## CONTENTS

Fluency in English

To the Teacher

Acknowledgements

**UNIT 1: READING STRATEGIES**

Inzy Lets Things Flow Over Him

*Kadambari Murali*  

... Dr. Seema Suri 1

**UNIT 2: WAYS OF READING**

It’s Only a Game, Enjoy

*Taran J Tejpal*  

... Dr. Seema Suri 7

**UNIT 3: TELLING STORIES**

Haroun and the Sea of Stories

*Salman Rushdie*  

... Dr. Seema Suri 13

**UNIT 4: UNDERSTANDING POINTS OF VIEW**

Girls

*Mrinal Pande*  

... Dr. Anil Aneja 19

**UNIT 5: UNDERSTANDING POETRY I**

Sisters

*Saleem Peeradina*  

... Dr. Anil Aneja 22

**UNIT 6: UNDERSTANDING STIRE**

A Ten Day Fast

*Harishankar Parsai*  

... Dr. Anil Aneja 25

**UNIT 7: UNDERSTANDING VALUES**

Go, Kiss the World

*Subroto Bagchi*  

... Neeta Gupta 30

**UNIT 8: UNDERSTANDING POETRY II**

Amalkanti

*Nirendranath Chakrabarti*  

... Neeta Gupta 35

**UNIT 9: UNDERSTANDING ARGUMENTS**

Hitting Dowry for a Six

*Kalpana Sharma*  

... Neeta Gupta 43

Graduate Course
UNIT 10: UNDERSTANDING HUMOUR
Chocolate
*Manju Kapur*

UNIT 11: UNDERSTANDING BIOGRAPHY
A Gandhian in Garhwal: Chandi Prasad Bhatt
*Ramchandra Guha*

UNIT 12: UNDERSTANDING POETRY III
To Mother
*S. Usha*

UNIT 13: READING REVIEWS
Lost and Found: Benegal’s Bose
*Mihir Bose*

UNIT 14: UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVE
Soapnut Leaves
*Chaaso*

UNIT 15: UNDERSTANDING POETRY IV
The Lost Word
*Esther Morgan*

UNIT 16: READING BETWEEN THE LINES
Lambo to the Slaughter
*Roald Dahl*

UNIT 17: UNDERSTANDING POETRY V
Some People
*Rita Ann Higgins*

UNIT 18: UNDERSTANDING DRAMA
Routes and Escape Routes
*Datta Bhagat*

Sample Question Paper

**SCHOOL OF OPEN LEARNING**
**UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**
5, Cavalry Lane, Delhi-110007
Dear Students,

As you are aware the Compulsory Language component of the B.A. Programme gives you the option of studying English as a compulsory language. There are three Streams of this course which are allotted depending on your eligibility.

- Stream A is for those students who have passed English in their Class XII

The duration of the Compulsory Language course is two years. Paper I will be in the First Year of the Programme. You have the option of appearing for English Paper II either in Second Year or in Third Year. For example, a student has offered English A and Hindi B in First Year. He/she can offer either English A or Hindi B in Second Year. Suppose he/she has offered English A in Second Year, then he/she shall have to offer Hindi B in Third Year or vice versa.

The Course aims at developing your Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening Skills as well as enhancing your Vocabulary and Grammar and has a prescribed text book as well as a prescribed grammar book. The course for English Stream A Paper 1 is as mentioned below:

- Grammar book: *Advanced English Grammar* by Martin Hewing, Units 1-62

As far as the Grammar component of the course is concerned you shall have to procure a copy of the prescribed grammar book mentioned above. Since it is a practice book and already contains a key to solutions to various exercises you will not be given any Study material on the above mentioned book.

The Study Material in hand is on *Fluency in English: Part I* where all the Units of the prescribed text book have been analyzed and explained with some solved exercises from the text as well as some unsolved exercises for additional practice. A Question paper at the end will give you some idea of the pattern of the examination.

We hope you enjoy studying the course.

Best Wishes

Department of English
READING STRATEGIES

‘INZY LETS THINGS FLOW OVER HIM’

By Kadambari Murali

— Seema Suri

Objectives

This section of the study-material includes a brief introduction to reading strategies, a study-guide and key to the exercises in your text book. You will notice that a major component of the exercises in your text book comprise group-based activities to be done in the classroom. As a student learning through the distance mode you might feel isolated and disadvantaged as you are learning on your own. Try to do the exercises and check your answers with the help of the key.

Introduction

What do we read?

Every day we read a variety of text-types without, perhaps, even realizing that they are texts. The newspaper you read in the morning, the billboard with an ad for a movie, the instructions on your bottle of shampoo, the rate-chart at the Metro station, the e-mail from your friend, the SMS you sent, or the prospectus for college that you bought – all these are examples of text-types. In addition we also read charts, diagrams, cartoons or photographs which accompany texts.

Why do we read?

We read primarily to seek information or increase our knowledge. People also read for pleasure, to communicate with other people, or to seek inspiration from religious texts. There is a wide spectrum of reasons, ranging from the purely functional to the religious or spiritual.

How do we read?

There are various ways in which a text can be read, depending on your intention. Linguists have classified reading strategies into four major kinds. If you are searching for some information, as when you are going through a railway time-table, you read quickly and focus only on what you need. This is scanning. When you read a chapter of a book in your course with the aim to understand everything it is intensive reading but if you read a newspaper article quickly just to get the general idea it is skimming. If you go through an entire novel, without being bothered by things you don’t understand and because you enjoy reading fiction, it is extensive reading.
The main requisite for reading comprehension is to develop the ability to read a passage without failing to grasp the general meaning of the text. The aim of the text book in your course is to provide you with a wide variety of authentic texts and sensitize you to differences in style. You must learn not only to pay attention to what is said but how it is said. Other skills that help you understand the text are the ability to deduce meanings of unfamiliar words, recognize the writer’s technique and evaluate writing in terms of organization, aim, function, and writer’s intention.

Cricket is a religion in the Indian sub-continent and for fans, sports stars are iconic figures. The first unit in your text book ‘Inzy Lets Things Flow Over Him’ is about Inzamam-ul-haq, the captain of the Pakistani cricket team. He is regarded as one of the greatest Pakistani batsmen of the modern era. In International Cricket Council rankings between 1995 and 2007, he has consistently remained among the top twenty batsmen in the world.

Study-Guide

The first paragraph summarizes the content of the article. As we are told; it is a ‘human tale; of two friends’. We can guess that though the article is about Inzamam-ul-Haq, or Inzy as he is known, it will focus more on his friendship with Mujtaba.

Where is the interview with Mujtaba taking place?

How long have Mujtaba and Inzamam known each other?

What is Mujtaba’s full name?

The interview is in a simple style. Kadambari Murali presents the Pakistani captain through the eyes of Mujtaba. She allows him to talk freely about Inzamam, without intervening or interrupting with any questions of her own. Notice how direct quotations comprise a large portion of the article. At other places the author takes care to remind us that it is Mujtaba who is narrating the incidents. Note how the paragraphs begin:

‘According to Mujtaba…………………….’ (para 5)

Mujtaba recalls how ................................. (para 6)

Inzamam, it appears...............................’ (para 7)

He remembers the time...........................’ (para 8)

Mujtaba recalls the early days of their friendship. Murali uses a method that allows the human aspects of Inzamam to come to the fore. We learn about many facets of Inzamam’s personality. Each incident that Mujtaba recalls with nostalgia gives us an intimate picture of Inzy: his love for food, his basically shy nature, his dedication as a player, loyalty towards his friend and his laid-back attitude. The picture that emerges is endearing, of a man who is loyal and unaffected by status. Inzamam has not allowed his rise to fame to affect his friendship and Mujtaba, to his credit, takes a rare pride in his friend’s achievements and is protective and defensive about Inzamam.

Mujtaba was sad when Inzamam left Multan to join the Lahore Club on Imran Khan’s invitation. In the 1992 World Cup semi-final against Australia the relatively unknown Inzamam
was included in the batting line-up and noticed by fans and experts. Inzy was only 22 years old at that time. Again, in the World Cup semi-final against New Zealand in 1992, he hit 60 runs from only 37 balls and led his team to victory. It is regarded as one of the finest World Cup performances. Inzamam soon became a national celebrity and when he visited his home after the victorious match, Mujtaba conscious of the wide gap in their social position, did not join the cheering crowds welcoming their hero at the airport. But when the motorcade was passing Mujtaba’s shop Inzy went in and made his friend sit next to him. Mujtaba gets particularly emotional while recalling this incident.

Who was Inzamam’s father?
Where did Imran Khan meet Inzamam?
During which crucial match did Inzamam fall ill?
What is Inzamam’s son’s name?

The bond between the friends is a touching one. It is obvious that Inzamam, in spite of his success, treats Mujtaba as his confidante and depends on him. Mujtaba defends Inzamam’s silence during allegations of match-fixing that marred his career. In 2006, while playing against England at The Oval, there were allegations of ball-tampering against his team and Inzy protested against the umpires’ decision by remaining in the dressing room and not coming out to play. The charges were later cleared. Mujtaba tells Murali that during all these controversies Inzy never reacted and kept silent. You must have now understood the significance of the title. It refers to Inzamam’s characteristic personality trait: not reacting to either praise or criticism. Mujtaba, however, points out that Inzamam has changed and now started to assert himself.

The article ends with a surprising bit of information. We are told that Mujtaba runs the barber’s shop in the hotel. This sudden revelation about Mujtaba’s humble occupation only increases our respect for Inzamam. The article succeeds in presenting a side of Inzamam that most fans might not have known about and makes him a more lovable character. It is indeed rare to find a man so untouched by his success or a friend like Mujtaba, whose affection is not contaminated with jealousy or envy.

**KEY TO EXERCISES**

**Reading Comprehension**

1. This article is easy to understand because it is written in a simple, straightforward style. The article on Inzamam-ul-Haq is written by Kadambari Murali, well known sports journalist. She is currently the sports editor of the ‘Hindustan Times.’

As the first paragraph ends we know that this article is based on a conversation between the journalist Kadambari Murali and Ghulam Mujtaba, close friend of Inzamam-ul-Haq or Inzy, as he is known by his friends. The conversation takes place in the lobby of a hotel in Multan where Mujtaba is busy preparing for Inzy’s return home. Mujtaba and Inzy have been close friends for twenty years and Mujtaba narrates old incidents to Kadambari, telling her how Inzy and he would spend whole nights chatting with each other. He also tells Kadambari about Inzamam’s early cricketing career, his rise to become a cricket sports star, his success and
his problems. We get to know that Inzamam has never been assertive and only recently started to assert himself.

2. This article tells us more about Inzamam, though it is based on a conversation between the journalist and Mujtaba. The reader would naturally be more interested in learning about Inzamam as he is a sports icon. Inzamam was captain of the Pakistan cricket team from 2003-7. In the Indian subcontinent cricket is a religion and fans love to read about their favourite players.

3. The style of the article is informal and conversational. Kadambari Murali does not go into details of Inzamam’s career or his achievements as a cricketer. Instead, she adopts the human approach and focuses on Mujtaba’s reflections (reflective) on Inzamam’s personality and his narration (narrative) of the early days of their friendship.

4. The main features of formal and informal styles are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>complete and grammatically accurate sentences</td>
<td>well organized and well-structured paragraphs</td>
<td>hesitations, false starts, and interruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>precise and accurate use of words</td>
<td>simple and compound sentences</td>
<td>short and often incomplete sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of jargon or technical terms</td>
<td>use of jargon or technical terms</td>
<td>contractions or short forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>greater frequency of complex sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clichés, repetitive use of words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below are two examples, one each of a formal and informal style. You will find all the above mentioned features in both these extracts.

**Informal style**

The Woman : Are you happy?
The Older Girl : Yes, very.
The Woman : Sit down. Tell me the truth. Is there anything…?
The Older Girl : No. Nothing and yet…everything!
The Woman : For instance?
The Older Girl : For instance…everything?
The Woman : So you mean?
The Older Girl : I mean…that…before I got married I thought I knew Manoj very well. But now…
The Woman : Hmm. Is he unfaithful?
The Older Girl : No.

(From *Aadhe-Adhure*, Mohan Rakesh)
**Formal style**

We shall outline the four major subfields of anthropology that have emerged in the twentieth century: physical anthropology, archeology, linguistics and cultural anthropology.

Physical anthropology deals with human biology across space and time. It is divided into two areas; paleontology, the study of fossil evidence of the primate, including human evolution, and neontology, the comparative biology of living primates, including population and molecular genetics, body shapes (morphology), and the extent to which behaviour is biologically programmed.

Archeology is the systematic retrieval and analysis of the physical remains left behind by human beings, including both their skeletal and cultural remains. Both the classical civilizations and prehistoric groups, including our prehuman ancestors are investigated.


5. On the basis of the previous answers, attempt this one yourself.

6. | Informal Style | Formal Style |
--- | --- |
i) Now he has *gone far ahead.* | iv) He has greatly improved his position and status in life. |
ii) We *hit it off* immediately. | v) We soon developed a warm, friendly relationship. |
iii) He would *hang out* at my home. | vii) He would spend a lot of time with me at my home. |
iv) He played that match *coming straight off the drip.* | ii) Immediately after being discharged from the hospital, he played that match. |
v) I wouldn’t *fit in with* his new life now. | vi) I would feel out of place in his new lifestyle. |
vii) He *runs* the barber’s shop in the hotel. | i) He manages the barber’s shop in the hotel. |

**Writing**

1. When Mujtaba recalls the early years of his friendship with Inzamam-ul-Haq we learn that Inzamam *did not make friends easily* and was *shy* and *reserved*. Mujtaba tells Kadambari how they would stay up all night, chatting and eating omelettes and then go straight to the mosque for the early morning namaz. There is no doubt that he is a *big eater, requires little sleep, and is deeply religious* as well. Mujtaba and Inzamam have been friends for more than twenty years, in spite of Inzamam’s rise to fame. This proves that Inzamam is a *loyal friend* and *not at all status conscious*. The cricketer Imran Khan observed Inzamam practicing cricket at the Multan Stadium and most probably saw the potential in him and invited him to
Lahore. Inzamam went and joined the Lahore Club; it is clear that he was ambitious and saw a good opportunity. During the semi-final against New Zealand in the 1992 World Cup Inzamam was unwell but still went on to play the match, demonstrating his dedication to the sport.

2. Mujtaba, we get to know at the end of the article, runs the barber’s shop in the hotel in Multan where Kadambari Murali has interviewed him.

Although Inzamam has become a world famous sports person, Mujtaba is not envious but takes pride in his friend’s success. His friendship with the cricketer is unusual because it has not been affected by the disparity in status and position. His close emotional bond is evident in the preparations he is making for Inzamam’s return home and the pride with which he tells Kadambari that Inzamam’s son also wants to be a cricketer, like his father.

Mujtaba comes across as a simple and affectionate man, whose friendship with Inzamam is, as the writer says, is truly ‘a human tale’.

3. Here is a recipe for an Indian omelette.

Serves 2 Time taken: 5 minutes

**Ingredients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 eggs</td>
<td>1 tbsp oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 onion</td>
<td>salt, pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 green chilli</td>
<td>1 tbsp milk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Break eggs and put in a bowl. Add milk and beat the eggs till the mixture is fluffy.

b) Chop the onions and green chilli finely.

3) Heat a non-stick pan. Add oil. After a minute add onions and chilli.

4) Fry onions till transparent and add egg-mixture.

5) Fry on both sides till brown.

6) Serve with toast and tomato ketchup.
Objectives

This section of the study-material will attempt to draw your attention to the organization of the article and discuss Tejpal’s technique. It also includes a glossary, study-guide and key to the exercises.

Introduction

The history of India’s sporting ties with Pakistan is a troubled one. The 1965 and 1971 wars, Pakistan’s resentment over India’s role in creating Bangladesh, India’s resentment over Pakistan’s alleged role in secessionism in Kashmir and the Kargil war in 1999; are some of the reasons why there is always an undercurrent of hostility in the stadium. Political tensions have always affected the game of cricket. For instance, in 1999, India, at the behest of the then Sports Minister and the intervention of the Prime Minister, withdrew from the Asian Test Championship.

In 1978 television brought cricket matches into the drawing rooms and suddenly there was a national audience for cricket. The shift from five-day matches to one-day matches also increased interest in the mass spectacle. Tarun Tejpal’s article is a plea to sports lovers from both countries to disassociate the game from politics or nationalism.

Glossary

*metaphor for life* : a metaphor is a figure of speech in which two dissimilar things are compared e.g. ‘the house looked like a cake’. You don’t usually compare a house with a cake.

*pirouettes* : a dancer’s spin on one foot or the point of the toe.

*morality play* : English medieval drama of the 15th c., teaching a moral lesson

*testosterone* : chief male sex hormone

*surrogate* : substitute for a person in a specific role or office

*catharsis* : feeling of emotional release in drama, freeing of repressed emotion by association with something

*palliative* : anything used to soothe pain or anxiety

*cataclysmic* : violent upheaval or disaster
Shoaib’s thunderbolt: Shoaib Akhtar, recognized as one of the fastest bowlers in the world; setting a world record by docking 100 miles per hour twice. He has been nicknamed the ‘Rawalpindi Express’.

Sachin Tendulkar: one of the greatest batsmen the Indian game has ever seen.

straight drive: one of the most classical shots in a batsman’s repertoire

Chamb-Jaurian: a place on the Line of Control in Jammu. In 1965 Pakistan launched Operation Grand Slam in order to capture Akhnoor and cut India’s only road link to Kashmir.

Tiger Peak: the peak of Tiger Hill, on the Line of Control in Drass sub-sector where 25 Indian soldiers and 40 Pakistani intruders were killed in a battle to recapture the peak in 1999.

Study-guide

Tejpul’s article begins with general observations on the game of cricket and then moves on to Indo-Pak cricket. He accepts that a good game of cricket can be enjoyable as it is an opportunity for players to display their physical prowess. It can be both entertaining and exciting as it encourages a healthy sense of competition.

Tejpul extends his discussion to talk about sports lovers, people for whom cricket symbolizes a lot of serious things. According to them cricket teaches us moral, religious, and philosophical lessons; it is ‘a metaphor for life’, ‘a morality-play’, and a ‘surrogate battle’. This group of inter-related metaphors reinforces Tejpul’s argument that cricket-lovers associate their favourite game with a lot of things. They identify with their players’ loss and victory and see reflected in the game their own everyday struggles. Belief in certain values is reaffirmed through the operative rules of the game.

Tejpul picks up the thread of his main argument. In the first paragraph he said that games exist primarily to amuse us. To that, he adds another function. Using insights from psychology, he asserts that games provide a safe outlet for the aggression that is a natural part of a man’s physiological make-up. He sums up his discussion in this line,

The game exists to take the violence out of us, to drain us of real blood thirst. If instead it generates violence, it loses its purpose, remaining neither amusement nor catharsis. (para 4)

After this Tejpul switches to criticizing Indo-Pak cricket encounters. He strongly believes that political troubles should not be allowed to affect sporting ties. Underlining the common regional identity of the two countries, he is critical of all those people who contribute to the entanglement of sports with politics, whether politicians or sports commentators. A misplaced sense of patriotism can make players feel that they have let their country down if they lose a match. Echoing the sentiments of many he feels that cricket should become a unifying factor instead of a divisive force.

For that we have to change our attitude and learn to appreciate good cricket. Disassociating talent from national identity is the first step towards that. He concludes the article by repeating his opening statement:
‘A game is fun only if it remains a game. We must not make it anything more’.

Task 1: Writer’s intention

Being aware of the function of a passage is vital to its comprehension. One of the first things a student should do is to find out whether the text aims to convince the reader, criticize something, etc.

What is the writer’s intention in this article?

- to amuse the reader
- to criticize sports-lovers
- to appeal for a rational approach to cricket
- to increase our knowledge of cricket

Task 2: Organization of the text

In order to read efficiently one must be able to recognize the topic sentences, which are the ones that contain the main ideas of the passage. It is often found in newspaper articles where the first paragraph sums up the main point and rest of the text consists of expansions of different kinds.

The following points are all mentioned in the text. Write down M if you think it is a main idea and S if it is a supporting detail.

- More prose is written on a single game than in praise of seers or scientists.
- The surrogate warrior and the surrogate battle must never become real.
- Cricket doesn’t cure diseases.
- A game is fun only if it remains a game.
- Let the teams play without feeling some cataclysmic national honour and shame ride on their shoulders.
- Shoaib’s thunderbolt is as much a thing of beauty as Sachin’s straight drive.

KEY TO EXERCISES

1. Para 1 (D) The game of cricket is first and foremost a game though it also depends on speed, skill, and strength. It also provides excitement and entertainment.

Para 2 (J) Most people attach deep emotions and numerous meanings to games. They are seen as a metaphor for life and teach its lessons. More is made of a cricket match than of scientific discoveries or great philosophy.

Para 3 (G) This is because games, like films, plays and novels, where the settings and rules are made by us, can easily show us laws of good and bad, reward and punishment operating as we think they should with good winning and evil being punished. And games also provide us with the thrill of war without exposing us to its dangers.

Para 4 (I) Games provide people with safe outlets for their aggression. If instead they lead to violence, they have failed in their purpose.
Para 5 (F) The people of India and Pakistan share a common history, culture and genetic make-up but have been divided by politics. If the disharmony between India and Pakistan could be worked out through a cricket match we would not need to fight wars with each other.

Para 6 (H) The writer appeals to the public and to writers and commentators not to get too excited during an India-Pakistan match. Neither team should be made to feel that they have betrayed national pride if they lose.

Para 7 (A) Too much emotional involvement with our own team should not prevent us from appreciating the skills of players from other teams.

Para 8 (E) A game is fun only if it remains a game. We must not make it anything more.

2. (ii) People should not take cricket too seriously.

Vocabulary

1. Check glossary.

2. | Column A                      | Column B                                                                 |
   | i) vaulting prose            | (e) showy language, expressing undeserved praise.                        |
   | ii) morality play           | (c) play teaching moral lessons of victory of good over evil.          |
   | iii) pumping testosterone    | (a) chemical substance in the body; male hormone that excites.         |
   | iv) overloaded with baggage  | (d) prejudices that influence how we think and behave.                  |
   | v) in full cry               | (g) noisy and excited behaviour                                        |
   | vi) frisson of combat        | (b) excitement of competition                                           |
   | vii) exertions and pirouettes| (f) stress and strain                                                   |

3. (i) fair and foul
   (ii) loss and triumph
   (iii) reward and punishment
   (iv) exhilaration and despair
   (v) honour and shame
   (vi) mate and foe
   (vii) better or worse

Writing

This sample answer on the topic ‘Is cricket killing all other sports in India’, has been written, specially for you, for you by a senior journalist. Read it and then write an essay on this topic, in your own words.
Is cricket killing other sports in India?

In a democracy it is very easy to shift the cause of one’s misery onto others – those who are richer and better. A similar thing is happening in Indian sports. Every time a federation is short of funds, support, and success, cricket baiting starts. ‘Why Cricket, Cricket and Cricket?’ scream other sports federations and their inept officials.

‘It is really juvenile to blame cricket for the poor state of other sports in the country. Did BCCI blindfold the Indian viewers and stop them from watching the Indian hockey teams perform? Did Sachin Tendulkar strike a deal with the AITA, not to produce more Sania Mirzas?’ argues Rajesh Sahu, a Senior Producer with TV Today network.

He underlines three reasons why other sports have failed to strike gold.

‘I think that the national broadcaster Doordarshan and their pathetic commentators’ contribution is immense. Of course the way the various national federations run the game also has a huge role to play. But I think the biggest problem lies with the non-performance of the national teams at the international level.’

So the malady is self-inflicted. Not a contribution of cricket. Domestic football matches still get more spectators than Ranji events, but things turn on their head in the international arena! Lack of professionalism of broadcasters in broadcasting non-cricket events, and also of various organizations is evident in the poor commercial gains.

‘The BCCI may not be the most professional of organizations but is still more competent than other sports federations in the country simply because they are not dependent on government funding. They manage their own resources,’ says Rajshekhar Rao, Editor, Cricketnext.com. A large player base and the following that it has ensured over the years have given cricket a head start but mismanagement and lack of vision in football and hockey has ensured that these mass sports don’t have even a fraction of the fan following that cricket does.

For instance, Indian cricket cashed in on the success achieved in the 1983 World Cup and the 1985 Benson and Hedges World Series but in spite of a better show at the international level, with eight Olympic Golds and one World Cup triumph, hockey has failed to deliver. Not many know that the Indian football team had qualified for the 1950 World Cup finals in Brazil, but could not appear as they still played with bare feet!

In those heady fifties and sixties, the Indian football team won the 1951 and 1962 Asian Games gold medals, and in 1956, the team finished fourth at the Melbourne Olympics. But poor administration killed any future chances of commercial success.

Still, lessons can be learnt from the games of Tennis and Golf, and how corporatisation is supporting events and players. There may be more investment than money in these games, but the future looks bright if there is quality administration and telecast. People in India, especially in the big cities, follow European football and Formula 1 more than domestic games, says Rao, adding, ‘It only shows that there are sports lovers in the country but they are hungry for want of quality sports action.’

So, improving the standards while actively pursuing and nurturing emerging talent, and improving the administration and the telecast quality seem to be the only way out to pump some
much needed money into other sports. They may not reach the level of popularity that cricket enjoys but they will not remain poor cousins either. Else they will keep on killing themselves, while blaming cricket. at the same time.

(Courtesy: Atul Sondhi, senior sports journalist)
Objectives

This unit includes an introduction to the extract from Rushdie’s novel ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, a summary of the plot, a study-guide, glossary and key to the exercises in your textbook. In addition I have attempted to draw your attention to Rushdie’s literary style and his brilliant imaginative power.

Introduction

The first two units of your textbook were written by journalists. The first one was in an easy-to-read colloquial language and Tarun Tejpal’s article, though on the subject of cricket, used figurative-language quite liberally. This unit comprises a very different narrative style. Salman Rushdie’s ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’ is the story of a twelve-year old boy Haroun and his quest to restore his father’s lost gift of story telling.

This does not imply that there is a clear distinction between fiction and other forms of writing. You must train yourself to notice the technique of the writer and understand that a literary style is not the exclusive domain of the novelist. As you must have observed, even advertisements incorporate some extremely poetic expressions and sometimes fiction can include some very dull and flat prose. Rushdie’s fiction is a superb example of how a writer uses language as a tool to create a fantasy world.

Rushdie wrote this novel after a long gap when his ten year old son Zafar complained to him that he never wrote anything for children. Rushdie wrote ‘The Satanic Verses’ in 1988, which was considered blasphemous for its ironic vision of Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini, Supreme Leader of Iran, had issued a death warrant or fatwa against him. As a result the British government provided him protection and he remained underground for nearly ten years. ‘Haroun and the Sea of Stories’, published in 1990, was the first book that he published after going into hiding and it was dedicated to his son.

It is written in the fairy tale tradition but there are autobiographical elements in the troubled relationship between Rashid and Soraya, the love between father and son, and the writer’s/ storyteller’s predicament when faced with the loss of his freedom to tell stories. The extract is from the beginning of the novel, from the chapter titled ‘Shah of Blah’. It is a brilliant illustration of Rushdie’s ability to create a magical world and his rich, innovative language.
Glossary

*Alifbay*: an imaginary country. Its name comes from the Hindustani word for alphabet.

*glumfish*: Rushdie’s own coinage. It means sad fish.

*Ocean of Notions*: this nickname of Rashid’s would mean full of ideas

*Shah of Blah*: another name for Rashid, means the king of nonsense

*raggedy*: torn, frayed clothes

*alley*: a narrow back-lane

*saga*: a long, detailed story

*wobbly stomach*: shaking because of the layers of fat

*witchy*: here it would mean magical

*great story sea*: in the book from which this extract in taken the magical story waters are on Kahani, a hidden moon of the earth

*Water Genie*: there is a water-genie in the novel and he is called Iff.

*mingy*: mean, stingy

*politico*: politician or a person who is interested in politics

*panjandrum*: mock title for an important person

*Haroun and Rashid*: Haroun and Rashid are both named after the legendary Haroun-al- Rashid, Caliph of Baghdad, who features in many Arabian Nights tales. Their surname Khalifa actually means Caliph.

Plot Summary

Haroun’s father is the famed storyteller Rashid Khalifa, the Ocean of Notions or the Shah of Blah, but his wife tires of his imagination and elopes with Mr. Sengupta, a dull and dreary clerical drone. This leaves Rashid heartbroken, and unable to continue his profession of storytelling. Haroun feels he started the problem (by asking his father “What’s the point of telling stories that aren’t even true?”) so he must fix it and help his father. Soon, however, Haroun discovers that Rashid has already canceled his subscription to the magical story waters of Kahani, which give all storytellers their imagination, and in order to reverse the cancellation Haroun must go to Kahani. Thus Haroun embarks on a mystical journey to Kahani (meaning “story” in Urdu), a hidden moon of the Earth, in a quest to restore his father’s gift of the gab.

On Kahani, stories are everywhere; they make up the ocean (which gives the book its title). However, the evil Khattam-Shud (whose name means ‘The End,’ ‘completely finished’) is attempting to poison the sea of stories and render the inhabitants of Kahani silent by plugging the spring of stories (where all stories come from). He has also started a war with Gup, the central city where stories are made, by kidnapping the king’s daughter, Princes Batcheat, angering her fiancé Prince Bolo (in a reversal of the traditional prince-princess story myth, Batcheat is incredibly ugly and a terrible singer, while Bolo is a hyperactive idiot and implied to be cowardly). Haroun, along with various interesting characters such as Iff the water-genie, Butt, the mechanical hoopoe, the eggheads at the P2C2E (Processes Too Complicated To Explain) House, Mali the
floating gardener, and a pair of rhyming fish (Goopy and Bagha, named after the titular characters of a film by Satyajit Ray) set out to stop Khattam-Shud, thus saving Rashid, Batcheat, Kahani, and the stories of the world.

(Source: www.wikipedia.org/)

Study-Guide

page 12-13 : the ‘sad city’ and the ‘cheerful storyteller’

Read the first two paragraphs carefully. Notice how Rushdie creates the overpowering image of a sad city in Alifbay. He uses a cluster of closely related adjectives, metaphors, and similes to create the overpowering image of a ‘sad city’: it is

- ruinously sad
- the saddest of cities
- stood by a mournful sea
- sadness factories whose smoke was like bad news
- glum fish what made people belch with melancholy
- ruined buildings that looked like broken hearts

Rushdie’s language is rich; he uses similes and metaphors imaginatively to create an atmosphere of dull despair.

Against this sad backdrop the cheery storyteller Rashid Khalifa stands out by contrast. Rashid is famously known as the Ocean of Notions and the Shah of Blah. Don’t miss the brilliant use of rhyme to create these titles for Rashid. His son Haroun is ‘a happy young fellow’ and his wife sings sweetly. Rashid is full of stories and into this picture of the happy family Rushdie introduces a sense of impending trouble. Suddenly Haroun’s mother stops singing. It is a sign that something is wrong but no one knows exactly what.

pages 13-14 : Haroun and Rashid

Rashid Khalifa is busy with his storytelling, rehearsals and public events and does not notice the change in his wife’s demeanour but trouble is slowly building up. Haroun travelled frequently with his father. He knew that Rashid was ‘a magician’ and ‘a juggler’. When he spoke even animals and birds would listen. It is clear that Haroun adores and admires his father.

With a child’s natural curiosity Haroun pesters his father with questions about the source of his stories. Every time he asks he gets the same reply: ‘From the Great Sea Story…’. Rashid tells his son that he drinks the hot water from a tap installed by a Water-Genie. Haroun does not believe him. He is a subscriber to the Great Sea Story which is located on Kahani (Hindi word for story), a hidden moon of the earth. When Haroun becomes too inquisitive Rashid asks him to be content with the stories and enjoy them.

Rushdie builds up the reader’s sense of anticipation by hinting at tragedy around the corner: ‘Except that one day Haroun asked one question too many and then all hell broke loose’.

pages 14-15: Haroun’s house and the Senguptas

Don’t miss the rather unusual simile of a cake to describe Haroun’s colourful house.
Rushdie knows how to create a fantasy world that will fascinate children. There is the description of the city, with its poor and rich inhabitants. The refrain of impending tragedy becomes more and more explicit,

So the truth is that Haroun was lucky: but luck has a way of running out without the slightest warning. One minute you’ve got a lucky star watching over you and the next instant it’s done a bunk.

Haroun is a typical child, constantly pestering his parents with questions. He wants to know why they did not have any more children. His mother sadly expresses their failure but Rashid, as usual gives a more colourful answer.

At this point the Senguptas, Haroun’s neighbours, are introduced. Mr. Sengupta is a clerk and his wife is a fat lady who is fond of Haroun as they do not have children of their own. The dull Mr. Sengupta is the exact opposite of Rashid the storyteller; practical, unimaginative, lacking a sense of humour and cold. Whereas his wife is fond of Haroun and gives him gifts and hugs him all the time Mr. Sengupta is indifferent towards him.

Mr. Sengupta spends a lot of time chatting with Soraya and Haroun frequently overhears him talk ill of his father, but one sentence sticks to his mind and troubles him:

‘What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?’

This question is significant as it is indicative of an unimaginative attitude to life, without the fun, laughter and creativity that Rashid Khalifa represents. Haroun, with a child’s instinct, perhaps, senses Mr. Sengupta’s dishonourable intentions and dislikes him. It is clear that the lonely Soraya, neglected by Rashid and full of resentment, is getting influenced by her neighbour.

You must remember that Rashid and Mr. Sengupta represent two opposing attitudes to life. Not only are they different temperament-wise but their physical appearance is also contrasting. Rashid is plump and ‘stuffed with cheery stories’, symbolizing the abundant joy that he shares with everyone in the form of stories whereas the peevish Mr. Sengupta looks mean and ‘sticky-thin.’ Even his voice is ‘mingy.’

**page 16-18: Soraya’s elopement and the aftermath**

One day Haroun returns home to find his father crying and he learns the terrible news: his mother has run away with Mr. Sengupta. In a fit of rage Rashid has broken all the clocks in the house. Soraya has left a note that blames Rashid, saying that his brain is ‘full of make-belief’. Traumatized by being abandoned by his mother Haroun shouts at his father: ’What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?’

It is the same question that Mr. Sengupta asked Soraya and which Haroun overheard. Without realizing it Haroun echoes the question. The result is catastrophic because Rashid loses his storytelling powers. It is indeed a tragic consequence because Rashid is famous for his storytelling powers and it is the only work that he has the talent for.

**Conclusion**

Rushdie succeeds in creating a fantasy world that his young readers would love to read. There is an imaginary city where sadness is manufactured, an ocean of stories, water-genies, and
a loving father with magical powers. At the same time, you must remember, that there are underlying meanings in the story. On one hand there is the ‘cheery’ Rashid, busy entertaining people, full of gripping tales, and a man who never gives a straight answer. His immense popularity is clear from the fact that all types of politicians woo him and even animals pause to listen to him.

Against him is the sad city which has forgotten its name and the unimaginative clerk Mr. Sengupta who is obviously jealous of Rashid. Mr. Sengupta wins a temporary victory by running away with Rashid’s wife but in the end of the novel, in true fairy tale tradition, Soraya comes back to her family and Haroun gets his father’s storytelling powers back.

Critics believe that Salman Rushdie wanted to write a story that celebrates the triumph of the imagination and freedom of expression against fundamentalism and powers that seek to curb and stifle the writer’s voice. The novel is an assertion of the importance and value of stories/literature in our lives.

KEY TO EXERCISES

Reading Comprehension

1. Haroun was curious to know where the fantastic stories his father told came from. When Rashid, his father, told him that the stories came from the Great Story Sea, Haroun wanted to know where his father kept the hot water from the Great Story Sea. Another time Haroun wanted his father to tell him why he didn’t have any sisters or brothers but Rashid did not give a straight answer and told him that since Haroun was as good as four or five children they could not have more.

   The third question that Haroun asks his father is when his mother Soraya runs away with Mr. Sengupta, their neighbour. Haroun is upset and angrily asks his father, ”What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?”

2. Rashid Khalifa is a storyteller and he is used to creating imaginary worlds. It is not surprising then that he does not give straight answers to any of Haroun’s questions. Rashid is the Shah of Blah.

3. Haroun feels terrible after asking his father what use it was telling stories that were not true. He realizes that it is precisely what Soraya has written in the note that she has left for Rashid. Soraya has run away with Mr. Sengupta because she wanted to be with a man who was practical, not like Rashid whose head was full of make believe. As soon as he asks this question Haroun regrets hurting his father. After this Rashid loses his powers and cannot tell fantastic tales.

4. Soraya is tired of her husband who lives in a make-believe world. Maybe she feels that her husband is not practical enough or neglecting her but there is a hint that she feels unhappy. During the early years of her marriage she sings sweetly all-the time but then one day she stops singing all of a sudden.

5. Politicians pretend that they are telling the truth but the public could understand that they are lying. Rashid’s stories interested people because he would insist that they were his creation and they trusted him.

6. Refer to the plot summary.
**Vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonplace combinations</th>
<th>Unusual combinations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jealous rivals</td>
<td>toothless old-timers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet voice</td>
<td>witchy fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loving husband</td>
<td>mournful sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad news</td>
<td>sad city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruined buildings</td>
<td>sadness factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hummable tunes</td>
<td>raggedy children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huge audience</td>
<td>super-poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pink walls</td>
<td>child-stuff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delicious pomfret</td>
<td>sticky-thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huge audience</td>
<td>wobbly-fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet voice</td>
<td>unthinkable thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasty things</td>
<td>whiny-voiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serious business</td>
<td>squiggly metal-railings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding points of view involves a reading of various perspectives in a piece of writing. In *Girls*, we find three main points of view—first, the point of view of the girl-child; second, point of view of the older generation of women; and third, more indirectly, the author’s point of view. You need to be attentive and alert while reading, so that you can get into the habit of reading between the lines and discover different perspectives in a piece of writing.

**Introduction**

Have you observed any instances of discrimination between girls and boys in the society and community you live in? Do you feel that boys often get preferential treatment as compared to girls in many Indian families, even today, although girls are capable of excellence in various fields and walks of life? Despite education and career opportunities that have opened out to girls as compared to earlier times, society continues to have a male-dominated outlook.

The story *Girls* by Mrinal Pande is narrated from the point of view of a little girl. It explores the issue of gender-bias towards the girl-child. The young narrator is the second of the three daughters of her parents. The three daughters represent three different attitudes of victims of gender bias: The eldest daughter is quiet and submissive and plays the role that a girl in a male-dominated society is docilely expected to fulfill. The second daughter (the narrator of the story) is rebellious, as she is conscious of the unfair discrimination against girl children, even at such a young age. She represents awareness of one’s rights. The youngest girl is too young to understand what is going on, and represents innocence and ignorance on the part of a victim of gender injustice.

**Textual Analysis**

The narrator’s mother is expecting her fourth child. She fervently hopes that this time she would give birth to a boy, otherwise, she would have to go through the whole process of another pregnancy and delivery. The mother is always stressed out and irritable, often giving vent to her irritability to her children, particularly, the middle girl child. The narrator observes “To Ma, everything in life is a problem. As far as she is concerned, whether we are at home or at school, ill or just playing around, we are a problem.” The girl-child’s playful spontaneity is curbed, and she is
treated as a lesser mortal in a male-dominated society. Although the story is narrated from a young girl’s point of view, the author Mrinal Pande points to elder women’s plight and pressures of living in a society where men hold most of the power and importance.

The mother goes to her parents’ house for her delivery, with her three children. The children’s Mama and Maami (that is maternal uncle and aunt) are there to receive them at the station. The mother is indifferent to the inner feelings of the children and accuses the middle daughter of being “the cause of all” her problems. The young girl is not excited about going into her grandmother’s house. The mother is absorbed in the large sympathetic company of aunts, grandmother and maid-servants. The feelings and needs of the female children are often neglected by the elder women: if the children try to go near their mother they are warded off by the statement, “Let the poor thing have some rest at least while she is here.” The mother also gives vent to the woes of being a woman and behaves as if her three daughters always harass her at home.

On entering the grandmother’s house, the narrator is asked to bend properly and touch her grandmother’s feet. She is told, “You are born a girl and you will have to bend for the rest of your life, so you might as well learn.” This statement is significant because it depicts the conditioning of women and discriminatory attitude towards females in a male-dominated society. The old lady from the neighbourhood as well as the grandmother wish and pray that a boy would be born to Lali (the children’s mother) this time. Clearly, there is no welcome for another girl child in such a set-up. It is not only men who discriminate against women, even women themselves frown upon girl-children and are indifferent to their tender feelings, the author suggests in this story.

The children are ignored in a world of grown-ups, where women are engrossed in their own problems and preoccupations. The children are left to their own devices to comprehend the world of adults. The eldest of the three daughters quietly submits to the expectations of the elders regarding female children, as that seems to be the only way to peace. The younger girl is too young to decipher the power-games of elder of elder women and marginalizational treatment meted out to girl children. It is the middle daughter of Lali that is the narrator, has the sensitive power to discern the negative treatment rendered towards girl-children, and raise gender-sensitive issues and questions. One of the important queries the narrator has is when she responds to her father’s (Baabu’s) remark that if she were to work hard she could become anything she wanted, “just as Dhruva became a star”. The little girl’s stubborn response is, “But I cannot become a boy, can I?”

At night, the women in Naani’s house gather together and voice their concerns and woes about the plight of women. The little girl overhears one of the aunt’s crying softly and saying, “I don’t even get as much as respect as a dog does in that house”. She also overhears hears her mother’s response, “All of us suffer like that, one just has to endure it.” When the narrator refers indirectly to this incident in the morning, she is beaten up by her mother. The mother is perpetually angry with her. Troubled by the double standards of women towards young girls, often thwarted by elder women in her playful and inquisitive attitude to life, the little girl sits outside the house, and watches birds flying. She wishes she was born a bird, and woefully reflecting on her own status in the family, asks, “Do mother birds too think their girl birds are inferior?”
The grandmother shows marked preference for her grandson. However, on the festival of Ashtami, little girls are worshiped as “Devis”. While all the other little girls quietly participate in the celebrations, the narrator rebels sharply against it. Keenly perceiving the negative attitude towards girls in everyday life, the elements of violence and suppression meted out to female children, she refuses to be worshiped as a “Kanyakumari”. She breaks out in anguish, “When you people don’t love girls, why do you pretend to worship them?” Rejecting the ceremonial offerings, she screams, “I don’t want to be a goddess.”

Critical Comments

Though the story is narrated from the perspective of a young girl, *Girls* raises certain key issues regarding gender injustice, not only towards the girl-child, but also towards the grown-up women. The adult women are victims of discrimination in a male-dominated social ethos. These women themselves become perpetrators of further discrimination by neglecting the emotional needs of the girl-child, often making the little girls targets of abusive temper and intolerance.

Frequently snubbed and not cherished by women, the middle daughter (the narrator) of the story rebels against the prejudiced attitude of adult women. When her spontaneity, playfulness and inquisitive attitude towards the status of females are thwarted, she responds by asking significant questions. Through this little girl, the author Mrinal Pande, voices her own concerns regarding gender justice, and expects the reader to sit up, think and take a just stand.

GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nuisance</td>
<td>botheration, burden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preoccupied</td>
<td>fill the mind completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pathetic</td>
<td>arousing pity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashtami day</td>
<td>literally it means the eighth day. In the context of this story the word refers to an auspicious day occurring twice a year according to Hindu religious customs. This day is dedicated to the worship of the Mother Goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanyakumari</td>
<td>In the context of this story the word refers to young unmarried girls regarded as the symbol of purity and the image of the Mother Goddess and worshiped on the Ashtami day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As compared to other kinds of writings, a poem is compact and compressed. It is as important to follow the structure and story-line of a poem, as it is to understand point of view in poetry. For this reason, one has to read a poem attentively, and also learn to read between the lines.

INTRODUCTION

Sibling rivalry is a phenomena which manifests itself even in the early years of one’s life. Quarrels between brothers and sisters, or siblings are quite common. Sometimes the differences or issues raised by their fights are harmless, sometimes these are serious. Parents are not always impartial when they intervene in the quarrels of their children. The poem ‘Sisters’ written by Saleem Peeradina, deals with the differences of temperament and age between two sisters.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

LINES 1-6:

The narrator of the poem is the father of the two sisters. The elder daughter is less than ten years of age, while the younger one is a little more than five years old. The younger child is aware that she would never be able to bridge the difference of nearly five years’ gap between the two sisters. She feels that neither good behaviour (“how good she acts”), nor bad intention (“how hard she cheats”) will make up for the age difference. The father is aware of the inner natures of his two children. He implies that the younger daughter can employ both fair and foul means to have her way.

LINES 7-12:

The younger sister regards the age gap as a disadvantage. But she uses all kinds of strategies to turn the disadvantage or the “handicap” of being the younger one into an advantage. The younger sister tries to outwit the elder one by her manipulative nature: the younger one is bolder as well as sly by nature. Sometimes she uses sweet words and is obedient in order to impress her parents. But she is also capable of subverting rules, and deliberately influencing elders by shedding tears and shouting.
LINES 13-17:-

The father seems to be partial to the younger daughter. Even when the younger one is in the wrong, he tries to teach the elder one to be more tolerant, accommodating and protective towards her younger sister. The elder daughter often has to bear the brunt of the younger one’s smart and manipulative behaviour. The elder sibling responds to the unfair treatment meted out to her through the expression on her face. She tries to fight against the injustice she receives by accusing her father of taking the wrong side.

LINES 18-24:-

The speaker of the poem, that is the father, tries to talk to the elder daughter in a pleasant manner, placing the onus of all good behaviour on the elder child. But the elder daughter rebels against the moralistic and unfair attitude of the father. Sometimes when the father is not in a good mood, he suppresses the elder daughter by shouting at her; but deep down, he is a loving father, and, he immediately regrets such behaviour on his part.

We find that although the father puts unfair pressure on the elder daughter by trying to make her endure her younger sister’s negative behaviour, he is good at heart. He admits to the reader that he is unfair and moralizing.

LINES 25-30:-

The impact of the father’s unfair shouting at the elder daughter is that she lapses into silence. But she is not cowed into submission; the word “simmering” shows her quiet anger against the injustice that she receives. The father is silently joyful at the outcome, although he did not deliberately intend to teach the elder daughter what she has learnt instinctively. By standing her ground, and revolting against injustice, the elder daughter demonstrates her ability to defy authoritative behaviour. The expression “to overcome fathers, real and imaginary”, refers to standing up against authoritarian figures in one’s life.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

The poem ‘Sisters’ deals with sibling rivalry and with the question of one’s response to injustice. The elder daughter is expected to be docile, and submit to authority, and mould herself on the role of a traditional female figure. But even at a young age, she is conscious of her rights as a child, and, by rebelling against the authoritarian stance of her father, the elder daughter breaks out of the image of a meek submissive girl-child. She is capable of combating injustice by assertively taking a stand. This defiance renders a note of celebration to the poem.

Parents are often not impartial in their attitude towards their children. It is quite possible that a boy in the place of the elder sister would have behaved more aggressively; and perhaps the father would also have behaved differently towards a boy-child.
**GLOSSARY:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lead</td>
<td>to have the advantage of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sneakier</td>
<td>more crafty or sly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sullen</td>
<td>bad-tempered and sulky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blazes</td>
<td>flares-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simmering</td>
<td>to be in a state of anger or excitement which is only just kept under control.</td>
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</table>
UNIT 6

UNDERSTANDING SATIRE

*A TEN DAY FAST*

By Harishankar Parsai

— Dr. Anil Aneja

In the course of your study of *Fluency in English*, you are becoming familiar with the interpretation of many things, such as how to understand poetry, narrative and drama; how to understand humour; how to understand various points of view. Unit 6 of this book has been intended to teach you how to understand satire. Do you know the exact meaning of the word “satire”? The word incorporates “the use of humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to reveal and criticize people’s bad points.” In literature, the term refers to a type of novel, poem or play, whereby a particular subject, vice or folly in human nature or in a system is ridiculed.

“A Ten Day Fast” was written by Harishankar Parsai around twenty years after the independence of India. Through this piece of writing, Parsai holds up to our scrutiny the picture of an independent country where some people with vested interests use various strategies to manipulate public opinion and political system. By using such a method, the writer satirizes the functioning of democracy in the nation.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS:

“A Ten Day Fast” is written in the form of diary entry. Episodes between the dates 10th January to 21st January in the life of Bannu and his supporters are recorded. Bannu goes on a fast for an unworthy cause, that is to procure another man’s wife. The diary form of writing seen together with the contents of the story give a tone of mock-seriousness to this satirical piece.

10 January:

Bannu had been unsuccessfully pursuing Savitri, the wife of Radhika Babu. At the outset the narrator points out that nothing in this country functions on its own, whether it is the parliament, the judiciary, bureaucracy, or anything else. Everything has to be influenced and manoeuvred, in contemporary society. According to the narrator, all major demands can only be met through threats of fast or threats to kill oneself by burning (self-immolation). The narrator offers to show Bannu the way to achieve his heart’s desire: he suggests that Bannu should go on a fast to obtain his goal. {There was a time when the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi used to go on long fasts for a noble cause, that is the country’s independence}. By juxtaposing the tradition of such
czas with a frivolous cause in Bannu’s case, the writer satirizes the degeneration of contemporary political and social systems.

Initially, Bannu is unsure whether it is possible for someone at all to go on a fast over such a matter; and whether such a thing would work. However, he is persuaded by the narrator that much “depends on how you set up the issue … If the issue is set up well you will get your woman”. He suggests that they visit Baba Sankidas to procure expert advice and guidance. The narrator thus reveals that through manipulative and expert strategies, it is possible to twist and mould situations, and use them for a negative end.

11 January:

Under the able guidance of the narrator and Baba Sanki Das, Bannu proceeds on a “fast unto death”. On January 11, He is found sitting in a tent. A holy atmosphere has been contrived: incense sticks burn near him, and a group of people vigorously sing the favourite song of Mahatma Gandhi. A deceptively pious ambience is built up. {But the reader can discern the wide gap between the kind of noble purposes for which Gandhiji used to undergo a fast unto death and Bannu’s base purpose.}

Baba Sankidas craftily drafts the Declaration of Principles on Bannu’s behalf. He camouflages Bannu’s desire for another man’s wife in such a way that it sounds exalted and philosophic. In the Declaration, Bannu declares that he has been prompted by his soul which is incomplete without Savitri: “My soul calls out to me saying, I’m as only one half. My other half is in Savitri. My soul says, Bring the two halves together and make them one. Or else set me free from this world.” Bannu declares that he has gone on a fast to bring the two halves of his soul together.

The diary record made on this day, that is 11 January, shows how Baba Sanki das, the master strategist, uses language to manipulate others and influence public opinion.

13 January:

Bannu finds it difficult to go through the fast as he has little tolerance for hunger. He asks whether eminent personalities such as Jayaparakash Narayan and Vinoba Bhave had come to see him. Some journalists come to see him and want to know if the fast is for a public cause. Baba Sankidas shrewdly replies that the priority was to do something to save Bannu’s life. He adds, “When someone goes on a fast, he makes such a sacrifice that any cause becomes pure.” The queries of the journalists show how the media gets attracted to any public display. People like Baba Sankidas exploit the media to shape and sway public opinion.

14th January:

Baba Sankidas continues to shape public opinion. On 14th January, he gets a statement by Swami Rasanand published in the papers. Swami Rasanand claims that his ascetic acts have given him the power to see both the past and the future. These (so-called) powers, Rasanand asserts, have revealed to him that “Bannu was a sage in his previous life, and that Savitri was his wife.” He adds that it is a sin that a sage’s wife should now live with Radhika Prasad. This statement has a great impact on the people. Many people start taking Bannu’s side.
This extract shows how religion and media can be manipulated to influence public opinion.

15th January:

It is clear by this date that public opinion has emerged in Bannu’s favour. Newspapers are full of the story of Bannu’s fast. People in the city are heard saying that Savitri’s husband is a shameless man and that it is “a great sin to keep a sage’s wife as your own.” Such shocking public views are the writer’s way of satirizing democracy in the country. The author shows how even immoral demands meet with public approval through artful manoeuvering.

Also on this day, arrangements are made to send a small crowd of people to the Prime Minister’s residence to appeal to him to intervene in the matter. Jayaprakash Narayan visits Bannu that evening. {It must be borne in mind that in the process of writing a satire, the author uses imaginary scenes. The events are not meant to be seen as real episodes, but rather, their value lies in exposing negative social and/or political systems in a humorous way.}

16th January:

Jayaprakash Narayan, who has been persuaded to mediate and see the Prime Minister on Bannu’s behalf, is not successful in his mission. The narrator feels discouraged, but Baba Sankidas remains unshaken. The latter says that at first everyone rejects a demand; and that the time has come to intensify the struggle.

The Baba instigates the media as well as the caste system to create ripples of effect in society in Bannu’s favour. (Bannu is a Brahmin and Radhika Babu is a Kayasth).

17th January:

On 17th January, the newspaper headlines and a deliberately created advertisement further shows the use of media by a group of manipulative people to present the case in Bannu’s favour.

Bannu’s supporters also go to the extent of hiring four local goondas (miscreants). These people are paid in advance to throw rocks into Kayasth homes, and then go and throw rocks in Brahmin homes. We see how the politics of caste-rivalry can be played and misused in a democratic set-up such as India.

18th January:

Fierce fights take place between the two caste groups

As a result of all the animosity kindled by the supporters of Bannu, such as the narrator and Baba Sankidas, Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code is imposed on the city as a result of all the provocation and violence.

The government has been watching the situation carefully, although there is a deadlock as far as the talks are concerned. Thus we see how a trivial matter can be pushed to proportions of nation-wide interest by a handful of people with vested interests. To expose this social evil is one of the primary purposes of this particular satire.
19th January:

So many days of fasting have made Bannu weak. He raves and rants that he has been led into a trap. The narrator is worried that if Bannu reveals such a statement to the public or the press, people such as the narrator and Baba Sankidas will be exposed.

20th January:

Bannu’s condition continues to grow worse. The narrator and his advisors issue a public statement on Bannu’s behalf: “I may die but I shall not retreat”. There is much uproar in the nation regarding the issue of Bannu’s fast. The Brahmin Sabha threatens, “If the demand is not met, ten Brahmins will immolate themselves”. Savitri attempts suicide, but is saved. Prayer meetings are held all over the country.

Heightening the tone of satire, the author states that a telegram has been sent to the United Nations.

21st January:

All the crooked tactics of Baba Sankidas and the narrator finally yield results!

The government accepts Bannu’s demands in principle. Baba Sankidas gives a glass of orange juice to Bannu, as a token of breaking the fast. Bhajans and prayers are loudly recited. The author satirizes the functioning of democracy in the country as Baba Sankidas says triumphantly, “In a democracy, public opinion has to be respected.” The misuse of Dharma or religion is also mocked at, as hundreds of men and women come to touch Bannu’s feet, and people shout “Victory to Truth!” “Victory to Dharma!”

CRITICAL COMMENTS:

You have already had an understanding of the meaning and use of satire in a piece of literary writing. Through satire, an absurd situation is highlighted: One man is steered by “well-wishers” and experts to go on a fast unto death so that he can procure another man’s wife. The aim of the satirist Harishankar Parsai is to expose the loopholes in a democratic system, whereby a handful of people with vested interests can manipulate a situation and subvert political ideology.

Throughout “A Ten Day Fast”, ideas and means reminiscent of India’s struggle for independence are used satirically to achieve unworthy goals. We see how various kinds of people and agencies such as media, common man’s religious sentiments, the opinion of masses, the caste system and social miscreants can be manipulated to achieve petty personal gains.

GLOSSARY:

roughed up : beaten up
set up : the way in which something is organized or positioned
whimpered : feeble sound expressing fear or discontent
crystallized : became definite and clear
unanimous : fully in agreement; being of one opinion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>devout</td>
<td>religious; holy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deteriorating</td>
<td>becoming worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deadlock</td>
<td>a situation in which no progress can be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skirmishes</td>
<td>spell of unplanned fighting between small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma</td>
<td>in Indian religion, the eternal law of the universe</td>
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</table>
Introduction:

Chocolate is a short story which centres around certain events in the marital life of Tara. The narrative style of this story is humorous but the subject matter of the story is anything but that. The story raises some very serious issues concerning marriage and individual self-respect. In the process of our analysis we shall take a closer look at these issues. But before we do that I would like to outline the layout of this lesson. This would enable you to comprehend the lesson in a more meaningful manner.

1. Part-wise summary of the chronological events in the story.
2. Part-wise critical commentary.
3. Self Check Questions.
4. Humour in style.

a. Summary—Short history of Tara’s life upto the time of her marriage

Tara is sent to an all girls convent school until she attains the age of 17 yrs, where the emphasis, as in most schools is entirely on academic work. The free time that is available, Tara utilises it by attending dance and music classes. After schooling she is sent to an all girls college for three years. Here she decides to pursue the Honours Course in English, and this decision is taken by her for all the wrong reasons. She doesn’t exactly know what to do with her life and so she opts for English, which at that point seemed a “good no-purpose subject”. She realizes very soon that English (Hons) is not just about reading stories, but also requires a far greater involvement of grey cells, what with its emphasis on ideas, history and various kinds of interpretations, sometimes extremely obscure. So Tara spends her time bunking classes to watch films with her friends. All the time she complains about the strenuousness of the course and is duly consoled by her mother. Meanwhile Tara’s wedding is fixed and the wedding preparations coincide with the preparatory leave before the exams. Tara makes a feeble protest, and given her lack of aptitude for studies, one can only guess how ill-prepared Tara is for her exams. When the results are declared Tara is surprised that she has passed with a III division. Needless to say, by this time, she is back from her honeymoon.

Critical Commentary

Although Tara is made to go through school and college, it is very clear that her education
is not oriented towards any career goal. Education in her case is considered mostly as an ornament that would brighten her chances of getting a good husband. Her growing dis-affection for the course she is pursuing, does not alarm her parents. Clearly they do not expect her to take up a career. Tara, at this stage, still warm from the embraces of her husband does not have the foresight to figure out the importance of economic independence which a career would give her. It is only much later that she realizes the importance of education, but by then it is too late.

Self-Check Questions

1. Analyse Tara’s and her parents attitude towards her education.
2. Had Tara been a boy, would the parents have a similar approach towards his education?

b. Summary: The stigma and trauma of being barren

In the Indian social set up, birth of a child, preferably a male child is seen as a natural by-product of marriage and that too within the prescribed time limit of a year or at most two from the time of marriage. Tara’s case is no different. When it becomes increasingly clear that Tara is unable to bear a child in the normal course of time Tara goes in for a series of remedies, both rational and irrational. The narrator describes the various remedies undertaken in a humorous fashion. Tara suggests to her husband Abhay, that they should visit a doctor. Abhay refuses to see a doctor with the assertion that there is nothing wrong with him. The doctor after examining Tara declares that there is nothing wrong with her and suggests that the problem could be with Abhay. Abhay after a heated discussion agrees to see a doctor but on condition that he would do it alone. Tara never comes to know what transpired between the doctor and Abhay or what verdict was given by the doctor. We can however assume that the report is not positive as Abhay is “tight lipped and cross”. He moreover calls the doctor a fool and prohibits Tara from visiting the doctor.

With this rational option closed, Tara we are told explores the divine front. She crawls on her hands and knees upto Vaishno Devi and repeats it at various others shrines. When this exercise does not pay dividends she takes to wearing stones (rashi-stones perhaps). Her mother-in-law shows her appreciation but none-the-less would on the sly comment “she is unhealthy from inside”.

Critical Commentary

Abhay’s attitude in this sequence of events, seems extremely unreasonable. Abhay seems to believe that the inadequacy rests, solely with the woman. He is stubborn in his belief that the problem does not lie with him. This reflects a certain mindset, a mindset which is shared by the society at large, that the cause of infertility is always the female and not the male. Tara is unable to challenge Abhay on this issue, as her position in the house is that of a dependent. She has to quietly submit to her husband’s stubborness. It is also quite possible that men in general do not wish to acknowledge their infertility in the mistaken belief that their manhood and virility may be questioned.

It is interesting to note that Abhay’s mother too seems to be on her son’s side. Instead of rationalizing the problem and constructively counselling the son, she chooses to lay the blame on Tara’s “unhealthy inside.”
Self-Check Questions

1. Critically examine the attitude of Tara, Abhay and the mother to the problem.
2. Identify the lines in your text which add humour to Tara’s ordeal.

C. Summary: Tara’s Tryst with Chocolates

It is around this time that Abhay starts feeding Tara Chocolates and thus begins Tara’s tryst with Chocolates. It is the casualness with which Abhay seemed to bring her Chocolates that alerts Tara to something else. Abhay keeps getting an excess of peppermints and despite requests for more variety, persisted in bringing the same peppermints. His excuse is that he is very busy and airports stock only peppermints, which Tara knew was a lie. It dawns on Tara that Abhay picked these mints with a total indifference to her taste. It also dawns on her that he is most of the time not at home, and on occasions when he is at home he is greatly preoccupied. Tara’s obsession with Chocolates leads to obesity. Abhay makes fun of her and makes it quite clear that her rolls of fat did not do his image much good. He nonetheless continued to supply her with Chocolates, not one, not two, but all twenty at a time. He never takes Tara on any of his frequent trips. The physical intimacy of their relationship is restricted to an occasional rub around her fat belly.

Given these circumstances, Tara puts two and two together, does some spying and discovers what is obvious to everyone else, that Abhay is having an affair.

Critical Commentary

Abhay’s offering of Chocolates could mean three things. Firstly it would avert any suspicion in Tara’s mind, as the Chocolates which he so diligently brings for her are meant to be a token of his love. Secondly Chocolates probably assuaged his own guilt over his extra-marital affair. Finally Chocolates make Tara so ungainly and ugly that Abhay probably finds justification in this, for his own attraction towards the other woman. It is more difficult to understand Tara’s obsession with Chocolates. She shows no moderation in her consumption of Chocolates, despite her growing obesity and her husband’s taunts. Is Tara’s weakness for Chocolates merely gastronomical or is it her way of overcoming the unhappy state of her marriage? It is very clear that Tara’s and Abhay’s marriage is on the rocks. The following points are a clear indication of this.

1. Abhay stays away from home most of the time.
2. He is constantly making fun of Tara’s rolls of fat.
3. On the physical front their relationship is non-existent. Although Tara is surprised when she learns of another woman in Abhay’s life, the reader is hardly surprised as all indications clearly point to this conclusion.

Self-Check Questions

1. Examine the role of Chocolates in this section of the story?
2. What makes Tara spy on Abhay?
Summary

4. Tara’s Revenge

On discovering Abhay’s infidelity, Tara experiences all the emotions normal to a person in her situation. The immediate fall out of this emotional trauma for Tara is her total distaste for Chocolates. Chocolates now begin to symbolize Abhay’s betrayal and her earlier obsession now turns to nausea. And so she begins to lose weight steadily until she is thinner than ever before. Tara decides to discard sarees for salwar kameez and begins to look young and beautiful Tara decides to win over her husband and so adopts the age old adage that the path to a man’s heart is through his stomach. She joins a cookery class and starts dishing out delicious, mouthwatering food from her kitchen. Abhay succumbs to this offering from Tara and slowly gets addicted to all the delicacies. It seems as if he cannot get enough. His demand for good dishes keeps growing and Tara is more than willing to appease her husband. There is now a reversal of roles. Where earlier it was Tara who was obese, it is Abhay now who suffers this fate.

As expected Abhay’s growing girth leads to the break-up of his affair. So far so good. Tara has won her husband over from the other woman. But the story does not end here. It takes a very interesting turn. What had started as an innocent attempt by Tara to win back her husband, at some point of time becomes a plan for revenge. She begins to find Abhay ugly, what with all his layers of fat, and complexion turned unhealthy due to his excessive consumption of alcohol.

Tara to give her revenge a grand finale chooses to have an affair with Abhay’s best friend and very cleverly puts an end to the affair, the moment she discovers that she has conceived a child. She announces the news to her husband and attributes it to his improved good health. Abhay is puzzled over this new development and is suspicious about the child’s paternity. Tara, however, had been so careful and circumspect in her affair with Abhay’s friend, that Abhay finds no grounds for his suspicion. Abhay of course is not a fool. He tamely accepts the child, although he is not totally convinced that he is the father. You will of course, at this point recall his meeting with the doctor and his reluctance to talk about it. Tara now has what she wants, a child and a girl child at that.

But Tara is now a more mature person and as a mother is determined not to make the same mistake as her own mother. She is determined to give her daughter a good education—an education that would culminate in a career, making her daughter independent and self-sufficient. Even the lullabies she sings are of brave women warriors and not of tame submissive women.

Critical Commentary

Tara adopts Abhay’s strategy to work out her elaborate revenge plan. Where Abhay picked Chocolates off airport shelves, Tara laboured in the kitchen to feed him. She makes him fat and obese, like he had once made her. Like him, she also has an affair and that too with his best friend. Unlike Abhay, Tara earns for herself a wonderful gift for all her pains. The gift for her perfect revenge plan is a baby girl and her own baby girl at that! Tara’s attitude towards the baby girl also evidences her maturity and growth as an individual.

We might agree with the author that Abhay justly deserves what he gets and feel happy for Tara, but the story and its ending none-the-less raise some very pertinent questions regarding
the institution of marriage. One cannot but feel sorry for both Tara and Abhay. It is very evident that there is no love, respect or even affection between Tara and Abhay, yet they both choose to remain trapped in their loveless marriage. The marriage is indeed a farce for both. For Tara because she no longer loves her husband because of his infidelity. Moreover towards the end of the story she finds him positively repulsive.

For Abhay because he probably knows that the child is not his, yet is forced to acknowledge the child, lest he become a laughing stock in the society.

Is marriage then merely a social institution which has to be preserved at all costs? Or should marriage be a coming together of two people based on love, trust and mutual respect. In a scenario where a woman is economically dependent, does she have the option of walking out of a marriage which cannot physically and emotionally sustain her? Even where the woman is economically independent is it very easy to end a marriage, especially when a single divorced woman does not have much social acceptability and sanction?

These are some of the questions the short story raises, to which you must turn your thoughts.

**Self-Check Questions**

1. Comment on Tara’s plan of revenge?
2. Was Tara right in doing what she does?
3. Do you think Tara will make a good mother?

**Humour in Style**

In your text this short story Chocolate is given under a broad heading “Understanding Humour.” According to the Co-build English Dictionary “Humour is a quality in something that makes you laugh for eg. in a situation, in someone’s words or actions or in a book or film.” The narrative style of this story is definitely humourous. Tara’s choice of subject at college, her reasons for opting to English (Hons.), her subsequent disenchantment with the course are described in a light hearted manner and we are quite familiar with such situations. Tara’s various efforts to conceive a child are also familiar and quite comic.

But one might at this point argue that although the style of narration is humourous, the subject matter of the story—husband’s betrayal and wife’s revenge—is not in the least humourous. Surely there is nothing humourous about a relationship breaking up especially the one between husband and wife. The trauma, the pain and the helplessness of someone in Tara’s position is glossed over by the humourous treatment of the subject.

But let us look at the plus points of adopting a humourous style for what is obviously a very painful situation. The story does not become melodramatic at any point of time and manages to keep the focus firmly on the problem. One never loses sight of the many issues involved.
1. Introduction

Let us begin this unit by asking ourselves a simple question. What is biography? Well the word biography comes from the Greek words ‘Bios’ meaning life, and ‘Graphein’ meaning writing. Hence biography means writing a life. Now writing biography has a very long history, not only in the western world but also in India. Initially, biographies were written to praise kings and their achievements. They chronicled the great lives and deeds of the kings, often during their life time. Subsequently, we find biography of saints and religious leaders. The intention was to record the purity of these people and set them as an example for the common men to emulate and lead exemplary lives. But the biography in modern times moves beyond these limited objectives. It is no longer about the selection of a few facts and the presentation of these facts as a guide to good life.

A good, modern, biography not only recounts details and facts of a life but also establishes a link between what the individual did and the life and the circumstances that made it possible. It maps, not just the individual’s thoughts actions and emotions but also maps the social space within which it existed. It highlights the different textures or shades of personality as well as the intimate details of experiences.

That was a very brief discussion of biography but sufficient for our purposes. Now the task at hand is to examine Ramachandra Guha’s biography of Chandi Prasad Bhatt. I am sure you have read some biographies. Often they are long and cover the entire life span of the person in great detail.

But this biographical essay by Ramachandra Guha is a short biography. Obviously, then, the structure, style and scope of this essay will be a little different from the more formal and traditional biography you might have read. Let us examine the essay.

2. Para 1-4

The first thing that one notices is that it is a short biographical sketch. And the objective is made very clear in the first paragraph itself. The author obviously reveres Chandi Prasad Bhatt and hence he calls his journey a sacred pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place which has a religious significance. The author clearly regards Chandi Prasad Bhatt as a living deity, not in a religious sense, but in a very secular way. He is the founder of Chipko movement. It is obvious then that the author regards the Chipko movement as sacred and consequently the birthplace of the founder Gopeswar, a place of pilgrimage.
Thus the first paragraph (a very short one) introduces the reader to:

1. The objective and nature of the journey.
2. The living deity (Chandi Prasad Bhatt).
3. The achievement of the living deity (The Chipko movement).

We have earlier observed that a good biography must establish the relationship between the achievement of the individual and the life that made it possible.

The next three paragraphs provide us with that information. The early life of Chandi Prasad Bhatt is covered quickly without any great details about the circumstances of the family. He was born into a family of priests who tended the shrine of Lord Shiva at Rudranath. However, what the author does point is the informal education in ecology that Chandi Prasad Bhatt acquired on his trips to the shrine at Rudranath. He learnt that nature must be respected at all costs and that man must exist in a natural symbiotic relationship with nature. The taboo’s and prohibitions imposed by the people were meant to protect nature. For instance people were allowed to pluck flowers only after Nandasthmi because the flower would be ripe by then and plucking flowers at that time released the ripened seeds.

The fourth paragraph, very quickly, takes us though the early phase of his life. He lost his father early in life and to support his mother he started out by doing odd jobs. He, however, finally joined Garhwal Motor Owners Union (GMOU) as a booking clerk. He was posted at many places along the Alakananda which entailed a lot of interaction with people from various parts of the country. It is here and through this interaction that Chandi Prasad Bhatt got his first experience of the immense diversity of India.

3. Check Your Progress:
   I. Where did Chandi Prasad Bhatt get his first lessons in ecology?
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      ..............................................................................................................................
      ..............................................................................................................................
   II. How did the taboo’s and prohibitions help in preserving nature? Give one example.
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      ..............................................................................................................................
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      ..............................................................................................................................
   III. What did Chandi Prasad Bhatt do after his father passed away? What did he learn as a booking clerk with GMOU?
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      ..............................................................................................................................
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4. Para 5-8

The fifth paragraph, now, introduces us to the circumstances which transformed this
ordinary booking clerk at GMOU into an influential social worker. I am sure you are familiar with the saying “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step”. This small step, which would change the course of Chandi Prasad Bhatt’s life, was attending a public meeting in Badrinath in 1956. The meeting was addressed by Jayaprakash Narayan as well as a local Sarvodaya leader Man Singh Rawat. As you would know the Sarvodaya movement was a Gandhian movement started by Sri Vinoba Bhave. It had JP (Jayaprakash Narayan) as the other prominent leader. This movement aimed at general awakening and all round upliftment of all sections of the people.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt was deeply impressed by the two leaders who addressed that meeting and immediately became interested in the Sarvodaya movement. What impressed him even more was the personal sacrifices made by its leaders, especially Man Singh Rawat. Man Singh Rawat who came from a fairly rich family, had given up his inheritance for Sarvodaya. Chandi Prasad Bhatt began spending his leave with Man Singh and his wife Sashi Behn and learning more about Sarvodaya. And in 1960 was inspired enough to donate his life (Jeevan Daan) to the Sarvodaya movement. This was an enormous sacrifice when we consider the fact that he was already married and even had a child by then.

In the seventh paragraph we see the beginnings of a movement and a new direction taken by Chandi Prasad Bhatt. This small step would, eventually, result in the Chipko movement a decade later. Beginning with a labour co-operative, Bhatt established the Dashauli Gram Seva Sangh. The foundation stone for the organisation was laid by Sucheta Kripalani, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. The land was donated by another woman Shyama Devi.

Did you notice how swiftly and skillfully, Ram Chandra Guha, has managed to shift from the private world of Chandi Prasad Bhatt into the public domain where you see Chandi Prasad Bhatt. The transition from private to public is not a sudden one. It has been in the making for many years. But by focussing on significant events which mark this shift, Rama Chandra Guha has very skillfully, achieved this objective. He has managed to focus on the man, his achievements and the circumstances that made this possible.

The DGSS truly was a Sarvodaya outfit. The focus of the organisation was on livelihood. The DGSS tried to generate employment by promoting activities which were consistent with the local environment and ethos. You can see that the activities designed by DGSS already have a slant towards sustainability and conservation.

5. Check Your Progress.

I. What is the experience which transformed an ordinary booking clerk at GMOU into an influential social worker?

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II. What sacrifice did he make in 1960? And why is it significant?

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III. How was DGSS formed?

These three paragraphs recount the specific circumstances of the birth of Chipko. Since DGSS was involved in social reconstruction and sustainable development it occasionally came into conflict with the government. However it was commercial forestry (trees cut for commercial purposes) as against social forestry which led to the growth of Chipko. DGSS was refused the use of some trees with which they wanted to make some agricultural equipment. But the same trees were auctioned off to a sports goods company in Allahabad. The local people strongly resented this commercial exploitation of their forest. To protect the trees from being cut down Bhatt gave a call to embrace the trees (Angalwaltha in Gharwali). Similar action was followed at many places in the Alakananda Valley. At this point Sunderlal Bahuguna not only joined the protesters but also wrote about it in Yugvani. He hailed the efforts of Chandi Prasad Bhatt and the other workers and regarded it as the first step in the process of a transformation in the relationship between man and nature. Thus Chipko was born in the Alakananda Valley with the efforts of DGSS under the leadership of Chandi Prasad Bhatt. Subsequently the movement spread to Kumaon, Uttara Khand and the Bhagirathi Valley.

6. Check Your Progress

I. What were the specific circumstances of the birth of Chipko?

7. Paragraph 12-17

Ramachandra Guha, as you must have noticed, has approached the task at hand in a phased manner. The first four paragraphs which deal with the childhood of Chandi Prasad Bhatt, establish a link between the child and his environment. The child learns about the importance of living in harmony with nature from his surroundings. The next sections (Para 5-8) take us through his early youth and the momentous change that happens in Chandi Prasad Bhatt’s life after he attends a meeting addressed by Sarvodaya leaders, Jayaprakash Narayan and Man Singh Rawat. The next phase in Chandi Prasad Bhatt’s life (the birth of a social worker and the birth of DGSS) in captured in paragraph 9-11.
And now in these paragraphs we see a consolidation of the Chipko movement and the success it achieved under the leadership of Chandi Prasad Bhatt.

During this period we see Chandi Prasad Bhatt emerging as a great pioneering environmentalist as well as a great thinker. Under the leadership of Chandi Prasad Bhatt DGSS had entered a phase of reconstruction. DGSS not only protected the forests but also started reforestation projects. The DGSS met with remarkable success in their endeavour. While the survival rate of saplings planted by the forest department fluctuated between 20 to 50 per cent, the survival rate of saplings planted by DGSS was in excess of 70 per cent.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt was not only a great environmentalist but also a great social reformer. This is testified by many people including Murrari Lal a dalit member of DGSS. Chandi Prasad Bhatt worked tirelessly towards the upliftment of Dalit women and the removal of social inequalities. Thus the first tree plantation drive was flagged off from Murrari Lal’s village. His range of concerns were indeed wide. Apart from ecology and environment DGSS worked in the areas of traditional rights of people, the participation of dalits and women in decision making, safeguarding and using the indigenous knowledge of people and so on. In fact some of the development issues now being adopted by leading NGO’s and governments were in fact worked out by DGSS under Chandi Prasad Bhatt some thirty years ago.

Yet, as Rama Chandra Guha has pointed out, Chandi Prasad Bhatt remains much less known than he should be. He was a modest and self effacing man who shunned publicity and worked quietly. Since Chandi Prasad Bhatt lacked fluency in English, the English language press, Rama Chandra Guha believes, never gave him his due. The Chipko movement demonstrated to the world that the poor and tribal had indeed a greater stake in the responsible management of nature. He was the person who demonstrated to others that it is not enough just to protest against environmental degradation. It is important to begin reconstruction as well. The last two paragraphs not only bring out the simplicity of Chandi Prasad Bhatt through an anecdote, but also is an ironical reflection on the city bred and high flying environmentalists, moving around in the smart offices of WWF and other environmental agencies. Unlike these academic environmentalists Chandi Prasad Bhatt demonstrates the values of quiet service and selfless dedication which unfortunately has disappeared from our public domain.

7. Check Your Progress

I. What was the second phase of the Chipko movement?

II. In this phase Chandi Prasad Bhatt emerges as a great environmentalist as well as a thinker. Try to substantiate this statement.

III. The last two paragraphs highlight some personal traits of Chandi Prasad Bhatt. What are these? And how do they contrast with other environmentalists?
12.1 Introduction:

We often come across students who have difficulty in comprehending poetry. The common complaint being “its difficult”. But they are unable to pin point the difficulty. The difficulty lies not so much in the words or the ideas involved but in our approach to poetry. Often we make the mistake of trying to comprehend poetry the way we comprehend a prose passage. It is important to understand that poetry is different from prose and that we need to approach poetry differently. So what is it that makes poetry different from prose?

Poetry comes from the Greek word ‘Poesi’ which means making or creating. In a very simplistic way we can say that poetry, often, re-creates an imagined world. At the same time we must also keep in mind the fact that the same is true of certain kind of writing in prose as well (fiction writing). But while prose is written in sentences and paragraphs, Poetry, essentially, uses lines and stanza’s. Poetry uses a speaking voice (not necessarily the poet’s) who speaks to an imagined audience and tries to communicate the unspeakable aspect of human experience. Now you many ask how does one communicate something which is unspeakable?

Normally we use descriptive language to communicate our experiences. But our experiences are based in the real world and hence we use prose which is capable of communicating real world experiences. But there are some experiences which are located in our structure of emotions and feelings. It is difficult to describe these experiences. For instance when you fall in love with someone, it is difficult to describe the emotions involved. But we can communicate this experience by suggestive language. For instance “O My love is like a Red Red rose, That’s newly sprung in June.”

Now let’s examine these lines. The poet compares his love to a rose. Obviously a woman can not be a rose. But then that is to miss the point. The poet here is only comparing some of the qualities of the rose (its beauty, freshness…etc.) to his beloved. Thus it creates a beautiful image of the beloved in the reader’s mind. Thus now we come to the most important aspect of poetry. Poetry uses poetic language which is primarily figurative in nature. Or in other words we can say that Poetry uses various figures of speech like, metaphors similes, symbols…etc. and various other techniques like, repetition, alliteration…etc. to create a poetic world. This description, though simplistic, alerts us to a very important aspect of reading poetry, i.e. that while reading poetry we must pay close attention to the language used by the poet and that we should look for implied meanings rather than the literal meaning of the words on the page. Let us then begin to read the poem ‘To Mother’, written by S. Usha.
This poem, as you notice from the title itself, is addressed to the poet’s mother. But the address ‘Mother’ is immediately followed by ‘don’t’, an injunction. The ‘don’t’ is repeated thrice in the first stanza of the poem. This injunction ‘don’t’ in the first stanza is more of a plea in tone than a proper injunction. The poet is pleading with her mother to allow her to break free. She pleads with her mother not to cut off the sunlight with her saree ‘spread across the sky’. We have, in the introduction, discussed the use of figurative language in poetry. Now you see an example of the use of figurative language. When the poet pleads with her mother to allow sunlight to pass through she is not asking her to literally do so. We might ask ourselves the question, what does sunlight stand for? The poet has given us a hint in the last line of this stanza. Without sunlight green leaves grow pale and lifeless. So then, sunlight stands for life, for warmth. We might also add knowledge, joy and freedom to the earlier two qualities. But then how can the mother block or cut off the sunlight with her sari? And can she really spread a five metre cloth across the sky? The answer, literally, is no. But the sari also stands for something else other than the five meter of cloth. The sari stands for tradition. The sari also stands for gender specific role as well as conduct determined by the society. The sari also stands for bondage in the sense that tradition forces one to conform to a set of acceptable modes of social existence. For instance, as I am sure most of you know by now, women were not allowed to have an education in our society even as late as the end of nineteenth century.

Now let us go back to the first stanza of the poem. The poet is pleading with her mother to allow her to break free from traditions and allow her to grow up on her own terms. The poet finds the traditions represented by her mother and her saree not only restrictive but life sapping as well. She pleads with her mother not to reduce her to the state of the green leaves which look pale and lifeless in the absence of sunlight.

The second stanza begins with the injunction ‘Don’t’. But the tone here is different from the first stanza. The ‘don’t’ of the second stanza is no longer a pleading. It inverts the hierarchical system where the injunction comes from parents and in this case the mother. The poet, in this stanza, lists out a few, and quite common injunctions, of the things that her mother would not allow her daughter to do. ‘You’re seventeen already’ is not just a statement of fact but a simple reminder to the daughter that at a certain age a girl is supposed to behave in a way which is acceptable to the society. The mother wants her to be modest in her attire or what she wears and how she wears it and not to behave like boys. The poet counter poses her own injunction ‘don’t’ against her mother’s ‘don’ts’.

This theme continues in the third stanza as well. As you know, most parental injunctions have their roots in tradition and customs. These practices are passed on from generation to generation and draw their legitimacy from the tradition itself. The longer the tradition and practice the greater its authority. The poet’s mother is no different from the other parents who issue injunctions which draw their legitimacy, apart from parental authority, from tradition. The poet in this stanza, issues a counter injunction ‘Don’t’ against their tendency to use tradition as a tool to make children fall into a straight jacket. She compares herself with the snake that sways to the tune of the snake charmer curbing its natural instincts. The ‘Don’t’ in the stanza is no longer a quiet assertion but an order. It exhibits a new rebellion in the poet against not just an ancient tradition but also against the complicity of the mother in perpetuating the unjust tradition.
In the first three stanzas of the poem, the poet counterposes her own injunctions against that of the mother’s. The poet’s ‘don’ts’ against the mothers ‘don’ts’. It is a movement outward. And the poet tries to achieve thus, the assertion of her identity, by denying the authority of the mother to restrict her growth. The next three stanzas take this outward movement further but in a different way.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. The poet uses the injunction ‘don’t’ in each of the three stanza’s and in each line the tone seems to be different from the other. Try and identify the tone in each of the three stanza’s.

2. What does ‘sunlight’ and ‘sari’ stand for in stanza 1.

3. Why does the poet compare herself with the snake?

**12.3 Stanzas 4-5**

The last two stanzas bring out the latent theme of rebellion into the open. The fourth stanza reminds the mother of the consequences of thwarting the desire for freedom. Continuing with the image of the snake the poet warns the mother of the unpleasant consequences of stopping a young snake that is spreading her hood or in other words just beginning to emerge into adulthood. The poet, like the young snake, is just beginning to discover herself and would have no hesitation in defending her right to do so by attacking anyone who tries to prevent her. The stanza ends with a bold command to make way and let go.

The concluding stanza captures, through the use of highly contrasting images the impatience and churning within the poet’s heart. The first-three lines create the image of the traditional and pure image of the woman involved in a highly ritualised activity. It is quite common for women in traditional Hindu household to make circumambulations around the holy basil (tulsi) plant in the centre of the courtyard and make rangoli designs with coloured ricepowder during festivals. The performance of these rituals guarantees the passage of soul to heaven after death. But the poet, in one restless gesture rejects this life. This rejection is reinforced by the use of the image of goldfish in a bowl. This image is fused with the earlier image of circumambulation. The gold fish
going round and round in the bowl and turning up-dead speaks eloquently for the futility of this kind of life. A life which she thinks is without light and air or in other words a life which is lifeless:

“for God’s sake, I can’t do it.”

On the other hand, what she is going to do is to break out of the shackles of tradition and bondage in one violent strike. She will break out like a storm breaks out of the gathering clouds and roars through the land.

“Breaking out of the dam you’ve built, swelling in a thunderstorm roaring though the land.”

The use of the image of the storm right after the image of the calm domestic image of a woman busy in rituals, creates a sense of urgency and impending disaster. The pent up emotions of the poet can no longer be contained by the dam of domesticity built so very carefully by the tradition bound mother. The cry for freedom has now reached a crescendo. The tone now is shrill and the choice is very clear. Either the mother allows her to break free or the poet will break free on her own, like a swollen river that breaches its banks, with disastrous consequences.

The stanza ends with a demand once again to let the poet free and lead a life that is different, not necessarily better, from her mother’s. The positive assertion at the end of the poem is remarkably free of any value judgements. The poet wants a life different from her mother, a life in which the choices as well as the consequences are entirely one’s own.

**Check Your Progress**

1. Do you observe a change in tone in the last two stanzas? How is it different from the first three stanzas?

2. Do you think the image of the snake in stanza 4 is different from the image of the snake in stanza 3? If so, how?

3. The concluding stanza uses contrasting images to highlight the restlessness and churning within the poet. What are these images?
13.1 Introduction

Before we begin reading Mihir Bose’s review of Shyam Benegal’s film on Subhas Chandra Bose, let us try and understand what a review is and how to read a review. Reviews are a common place in newspapers these days and most of us have read a review or two about various things. The most common forms of reviews that we come across in the newspapers are the film and book reviews. But one does also find reviews of musical composition or recitals, games, annual reviews, etc. What then is a review? Simply put, any piece of writing that gives us an author’s opinion or critical assessment of a book, movie, game, etc. can be called a review. Reviews give us an idea about what to expect from a book, a movie or a musical composition etc. We expect a good review to give us a balanced overview on the subject under consideration. For example a good film review must tell us about not just the story, plot and cinematic qualities of the film but also highlight all the dimensions of the film both good and not so good. It helps the reader to take a decision on whether he would like to see the film or not. But we must keep in mind the fact that any review, especially the reviews dealing with literary products, films or music and the other arts, contains a strong subjective element. The review is, after all, an individual reviewer’s opinion. Thus when we read a review we must try and filter out the authors personal preferences and focus on the formal features of the analysis.

13.2.1 Lost and Found: Benegal’s Bose

Lost and Found: Benegal’s Bose is a film made by Shyam Benegal on the life of Subhas Chandra Bose. In this essay Mihir Bose reviews this film. He begins by recounting an incident where Satyajit Ray was asked if he ever considered making a film about Gandhi, and Ray had avoided the question. For Mihir Bose, this incident highlights the Indian film makers unwillingness to make films on the lives of our national heroes because they feel that these subjects could be highly controversial. Thus Shyam Benegal’s film on the life of Subhas Chandra Bose can be considered as a bold and path breaking attempt. Mihir Bose applauds Benegal for this attempt. Benegal’s film is all the more laudable because it deals with the life of one of the most controversial as well as important figures in India’s freedom struggle. It marks the beginning of maturing of Indian cinema in the sense that with this film Indian cinema has proved that it can also deal with its history through films.
13.2.2

Bose begins by making a few general observations about the title of the film and the title of his own biography of S.C. Bose. He also remembers the film Gandhi by Richard Attenborough. While the subject of both the films are similar (biographical films), the treatment of the subjects is different. Attenborough covers a very large tract of time in his film on Gandhi, beginning with his time in South Africa. Benegal on the other hand focuses only on the last four years of Bose’s life and begins in 1941. These were some of the most tumultuous years of Bose’s life. But Benegal side steps the controversy regarding the death of S.C. Bose. Mihir Bose finds this quite desirable. He himself has done the same thing in his biography of S.C. Bose so that he could focus more on the contribution of S.C. Bose to the National freedom movement without getting bogged down by the fruitless debate on the manner of his death.

Check your progress:

(1) What has Shyam Benegal’s film achieved for Indian Cinema?

(2) What other books or films is Mihir Bose thinking about while writing this review?

13.2.3

Bose points out that Shyam Benegal calls his film “The Forgotten Hero” a fictional presentation of S.C. Bose’s life. While conceding that all films, including Attenborough’s Gandhi, take liberties with historical truth, Mihir Bose takes Benegal to task for taking too much liberty with historical facts. Mihir Bose observes that Benegal’s own additions, some of which (like the incident of Abid Hasan Cooking Khichri) are interesting in themselves and add much drama to the narrative, are mostly historically untrue. Two of the major incidents pointed out in this context are the transfer of S.C. Bose and Hasan from German to the Japanese sub-marines and to the presentation of his marriage. Mihir Bose observes that the presentation of these two incidents add a touch of unreality to the film which could have been avoided.

Much of Mihir Bose’s criticism about the historical inaccuracies of the film is based on his own biography of S.C. Bose. For instance the reviewer contests the presentation of Bose’s marriage to his secretary Emilie Schenkl in Berlin sometime in 1941. Mihir Bose continues that the marriage took place in 1937 and not in 1941. But he must remember that Benegal was not making a historical document. He was making a fictional presentation of a period of Bose’s life.

Mihir Bose, further, finds fault with the way the relationship between Hitler and S.C. Bose is presented in the film. He complains that Benegal’s film makes S.C. Bose more anti Hitler than he actually was. He contends that though Bose maintained his independence from the Nazis he
was not prepared to confront Hitler. He further argues that it was Nehru and not Bose who had a clearer idea about the dangers of Nazism.

Check your Progress:

(1) Mihir Bose feels that Benegal, in his film, has made additions which are historically not true and that these incidents though dramatic at times, add a touch of unreality to the film which was unnecessary. Which incidents is Mihir Bose referring to?

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13.2.4

There are some other things in the film that the reviewer is unhappy about. He thinks that the battle scenes in Imphal and Burma are overdone and feels that Benegal has glorified the INA much more that it really deserves. According to him the INA’s contribution to the battles can hardly be considered heroic or significant. The film presents the battle as a battle between the INA of Bose and the British army whereas in reality it was Indians fighting against the Indians in the British Army.

Apart from this unnecessary glorification, Mihir Bose finds the film beautiful in parts. The part he likes the best is Bose’s escape from Kolkata to Berlin via Afghanistan. He especially liked the scene where Bose after stepping on free Afghan soil kicks on George VI’s face on a coin. Benegal’s film ends with the plane, carrying Bose, taking off and shows Emilie hearing the news of Bose’s death through a BBC broadcast. Though the film hints at the possibility of the air crash being the cause of Bose’s death, he finally steers clear of this controversial issue. Mihir Bose feels that Benegal could have ended the film with the air crash which would have helped finish off the controversy surrounding Bose’s death. The review ends with a scathing comment on the Bengalis who are critical of Benegal’s film. He hopes that Benegal’s film will contribute much not only to the understanding of Subhas Chandra Bose but will also put some sense into the degenerate Bengalis who revere S.C. Bose but hardly take the trouble of knowing the man better.

13.2.5. Let’s Sum Up

Mihir Bose’s review of Shyam Benegal’s film, The Forgotten Hero, draws our attention to both the merits and short comings of the film. Though he finds fault with the film on many counts, he finds the film interesting in parts and applauds Benegal for having done something bold and remarkable for Indian cinema. Some of the things he likes about the film are:

(a) The dramatic presentation of Bose’s journey, difficult as it was, from Germany to Japan in a submarine and the comic elements in them as well.
(b) Bose’s escape from Kolkata to Berlin via Afghanistan.
(c) The fact that Benegal’s film will certainly lead to a better understanding and rehabilitation of S.C. Bose.
Some of the things he did not like about the film are:

(a) Benegal’s derivations from the historical truths and too much fictionalization of some of the incidents in Bose’s life especially the issue of his marriage and his relationship with Hitler.

(b) Benegal’s attempt to glorify Bose’s personality so that it confirmed to popular perception rather than historical truth.

(c) Glorification of the role of INA in the battles of Imphal and Burma.

Finally when we try and evaluate the review we do find that, Mihir Bose, has focussed far too much on the historical authenticity of the film narrative and has ignored the cinematic qualities of the film. Much of the review is informed by his own biography of S.C. Bose and Richard Attenborough’s film Gandhi. What the review lacks is an analysis of the filmic qualities like cinematography, acting, screenplay, etc. thereby making the review one dimensional. It seems he is reading Benegal’s film more as a historical document and not as a fictional representation of a part of S.C. Bose’s life as ideally it should be.
14.1 Introduction

Let us begin with the question, what is a narrative? A narrative is, first of all, a story or a part of a story. A narrative describes a chain of events initiated and experienced by characters. The characters could be real or fictional. They could be human beings or animals like you find in fables. A narrative is written or narrated orally and has a narrator who may be a character or someone who witnessed the incidents. A narrative may have one or many points of view from which the narration takes place.

Having made these general observations let’s deal with the narrative prescribed for you, “Soapnut leaves.” Now this is, as you all know, a short story. We know that the short story has its own characteristics. Though there are no hard and fast rules which govern the short story, we do find some features which are, more or less, common to short stories. To begin with let’s point out some of the features that are likely to be found in a short story.

a) A short story, unlike the novel which has a complex structure, has a single and simple plot, a single setting and a limited number of characters.

b) The incidents narrated in the short story cover a short period of time. Normally short stories begin abruptly in the middle of the action. But they also have a climax or crises or what you may call a turning point in the narrative.

c) It is very difficult to define the length of a short story. However, it is commonly held that the length of a short story should be such that a reader is able to read the story in one sitting.

d) Finally the short stories, typically, have abrupt and open endings and they may or may not have a moral.

So when we read a short story we must try and pay special attention to amongst other things, the plot, the characters, the narrative point of view.

14.1.2 Soapnut Leaves

Soapnut leaves is a short story by Chaaso. This story was originally written in Telegu. The plot of this story is very simple. This story is about two village girls, Paaramma and Gaviri, who go out into the fields and the vastly different kinds of experiences they have on this outing.
Paaramma is the daughter of a respectable farmer and Gaviri is the daughter of a labourer. On their way to the fields they come across fields of greengram and Paaramma keeps picking the green pods without worrying about getting caught. She believes that being the daughter of a respectable farmer no one would dare do anything about it. But Gaviri being the daughter of a labourer dare not do the same, though she is very hungry.

They keep walking and soon they find a carpet of soapnut leaves on their path. Paarammma has no use for soapnut leaves, but for Gaviri they are a fine source of fuel and she gathers as much as she can and puts them in her basket. Finally they reach the field of the Prime landlord Kaambhukta garu. They find a tamrind tree laden with fruit. Paaramma flings a few stones and manages to pick a few tamarind fruits. When Gaviri asks for a few tamarind fruits, Paaramma asks her to pick her own fruits and moves away. Gaviri gathers all her courage and flings a few stones. But instead of fruits, she manages to bring down a big dry twig. She is very happy because the twig is good fire wood. She breaks the twig into smaller pieces and puts them in her basket.

In the meantime the Prime Landlord arrives and kicks her basket scattering the twigs and the soapnut leaves. Gaviri tries gathering the leaves and the twigs once again. This further angers the Prime Landlord and he starts abusing her. He, obviously, did not know what the soapnut leaves meant to Gaviri. She promises the Prime Landlord that she will never visit his field again. But the Prime Landlord does not relent. He accuses her of thieving cattledung which he finds hidden under a bush. Despite Gaviri protesting her innocence she is given a thrashing by the landlord. Gaviri picks up courage and fights back and showers abuse on the landlord. The landlord hits her with his wooden sandal. Gaviri falls on her face with pain and the landlord, satisfied with the outcome, leaves.

Gaviri, after a long bout of weeping, and in much pain, picks herself up. She collects her soapnut leaves. As a mark of her protest she leaves the tamarind twig behind in the landlord’s field. While she walks back, still sobbing, the school children are still singing their multiplication tables.

14.1.3. Caste and Class

The plot of this story, as we have seen in the previous section, is very simple. It revolves around two small girls. But the theme is not so simple. The narrator begins by making a very sharp distinction between the social class of both the girls. Paaramma is a rich farmer’s daughter and Gaviri is the daughter of a labourer. Paaramma is a Naidu which is also a forward caste but Gaviri’s caste is not mentioned. She belonged to the ‘loin-cloth class’. The difference of class is, as is very usual, reflected in the way they are dressed, the food that they eat and also in their attitude towards life and fellow human beings.

It is interesting to note that the issue of class has a primacy over the issue of caste in the story, which has a rural setting. We all know that caste is the dominant determinant in our social interactions, especially in rural India. On the other hand class is more of an urban issue. But does it suggest that the narrator, adopting the point of view of class, is rejecting caste as the defining characteristic of social organization? The answer, according to me, is that the author is trying to demonstrate the overlapping nature of caste and class in Indian society.
But at the same time the author is trying to reveal the nature of this overlap. Our social interactions and attitudes are shaped more by the class rather than the caste that we belong to. For instance Paaramma’s attitude towards Gaviri, school, and other things are shaped by the fact that she is Appala Naidu’s (a big and moneyed farmer) daughter. Paaramma can pick green gram from other people’s fields but Gaviri cannot do the same because of their respective social classes. At the same time we see that Gaviri is beaten and punished by the Prime Landlord only on the basis of mere suspicion despite Gaviri protestation of innocence. It seems that the Prime landlord (by implication the moneyed class) takes it as a matter of right to punish the children or people of the lower classes. Thus the system of justice here seems to be the preserve of the higher classes. In fact in an instance of supreme irony the Prime Landlord becomes the accuser as well as the judge, thereby effectively shutting out the possibility of justice for the lower classes.

### 14.1.4. The Role of Education

The village school serves as a backdrop in this story. Paaramma is supposed to attend school soon. Paaramma’s father had already given his consent. On the other hand Gaviri’s father, according to Gaviri, considers schooling useless for the children of labourers. It is considered that education can bring in great social changes and it alone can help in establishing a just and equitable society. However, in this story, it seems to have failed in its mission. The school hasn’t actually changed the attitude of the people. The village remains trapped in its unjust practices. Consequently the attitude of people towards education is nothing short of sceptical. Gaviri’s father believes that the school will not help Gaviri in her life because the life skills that Gaviri needs to learn are not to be found in books or the multiplication tables taught in the school.

For Gaviri and people of her class the prime concern is to keep the cooking fires burning in their huts. It is a daily struggle for survival. And these skills are best learnt from life. And you can see for yourself, in this story, that life’s lessons are bitter. Gaviri must learn to curb her hunger, must suppress her desires and must submit herself to the unjust social system in order to survive. She suffers at the hand of not just the Prime Landlord but also her friend Paaramma.

Though Paaramma is supposed to be a friend, she tries at every opportunity to put down Gaviri. She is a proud and arrogant girl. She shows off her privileges to Gaviri and lacks decency and sympathy. Her attitude, typifies the upper class attitude towards their less privileged counterparts. We are forced to wonder if school would actually change the way Paaramma looks at life. Paaramma is so self-centred that instead of helping her friend prove her innocence in front of the Prime Landlord, she runs away deserting her friend Gaviri to her fate. Consequently Gaviri suffers, not just the beating, but also the indignity of being called a thief.

The story ends, once again, with the school coming into focus where the children are still learning the multiplication table. The contrast between the situation of Gaviri in the school of life and the school where the children are learning the multiplication tables, once again brings the role of education into focus. The irony of the situation is that there seems to be a wide chasm between this school and the school of life. What the author is, perhaps, suggesting here is that this chasm between the school and the school of life must be bridged for education to become meaningful. Till then the soapnut leaves would remain immensely more valuable than the education dished out in the schools.
15.1 Introduction:

We have already discussed how to read poetry in Understanding Poetry III. Please go through the introduction to that section once again before reading this lesson. Poetry, as we have discussed earlier, is primarily suggestive and has layers of meaning. Reading poetry is like peeling an onion which has several layers but hardly a core. So instead of looking for a core meaning we should try to understand the various layers of meanings that a poem contains.

To begin with we must try and understand that the words in a poem, are like clues in a treasure hunt. One clue leads to another. But unlike the treasure hunt where the objective of the hunt is to find the treasure in poetry the objective is not to find the hidden meaning but to find the network of clues which give the poem its form and substance. Thus, while reading a poem, we should try to figure out all the possible clues that are hidden in the words.

15.1.2 The Lost Word:

Let us begin our treasure hunt with the title of the poem. This poem, as the title tells us is about a lost word. Does it sound a little strange? It does sound strange if we take the title literally. We often lose things but a word is not a thing. How can we lose a word? Yet it makes sense if we probe a little more. When we lose a thing we cannot use it for our needs. Hence when we cannot use a word it is lost to us. We lose words if we forget them. Thus, here the word lost, refers to a word which the woman has forgotten and cannot use it.

15.1.3

In the first stanza of the poem we find a woman searching for a word she has lost. And she is searching for it in places which are hidden from view or places where we keep our rubbish. But isn’t it unusual to look for a word in places where we find things? The hidden places mentioned here are places which do not require our attention on a day to day basis. Or rather places we tend to ignore in our daily lives, places which are difficult to reach. The poet then seems to suggest that the woman has lost this word in the world of her domesticity. This domestic world is not just a physical world it also is a mental world. The woman is so preoccupied in this world that she fails to remember this word which is certainly an important word.
15.1.4

In the second stanza we see her looking under the carpet and there she finds many other words that she had swept under the carpet but not the one she was looking for. We tend to sweep under the carpet, or in other words we hide or suppress things we don’t want others to see or things that embarrass us but we don’t want to throw them away all together. And we tend to hide or suppress things when we are not very confident about them. The woman here seems to be in the habit of sweeping many words under the carpet. It shows that she is not a very confident person. She has hidden and suppressed or forgotten to use many words because she is not confident about using them. The last two stanzas of this poem throw more light on the nature of the particular word that she is looking for now. It is a very small, two letter word but a very important word.

15.1.5

In the third stanza she takes a break from this frenetic search to think about the word. She tries to remember the last time she had used this word. This is a very common way of remembering about things which are lost or misplaced. But this attempt also ends in failure. She can hardly remember the last time she used it. The only thing that she remembers now is not the use of the word but the failure to use it, though she had tried several times. And she had failed to use it because her mouth was full of someone else’s tongue. When the poet says that her mouth was full of someone else’s tongue it does not mean that she did not have a tongue of her own. Tongue here is used in the sense of a voice.

When the woman tries to remember the word she has lost she is unable to do so because she had been using not her own but someone else’s language. The abrupt ending of this poem seems very unsatisfactory. It does not give us any definite clues about the word she is looking for. If we probe further and think about the word she is looking for we will realise that it is a two letter word and that it is an important word. The woman, it seems, has never been able to use the word because she has never used her own voice. We know that voice, or in other words the freedom to choose and express ideas and opinions, gives us an identity. And the loss of this results in loss of identity. Thus we can guess that the word she is looking for would be a word which could give her an identity. Words like “me”, “am”, “no”, assert one’s individuality. Perhaps it is one of these words that she is looking for. Is she looking for the word no? We know that the ability to say “no” gives us a sense of freedom. Perhaps she has never been able to say “no” in her life. If we look at the position of women in traditional societies we will realise that for a woman saying “no is”, often, a great challenge. And they often fail to say “no” because they are taught to obey what others ask them to do. Thus they always end up saying what other people want them to say and in the process lose their own voice. Perhaps, the woman here is looking for the word “no”, so that she can regain her voice. But her attempt ends in failure once again because when we lose our voice we have nothing more to say. Thus the poem ends on this abrupt note to suggest that when we adopt the tongue of others and speak in their voice, it is very difficult to break free and find one’s own tongue. So we end up having very little to say and the only option that is open is silence.
A Brief Introduction:

The short-story is a relatively young literary genre whose rise and popularity arise out of people’s being busy and having little time on their hands for leisure reading. A short, compact piece is a refreshing source of entertainment. However, there are inputs in a short story which add to its quality as a literary composition.

The intensity of impact in a short story is what is valued most highly. Like a fine lyric poem, the short story requires the reader’s utmost attention, a focussing of the mind on each detail in order to realise the final fulness of effect. The short story depends on concreteness, on sensual impressions that deliver their meaning without waste. The action of a conventional short story is compressed within a short time and space. The characters, few in number are revealed not developed. The background and setting are implied; not rendered. The story gets going as quickly as possible.

A question we ask is, “How does a story manage to tell so much in such a brief space? The answer is that every word, gesture description, stands for so much. Sometimes a single detail will stand for a wealth of meaning—for a whole social class or a character’s background. In Lamb to the Slaughter, a middle-class family, an organised household are described well enough. But the beauty of the irony arising out of food imagery is amazing. Right from the title where the word “lamb” occurs there are many ways of interpreting the word lamb—a victim, a sacrifice, literally an item of food, a murder weapon, evidence destroyed etc. But more of this later.

The Story:

Recalling some of the features of a successful short story, you can observe that the setting, as described in the first paragraph, is a comfortable one in readiness for a couple to spend a relaxed evening. A loyal and committed wife, Mrs. Mary Maloney is waiting for her husband to return from work. Six months pregnant, she glows with contentment and security, ready to welcome Mr. Maloney. Familiar with his habits, she revels in his almost silent company. She knows he will not speak much till the first drink is finished. The entire description of their sitting together is an interesting one. She, unaware of what is going on in his mind, is ready to do anything to make him comfortable, please him. He, on the other hand is trying to bring himself to break the news of his intention to abandon her. He empties his glass of whisky, refuses to have anything to eat, and then tells her.
In keeping with the principle that in a short story, less is more, the author does not quote all the details of what Maloney tells his wife. But we understand very well that he plans to leave her for another woman. Of course he’ll give her money and she will be looked after. This is what is called revealing the tip of the iceberg. The iceberg here is the huge volume of distance that has came to exist between the couple. The presence of an iceberg, a very large dangerous block of ice is visible only as the tip which shows above but its hidden dangers manifest themselves in a frightening manner only when it is too late. In this story too, Maloney simply tells Mrs. Maloney of his intent to leave her unaware of the fury of emotions released within her by this declaration. But all of this later.

First, let us observe how the wife’s shock of manifests itself. Her first instinct is not to believe any of it. She thinks she might be imagining the whole thing. Or, it might just be a bad dream and when she wake-up, she might find nothing has happened.

Then she gets up to prepare supper. Almost in a dare, she goes down to the cellar to fetch something to cook. The first thing she lays her hands on is a leg of lamb. Do not miss the irony of the word “lamb” here. Still standing by the window with his back to her, Mr. Maloney tells her that he is going out and she shouldn’t make supper for him. In one angry reflex, Mary Maloney simply walks up behind him and hits him on the back of his head with the frozen leg of lamb. The blow is fatal; he falls to the carpet. The crash, the nose of the small table overturning brings her out of her shock.

Her mind starts racing. She realises the enormity of what she has done. Then, she plans out her evening. She puts the lamb in the microwave to cook. Then goes out to the greengrocer’s and returns with stuff to be cooked for supper. Then she kneels by the body of her dead husband, finds him dead, and calls the police.

Then, it is as if the detectives take over the action of the story. They fuss around completing all the procedures, finding clues, but of course not finding the weapon used for the murder. As they work late into the right, Mary, showing genuine concern for her husband’s former colleagues, offers them the leg of lamb that was cooking in the microwave. This, in effect, destroys, the weapon of offence. As they eat, they remark ironically that the blunt object used to kill Maloney is probably somewhere right there, “under their noses,” yet they are unable to see it. Of course, the reader and Mary know that the murder weapon is right “under their noses”, being destroyed by becoming food for the hungry cops.

We know the murder cannot be solved in the conventional way. That is why Mrs. Maloney giggles in the other room as the policemen conjecture the presence of the weapon.

This story is replete with instances of black humour. Black humour is humour arising out of situations arising out of death and tragedy and jokes arising out of such situations or language are called “black”.

Exercises

Reading Comprehension:

1. At the beginning of the story, Mary Maloney is shown to be the typical, happily married housewife. What details help build up this impression?
The warm, clean room with curtains drawn, two table lamps alight and the side board ready for a shared evening drink convey an atmosphere of ease and comfort. Mary herself waits as if looking forward to her husband’s return. Her finished face, tranquil expression and soft eyes, all convey the impression of a happily married woman.

2. The writer hints at Patrick Maloney’s discomfort that particular evening. Mention three details.

Patrick Maloney’s lifting his glass of whisky and draining it in one swallow although there was still half of it left was unusual. Then, his going over and making himself a stiff new drink was an indication of his discomfort. Thirdly, his refusal to let her do anything for him, get his slippers or get him something to eat, indicated a hostile mood.

3. What do you think Patrick Maloney told his wife that prompted her to kill him?

Patrick probably told Mary that he had fallen in love with another woman and wished to get away from his wife, either by way of separation or divorce.

4. How do you think Mary Maloney would have behaved if she had not been pregnant?

Mary would probably have behaved in the same way even if she had not been pregnant.

5. Why was she so insistent that the policeman eat the leg of mutton being cooked in the oven?

This was because the leg of lamb was the weapon of attack which had caused Patrick’s death. Eating it would destroy evidence.

6. Why does Mary “giggle” when the policeman says that the murder weapon was probably “right under our noses?”

She giggles because it is, quite literally under their noses. They are biting into the mutton with their teeth, right below their noses.

7. Food is an important metaphor in the story. Pre-occupation with eating and drinking on the one hand, guarantees Mary’s innocence and on the other, provides her with the perfect weapon. Comment.

Interestingly, the story begins with a sideboard well prepared for an evening of warmth. Even amidst the tension Mary offers to get Patrick food and drink. It is during her efforts at preparing supper that she fetches the leg of lamb which she impulsively uses to fatally hit her estranged husband. Even her strategy to delay calling the police centres around buying potatoes etc for supper from the local greengrocers. And when the policeman get delayed working on the detail of the murder, the murder weapon, the newly cooked leg of lamb, is consumed as food by the cops and crucial evidence is destroyed, letting Mary Maloney escape being discovered.

Vocabulary

2. Idioms:

Mary was very much in love with her husband. Her heart missed a beat every time her detective husband returned home, from work. She waited eagerly for his return each evening. It gladdened her heart to hear the tyres on the gravel outside. However, Patrick was a dark horse and had been having an affair. He knew the news would break the heart of his wife. He decided to steel himself to the task though it made his heart sink.
Introduction:

Rita Ann Higgins, born in 1955, is an Irish born well-known poet. She is deservedly well-known internationally for her protests against social exclusion and misuse of power in an increasingly brash and materialistic western world. Her poems focus on the experience of harassed mothers’ maladjusted sons, narcotically dependent young people and victims of economic maladjustment. The poem “Some People” included in your text book is directly concerned with these issues which arise out of social exclusion, letting the poor remain outside the realm of all the comfort and dignity that material wealth can buy.

The Poem:

As you can see from the very beginning the language of Higgins’s poems is just a shade removed from actual speech. Its stylized colloquialisms create a monologue which contains phrases describing the suffering, day to day, of people who have not managed to survive the day to day trauma of economic humiliation. We are all aware that poverty brutalizes human nature. It makes us less human, less sympathetic to fellow human beings, less sensitive, and generally robs us of a certain dignity.

As the notes in your text book tell you, some words like ‘cunt’ in line 2 are socially unacceptable. They are not polite words. Such words are used by angry frustrated people, almost like an abuse; by frustrated people who can see no use for a woman except as a sex object. Poverty and gender disadvantage (being female) is a deadly combination in this world. And this is what the main character of the poem is. She says some people (it refers to herself in the third person) know what it is like to be abused before one’s own children. “To be short” of something is not to have enough money for a specific purpose. The speaker has on various occasions been short of money for rent, for electricity, for children’s school books. She has experienced the indignity of waiting for medical attention in a welfare system which is overburdened. Of course, waiting for a troubling tooth to be attended to for two years is an exaggeration. But it humorously points to the problem of delay in getting anything through welfare. We in India all know how the poor are treated in government hospitals. It is a similar situation.

Talking of varicose veins, this is a medical condition especially prevalent among hardworking people who have to stand long hours. And the list of people waiting to get treated for this problem
too, seems to be endless. Like waiting for two years for a dental appointment, being 198 on the list is again a humorous way of saying that the health system is overburdened and crowded.

Line II onwards the double mention of banana to remind us how people are trained to use the telephone to earn a living, is again an instance of cynical humour. And this cynicism continues when the person is described as being out of work out of money, out of fashion, out of friend, and to wait for charity. Living on charity is certainly not a dignified existence.

Line 18 onwards, there are references to the kind of lies people have to tell about members of their family. When people like the milkman or coal man come for their dues the family says that Mammy (the woman who heads the family) is not at home (gone to Mars, not literally of course, or died, again, not really). These are humorous ways of saying, “Not at home”. It is the same for the rent man who is told that Mammy is in a charitable hospital (St. Jude’s) for the poor.

This is certainly not the way respectable people behave. But the person who is the speaker of the poem knows what is like to be second class to be looked down upon to not belong to any respectable class. To be urinated upon or to be defecated upon is to receive the worst insults possible for human dignity. She knows all this though, perhaps, other people don’t know what these experiences feel like.

Exercises

The speaker divides people into those who know and those who don’t. List five things about each of the two categories.

Reading Comprehension

1. Five things about people who know are:
   a) they are poor b) they are uneducated c) they have health problems d) they are insecure and e) they are unhappy. (You must remember that “people who know” here are people who know the seamier, nastier side of life).
   “Others who don’t” (know) are:
   a) employed b) well-off c) fashionable d) have friends and e) secure.

2. To which category does the speaker belong? How do we know?
   The speaker belongs to the category of those who know. We know because of the intensity of the description of the speaker’s poverty and the last line says “other people don’t.”

3. Is the speaker male or female? Is it important to know the gender of the speaker?
   The speaker is female. Yes it is important to know the gender of the speaker. All the suffering and humiliation is described from a woman’s point of view.

4. Here is a list of other ways in which we could divide people. How many of these oppositions apply to the division made by the speaker?
   All except popular/unpopular apply to the divisions in the poem.

5. The phrase “to be short for” is a colloquialism pick out two other colloquial phrase in the poem.
1) “to be out of” meaning “to be without’ lines 13, 14, 15, 16.
2) “to talk into” meaning to talk not to a human being directly but into an instrument, electronic or otherwise.

6. Why does the child make such strange and fantastic excuses?
   Such excuses are intended to ward off people who come to claim their dues.

7. The poem exhibits emotions. Which of the listed emotions can be found? Quote.
   - Humour: Lines 7, 8, 9, 10.
   - Sadness: Lines 13, 14, 15, 16.
   - Helplessness: Lines 11, 12.

8. Is the speaker’s anger directed at a) people who don’t b) the government/the system c) fate
   I think the government is the target of the speaker’s anger. This is evident as early as Line 6 of the poem in the reference to community welfare.

9. What is the speaker angry about, material or non-material things.
   The speaker is angry about non-material things like society’s insensitivity to the suffering of the poor and the denial of dignity to them.

10. Comment on the poem being one long sentence culminating in the last line.
    The speaker ends the list of complaints with “other people don’t” because she feels that no one is really listening to her and she has to accept her situation for what it is.
This unit contains an extract from a contemporary play by Datta Bhagat, a contemporary playwright.

Introduction:

Drama as an art form is thousands of years old. In Greek plays more than three thousand years ago, themes of universal interest and relevance were exposed threadbare through dialogues in the plays and interaction among the characters. The same is true of Sanskrit drama which deals with themes and issues of the times in which it is written.

In the present day too, drama is considered a very vibrant and expressive art form. It takes up age-old themes, social issues, problems of gender, dowry, the status of women, etc. and manages to throw light on various aspects of the problem. That neither the problems nor the solutions are simple is borne out by the fact that in drama several characters have their own views on a problem and each is justified in his or her perception of the same. What the audience gets is a fuller understanding of the problem or the issue at stake.

Marathi theatre is especially developed in its concern for contemporary issues like gender, corruption and untouchability which brings us to the Dalit issue. Which is the theme of the extract prescribed for study. It does not need much prodding for any socially conscious citizen to see that the Dalits are a section of society highly discriminated against. The viciousness of human nature, legitimised by the caste system in the Hindu social structure, finds full, unrestrained expression in the attitude and behaviour of caste Hindus towards Dalits. The most outstanding Dalit intellectual appeared on the scene sixty years ago in the form of Bhim Rao Ambedkar who was one of the main architects of the Constitution of India. He managed to instill some confidence among Dalits which resulted in a gradual rise in awareness among them. They now have their own political groups and are able to occupy positions of the power like the office of the President, Chief Justice, Ministerial positions etc.

However, these instances of Dalit achievers are few and far between. For the majority, life is an uphill struggle and it is this segment of Dalits whose problems we encounter in the extract. Fortunately, there are idealists among them who are willing to show the way to the rest of the community.

To put things in perspective, let us take an overview of the extract. The central characters
of the play are a couple—a Dalit Professor, Satish Godghate and his Brahmin wife Hema. Other characters are Satish’s uncle, Kaka and Dasrao Joshi, the headmaster who is also Hema’s uncle. Another character who enters the scene late in the extract is Arjun, the impatient rebel who takes the law into his own hands. Importantly all the characters are from the local community and know the area and its problems and prejudices very well. There are no regional barriers, only those of caste.

This choice of locale and the combination of characters enables the author to allow an in-depth analysis and discussion of issues. The characters follow the cross references, the subtle nuances and prejudices of the speakers among themselves. This makes for greater lucidity and intensity in the discussion. Another feature of drama is that facts and events and developments can be reported by one character to another e.g. the episode of the Deshmukh boy being mistaken for a Dalit.

Looking for the dynamics of the effectiveness of the play, let us examine it closely.

A note on the title:

Routes and Escape Routes gives you a clue to the theme of the play. It is about the Dalit movement. Within the movement, there are different approaches to the attainment of social justice. There are some to whom the means and the ends are both equally important. There are others who believe the ends justify the means. There are yet others whose public postures and private actions are at variance with each other. In other words, all those involved have a path to choose in reaching their goals—be it a known public route or an escape route—a private, lesser-known one.

I

The description of the setting gives you some idea of what you would see on the stage if you were watching the play performed in a theatre. It seems a neat, sparsely furnished drawing room of an intellectual. Don’t miss the corner table with books. The portrait of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and a Sewadal Calendar should give you a clue to the caste and ideological leanings of the owner of the house.

Kaka, described as being between fifty and sixty years of age is the uncle of Prof. Godghate. The rigidity of age is manifest in his initial dialogue when he calls out to Hema “Sunbai”, he says, and when Hema asks “What?” he gets annoyed. He wants people to respond with “Ji.” It also gives a clue to the rigidity of his character and views.

The fact that Hema tells him she doesn’t like to be scolded or insulted when people are around indicates that his behaviour leaves much to be desired. And, his subsequent taunt that he is merely a Buddhist and Hema a Brahmin brings out the bitterness so natural in a person not given his due in society. You can see that caste-consciousness is so close to the surface that it needs very little provocation to become a subject of dialogue. When Hema protests that she dislikes references to her caste in every other sentence, Kaka retorts that not talking about the problem will not remove it from society. Caste is a social reality. Therefore, people will talk about it. If Hema and Satish broke away from their castes to get married, they were alone in their decision. Nobody supported them. Nobody helped in times of economic hardship. Acceptance by
relatives was difficult. But even after acceptance, Hema feels that Kaka’s references to her Brahminism is undesirable. Kaka, on the other hand, is obsessed with caste as is revealed by every line he utters.

II

The second section of this extract brings up the issue of a certificate required by Shewanta. Shewanta is a young widow who wishes to do a teachers training course. She is a matriculate and her husband. Gopya, a rickshaw puller, was run over by a truck. What she needs is a certificate saying she has taught for three months. Satish is not likely to recommend to anyone that a false certificate be issued to her. When Kaka learns this, he decides to ask Dasrao Joshi himself. (Dasrao being a cunning person, says he will ask a friend from a different village to issue the certificate. He will not issue it himself. This is revealed later).

Another issue raised in Section II and continued in Section III is that of Dalit housing. When Kaka decides to go out in the evening (middle of p. 131) Hema asks about when he will be back and where he is going. Annoyed, Kaka unleashes a whole lot of sarcasm. He cooks up a story about a community feast with a group of pilgrims who have returned from Bodh Gaya. Also about Dalits who wish to set-up a Bodh Vihar, being converts to Buddhism. He talks of a meeting of the Bharatiya Bodh Mahasabha adding sarcastically that Hema being a Brahmin has neither religion nor God. Of course, the real issue is revealed later. Arjun, an activist is collecting subscription for acquiring by force houses built for people affected by the flood. As Section III reveals, he plans to break open the locks and allot the houses to all slum dwellers in case the government refuses to give them the houses. Hema has heard of all this and Kaka is a silent party to it. Satish’s law-abiding methods are differ from the impatient activists. Satish, an educated Professor can’t get a certificate for Shewanta; he can’t get reasonable facilities for people of his community. What use is such an intellectual to the Dalits?

You can see how various points of view on a particular social issue can be revealed in the course of interaction on the stage. You have Kaka, the aging Dalit who has seen Dalits suffering passively throughout his life and internalise social attitudes; there is Arjun, the impatient young activist, a student of Professor Satish Godghate, whose view and plans are reported by Kaka, there is also Hema, the voice of the law who echoes the views, attitudes and perception of her husband, Satish. The reference to the law acquires a certain sting, as Hema’s father is a judge. Of course being an intelligent woman Hema manages to show Kaka the propriety of seeing the pros and cons of an action plan before it is taken up. In this case it is the forcible occupation of houses built by the municipality.

As she reaches for the Bharatiya Bodh Sabha register from the cupboard, Hema changes the subject to the medicines Kaka has forgotten to take for his heart ailment. Here you see how, in drama, a subject can be raised, given the desired time for discussion or reference and then suddenly be changed. A total change of mood and tone is also possible which is not the case in a running narrative in prose, or even in a poem. Hema’s personal concern for the health of a senior family member replaces her ideological position. This enables us to see her in a positive light as a responsible daughter-in-law rather than as a Brahmin girl married into a Dalit family.
IV

As we reach Section IV of the extract we see an encounter between a Dalit and a Brahmin stalwart. Dasrao has come to Godghate’s house and the latter offers him tea. In his sullen old way, Kaka adds that Dasrao should not have a problem having tea in the house of relatives by marriage. As Dasrao understands the taunt, he says that anyway, the tea will be prepared by the Brahmin Hema.

When two experienced men of some social standing meet, surely some socially relevant issues will be raised. Here it is the issue of reservation—33% reservation which the Brahmin Dasrao resents. Of course, Kaka retorts that higher castes have always enjoyed the benefits of power and education. Yet, when it comes to a petty certificate for Shewanta, issues of propriety are raised.

In the midst of all this petty bickering and mud slinging, Kaka gets up and goes away to meet up with the Buddhist Samaj. He believes it interacting with Dalits, not just reading books about them. He has walked shoulder to shoulder with Bhimrao Ambedkar. Kaka’s favourite project is building a Bodh Vihara. This is a response to the caste Hindus who are prepared to build a Ganesha temple anywhere they settle.

Every few lines especially Page 139 onwards Dasrao Joshi, a member of the same Brahmin community as Professor Satish Godghate’s wife Hema, sympathises with her to say how difficult it is to live with a man like Kaka. But, an intelligent woman, she cannot be sweet-talked into accepting that Brahmins behave better. She exposes the hypocrisy of Dasrao Joshi who backtracked on the agreement to rent rooms to Satish and Hema even after he had accepted the advance. This was because he had found out about Satish being a Dalit.

Another interesting and relevant episode reported in the play is that of Arvind Deshmukh the dark, not good looking boy who is mistaken for a Dalit and served tea in a differently marked cup. He is, incidentally, very likely to become Dasrao Joshi’s son-in-law. His family have asked for the hand of Sonal, Dasrao Joshi’s daughter.

VI

The last section of the play which is dominated by the rebellious Arjun gives you a glimpse of how the young react to corruption and hypocrisy. The oldest character in the play Kaka was a long time sufferer, a victim of caste discrimination who is a follower of Bhimrao Ambedkar, the Dalit intellectual. Dasrao Joshi is a hypocrite, pretender to reform, but actually a self server. The young Arjun has no patience.

He has learnt about the devious plans of Pawar the contractor who has built houses for flood victims under a government plan. But Hema knows that he wishes them to be occupied by his relatives and friends who don’t really need or deserve government housing. Aware of this scheme Arjun takes the law into his own hands and breaks open the locks for Dalits and hutment dwellers to move in.

He is handcuffed and arrested and that is how the extract closes.

From the Exercises at the end of the extract let us take a look at No. 5. Notice that each
of the six sections furthers the theme, plot and development of characters. It also provides background information so that the incidents on stage become more clear. It will serve as a summary to help you recall the progress of the action in the play.

1. This section serves to lay out before the reader/audience the main issue under debate in the narrative. Is it possible for social reformers/activists or progressive citizens to alter the common man’s attitude to caste? The answer is, largely, ‘No.’ Even an inter-caste marriage like that of Professor Sastish Godghate and Hema cannot make a dent in society.

2. The Kaka-Hema exchange is over the false certificate for Shewanta who needs it to be able to do a teacher’s training course. While Kaka is in favour of a shortcut, a practical solution to a problem, Hema is in favour of an honest and procedurally correct solution.

3. The Kaka-Hema exchange over the plans for forcible occupation of houses by Arjun and others is again a clash about the means to achieve social justice for Dalits.

4. Kaka gets a false certificate from Dasrao. We get the impression that Dasrao is a manipulative clever practical man. A local certificate would not seem good so he arranges one from a different place.

5. The section where Dasrao, Satish, Hema and Kaka all talk raises a lot of issues and reveals the characters of all. Kaka is keen on a Bodh Vihara; Dasrao looks for practical solutions—escape routes be it for his daughters or for others Satish is a man in touch with all sections of society and Hema has an overview of all.

6. The last section is about Arjun and his taking the law into his own hands to occupy the houses, built for flood victims.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clank</td>
<td>The sound of metal against metal; Something heavy falling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hey</td>
<td>You want to catch someone’s attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aha</td>
<td>Shows you are listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh! Well!</td>
<td>Expresses triumph, surprise mockery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ow! Ouch</td>
<td>Expresses physical pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha, Ha!</td>
<td>Expresses laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phew!</td>
<td>Expresses relief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crash</td>
<td>A loud smashing noise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plop</td>
<td>Sound of drops of water falling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmn</td>
<td>Expresses resignation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>