.'

Mr. Shamnath held his peace. This was no time for bandying words, but for cool thinking. He turned round and looked at mother's room. Her room opened onto the verandah. As his gaze swept over the verandah, a thought flashed through his mind, ‘I’ve got it!’ he said. Promptly he strode towards mother's room. With her back against the wall, mother was sitting on a low wooden chowki, her face almost covered with the dopatta. She was telling her beads. Since morning she had been nervous at the goings-

on in the house. The big boss from her son's office was coming to their house, and she was anxious that everything should go well.

‘Mother, finish your meal early this evening. The guests will be here at seven-thirty.’

Mother slowly uncovered her face and looked at her son. ‘Son, I won't take my meal today. You know very well I don't eat when flesh is cooked in the house.’

‘Anyway, anyway, retire to your room early.’

‘All right, son.’

‘And, mother, I will receive the guests in the drawing room; till then you stay in the verandah. When we move into the verandah, you will quietly slip into the drawing room through the bathroom.’

For an instant mother looked at her son; then she said faintly, 'All right, son.'

'One thing more, mother. Do not go to sleep early, as you do. Your snores carry far.'

‘I can't help it, son,' she said, ashamed. 'I have difficulty in breathing since my last illness.’

Mr Shamnath had fixed everything. But he still felt anxious. The arrangement did not seem foolproof. What if the boss took into his head to step into the verandah? There would be about ten guests, mostly his Indian colleagues and their wives. Any one of them might like to use the bathroom. Oh, what a nuisance! He brought up a chair and placing it by the door said, 'Mother, let's see how you look in this chair.'

Mother nervously fingered her beads, adjusted her dopatta over her head, and sat down in the chair.

‘He Bhagavan! No, mother, no! Not like this. Not with your feet up. It's not a cot. It's a chair, a chair.’

Mother dangled her feet.

'And please, please, mother, don't walk about barefoot. And don't wear those wooden sandals of yours. One day I'll throw them away.'

Mother was silent.

'And what will you wear, mother?'

'I'll wear what I have. I'll wear what you ask me to.'

Mr Shamnath inspected his mother with half-closed eyes, trying to decide what his mother should be made to wear for the occasion. He was a stickler for discipline in the house; he had the final say in everything. Where the pegs should be fixed in the walls, in what corner the bedsteads should be placed, what should be the colour of the curtains, which sari his wife should put on, what should be the design of the tables- Mr Shamnath was meticulous about the smallest detail. He looked at mother from head to foot, and said, 'Better wear white kameez and salwar. Just go and dress up. Let's see how you look in them.'

Mother got up slowly and went into her room.

Shamnath turned to his wife and said in English, 'Mother is a problem! There's no end to her oddities. If something goes wrong and the boss is offended, you know what will happen.'

Mother came out in white kameez and white salwar. Short, shrivelled, lack-lustre eyes, only half of her sparse hair covered with the dopatta, she looked only slightly improved.

Shamnath looked at her dubiously. That will do. If you have any bangles, put them on too.'

'I have no bangles, son, you know that. I had to sell all my jewellery for your education.'

'All right, all right! Why do you make a song about it, mother?' he said. 'Why carry on about it? Just say that you don't have any. Why bring in the question of my education? The jewellery was sold to good purpose, wasn't it? I'm not a loafer, am I? I'll pay you back double what you spent on me.'

'May my tongue be reduced to ashes, son! Does a mother ever ask a son to pay back? I did not mean it. Don't misunderstand me. Had I the bangles, I would have worn them all the time. But I don't have them.'

Now it was past five-thirty. Mr Shamnath had to take his bath and get into his dinner suit. His wife was getting ready in her room. Before leaving, Shamnath again instructed his mother, 'Mother, don't sit silent as you always do. If the Sahib comes your way and asks you anything, reply to him properly. I'll tell you what to say.'

'I am illiterate, son. I can neither read nor write. You can tell them that your mother is ignorant, if that helps.'

As time passed, mother's heart started pounding heavily. If the boss came to her and asked her some question, what would she say? She was scared of English Sahibs even from a distance, and this one, they said, was an American. God only knew what sort of questions American Sahibs asked. She felt like going away to her widow-friend,

but she lacked the courage to defy her son's orders. She kept sitting there, dangling her legs from the chair.

Mr Shamnath's dinner had reached the crescendo of success. The topics changed with every change of glasses. Everything was going superbly. The Sahib liked the Indian dishes and the Memsahib the curtains, the sofa covers, the decor. What more could the hosts ask for? The Sahib had shed his reserve and was regaling the audience with anecdotes. He was as jovial now as he was strict in the office. His wife, in a black gown, a rope of pearls round her neck, wearing a loud perfume, was the cynosure of the female guests. She laughed, she nodded; she was ***so*** free with Mrs Shamnath and with the men; as if they were old friends.

Nobody realized how time flew; it was now ten-thirty.

They came out of the drawing room, Mr Shamnath leading the way and the boss and the other guests following.

Reaching the verandah, Mr Shamnath stopped short. What he saw made him weak in the legs. His smile vanished. Outside her room mother was sitting exactly as he had left her, but both her feet were on the seat and her head swayed from side to side. She snored heavily. When her head fell to one side, her snores became louder, and when she awoke with a jolt she again started swaying from side to side. The end of her dopatta had slipped from her head and her thin hair lay in confusion over the bald portion of her head.

Mr Shamnath seethed with anger. He felt like giving her a wild shaking and then pushing her into her room. But the boss and the other guests were standing by what could he do?

The wives of the other guests tittered and the boss said, 'Poor dear.'

Mother woke up, flustered. Seeing so many people around her, she got so confused that she could not utter a word. She covered her head, and getting up awkwardly she stood before them with downcast eyes. Her legs shook; her fingers trembled.

'Mother, go to sleep. Why do you keep awake so late?' Ashamed, he looked at the boss.

The boss was in an expansive mood. He smiled, and said, 'Namaste.'

Mother almost shrank into herself. Hesitantly she tried to fold her hands in greeting. But one hand was inside the dopatta, with which she held her beads, and her effort looked clumsy. Shamnath was annoyed.

The boss extended his right hand. Mother looked at it, alarmed.

'Mother, shake hands with the Sahib!'

But how could she? She was holding the beads in her right hand. In confusion, she placed her left hand in the Sahib's right hand. Someone giggled. Shamnath was furious.

'Not like that, mother! Don't you even know how to shake hands? Your right hand, please!'

But by now the boss was pumping her left hand saying, 'How are you ? How are you?'

'Mother, say, "I am quite well, thank you." '

Mother mumbled something. Someone giggled.

But the crisis passed. The boss had saved the situation. Shamnath's anger started ebbing.

The Sahib was still holding mother's hand and she standing still, utterly confused.

Shamnath said, ‘Sir, my mother's from a village. She has lived in a village all her life. That's why she's feeling so shy.’

'Is that so?' the Sahib said cheerfully. 'Well, I like village folk. I guess your mother must be knowing folksongs and folk dances.' The boss nodded his head and looked approvingly at mother.

'Mother, the Sahib wants you to sing. An old song. Any old song. You know so many.'

‘I can't sing,’ mother said in a weak voice. 'Have you ever heard me singing?'

'Mother,' he said, 'does one ever refuse a guest? If you don't sing, the Sahib may feel offended. Look, he's waiting.'

'But I don't know any song. I know nothing of singing.'

'Come, mother. Just sing a couplet or two. The pomegranate song, for instance.'

The Indian colleagues and their wives clapped their hands at the mention of this song. Mother looked with imploring eyes, first at her son, then at her daughter-in-law;"

'Mother!' The son was getting impatient. She could detect a touch of asperity in his tone.

There was no way out. She sat down in the chair. In a feeble cracked voice she started singing an old wedding song. The ladies burst into laughter. After singing two lines, mother pathetically trailed into silence.

The verandah resounded with applause. The Sahib would not stop clapping. Shamnath's anger suddenly changed into joy. Mother had introduced a new note into the party.

When the clapping stopped, the subject suddenly veered round to village industry products of the Punjab; the boss wanted to be enlightened on the point.

Mr Shamnath was bubbling with joy. The sound of clapping was still ringing in his ears. 'We have so many of them,' he said enthusiastically. 'I'll collect a complete set for you. I'll bring it to the office, sir. You'll like it, I am sure.'

'No, no, don't get me wrong. I'm not talking of those bazaar things,' the boss said, shaking his head. 'I mean those things which are made in Punjabi homes, things which the women make themselves.'

Mr Shamnath thought for a moment. 'The girls make dolls, sir, and . . . and women make phulkari.'

Mr Shamnath inefficiently tried to explain that a phulkari was a sort of embroidered piece of cloth and then, giving the effort up as hopeless, he turned to his mother. 'Mother, do we have an old phulkari in the house?'

Mother went in and returned with one.

The boss examined it with keen interest. It was an old phulkari, its threads had come off in several places, and the cloth almost crumbled at the touch. Shamnath said, 'Sir, this one is almost threadbare. It's useless. I'll have a new one made for you. Mother, you will make one for the Sahib, won't you? Make one for him.'

Mother was quiet. Then she said, 'My sight is not the same as it used to be. Old eyes feel the strain.'

'Of course mother will make one for you,' Shamnath said, interrupting her. 'You'll be pleased with it.'

The Sahib nodded his head, thanked mother and proceeded towards the dining table. Other guests followed.

When they had settled down to dinner, mother quietly slipped into her room. No sooner had she sat down than her eyes flooded with tears. She kept wiping her eyes with the dopatta, but the tears wouldn't stop, as if the flood-gates of years of old pent-up feelings had suddenly burst open. She tried to control herself, she folded her hands before the image of Krishna, she prayed for the long life of her son, but like monsoon showers the tears kept flowing.

It was now midnight. The guests had departed one by one. But mother kept sitting with her back set against the wall. All the excitement was over and the quietness of the locality had also descended on the house.

One could hear only the rattling of plates in the kitchen. Someone knocked at the door. 'Mother, open the door.'

Her heart sank. Had she made another blunder? She was making mistakes. Oh, why had she dozed off in the verandah? Had her son not forgiven her for it? She opened the door with trembling hands.

Shamnath hugged her wildly. 'Ammi, you have done wonders today. The Sahib was so pleased with you, Ammi. my good Ammi!'

Her frail body looked even more small against Shamnasth's heavy frame. Tears came to her eyes. Wiping them, she said, 'Son, send me to Hardwar. I've been asking you for a long time.'

Shamnasth's face darkened. He let go of her. 'What did you, mother? Again the same thing?'

He was getting angrier. 'So you want to discredit me before others so that they will say that the son cannot give shelter even to his own mother!'

'No, son, don't misunderstand me. You live with your wife, in joy and comfort. I've come to the end of my life. What will I do here? The few days that are left to me, I would like to spend in meditation. Please send me to Hardwar.'

'If you go away, who'll make the phulkari for the Boss? I promised him one in your presence. You know that.'

'Son, my eyesight has become feeble. It can't stand any strain. You can have the phulkari made by someone else. Or buy a ready-made one.'

'Look, you can't let me down like this, mother. Do you want to spoil the whole thing? If the Sahib is pleased, he'll give me a raise.'

Mother was silent for a minute. Then suddenly she said, 'Will he give you a lift in the office? Will he? Did he say so?'

'He did not say anything. But didn't you see how pleased he was with me? He said when you start making the phulkari, he'll personally come and watch it being made. If the boss is pleased, I may get an even higher post. I may become a big official.'

Her complexion started changing, and gradually her wrinkled face was suffused with joy.

'So you are going to get a lift in the office, son.

'It's not so easy, mother. You don't understand. If only I could please the boss. . . There are others too, all wanting to get promoted. It's all a rat race, mother. But I'll have a better chance.'

'In that case I'll make one for him, I'll. . . I'll somehow manage it, son.' Silently she prayed for her son.

'Now go to sleep, mother,' Mr Shamnath said as he turned towards door.

- **Bhisham Sahni**

About the Story

'The Boss Came to Dinner' is a study of human character in ordinary, everyday situations with great psychological insight. The story renders very powerfully Shamnath's anxiety to please his American boss whom he has invited for dinner. His mother, a very loving and kind one but 'an old fashioned woman', appears to stand in his way and he wishes to get rid of her to avoid any kind of embarrassment. But it is the mother who eventually emerges as a savior for Shamnath and his wife.

The story 'The Boss came to Dinner' is written by Padma Bhushan Sahni, a well known Hindi writer, playwright and actor. Among his novels, the best known is *Tamas* (1974), set againt the background of communal riots in the west of Punjab before partition. He received India's highest literary award the Sahitya Akademi fellowship in 2002.

Glossary

Bric-a-brac: bits of furniture, ornaments, etc. of no great value
turned on his heels: turned sharply round
bedstead: the framework of a bed
screwed up his eyes: contracted the muscles of his eyes
give a wide berth to: avoid
hag: vicious old women
threw up his hands in irritation: expressed annoyance
stuck your nose in: interfered
keep up appearances: maintain an outward show of prosperity
wash my hands of: no longer responsible for
held his peace: kept quiet
bandying words: exchanging words sharply
goings on: behavior of people
dangling: hanging or swinging loosely
regaling: royal
anecdotes: small interesting tales
sparse: small in number
shrivelled: dryer and smaller
foolproof: incapable of failure

stickler: person who insists upon the importance of something
oddities: strange acts
make a song: make a fuss
crescendo of success: climax or the highest point of success
décor: all that makes up the appearance of a room
cynosure: centre of attrachon and admiration.
jolt: shake
tittered: laughed in a silly manner
expansive: grand, heroic
asperity: harshness
shoving: pushing

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. Shamnath's boss is a/an_____
   (a) Dutch
   (b) American
   (c) British
   (d) German
2. The Boss asks Shamnath's _____ to sing.
   (a) wife
   (b) son
   (c) daughter
   (d) mother
3. 'Suddenly a problem reared up before Shamnath'. The problem is related to
   (a) food
   (b) mother
   (c) wife
   (d) servant

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. Why don't Shamnath and his wife want the mother to appear before the boss?
2. Why is the mother unwilling to make phulkari?
3. Why does Shamnath's mother sell her jewellery?
4. At what point does the boss want to be enlightened?
5. Where does the mother want to go?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. Why does Shamnath cancel the idea of sending his mother to her room and lock it from outside?
2. Why is the mother afraid of her son when he knocks at the door after the boss has departed?
3. Why does Shamnath's anger suddenly change into joy?
4. Why does the mother agree to make phulkari for the boss in spite of all her handicaps?

5. Why doesn't the mother want to have her meal the day the boss is to come?

(D) Answer to the following should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. 'Mother is a problem! There is no end to her oddities'. What do these lines reflect about Shamnath's character?
2. What is so disturbing about the story?

(E) Say whether the following are True or False. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for False in the bracket:

1. The Boss is invited for lunch. [ ]
2. Shamnath has great respect for his mother. [ ]
3. The mother's eye sight is not feeble. [ ]
4. Phulkari is a sort of embroidered piece of cloth. [ ]
5. The mother agrees to make phulkari. [ ]

The Gentlemen of the Jungle

Once upon a time an elephant made a friendship with a man. One day a heavy thunderstorm broke out, the elephant went to his friend, who had a little hut at the edge of the forest, and said to him: 'My dear good man, will you please let me put my trunk inside your hut to keep it out of this torrential rain?' The man, seeing what situation his friend was in, replied: 'My dear good elephant, my hut is very small, but there is room for your trunk and myself. Please put your trunk in gently.' The elephant thanked his friend, saying: 'You have done me a good deed and one day I shall return your kindness.' But what followed? As soon as the elephant put his trunk inside the hut, slowly he pushed his head inside, and finally flung the man out in the rain, and then lay down comfortably inside his friend's hut, saying: 'My dear good friend, your skin is harder than mine, and as there is not enough room for both of us, you can afford to remain in the rain while I am protecting my delicate skin from the hailstorm.'

The man, seeing what his friend had done to him, started to grumble; the animals in the nearby forest heard the noise and came to see what was the matter. All stood around listening to the heated argument between the man and his friend, the elephant. In this turmoil the lion came along roaring, and said in a loud voice: 'Don't you all know that I am the King of the Jungle! How dare any one disturb the peace of my kingdom?' On hearing this, the elephant, who was one of the high ministers in the jungle kingdom, replied in a soothing voice, and said: 'My lord, there is no disturbance of the peace in your kingdom. I have only been having a little discussion with my friend here as to the possession of this little hut which your lordship sees me occupying.' The lion, who wanted to have 'peace and tranquility' in his kingdom, replied in a noble voice, saying: 'I command my ministers to appoint a Commission of Enquiry to go thoroughly into this matter and report accordingly.' He then turned to the man and said: 'You have done well by establishing friendship with my people, especially with the elephant, who is one of my honourable ministers of state. Do not grumble any more, your hut is not lost to you. Wait until the sitting of my Imperial Commission, and there you will be given plenty of opportunity to state your case. I am sure that you will be pleased with the findings of the Commission.' The man was very pleased by these sweet words from the King of the Jungle, and innocently waited for his opportunity, in the belief that naturally the hut would be returned to him.

The elephant, obeying the command of his master, got busy with other ministers to appoint the Commission of Enquiry. The following elders of the jungle were appointed to sit in the Commission: (1) Mr. Rhinoceros; (2) Mr. Buffalo; (3) Mr Alligator; (4) The Rt. Hon. Mr. Fox to act as chairman; and (5) Mr. Leopard to act as Secretary to the Commission. On seeing the personnel, the man protested and asked if it was not necessary to include in this Commission a member from his side. But he was told that it was impossible, since no one from his side was well enough educated to understand the intricacy of jungle law. Further, that there was nothing to fear, for the members of the Commission were all men of repute for their impartiality in justice, and

as they were gentlemen chosen by God to look after the interests of races less adequately endowed with teeth and claws, he might rest assured that they would investigate the matter with the greatest care and report impartially.

The Commission sat to take the evidence. The Rt Hon. Mr Elephant was first called. He came along with a superior air, brushing his tusks with a sapling which Mrs Elephant had provided, and in an authoritative voice said: 'Gentlemen of the Jungle, there is no need for me to waste your valuable time in relating a story which I am sure you all know. I have always regarded it as my duty to protect the interests of my friends, and this appears to have caused the misunderstanding between myself and my friend here. He invited me to save his hut from being blown away by a hurricane. As the hurricane had gained access owing to the unoccupied space in the hut, I considered it necessary, in my friend's own interests, to turn the undeveloped space to a more economic use by sitting in it myself; a duty which any of you would undoubtedly have performed with equal readiness in similar circumstances.'

After hearing the Rt. Hon. Mr. Elephant's conclusive evidence, the Commission called Mr. Hyena and other elders of the jungle, who all supported what Mr. Elephant had said. They then called the man, who began to give his own account of the dispute. But the Commission cut him short, saying: 'My good man, please confine yourself to relevant issues. We have already heard the circumstances from various unbiased sources; all we wish you to tell us is whether the undeveloped space in your hut was occupied by anyone else before Mr. Elephant assumed his position?' The man began to say: 'No, but-' But at this point the Commission declared that they had heard sufficient evidence from both sides and retired to consider their decision. After enjoying a delicious meal at the expense of the Rt. Hon. M.r Elephant, they reached their verdict, called the man, and declared as follows: 'In our opinion this dispute has arisen through a regrettable misunderstanding due to the backwardness of your ideas. We consider that Mr. Elephant has fulfilled his sacred duty of protecting your interests. As it is clearly for your good that the space should be put to its most economic use, and as you yourself have not reached the stage of expansion which would enable you to fill it, we consider it necessary to arrange a compromise to suit both parties. Mr. Elephant shall continue his occupation of your hut, but we give you permission to look for a site where you can build another hut more suited to your needs, and we will see that you are well protected.'

The man, having no alternative, and fearing that his refusal might expose him to the teeth and claws of members of the Commission, did as they suggested. But no sooner had he built another hut than Mr. Rhinoceros charged in with his horn lowered and ordered the man to quit. A Royal Commission was again appointed to look into the matter, and the same finding was given. This procedure was repeated until Mr. Buffalo, Mr. Leopard, Mr. Hyena and the rest were all accommodated with new huts. Then the man decided that he must adopt an effective method of protection, since Commissions of Enquiry did not seem to be of any use to him. He sat down and said, 'Ng'enda thi

ndagaga motegi,' which literally means 'there is nothing that treads on the earth that cannot be trapped,' or in other words, you can fool people for a time, but not for ever.

Early one morning, when the huts already occupied by the jungle lords were all beginning to decay and fall to pieces, he went out and built a bigger and better hut a little distance away. No sooner had Mr. Rhinoceros seen it than he came rushing in, only to find that Mr. Elephant was already inside, sound asleep. Mr. Leopard next came to the window, Mr. Lion, Mr. Fox and Mr. Buffalo entered the doors, while Mr. Hyena howled for a place in the shade and Mr. Alligator basked on the roof. Presently, they all began disputing about their rights of penetration, and from disputing they came to fighting, and while they were all embroiled together the man set the hut on fire and burnt it to the ground, jungle lords and all. Then he went home, saying: 'Peace is costly, but it's worth the expense,' and lived happily ever after.

- **Jomo Kenyatta**

About the Story

Written by Jomo Kenyatta, the story 'The Gentlemen of the Jungle' is in the form of a fable. A fable is a short moral story often with animal characters. The story is about the law of self-perseveration and the danger of friendship between unequals. An elephant makes friendship with the man. The man has a little hut at the edge of the forest. The elephant requests the man to allow him to keep his trunk inside the hut to protect him from the torrential rain. The man agrees. The elephant slowly occupies the hut which he has made in succession. Eventually the man realizes that he can release himself from the clasp of the animals only through intelligence. The moral of the story is that one can protect one's interests only by making good use of one's own resources.

Jomo Kenyatta, a Kenyan statesman and the dominant figure in the development of African nationalism in East Africa has authored several books. His long career in public life made him the undisputed leader of the African people of Kenya in their struggle for independence.

Glossary

thunder Storm: storm accompanied by thunder and lightning
flung: threw
hailstorm: shower of hail
turmoil: disturbance, trouble
tranquility: peace, calm
establish: set up, to settle on a permanent basis
grumble: to murmur with discontent
findings: information discovered as the result of an inquiry
personnel: the people employed by an organization
intricacy: complexity
impartial: without prejudice or bias, fair, just
adequate: sufficient

endowed: gifted with, to possess an ability or skill
investigate: to find out more details or gain more information
hurricane: a storm with violent wind
conclusive: decisive
evidence: a thing or set of things helpful in forming a conclusion or judgement
confine: to keep within limits
unbiased: fair or impartial

COMPREHENSION:

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. The elephant put his trunk into his friend's hut because ……
   (a) His friend was a kind man.
   (b) His friend was powerful.
   (c) The weather outside was very bad.
   (d) He wanted to live there.
2. The king of the jungle appointed the Commission of Enquiry because…..
   (a) the animals of the forest had a dispute
   (b) the man and the animals had a dispute
   (c) the man and the elephant had a trouble
   (d) the animals' freedom was in danger

3. "_____ your hut is not lost to you." Who said these words?
   (a) Lion
   (b) Elephant
   (c) Man
   (d) Rhinoceros

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. Who was the owner of the hut?
2. Why did the elephant request the man to allow him put his trunk inside the man's hut?
3. Why did the elephant throw the man out of the hut?
4. Why did the animals assemble near the hut?
5. Why was the commission of Enquiry appointed?
6. Why was the man not allowed any representation in the commission?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. Who were the members and the secretary of the Commission?
2. Why did the man permit the elephant to put his trunk inside the hut?
3. What did the elephant say before the Commission of Enquiry?
4. Why did the man do as the members of the commission suggested?
5. Why did the man build a very large hut?

(D) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words:

1. What does the story teach you?

2. “Peace is costly, but it’s worth the expense.” Explain.

(E) Say whether the following statements are True or False. Write “T” for True and “F” for False in the bracket:

1. The elephant and the man were friends. [ ]
2. One day the elephant helped the man. [ ]
3. The lion praised the man for his friendship with the elephant. [ ]
4. The animals of the forest invited the lion as the peace of the jungle was in danger. [ ]
5. The Commission of Enquiry included a member from the man’s side. [ ]
6. The man built a large and better hut and lived in it. [ ]

The Gold Frame

The Modern Frame Works was actually an extra-large wooden packing case mounted on wobbly legs tucked in a gap between a drug store and a radio repair shop. Its owner, Datta, with his concave figure, silver-rimmed glasses and a complexion of seasoned timber, fitted into his shop with the harmony of a fixture.

He was a silent, hard-working man. He gave only laconic answers to the questions his customers asked and strongly discouraged casual friends who tried to intrude on his zone of silence with their idle gossip. He was always seen sitting hunched up, surrounded by a confusion of cardboard pieces, bits of wood, glass sheets, boxes of nails, glue bottles, paint tins and other odds and ends that went into putting a picture in a frame. In this medley a glass-cutter or a pencil stub was often lost and that was when he would uncoil from his posture and grope impatiently for it. Many times he had to stand up and shake his dhoti vigorously to dislodge the lost object.

This operation rocked the whole shop, setting the pictures on the walls gently swinging.

There was not an inch of space that was not covered by a picture; gods, saints, hockey players, children, cheap prints of the Mona Lisa, national leaders, wedding couples, Urdu calligraphy, the snow-clad Fujiyama and many others co-existed with a cheerful incongruity like some fabulous world awaiting order and arrangement.

A customer standing outside the shop on the pavement, obstructing the stream of jostling pedestrians, announced, 'I want this picture framed.' Datta, with his habitual indifference, ignored him and continued to be engaged in driving screws into the sides of a frame.

'I want a really good job done, no matter how much it costs.' The customer volunteered the information, unwrapping a faded newspaper and exposing a sepia-brown photograph of an old man. It was sharp and highly glazed in spite of its antiquity.

'What sort of a frame would you like?' Datta asked, still bent over his work.

'The best, of course. Do you expect I would stint where this great soul is concerned?'

Datta gave a side glance and caught a glimpse of the photograph: just another elderly person of those days, he told himself; a standard portrait of a grandfather, a philanthropist, a social worker, with the inevitable whiskers and top-heavy cascading turban—it could be any one of these. At least half a dozen people came to him every month bearing similar portraits, wanting to demonstrate their homage to the person in the picture in the shape of a glittering frame.

The customer was describing the greatness of the old man: extravagant qualities of nobility, compassion and charity were being generously attributed to him in a voice that came close to the chanting of a holy scripture. . . . If this world had just a few more like him, believe me, it would certainly have been a different place. Of course, there are demons who may not agree with me. They are out to disgrace his name and destroy his memory. But he is God in my home!'

'What sort of a frame do you want?' Datta interrupted. 'Plain, wooden, lacquer, gold, plastic or just enamel painted?' He waved a casual hand towards the pictures on the wall. The customer silently surveyed the various frames. After some time Datta heard him mumble, want the best .

'I don't have any second-rate stuff in my shop,' Datta said.

' How much will that gold frame cost? enquired the customer.

He was shown a number of samples: plain, decorative, floral, geometrical, thin, hefty and so forth. The customer was baffled by the variety.

He examined the selection before him for a long time as if he was unsure of his judgement and was afraid of enshrining his saviour forever in some ugly cheap frame.

Datta came to his rescue and recommended one with a profusion of gold leaves and winding creepers and, in order to clear any lingering doubt he might still harbour in regard to its quality, added: 'It is German! Imported!'

The customer at once seemed impressed and satisfied. Datta next asked, ‘You want a plain mount or a cut mount?' and watched the puzzled look return. Again he helped the man out by showing his various mounts and suggested that a cut mount looked more elegant.

'All right, let me have a cut mount then. Is that a cut mount?' he asked, pointing to a framed picture on the wall of a soulful-looking lady in an oval cut mount. I like that shape. Will it cost much?'

'No. Frame, mount, glass—all will cost seventeen rupees.' The customer had expected it would be more. He pretended to be shocked all the same and tried to bargain. Datta withdrew to his corner without replying and began to cut a piece of plywood. The customer hung about uncertainly for some time and finally asked, 'When will you have it ready?' and barely heard the reply over the vibrating noise of the saw on the plywood, 'Two weeks from today.'

Datta had learnt by long experience that his customers never came punctually. They came days in advance and went away disappointed or came months later, and some never turned up at all and their pictures lay unclaimed in a box, gathering dust and feeding cockroaches and silver fish. Therefore he made frames for those who came to him and visited him at least twice before he actually executed their orders.

Ten days later the tall, rustic-looking man appeared and enquired, 'Has the picture been framed? I was passing by and thought I could collect it if it was ready.' Datta cast a side look at him and continued with his work. 'I know I have come four days early,' the customer grinned nervously. 'Will it be ready by Tuesday?' Datta merely nodded without shifting attention from a tiny nail which he, with precise rhythmic strokes, was driving into a frame, but sensed the man's obsessive attachment to the photograph. He told himself there would be trouble if he did not deliver the order on the promised date.

Next morning he made that his first job, keeping aside all the others.

The photograph was lying on a shelf among many others. He took it and carefully kept it on a wooden plank on the floor. Then he looked for the pencil stub for marking the measurements. As usual it was missing. He swept his hand all round him impatiently, scattering fragments of glass and wood.

False shapes that he mistook for the pencil harassed him to no end and stoked his anger. Frustrated in all his attempts to find it, he finally stood up to shake the folds of his dhoti—an ultimate move which generally yielded results. But he shook the folds so violently that he upset a tin containing white enamel paint and it fell right on the sacred photograph of the old man, emptying its thick, slimy contents on it.

Datta stood transfixed and stared at the disaster at his feet as if he had suddenly lost all faculty of movement. He could not bring himself even to avert his eyes from the horror which he seemed to be cruelly forced to view. Then his spectacles clouded with perspiration and helpfully screened his vision.

When at last he fully recovered his senses he set about rescuing the picture in such desperate hurry that he made a worse mess of it. He rubbed the picture so hard with a cloth that he peeled off thin strips of filmy coating from its surface. Before he realised what he had done half the old man's face and nearly all of his turban were gone.

Datta helplessly looked at the venerable elder transformed into thick black specks sticking to the enamel smeared on the rag in his hand.

He sat with both hands clutching his head: every nerve in his head throbbed as if it would tear itself apart if he did not hold it down.

What answer was he going to offer to the customer who had a fanatic devotion to the photograph he had just mutilated beyond recovery?

His imagination ran wild, suggesting nightmarish consequences to his own dear self and to the fragile inflammable shop.

He racked his brain for a long while till sheer exhaustion calmed his agitated nerves and made him accept the situation with a hopeless resignation. Meanwhile the

plethora of gods, saints and sages gazed down at him from the walls with a transcendental smile and seemed to offer themselves to him to pray to. With a fervent appeal in his heart he stared at them.

In his state of mind it did not register for quite a while that a particular photograph of a person on the wall had held his attention rather more than it was qualified to do. It was an ordinary portrait of a middle-aged man in a dark suit and striped tie, resting his right arm jauntily on a studio prop made to look like a fluted Roman pillar. Datta was amazed to see that he had a faint likeness to the late-lamented old man. The more he gazed at the face, the more convincing it appeared to him. But he dismissed the odd resemblance he saw as one of those tricks of a thoroughly fagged-out mind.

All the same, at the back of his mind an idea began to take shape: he saw the possibility of finding an acceptable substitute! He brought down the old wooden box in which he had kept all the photographs unclaimed over the years. As he rummaged in it, panicky cockroaches and spiders scurried helter-skelter all over the floor. Unmindful of them, Datta anxiously searched for the brownish photographs of the old man's vintage. Soon there was a pile before him: he was surprised he could pick up so many which qualified to take the old man's place.

But he had to reject a lot of them. In most of the portraits the subjects sported a very conspicuous flower vase next to them, or over-dressed grandchildren sat on their laps and therefore had to be rejected.

Luckily, there was one with which Datta felt he could take a fair risk; the print had yellowed a bit noticeably but he calculated that the total effect when put in a dazzling gold frame would render it safe.

After a couple of hours' concentrated work he sat back and proudly surveyed the old man's double, looking resplendent in his gold frame. He was so pleased with his achievement that he forgot he was taking perhaps one of the greatest risks any frame-maker ever took! He even became bold enough to challenge the customer if his faking was discovered. 'Look, my dear man', he would say, 'I don't know who has been fooling you! That's the picture you brought here for framing. Take it or throw it away!'

The days that followed were filled with suspense and anxiety. Datta feared that the customer would surprise him at an unguarded moment making him bungle the entire, carefully-thought-out plot. But the man turned up promptly a couple of days later. At that moment Datta was bent over a piece of work and slightly stiffened as he heard the voice, shrill with expectation, ask, 'Is it ready?'

Datta's heart began to race and to compose himself, he let a whole minute pass without answering. Then he put aside the scissors in his hand with slow deliberation and reached out to take the neatly wrapped package in a corner.

'Ah, it is ready!' the customer exclaimed with childish delight, at the same time mumbling flattering tributes to Datta for his promptness and so on. He spread his arms widely with dramatic exuberance to receive the photograph as if it was actually a long-lost person he was greeting.

But Datta took his time removing the wrapper from the frame. The customer waited impatiently, filling in the time showering more praises on his worshipful master who was to adorn the wall of his home.

Datta finally revealed the glittering frame and held it towards him.

The customer seemed visibly struck by its grandeur and fell silent like one who had entered the inner sanctum of a temple. Datta held his breath and watched the man's expression. With every second that passed he was losing his nerve and thought that in another moment he would betray the big hoax he had played. Suddenly he saw the customer straighten, the reverential look and benevolent expression vanished from his face.

'What have you done?' he demanded, indignantly. For Datta the moment seemed familiar for he had already gone through it a thousand times night and day since he splashed the white paint on the original photograph.

Several times he had rehearsed his piece precisely for this occasion.

But before he could open his mouth the customer shouted with tremendous authority in his bearing, 'Now, don't deny it! I clearly remember asking for a cut mount with an oval shape. This is square. Look!'

- R. K. Laxman

About the Story

'The Gold Frame' written by R.K. Laxman is the story of a frame maker who is asked to frame the photograph of a revered elder. The customer who brings this photograph is very particular about the frame as the elder is his patron. In a very light hearted humour, Laxman satirises the way the customer gives excessive importance to the frame.

Rasipuram Khrishnaswamy Iyer Laxman (R.K. Laxman) is a well-known Indian cartoonist, illustrator and humorist. Laxman has also written short stories, travelogues and a novel: *Sorry, No Room*. He was honoured with the prestigious Magsaysay Award in 1984.

Glossary

wobbly: inclined to shake;shaky
concave: Curved in, hollow
laconic: using few words/short answers
hunched: not erect

medley: assortment, a collection
Mona Lisa: a famous portrait of a lady by Leonardo da Vinci
calligraphy: decorative handwriting
fujiyama: a volcano in Japan
incongruity: strangeness, to be inappropriate
fabulous: extremely pleasing
Jostling: pushing and shoving
sepia-brown: a photographic technique which produces prints in shades of brown/brownish shade of old photographs.
antiquity: the distant past, olden days
stint: spell, period
Philanthropist: someone who gives charity to increase human well-being
scripture: any writing that is considered as sacred by a religious group
plethora: overplus, extreme, excess
jauntily: in a fashionable manner
rummaged: searched haphazardly
helter-skelter: not organized
resplendent: having great beauty
exuberance: joyful enthusiasm

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:-

1. The frame maker is _____
   (a) hardworking.
   (b) idle.
   (c) talkative.
   (d) gossiper.
2. The answers that the frame maker gives to his customers are _____
   (a) long.
   (b) confusing.
   (c) brief.
   (d) puzzling.

3. The frame is to be made of the customer's _____
   (a) patron.
   (b) grandfather.
   (c) mother.
   (d) uncle.

(B) Answer to the following should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. What task is given by the customer to the frame maker?

2. What is the relationship between the customer and the man whose photograph he wants to get framed?
3. Why does the customer want a cut mount for the frame?
4. Why is the customer so particular about the frame?
5. How does the frame maker make a worse mess of the photograph?

(C) Answer to the following should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. What, according to the customer, are the qualities of his patron?
2. How does the frame maker manage to replace the spoiled photograph?
3. Why is the frame maker anxious?
4. Why does the frame maker discourage the idle gossipers?
5. Why is the customer not satisfied with the frame in the end?

(D) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. Attempt a character sketch of the frame maker.
2. Write a note on the satire in the story.

(E) Say whether the following are true or false. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false in the bracket.

1. The customer wants a plain mount photo frame. [ ]
2. The photograph of the patron is sharp and highly glazed. [ ]
3. The customer gives excessive importance to the frame. [ ]
4. The original photograph does not get spoiled. [ ]
5. The customer wants a cheap frame. [ ]

The Mother of a Traitor

One can talk endlessly about Mothers. For several weeks enemy hosts had surrounded the city in a tight ring of steel; by night fires were lit and the flames peered through the inky blackness at the walls of the city like a myriad red eyes—they blazed malevolently, and their menacing glare evoked gloomy thoughts within the beleaguered city.

From the walls they saw the enemy noose draw tighter; saw the dark shadows hovering about the fires, and heard the neighing of well-fed horses, the clanging of weapons, the loud laughter and singing of man confident of victory—and what can be more jarring to the ear than the songs and laughter of the enemy?

The enemy had thrown corpses into all the streams that fed water to the city, they had burned down the vineyards around the walls, trampled the fields, cut down the orchards—the city was now exposed on all sides, and nearly every day the cannon and muskets of the enemy showered it with lead and iron.

Detachments of war-weary, half-starved soldiers trooped sullenly through the narrow streets of the city; from the windows of houses issued the groans of the wounded, the cries of the delirious, the prayers of women and the wailing of children. People spoke in whispers, breaking off in the middle of a sentence, tensely alert; was not that the enemy advancing?

Worst of all were the nights; in the nocturnal stillness the groans and cries were more distinctly audible; black shadows crept stealthily from the gorges of the distant mountains towards the half-demolished walls, hiding the enemy camp from view, and over the black ridges of the mountains rose the moon like a lost shield dented by sword blows.

And the people in the city, despairing of succour, worn out by toil and hunger, their hope of salvation waning from day to day, the people in the city stared in horror at that moon, at the sharp-toothed ridges of the mountains, the black mass of the gorges and the noisy camp of the enemy. Everything spoke to them of death, and not a star was there in the sky to give them consolation.

They were afraid to light the lamps in the houses, and a heavy darkness enveloped the streets, and in this darkness, like a fish stirring in the depths of a river, a woman draped from head to foot in a black cloak moved soundlessly.

When they saw her, people whispered to one another:

'Is it she?'
'It is she!'

And they withdrew into the niches under archways, or hurried past her with lowered heads. The patrol chiefs warned her sternly:

'Abroad again, Monna Marianna? Take care, you may be killed and nobody will bother to search for the culprit...'

She drew herself up and stood waiting, but the patrols passed by, either not daring or else scorning to raise their hand against her; the armed men avoided her like a corpse and, left alone in the darkness, she continued her solitary wanderings from street to street, soundless and black like the incarnation of the city's misfortune, while all about her, as though pursuing her, melancholy sounds issued from the night; the groans, cries, prayers and the sullen murmur of soldiers who had lost all hope of victory.

A citizen and a mother, she thought of her son and her country; for at the head of the men who were destroying her town was her son, her gay, handsome, heartless son. Yet, not so long ago she had looked upon him with pride regarding him as her precious gift to her country, a beneficent force she had brought forth to aid the people of the city where she herself had been born and reared. Her heart was bound by hundreds of invisible threads to these ancient stones with which her forefathers had built their homes and raised the walls of the city; to the soil wherein lay buried the bones of her kinsfolk, to the legends, the songs and the hopes of the people. And now this heart had lost a loved one and it wept. She weighed in her heart as on scales her love for her son and her love for her native city, and she could not tell which weighed the more.

And so she wandered thus by night through the streets and many, failing to recognise her, drew back in fear mistaking her black figure for the incarnation of Death that was so near to all of them, and when they did recognise her, they turned silently away from the mother of a traitor.

But one day in a remote corner by the city walls she saw another woman, kneeling beside a corpse, so still that she seemed part of the earth. The woman was praying, her grief-stricken face upturned to the stars. And on the wall overhead the sentries spoke in low tones their weapons grating against the stone.

The traitor's mother asked:

'Your husband?'
'No.'
'Your brother?'
'My son. My husband was killed thirteen days ago, my son today.'

And rising from her knees, the mother of the slain man said humbly:

'The Madonna sees all and knows all, and I am grateful to her!' 'For what?' asked the first, and the other replied: 'Now that he has died honourably fighting for his country I can say that I feared for him: he was light-hearted, too fond of revelry and I

feared that he might betray his city, as did the son of Marianna, the enemy of God and Man, the leader of our foes, may he be so cursed and the womb that bore him!'

Marianna covered her face and went on her way. The next morning she appeared before the city's defenders and said:

'My son has come to be your enemy. Either kill me or open the gates that I may go to him...'

They replied:

'You are a human being, and your country must be precious to you; your son is as much an enemy to you as to each one of us.'

I am his mother. I love him and feel that I am to blame for what he has become!'

Then they took counsel with one another and decided.

'It would not be honourable to kill you for the sins of your son. We know that you could not have led him to commit this terrible sin, and we can understand your distress. But the city does not need you even as a hostage; your son cares nought for you, we believe that he has forgotten you, fiend that he is, and there is your punishment if you think you have deserved it! We believe that is more terrible than death itself!'

'Yes,' she said. 'It is indeed more terrible.'

And so they opened the gates and suffered her to leave the city and watched long from the battlements as she departed from her native soil, now drenched with the blood her son had spilt. She walked slowly, for her feet were reluctant to tear themselves away from this soil, and she bowed to the corpses of the city's defenders, kicking aside a broken weapon in disgust, for all weapons are abhorrent to mothers save those that protect life.

She walked as though she carried a precious phial of water beneath her cloak and feared to spill a drop and as her figure grew smaller and smaller to those who watched from the city wall, it seemed to them that with her went their dejection and hopelessness.

They saw her pause halfway and throwing back the hood of her cloak turn back and gaze long at the city. And over in the enemy's camp they saw her alone. They approached and inquired who she was and whence she had come.

'Your leader is my son,' she said, and not one of the soldiers doubted it. They fell in beside her, singing his praises, saying how clever and brave he was, and she listened to them with head proudly raised, showing no surprise, for her son could not be otherwise.

And now, at last, she stood before him whom she had known nine months before his birth, him whom she had never felt apart from her own heart. In silk and velvet he stood before her, his weapons studded with precious stones. All was as it should be, thus had she seen him so many times in her dreams rich, famous and admired.

'Mother!' he said, kissing her hands. 'Thou hast come to me, thou art with me, and tomorrow I shall capture that accursed city!'

Intoxicated with his prowess, crazed with the thirst for more glory, he answered her with the arrogant heat of youth:

'I was born into the world and for the world, and I mean to make the world quake with wonder of me! I have spared this city for thy sake, it has been like a thorn in my flesh and has retarded my swift rise to fame. But now tomorrow I shall smash that nest of obstinate fools!'

'Where every stone knows and remembers them as a child,' she said.

'Stones are dumb unless man makes them speak. Let the mountains speak of me, that is what I wish!' 'And what of men?' she asked.

'Ah yes, I have not forgotten them, Mother. I need them too, for only in men's memory are heroes immortal!'

She said: 'A hero is he who creates life in defiance of death, who conquers death ...'

'No!' he objected. 'The destroyer is as glorious as the builder of a city. See, we do not know who it was that built Rome-Aeneas or Romulus—yet we know well the name of Alaric and the other heroes who destroyed the city . . . '

'Which outlived all names.' the mother reminded him.

Thus they conversed until the sun sank to rest; less and less frequently did she interrupt his wild speech, lower sank her proud head.

A Mother creates, she protects, and to speak to her of destruction means to speak against her; but he did not know this, he did not know that he was negating her reason for existence.

A Mother is always opposed to death; the hand that brings death into the house of men is hateful and abhorrent to Mothers. But the son did not perceive this, for he was blinded by the cold glitter of glory that deadens the heart.

Nor did he know that a Mother can be as clever and ruthless as she is fearless, when the life she creates and cherishes is in question.

She sat with bowed head, and through the opening in the leader's richly appointed tent she saw the city where first she had felt the sweet tremor of life within her and the anguished convulsions of the birth of this child who now thirsted for destruction.

The crimson rays of the sun dyed the walls and towers of the city blood-red, cast a baleful glare on the windowpanes so that the whole city seemed to be a mass of wounds with the crimson sap of life flowing from each gash. Presently the city turned black as a corpse and the stars shone above it life funeral candles.

She saw the dark houses where people feared to light candles so as not to attract the attention of the enemy, saw the streets steeped in gloom and rank with the stench of corpses, heard the muffled whispers of people awaiting death—she saw it all, all that was near and dear to her stood before her, dumbly awaiting her decision, and she felt herself the mother of all those people in her city.

Clouds descended from the black peaks into the valley and swooped down like winged steeds upon the doomed city.

'We may attack tonight,' said her son, 'if the night is dark enough! It is hard to kill when the sun shines in your eyes and the glitter of the weapons blinds you, many a blow goes awry,' he remarked, examining his sword.

The mother said to him: 'Come, my son, lay thy head on my breast and rest, remember how gay and kind thou wert as a child, and how everyone loved thee. . . '

He obeyed her, laid his head in her lap and closed his eyes, saying:

‘I love only glory and I love thee for having made me as I am.'

'And dost thou not desire children?' she asked finally.

'What for? That they might be killed? Someone like me will kill them; that will give me pain and I shall be too old and feeble to avenge them.'

'Thou art handsome, but as barren as a streak of lightning,' she said with a sigh.

'Yes, like lightning. . .' he replied, smiling.

And he dozed there on his mother's breast like a child.

Then, covering him with her black cloak, she plunged a knife into his heart, and with a shudder he died, for who knew better than she where her son's heart beat. And, throwing his corpse at the feet of the astonished sentries, she said addressing the city:

'As a Citizen, I have done for my country all 1 could: as a Mother I remain with my son! It is too late for me to bear another; my life is of no use to anyone.'

And the knife, still warm with his blood, her blood, she plunged with a firm hand into her own breast, and again she struck true, for an aching heart is not hard to find.

- **Maxim Gorky**

About the Story

'The Mother of a Traitor' is a very poignant story about a mother named Monna Marianna whose son turns out to be a traitor. She tries to dissuade him from destroying his own city but of no avail. Oscillating between her love for her son and her love for the motherland, she plunges a knife into his heart as he dozes off in her lap and he dies. But as a mother she has to be with her son and, therefore, plunges the same knife into her own breast and kills herself. Thus she plays the role of both the mother and the citizen.

The author Maxim Gorky (1868-1936) was the pen name of Alexei Maximovich Peshkov who was a great figure in Russian literature of the early part of twentieth century.

Glossary

myriad: a large number
malevolently: spitefully, with ill will
menace: threatening
beleaguered: besieged or surrounded by the army
jarring: unpleasant and irritating
musket: a light gun with a long barrel
delirious: related to or typical of delirium which is an excited or dreamy state in illness
nocturnal: happening during the night
gorge: a narrow opening (usually between hills)
Madonna: Mary, mother of Jesus Christ
enveloped: covered
succour: help given in time of need
abhorrent: hateful, distasteful
baleful: evil and harmful

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. One day in a remote corner by the city walls a woman was kneeling beside the corpse of her-
   (a) husband.
   (b) neighbour.
   (c) son.
   (d) brother.

2. When Marianna appeared before the defenders of the city, they decided to-
   (a) kill her.
   (b) arrest her.
   (c) allow her to leave the city.
   (d) stop her.
3. Marianna killed-
   (a) only her son.
   (b) only herself.
   (c) her son and herself.
   (d) the soldier.

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. What had the enemy done to the city?
2. What was the slain man's mother proud of?
3. How did the enemy soldiers describe Marianna's son to her?
4. Why had the son spared the city for so long?
5. How did the mother try to dissuade the son from his plan to attack the city?
6. Why were people afraid to light candles at night?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. What activity of the enemy could be seen from the walls?
2. How did the mother kill the son and herself?
3. What had the enemy done to the water resources of the city and the vine yards around the wall?
4. What general suffering of the public could be heard in the city from the windows of the houses?
5. How did the enemy soldiers behave with Marianna when she told that she was their leader's mother?

(D) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. Discuss the moral of the story.
2. How did Marianna succeed both as a mother and as a citizen.

(E) Say whether the following statements are True or False. Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False in the bracket:

1. The mother asked the city defenders not to kill her. [ ]
2. The mother was not afraid of death. [ ]
3. Marianna loved the city in which she lived. [ ]
4. The other woman in the story had lost both her husband and her son. [ ]
5. The other woman's son was killed because he was a traitor. [ ]
6. The people of the city avoided Marianna even when they recognized her. [ ]

The Refugees

They walked through the new capital, alone and from a far country, yes, although their own lands were only a few hundred miles perhaps from this very street upon which they now walked. But to them it was very far. Their eyes were the eyes of those who have been taken suddenly and by some unaccountable force from the world they have always known and always thought safe until this time. They, who had been accustomed only to country roads and fields, walked now along the proud street of the new capital, their feet treading upon the new concrete side-walk, and although the street was full of things they had never seen before, so that there were even automobiles and such things of which they had never even heard, still they looked at nothing, but passed as in a dream, seeing nothing.

There were several hundreds of them passing at this moment. If they did not look at anything nor at anyone, neither did any look at them. The city was full of refugees, many thousands of them, fed after a fashion, clothed somehow, sheltered in mats in great camps outside the city wall. At any hour of the day lines of ragged men and women and a few children could be seen making their way towards the camp, and if any city-dweller noticed them it was to think with increased bitterness:

'More refugees-- will there never be an end to them? We will all starve trying to feed them even a little.'

This bitterness, which is the bitterness of fear, made small shopkeepers bawl out rudely to the many beggars who came hourly to beg at the doors, and it made men ruthless in paying small fares to the rickshaw pullers, of which there were ten times as many as could be used, because the refugees were trying to earn something thus. Even the usual pullers of rickshaws, who followed this as their profession, cursed the refugees because, being starving they would pull for anything given them, and so fares were low for all, and all suffered. With the city full of refugees, then, begging at every door, swarming into every unskilled trade and service, lying dead on the streets at every frozen dawn, why should one look at this fresh horde coming in now at twilight of winter's day?

But these were no common men and women, no riff-raff from some community, always poor and easily starving in a flood time. No, these were men and women of which any nation might have been proud. It could be seen they were all from one region, for they wore garments woven out of the same dark blue cotton stuff, plain and cut in an old-fashioned way, the sleeves long and the coats long and full. The men wore smocked aprons, the smocking done in curious, intricate, beautiful designs. The women had bands of the same plain blue stuff wrapped like kerchiefs about their heads. But men and women were tall and strong in frame, although the women's feet were bound. There were a few lads in the throng, a few children sitting in baskets slung upon a pole across the shoulders of their fathers, but there were no young girls, no young infants. Every man and every lad bore a burden on his shoulder. This burden was always

bedding, quilts made of the blue cotton stuff and padded. Clothing and bedding were clean and strongly made. On top of every folded quilt, with a bit of mate between, was an iron cauldron. These cauldrons had doubtless been taken from the earthen ovens of the village when the people saw the time had come when they must move. But in no basket was there a vestige of food, nor was there a trace of food having been cooked in them recently.

This lack of food was confirmed when one looked closely into the faces of the people. In the first glance in the twilight they seemed well enough, but when one looked more closely, one saw they were the faces of people starving and moving now in despair to a last hope. They saw nothing of the strange sights of a new city because they were too near death to see anything. No new sight could move their curiosity. They were men and women who had stayed by their land until starvation drove them forth. Thus, they passed unseeing, silent, alien, as those who know themselves dying are alien, to the living.

The last one of this long procession of silent men and women was a little wizened old man. Even he carried a load of a folded quilt, a cauldron. But there was only one cauldron. In the other basket it seemed there was but a quilt, extremely ragged and patched, but clean still. Although the load was light it was too much for the old man. It was evident that in usual times he would be beyond the age of work, and was perhaps unaccustomed to such labour in recent years. His breath whistled as he staggered along, and he strained his eyes to watch those who were ahead of him lest he should be left behind, and his old wrinkled face was set in a sort of gasping agony.

Suddenly he could go no more. He set his burden with great gentleness, sank upon the ground, his head sunk between his knees, his eyes closed, panting desperately. Starved as he was, a little blood rose in dark patches on his cheeks. A ragged vendor selling hot noodles set his stand near, and shouted his trade cry, and the light from the stand fell on the old man's drooping figure. A man passing stopped and muttered, looking at him:

‘I swear I can give no more this day if I am to feed my own even nothing but noodles but here is this old man. Well, I will give him the bit of silver I earned today against tomorrow and trust to tomorrow again. If my own old father had been alive, I would have given it to him.’

He fumbled and brought out of his ragged girdle a bit of a silver coin, and after a moment's hesitation and muttering, he added to it a copper penny.

‘There, old father," he said with a sort of bitter heartiness, "let me see you eat noodles.’

The old man lifted his head slowly. When he saw the silver, he would not put out his hand. He said:

‘Sir, I did not beg of you. Sir, we have good land and we have never been starving like this before, having such good land. But this year the river rose and men starve even on good land, at such times; Sir, we have no seed left, even. We have eaten our seed. I told them, we cannot eat the seed. But they were young; and hungry and they ate it.

"Take it," said the man, and he dropped the money into the old man's smocked apron and went on his way, sighing.

The vendor prepared his bowl of noodles and called out:

‘How many will you eat, old man?’

Then was the old man stirred. He felt eagerly in his apron and when he saw the two coins there, the one copper and the other silver, he said:

‘One small bowl is enough.’

‘Can you eat only one small bowl, then?’ asked the vendor, astonished.

‘It is not for me,’ the old man answered.

The vendor started astonished, but being a simple man he said no more but prepared the bowl, and when it was finished, he called out. "Here it is." And he waited to see who would eat it.

Then the old man rose with a great effort and took the bowl between his shaking hands and he went to the other basket. There, while the vendor watched, the old man pulled aside the quilt until one could see the shrunken face of a small boy lying with his eyes fast closed. One would have said the child was dead except that when the old man lifted his head so his mouth could touch the edge of the little bowl he began to swallow feebly until the hot mixture was finished. The old man kept murmuring to him:

‘There, my heart - there, my child.’

‘Your grandson?’ said the vendor.

‘Yes, said the old man. ‘The son of my only son. Both my son and his wife were drowned as they worked on our land when the dikes broke.’

He covered the child tenderly and then, squatting on his haunches, he ran his tongue carefully around the little bowl and removed the last trace of food. Then, as though he had been fed, he handed the bowl, back to the vendor.

‘But you have the silver bit,’ cried the ragged vendor, yet more astonished when he saw the old man ordered no more.

The old man shook his head. 'That is for seed,' he replied. 'As soon as I saw it, I knew I would buy seed with it. They ate up all the seed and with what shall the land be sown again?'

'If I were not so poor myself, said the vendor, 'I might even have given you a bowl, but to give something to a man who has a bit of silver!' he shook his head puzzled.

'I do not ask you, brother,' said the old man. 'Well, I know you cannot understand. But if you had land you would know, it must be put to seed again or there will be starvation yet another year. The best I can do for this grandson of mine is to buy a little seed for the land. Yes, even though I die, and others must plant it, the land must be put to seed.'

He took up his load again, his old legs trembling, and straining his eyes down the long straight street, he staggered on.

- Pearl S. Buck

About the Story

Written by Pearl S Buck, 'The Refugees' brings out the tragedy of those hardworking poor people who are uprooted from their land as a result of natural calamities like floods. Even as they look for work, or a temporary support, they are generally treated as beggars in the alien land. The old man of this story is a symbol of men of strong character who can face such tragic phases in their lives to hail the dawn of prosperity once again. In the story, when a silver bit is thrown to the old man, he keeps it to purchase seeds so that he can go back to his native land and work for his grandson, the only survivor of this family.

Author of about seventy books, Pearl S Buck is the first American woman to win the Noble Prize for literature.

Glossary

riff-raff: the lowest of the low
smoched: decorated with small stitches
throng: a large crowd of people
cauldron: a large round metal pot
quilt: a thin cover put over the blanket
vestige: a small part
wizened: old

staggered: walked unsteadily
fumbled: tried and reached (for something)
girdle: a belt
haunches: lowers towards the ground

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. One of the baskets that the old refugee carries, contains_____
   (a) seeds.
   (b) fruits.
   (c) vegetables.
   (d) quilt.
2. The city dwellers notice refugees with _____
   (a) bitterness.
   (b) love.
   (c) sympathy.
   (d) empathy.
3. The old man gives the bowl of noodles to his _____
   (a) son.
   (b) daughter.
   (c) wife.
   (d) grandson.

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. Why do the refugees in the story have to leave their land?
2. Name any two things in the new capital which the refugees have never seen before.
3. What load does the old man carry in the two baskets?
4. What shows that the refugees are all from our region?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. How do the refugees feel about the new place?
2. How do the local inhabitants feel about all the refugees in the city?
3. What finer human qualities are manifested in refugees' life of deprivation and suffering?
4. Why do the refugees look at nothing and pass as in a dream?
5. Why does the old man order only one small bowl of noodles?

(D) Answer to the following should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. Describe the physical and mental condition of the refugees in the new capital.
2. What are the most important concerns of the old starved man and how does he show them in his behavior?

(E) Say whether the following are True or False. Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False in the bracket.

1. The city dwellers notice refugees with love. [ ]
2. Rickshaw-pullers curse the refugees. [ ]
3. The old man eats a bowl of noodles. [ ]
4. The refugees are all from one region. [ ]
5. There are only a few refugees in the city. [ ]

The Three Dancing Goats

‘This evening I am going to tell you the tale of the three dancing goats’ began Baba Trinco as he squatted on the floor and greeted us with his broad smile.

'Once upon a time it happened that a hard-working young peasant was lucky enough to possess three dancing goats. He was lucky because they brought him all he desired—a little comfort for his widowed mother, and a pretty wife.

He and his mother lived in a little bamboo hut and had a small plot of grazing land. Their entire wealth consisted of a couple of cows. When a year of drought came they were in great trouble, so that one morning the widowed mother with tears in her eyes said to her son:

"Sindhu, we shall have to get rid of the two cows. So go to the market-town and sell them."

The thought of selling the cows they loved so much distressed the boy. It was a pity that they had not enough fodder; but what could they do?

So Sindhu set out with the two cows and said to himself that he was not going to sell them to a butcher and that he would beg their purchaser to take great care of them.

Before coming to the market-town he met a woman who was also going to market to sell her three goats. Both Sindhu and the woman rested under a tree and both plucked leaves from it to feed their pets.

The old woman looked at the boy compassionately as he was feeding the cows, and said:

"Tell me, my lad, what is troubling you. I know it is not a good time for the peasants."

'What can I do? I have to sell the two cows we love so much," murmured Sindhu.

The old woman asked him all sorts of questions and at last came close and said:

"My dear lad, I like you and admire your love for your cows. Let me have them and I promise they shall be well cared for. You take my three goats."

"Nonsense," replied Sindhu. "What can we do with your goats, my dear woman? We must have grain for our own meals, and how can I feed your goats?"

"But these goats are much better than money, and they will someday bring fortune to you," the old woman said in a solemn voice.

Then she drew a little bamboo flute from her willow basket and began to play. Would you believe it? The three goats began to dance to the tune!

They were lovely goats from the Himalayan region, quite different from the ones we see in the plains. They had long hair, long flapping ears and round noses. The old woman called them Chapu.

Sindhu was greatly amused at the performance of the dancing goats, and he believed what the old woman said about them. They might not bring him a fortune, but he would certainly be able to earn a few pennies every day by entertaining the village folk. Thus he argued in his own mind and accepted the offer.

"Be content with what you have got, my son," the old woman said gently, "Here is the flute and there are my beloved goats. God bless you all." Then she took Sindhu's two cows and went her way.

And Sindhu? Wasn't he pleased with the bargain! He played the flute and the goats danced to the tune. Joyfully he made his way along the path across the meadow in order to reach home as quickly as he could.

But when his mother saw what he had brought back, she was unhappy. Sindhu played the flute and the three goats danced as merrily as ever, but it only made her sad. She thought her son had been cheated by the wicked market-folk or perhaps he had lost his senses.

“Are you sure you have not been cheated, my son?" she cried. "We have hardly enough food to keep ourselves from starvation. What will you do with these silly goats?"

"Don't be afraid, mother", implored Sindhu. "I am neither mad nor light-hearted. The dear old woman who exchanged these wonderful goats for our cows said to me that they would someday bring us luck. And I believe her. If they do not bring in a few pennies for our livelihood, they will certainly fetch a handsome price from our landlord."

Now Sindhu's landlord lived close to the village. His daughter, a girl of great beauty, soon heard of the dancing goats and wanted her father to summon the peasant for her entertainment.

So one day Sindhu took his flute and goats and went to the landowner's house. He played his flute as well as he possibly could, and the three dancing goats danced as merrily as ever. Their lovely long ears flapped rhythm, and the movements of their limbs were graceful. It was an enchanting performance.

The landowner's daughter offered to buy one of the goats and asked what price Sindhu wanted for it.

"It cannot be purchased with money, dear lady," declared Sindhu, adding that if she really wanted his precious pets, she would have to pay a visit to his widowed mother and take her a barrel of foodstuffs. For he lived and laboured for his mother's happiness and comfort.

The girl was so eager to have a goat that she agreed to go to the peasant's hut with a barrel of foodstuffs.

Sindhu and his mother were very happy to welcome this beautiful daughter of their landlord in their humble cottage, and the girl was delighted to own a dancing goat.

A few days later another summon came from the landowner, and Sindhu went with his flute and the two goats.

The girl came out and said: *"You* see, dear lad, I have not been able to make my goat dance at all. I have had expert musicians from the Temple to play for him, but he won't dance. Our village soothsayer says the goat will never dance without a companion. Will you *let* me have another goat?"

Sindhu was delighted both for the sake of his mother and for himself; also he was enchanted by the beauty of the girl.

"Of course, you can have another of my pets, but this time I would ask for that gold ring you wear, as well as a barrel of foodstuffs," replied Sindhu very politely.

The girl was pleased, and without hesitation took off her favourite ring and gave it to Sindhu. By the time he returned home a barrel of foodstuffs had reached his mother.

But, again, after a few days, one of the girl's maids brought a message from her, saying that her goats still refused to dance and no longer responded to the sound of music, so she was very sad.

Sindhu went to see her and took his third goat with him. She was on the doorstep of her house waiting for him. She said: "What am I to do now? The village priest says that my goats will dance if you will give me the third goat; but I hate to ask you for it, as it is the only pet left to you!"

"My dear lady," Sindhu said humbly, "I would willingly part with my last goat if it would make you happy. But let me play my flute and see them dance once again."

So he played the flute and the three goats danced merrily to the tune. As soon as the music ceased, the girl exclaimed gleefully, "Now I know, my dear lad! Now I see! It was the magic of the flute that made the goats dance! Will you let me have the flute as well as the third goat?"

Sindhu looked at her for a moment and said: "Yes, I will gladly give them to you, my charming lady; but now that you have discovered my secret, I would ask you

to tell me the meaning of the three different coloured stones set in the gold ring you gave me. When I know that secret I shall only ask for a barrel of foodstuffs in exchange for my last goat and my magic flute."

The girl was rather embarrassed, and hesitated for a little while. "Can this peasant aspire to marry me?" she wondered. "Why is he curious to know the meaning of these three stones? Anyhow, I am not the girl to give up a thing once I have set my mind on it, I must have the goat and the flute." So ran her thoughts.

"Yes," she said in a whisper, "I will tell you meaning. There are three strange strands of hair hidden among my black silken tresses. One is pure white, the colour of a diamond; one is dark red, the colour of a ruby; and one is bright green, the colour of an emerald. So in my ring there are three stones of similar colours. But all this is secret, dear lad."

"I understand, beautiful lady," said Sindhu. "Here is my flute and there is my goat. I take my leave and hope you will now be happy with the three dancing goats."

Before he returned home, a barrel of foodstuffs had reached his mother. But she was still very distressed. All this time they had lived on the foodstuffs Sindhu received in exchange for the goats, but what would happen to them when this supply of foodstuffs was finished?

Sindhu had no such worry. He believed in the words of the old lady who had taken his cows in exchange for the goats. The three dancing goats would bring him luck.

Meanwhile, Sindhu worked as a labourer on his landowner's farm. He was happy because he could thus catch just a moment's glimpse of the landowner's daughter.

Then one day it came to pass that the landowner announced his intention of finding a suitable bridegroom for his lovely daughter, and made it known that whoever could name the three strands of hair hidden among her black silken tresses should have her for bride.

It was a curious way of finding a bridegroom, wasn't it?

Many young men from all parts of the country came to try their luck, but not one of them could make the right guess.

Sindhu had heard about this strange offer and wondered if he should take this opportunity of marrying the girl he loved so much. But would the landowner allow his daughter to be married to a peasant? Perhaps the girl herself would dislike being the wife of a poor farm labourer.

These thoughts tormented and angered him. Poor Sindhu! But, one day as he was watching the dance of the three goats, his mind was made up. The thought of that old woman who had given him the goats awakened in him a strange hope of success.

Presently he met a handsome hut very gaily dressed young man on the village highroad.

"What's the best way to go to the manor house?" said he as he saw Sindhu passing by. "It is a long way from here, far across the meadows. I will show you the way, sir, if you like." Sindhu answered politely.

As they were walking along, Sindhu muttered aloud to himself and sighed: "Alas! I am just a poor peasant, otherwise I would certainly have won the hand of our landowner's daughter."

"What!" exclaimed the young man. "What are you saying? Are you mad?"

"No sir, I am not mad. I happen to know the secret of those three strange strands of hair. But of what use is that to me?" replied Sindhu.

"Tell me what they are, my good fellow; and I will reward you well," said the young man impatiently.

Sindhu answered haltingly: "You see, master, 1 can't tell you the secret unless I am brought into the presence of the girl... How can I enter the house?"

The young man suggested that he would find a rich livery for Sindhu, who should enter the house as his servant.

So as they returned to the village, the young man ordered a beautiful livery with a silk turban. And Sindhu looked very attractive in his gay attire.

Once on the village highroad, they found a conveyance, and within a short time arrived at the manor house.

The hall was crowded with a number of suitors, all trying to guess riddle. The girl sat by her father on a raised platform. She was dressed simply; her beauty, grace, and charm did not require the refinements of luxury.

Nobody recognised Sindhu. He stood calmly by his master, who was constantly pressing him to whisper the secret to him. Then all of a sudden Sindhu declared in a solemn voice:

"The noble lady has one hair pure white, the colour of a diamond; one dark red, the colour of a ruby; and one bright green, the colour of an emerald, These three strands of hair are hidden among her black silken tresses."

"That is correct, that is a splendid guess," exclaimed the landowner. Sindhu then took off his disguise and appeared before the landowner. The young man who had engaged Sindhu as his servant started up in dismay: "What! What! Impossible!" The other suitors, too, were astonished.

But the landowner, although distressed at the prospect of such a son-in-law, calmly asked Sindhu:

"Now tell us how you came to know this secret."

Sindhu caught a glimpse of the girl and felt happy. Then he related the story from the very beginning and the landowner found the ring was the one that had belonged to his daughter.

So he turned to his daughter and said: "Since you have given him the ring and told him the secret, you are his bride."

The disappointed suitors began to jeer at Sindhu, and someone cried aloud: "This is an error of destiny, trick of fate--perhaps a curse of God."

Sindhu replied in a quiet but firm voice: "No, gentlemen, this is a triumph of faith, love and patience."

'So the pair married and lived happily ever after.'

'That is the story of the three dancing goats, beloved children,' said Baba Trinco as he rose to good night to us.

- Anonymous

About the Story

'The Three Dancing Goats' is a story about love, patience and faith. A poor, hard working young peasant Sindhu, and his mother are in great trouble when a year of drought comes. His mother advises him to sell their cows. Sindhu gets three dancing goats in exchange for the cows from an old woman. The old woman says that the goats will someday bring fortune to him. Sindhu succeeds in marrying a beautiful and rich landlord's daughter.

A folk tale is a popular story that forms a part of oral tradition and does not have a single, identifiable author. It can have both a moral and a philosophical aspect, as well as entertainment value. The folktales are passed down from one generation to the next. They often reflect the values and customs of the culture from which they come.

Glossary

distressed: much troubled, upset, worried.
compassionately: sympathetically.
meadow: a piece of flat grass land.

starvation: suffering caused by lack of food.
solemn: grave, serious.
implore: to make an emotional request.
barrel: a container made of wood or metal.
cease: to stop.
gleefully: with great joy, in a joyous manner, joyfully.
aspire: to have a great desire.
ruby: a precious stone of red colour.
emerald: a precious stone of beautiful green colour.
tresses : locks of human hair.
Manor house: a large house with lands, the house of a manor.
mutter: to speak in a low voice.
livery: a special uniform worn by a servant.
suitors: candidates willing to marry.
prospect: the possibility of some future event occurring.
triumph: victory.

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. The narrator of the story is –
   (a) Sindhu
   (b) Sindhu's mother
   (c) the old woman
   (d) Baba Trinco
2. When sindhu's mother saw the goats, she was –
   (a) happy
   (b) unhappy
   (c) excited
   (d) surprised
3. The land lord's daughter agreed to go to the peasant's hut because-
   (a) she wanted to meet sindhu's mother.
   (b) she liked sindhu.
   (c) she was very eager to have a goat.
   (d) her father wanted her to do so.

(B) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10 -15 words each:

1. What did Sindhu get in exchange for his two cows?
2. Why did Sindhu and his mother want to sell their cows?
3. Why did the landlord's daughter want her father to summon Sindhu?
4. Who was eager to have the three dancing goats from Sindhu?
5. What did the land lord's daughter ask for along with the third goat?
6. What promise was made by the old woman regarding Sindhu's cows?

(C) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 20-30 words each:

1. Why did Sindhu accept the offer made by the old woman?
2. What did the land lord's daughter decide after watching the dance of the goats first time?
3. What price did Sindhu ask for the third goat and the flute?
4. What did the village soothsayer tell the girl about the goats?
5. Why was Sindhu happy to work as a labourer on the land lord's farm?

(D) Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60- 80 words each:

1. What did the three different colours of the stones set in the ring mean?
2. How did the other suitors react to Sindhu's success?
3. How did Sindhu explain his success? Did he have full faith in old woman's promise of good fortune?

E. Say whether the following statements are True or False. Write 'T'for True and 'F' for False in the bracket :

1. Sindhu sold his cows to a butcher. [ ]
2. The old woman and Sindhu plucked leaves from the tree to feed their pets. [ ]
3. Sindhu believed that the three dancing goats would bring him good luck. [ ]
4. Many young men from all parts of the country came to try their luck. [ ]
5. Sindhu entered the land lord's house as a servant of a rich suitor. [ ]
6. When Sindhu entered the land lord's house, the land lord immediately recognized him. [ ]

Panchparmeshwar

Jumman Sheikh and Algu Chaudhari were fast friends. They were also partners in farming. They had an unshakeable faith in each other's love and loyalty. When Jumman was going on a pilgrimage, he entrusted his household to the care of Algu. And the latter, too, whenever he had an occasion to leave the village would place his family in the charge of his friend. But they differed from each other in their social customs and in their religious beliefs. Though they neither ate nor worshipped together, still they shared in the same likes and this, indeed, is friendship's real foundation.

Their friendship began when they were still boys. Jumman's father, Jumarati, was a teacher. Algu had served him with all his heart and had scoured his pots and pans while the teacher sat and puffed away at his hubble-bubble. Algu's father belonged to the old school. He was one of those who believe that the primary duty of the pupil is the service of the teacher, rather than the study of certain tenets at his feet; he used to say that knowledge comes only by the blessings of the teacher.

Jumarati Sheikh himself, however, held a different opinion. He relied more on the rod than on his radiant love for driving home the truth to his students. And the fear of that rod was at the root of the high esteem in which he was held in the neighbouring village. So while Algu attended on his master, Jumman pored over his books.

Jumman had an aged aunt who had a little property. As she had none of her near relations living, Jumman, by making all sorts of promises, cleverly managed to get the property registered in his own name. During the negotiations he showed her great respect and also saw to every detail of her comfort. But no sooner was the deed executed than all his courtesy and considerateness to her ceased. Thenceforward Jumman's wife, Kariman, also began to season the food she gave his aunt with a daily phial of verbal vitriol. The old woman suffered this indignity in silence, for whenever she complained to Jumman, he would turn round and retort, 'You have not given me such a princely property-just a fraction of an acre — that you should expect anything better at our hands.'

At last, one day, growing tired of the constant ill-treatment at the hands of Jumman and his wife, the aunt said, 'Son, as we cannot get on well with one another at the same hearth, you may, instead, give me some money every month and I shall cook my own food separately.'

Jumman replied wrathfully, 'Does silver grow on trees?' The aunt became furious. She threatened to refer the matter to the Panchayat, the village council of elders.

Jumman chuckled at this, just as a hunter, seeing a deer making unwarily for his net, might laugh to himself, and said, 'Certainly, let the Panchayat decide, because I also do not like your complaining constantly.'

Jumman said this because he felt sure that the matter was bound to be decided in his favour. For, who was there in the whole locality who was not indebted to him for some favour or other?

For some days the aged aunt, with her back bent like a bow, hobbled up and down the village, supporting herself on a staff. There was not a single good man in the village before whom she did not weep out her tale of woe. Some sent her away with an ambiguous assurance of help, while others were shocked at the high-handedness of Jumman. A few advised her to be reconciled to her lot, for, they added, that as she was living within a stone's throw of the graveyard, she had better spend the evening of her life in peace and prayer. Hardly one or two sympathized heartily with the old woman in her sorrow. At last she went to Algu Chaudhari and said to him, 'Son, please come to the Panchayat when my case comes up.'

Algu replied, 'There is no need for me to go there, for I am quite sure many others will attend.'

The old woman rejoined, 'I hope so, for I have told every one of my trouble. Well, it is now their look-out whether they come there or not.'

'I will come, but excuse me if I do not open my mouth.'

'Why, son?'

'You know very well that Jumman is my old friend. I don't want to break off with him.'

'For fear of displeasing will you refrain from speaking the truth?' Saying this she went back home.

All the wealth of conscience may be stolen without a man's ever knowing it. But let him hear a challenge to his sense of right and wrong and it is there again-vigilant and unconquerable! Algu had no reply to the old woman's words, but in his heart they kept resounding, for fear of displeasing him will you refrain from speaking the truth?'

At last the day for the Panchayat session came. Sheikh Jumman had a big carpet spread under a tree and had arranged for a good supply of betel-nuts, cardamoms and tobacco. The village people began to pour in. Whenever anyone came, Jumman and Algu, who were sitting in a corner of the carpet, would rise and bow and welcome him. The sun had set. On the trees overhead the birds seemed to be holding their own council. The barbers were busy feeding the hubble-bubbles with small bits of live coal and tobacco. The children were scampering about. The village dogs, thinking that some group feast was afoot, gathered all round in full force.

When everything was in order, the old aunt rose respectfully and made her deposition:

'Members of the Panchayat, three years ago I transferred my property to my nephew, Jumman, on condition that he would guarantee me bed and board as long as I lived. But he has not been giving me sufficient food and clothing and now I cannot stand his ill-treatment any longer. I am a helpless widow. I can't sue him in a court of law. And so I have come to you for justice. If you find I am in the wrong, punish me unhesitatingly. If Jumman is guilty, persuade him to do the right thing. I assure you that I will accept your verdict unreservedly.'

Ramdhan Misra, many of whose tenants had now settled down in Jumman's village and who therefore had a grudge against him, rose and said, 'Jumman, whom do you appoint as the head of the Panchayat?'

Jumman noted that especially those people were present who had some grudge or other against him. So he replied, 'The decree of the Panchayat is the decree of God. Let my aunt nominate any one and I shall have no objection.'

'O good man of God! the aunt exclaimed, 'why don't you give the name?'

Jumman became very angry and retorted, 'Don't make me open my mouth at this time! You have had your way; you may nominate any one you like.'

The aunt understood the innuendo in his words. 'Fear God,' she said. 'The Panchayat is neither a friend nor a foe of any one, so you should not hesitate to nominate someone unless, of course, there is no one in whom you have any faith. But I am sure you trust Algu Chaudhari. Well, then I nominate him.'

Jumman felt happy inwardly but, hiding his true feelings, said, 'All right, let it be Algu Chaudhari. As far as I am concerned, Algu and Ramdhan Misra would be the same.'

But Algu did not wish to be dragged into the dispute. So he said to the aunt, 'You know already of my intimacy with Jumman.'

She replied solemnly, 'Yes, but, son, for the sake of friendship one should not sell the truth. In the heart of the Panchayat dwells God. Whatever comes from the lips of the Panchayat comes from God.'

So Algu Chaudhari was ultimately appointed as the head of the Panchayat. Ramdhan Misra and Jumman's other enemies inwardly cursed the old woman for this.

The hearing of the case commenced. Algu Chaudhari first addressed Jumman, 'Sheikh Jumman, you and I are old friends, who have stood by each other in the past. But now you and your aunt are equal in my eyes. Tell the Panchayat what you have to say.'

Jumman was cocksure that the die would be cast in his favour and that Algu's speech was meant to be a mere formality. He, therefore, deposed with an easy mind:

'Members of the Panchayat, three years ago my aunt transferred her property to me on condition that I would maintain her as long as she lived. God is my witness that, ever since, I have treated her as my mother and have not caused her the least trouble. There has been, however, for some time a tension between her and my wife. Now my aunt demands a separate monthly allowance for maintenance. Gentlemen, you are aware of the fact that her property yields no appreciable return. Furthermore, at the time of the execution of the deed no such stipulation was made. However, I leave everything to the wise verdict of the Panchayat.'

Algu Chaudhari was accustomed to working in courts of law, therefore, he knew the ways of litigation rather well and hence he began to cross-examine Jumman. This sounded on his heart like so many hammer-strokes. Ramdhan Misra was simply spell-bound at Algu's skilful cross-examination, while Jumman was wondering what had come over this friend and why he was questioning him in that strain. 'Even now,' he told himself, 'this very Algu was chatting with me. What has come over him so quickly that he is now bent on digging me up by the roots! What fault of mine can it be for which he is now trying to get even with me! We have been friends for a long time. Is such a long standing friendship of no worth whatever?'

Jumman was still engaged in solving the mystery when Algu Chaudhari pronounced the decision: 'Jumman Sheikh, the Panchayat has carefully considered the matter, referred to them, and they have come to the decision that your aunt should be granted an adequate monthly allowance for her maintenance, for they believe that her property is sufficiently substantial to warrant it. If you do not accept our award, then you may consider the deed cancelled.'

The Panchayat's verdict stunned Jumman. A friend had behaved like an inveterate enemy, had pierced his heart with a dagger, had failed him in his hour of need! 'Truly,' he told himself, 'such occasions as this prove what friends are true and what false. And this friendship of ours was false. No wonder our country is in the grip of such serious epidemics as cholera and plague, for with such cheats and liars as this, how could things be otherwise?'

Ramdhan Misra and other members of the Panchayat, however, were openly praising the righteousness of Algu, 'This,' they said, 'is what a true Panchayat does; like a swan it separates water from milk, milk from water, truth from falsehood. Of course, friendship has its place but it should always be subordinated to truth and justice. It is because of such truth speakers as Algu Chaudhari that the world goes on, or else it would have sunk long ago to the bottom of Hell!'

The decision shook the roots of Algu's and Jumman's friendship.Nor were they seen to be chatting together. And whenever if at all, they happened to pass each other on the road they met as sword meets shield. Jumman now harboured a secret desire to take revenge on Algu and so all the while he was devising ways and means towards that end.

Good deeds take a long time to be accomplished, while bad deeds are done overnight. So Jumman got an early opportunity to avenge himself on Algu.

Algu Chaudhari had a pair of strong, beautiful bullocks which he had purchased the previous year. They were the cynosure of the whole village. As luck would have it, a month after the Panchayat's decision one of the animals died. Jumman exploited the incident, saying Algu had been rightly served by God for his unjust award. Algu began to suspect that, perhaps, the death of the bullock was due to its having been poisoned by Jumman. Algu's wife also was of the same opinion. So one day she picked up a quarrel with Jumman's wife and an endless exchange of abuse and invective followed between their ladyships till, at last, Jumman dragged his lady from the battlefield and silenced her with strong language. Algu Chaudhari, on his part, silenced his queen with his highly argumentative bamboo club.

The surviving bullock, singly, was useless for any service. Algu, therefore, tried to get another animal to complete the pair but failed. Eventually he decided to sell it.

Now in the village lived a cart-driver, Samjhu Sahu by name, who used to carry various commodities from the village to the market and back. He had set his heart on the bullock, for, he said to himself, that if his cart was drawn by that strong creature he could make two or three trips instead of one, and thus increase his daily income. He therefore, approached Algu and, after a great deal of higgling, at last a bargain was struck and Sahu promised to pay rupees one hundred and fifty to Algu within a month.

Sahu began to tax the poor bullock to the limit. What was worse, he did not feed it properly. What a contrast to its easeful existence as the property of its former master! In those days only once in six months or so it was yoked in service and then it jumped, and ran for miles in pure joy. But now there was no such play, now there was an unending round of work - and well-nigh starvation! No wonder that a month of such treatment made its ribs stick out. Why, the very sight of the bullock-cart was enough to make its blood run cold.

One afternoon Sahu stowed in the cart double the usual load. The poor creature, already exhausted by three previous trips, could hardly lift its feet. Sahu whipped it hard to make it go. The bullock started and covered a short distance but again stopped. Its master whipped it again, this time harder than before. The poor thing fell down on the ground, alas! never to rise again. Sahu feared that, perhaps, the creature was dead. He, therefore, unyoked it. Then he began to wonder how he would be able to get the cart home. He raised a hue and cry for help, but no one was to be seen because the roads of a village are like the eyes of children closed in sleep as soon as evening comes.

Sahu was in rage. That day he had earned about two hundred and fifty rupees from the sale of *gur* and *ghee.* This amount he was carrying in his belt. In the cart there were several bags of salt. He could not, therefore, go home leaving the cart behind. He finally decided to sleep in the cart for the night. He had a few puffs. Thus he spent half the night in warding off sleep. Then he fell asleep. He tried to sleep lightly as he was

afraid lest somebody might rob him of his money. Nevertheless, when he got up in the morning he found that the money was missing. Several tins of oil were also missing. He threw himself on the ground weeping and then made for home. On arrival he told his wife of his mishap, whereupon she burst out, 'What an ill-omened bullock that fellow Algu sold to us that it died so soon and we have lost our life's savings!'

Three months passed. One day Algu went to Sahu's place to demand his dues. No sooner did the cart-driver and his wife see him than they flew at him like mad dogs, 'You wretch, we have lost our life's savings and you have come to ask for money. Are you not ashamed of yourself for throwing dust in our eyes by selling a bad animal, an aged bullock, to us? Go and first wash your face in a ditch and then try to get the money. The best we can do is to make payment in kind and that, too, in part. You can take away our own bullock and you can yoke it for a month or two and then return it.'

Algu, at first, felt like returning home crest-fallen but he had not the heart to let go his one hundred and fifty rupees. So he, too, got angry. Sahu went inside the house to fetch a stick while his wife held the field. From arguments they advanced to blows. Then Sahu's wife went inside the house and closed the door and raised a cry. In a moment a crowd gathered in front of the house. At last, some of the good-hearted villagers persuaded both Algu and Sahu to have their quarrel settled by the Panchayat.

Preparations for the holding of the Panchayat began. Both the parties to the dispute commenced canvassing the support of their friends. On the third day the Panchayat met. In the fields the crows were in council. They were discussing whether they had a right to the peas growing in the fields. It appeared that until this matter was decided they were bent upon expressing their disapproval of the watchman's vigilance by cawing vociferously. The parrots on the trees were debating whether men had any right to call them faithless when, amongst men, too, one's own friends do not refrain at times from deceiving one another.

Ramdhan Misra asked Algu Chaudhari whom he would like to nominate as the President of the Panchayat. Algu replied meekly, 'Let Sahu do it.' Sahu rose and said in a harsh voice, 'I appoint Sheikh Jumman.'

Hearing the name of Jumman, Algu's heart began to beat fast and he felt as if somebody had slapped him in the face. Ramdhan observed this and asked, 'Algu, have you any objection?' Algu replied despairingly, 'No, why should I object?'

Verily, the sense of responsibility often works a great change in a person. Behold the editor in his sanctum - with what recklessness he launches his fiery denunciations of our Ministries! But the day comes when he, too, takes his seat in the Cabinet and then how prudent, how full of sound judgment and good sense and understanding his writings are! This is the sense of responsibility. Or take the hot-headed young man of yesterday over whom his parents were grieving, for a little while the weight of responsibility for a family lies on his shoulders and how patient and moderate becomes our lawless youth!

Sheikh Jumman in like manner began to feel a sense of responsibility, for now he was sitting in the seat of justice, and he knew that whatever he would speak from there would be accepted by the people as the very voice of God. He should, therefore, not allow his own personal feelings to sway him one way or another.

Algu and Sahu made their respective statements fully and forcefully. The members of Panchayat, after hearing them, were all agreed on at least one thing, namely, that Algu must get the price for his bullock. Two of them, however, were in favour of reduction in the price because Sahu had lost his means of livelihood. But at the same time they wanted to punish him and make an example of him so that others might be deterred from treating their animals cruelly.

At last Jumman announced his verdict. 'Algu Chaudhari and Sahu, we have considered your dispute carefully. Our decision is that Samjhu Sahu should pay the price in full because, when the transaction was made, the animal was not suffering from any disease. The creature died of starvation and hard work.'

Ramdhan, interposing, said, 'Samjhu Sahu deliberately killed the creature and he must be punished severely.'

Jumman replied, 'That is a different question.'

Sahu thereupon pleaded for a reduction in the price.

Jumman answered, 'That is left to the goodwill of Algu Chaudhari.'

Algu was beside himself with joy. He rose and shouted, 'Hurrah! Victory to the Panchayat!' and the whole audience echoed that cry.

This is justice,' the people were heard saying, Verily, in the Panchayat dwells the Divine.'

Shortly afterwards, Jumman went up to Algu and, embracing him, said, 'At long last I have realized today that the Panchayat is the voice of God.'

Algu began to weep. His tears watered the dry and dying creeper of their love and gave it another lease of life.

-Premchand

About the Story

In 'Panchparmeshwar', Premchand shows how disputes in villages can be settled amicably and how the Panchayat can play a vital role in restoring peace and harmony. The story gives the message that an ideal judge is one who is not biased and in him dwells the voice of God. Algu is the village chief and when it comes to do the justice, he does not spare even his best friend Jumman. The friends become foes but in due

course when Jumman becomes 'sarpanch' and sits on the judgement seat, he realizes that Algu was right.

Premchand is the pen name of Dhanpat Rai Shrivastav, a great writer of short stories and novels. He has written about 300 short stories and several novels. The main characteristic of Premchand's writing is his interesting story telling and the use of simple language. His novels describe the problems of the rural peasant classes.

Glossary

scour: to clean by rubbing with a brush
tenets: beliefs, principles
rely on: to depend on
esteem: respect, admiration
pore over: to study something carefully
negotiate: to arrange or settle by discussion
phial: a small bottle or container
indignity: humiliation or shame
retort: to reply in an angry manner
hearth: fireplace
chuckle: a quiet or inward laugh
hobble: to walk with difficulty.
ambiguous: of doubtful meaning
high- handedness: using power without proper consideration
reconciled to: resigned to, prepared to accept
refrain: to avoid doing, to cease
vigilant: watchful
resounding: echoing, ringing
hubble-bubble: a hookah (tobacco pipe for smoking)
grudge: a feeling of ill will or resentment
decree: an order or decision of the court
dispute: argument, quarrel
cocksure: offensively sure or confident
formality: required by custom or rule.
depose: to give evidence before the elders of the Panchayat.
litigation: court case, legal action.
cross examination: questioning closely to test the answers already given.
pronounce: to utter
warrant: to justify
exploit: use selfishly for one's own profit or advantage
crestfallen: sad, disappointed
vigilance: attention, caution
verily: in truth
recklessness: irresponsibility, carelessness
deter: to discourage or prevent
interpose: to interrupt

canvass: asking or requesting persons for their support for a cause
vociferously: noisily
deliberately: done on purpose
creeper: plant that creeps along the ground.
lease: rent, let out.

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative:

1. The real foundation of the friendship between Jumman Sheikh and Algu Chaudhari was that –
   (a) they had the same customs.
   (b) they had the same religious belief.
   (c) they worshipped together.
   (d) they had the same likes.
2. When Algu attended on his master, Jumman –
   (a) read his books carefully.
   (b) played outside.
   (c) did not do anything.
   (d) helped Algu.

3. Samjhu Sahu promised to pay rupees one hundred and fifty to Algu within
   (a) two months.
   (b) fifteen days.
   (c) a month.
   (d) three months.

(B) Answer the following questions in about 10- 15 words each:

1. How was the aunt treated by Jumman after the transfer of her property to him?
2. Who was nominated as the head of the Panchayat by the aunt?
3. What happened to one of the bullocks of Algu one month after the Panchayat's decision?
4. Who nominated Jumman as the head of the Panchayat?
5. Why did Samajhu Sahu want to buy the bullock?
6. What did Sahu's wife say when she was told about the death of the bullock?

(C) Answer the following questions in about 20-30 word each:

1. Why did the aunt want to take the matter to the Panchayat?
2. Why did Jumman feel happy when Algu was nominated as the head of the Panchayat?
3. Why did Algu not want to be the head of the Panchayat?
4. "The Panchayat's verdict stunned Jumman" Why was Jumman stunned?

5. Why did Algu's heart begin to beat fast when Jumman was appointed as the head of the Panchayat?

(D) Answer the following questions in about 60-80 words each:

1. 'Friendship has its place but it should be subordinated to truth and justice. Elucidate.
2. "Victory to the Panchayat! This is justice." Who said this and why?

(E) Say Whether the following statements are True or False. Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False in the bracket:

1. Algu's father believes that the primary duty of the pupil is the service of the teacher. [ ]
2. Jumman was not sure that the decision would be in his favour. [ ]
3. Algu Chaudhari knew the ways of litigation well. [ ]
4. The decision given by the Panchayat had no effect on the friendship of Jumman and Algu. [ ]
5. Samjhu Sahu fed the bullock properly. [ ]