JANUARY NIGHT

Prem Chand



Dhanpat Rai *(1880 - 1936), born in Varanasi on July 31, 1880 was a prolific writer of both Hindi and Urdu. He changed his pen name to "Premchand" after his book "Soje Vatan" was banned by the then British government. He wrote about the realities of life and the various problems faced by the common man in a turbulent society. He focussed chiefly on rural India and the exploitation faced by a common villager at the hands of priests, landlords, loan sharks, etc. He also emphasised on the unity of Hindus and Muslims. Some of his well-known works are* **Godaan, Gaban, Karmabhoomi, Pratigya,** etc.

A. Answer these questions orally :

1. ***Have you ever heard stories which deal with the life of animals or birds? Who told you those stories and what lesson did you learn from them?***

PART - I

HALKU came in and said to his wife, 'The landlord's come! Get the rupees you set aside, I'll give him the money and somehow or other we'll get along without it.'

Munni had been sweeping. She turned around and said, 'But there's only three rupees. If you give them to him where's the blanket going to come from? How are you going to get through these January nights in the fields? Tell him we'll pay him after the harvest , not right now.'

For a moment Halku stood hesitating. January was on top of them. Without a blanket he couldn't possibly sleep in the fields at night. But the

landlord wouldn't be put off, he'd threaten and insult him, so what did it matter if they died in the cold weather as long as they could just take care of his calamity right now? As he thought this he moved his heavy body (he gave the lie to his name) and came close to his wife. Trying to coax her he said, 'Come on give it to me. I'll figure out some other plan.'

Munni drew away from him. Her eyes angry, she said, 'You've already tried "some other plan". You just, tell me what other plan can be found. Is somebody going to give you a blanket? God knows how many debts are always left over that we can't pay off. What I say is, give-up this tenant farming! The work's killing you, whatever you harvest goes to pay up the arrears, so why not finish with it? Were we born just to keep paying off debts? Earn some money for your own belly, give up that kind of farming. I won't give you the money, won't.

Sadly ! Halku said, 'Then, I'll have to put up with his abuse.' Losing her temper, Munni said, 'Why should he abuse you — is this his kingdom?'

But as she said it her brows relaxed from the frown. The bitter truth in Halku's word came charging at her like a wild beast.

She went to the niche in the wall, took out the rupees and handed them over to Halku. Then she said, 'Give up farming this time. If you work as a hired labourer you'll at least get enough food to eat from it. No one will be yelling insults at you. Fine work, farming someone else's land! Whatever you earn you throw back into it and get insulted in the bargain.'

Halku took the money and went outside looking as though he were tearing his heart out and giving it away. He'd saved the rupees from his work, paisa by paisa, for his blanket. Today he was going to throw it away. With every step his head sank lower under the burden of his poverty.

PART - II

A dark January night. In the sky even the stars seemed to be shivering. At the edge of his field, underneath a shelter of cane leaves, Halku lay on a bamboo cot wrapped up in his old burlap shawl, shivering. Underneath the cot, his friend Jabra, the dog, was whimpering with his muzzle pressed into his belly. Neither of them was able to sleep.

Halku curled up drawing his knees close against his chin and said, 'Cold, Jabra? Didn't I tell you, in the house you could lie in the paddy straw? So why did you come out here? Now you'll have to bear the cold, there's nothing I can do. You thought I was coming out here to eat puris and sweets and you came running on ahead of me. Now you can moan all you want.'

Jabra wagged his tail without getting up, protracted his whimpering into a long yawn, and was silent. Perhaps in his canine wisdom he guessed that his whimpering was keeping his master awake.

Halku reached out his hand and patted Jabra's cold back. 'From tomorrow on stop coming with me or the cold will get you. This bitch of a west wind comes from nobody knows where bringing the icy cold with it. Let me. get up and fill my pipe. I've smoked eight pipefuls already but we'll get through the night somehow. This is the reward you get for farming. Some lucky fellows are lying in houses where if the cold comes after them the heat just drives it away. A good thick quilt, warm covers, a blanket! Just let the winter cold try to get them! Fortune's arranged everything very well. While we do the hard work somebody else gets the joy of it.'

He got up, took some embers from the pit and filled his pipe. Jabra got up too.

Smoking, Halku said. 'If you smoke the cold's just as bad, but at least you feel a little better.'

Jabra looked at him with eyes overflowing with love.

'You have to put up with just one more cold night. Tomorrow I'll spread some straw. When you bed down in that you won't feel the cold.'

Jabra put his paws on Halku's knees and brought his muzzle close. Halku felt his warm breath.

After he finished smoking, Halku lay down and made up his mind that however things were he would sleep now. But in only one minute his heart began to pound. He turned from side to side, but like some kind of witch the cold weather continued to torment him.

When he could no longer bear it he gently picked Jabra up and patting his head, got him to fall asleep in his lap. The dog's body gave off some kind of stink but Halku, hugging him tight, experienced a happiness he hadn't felt for months. Jabra probably thought he was in heaven, and in Halku's innocent heart there was no resentment of his smell. He embraced him with the very same affection he would have felt for a brother or a friend. He was not crippled by the poverty which had reduced him to these straits at present. Rather it was as though this singular friendship had opened all the doors to his heart and brilliantly illuminated every atom of it.

Suddenly Jabra picked up the noise of some animal. This special intimacy had produced a new alertness in him that disdained the onslaught of the wind. Springing up, he ran out of the shelter and began to bark. Halku whistled and called him several times. But Jabra would not come back to him. He went on barking while he ran around through the furrows of the field. He would come back for a moment, then dash off again at once. The sense of duty had taken possession of him as though it were desire.

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PART - III

Another hour passed. The night fanned up the cold with the wind. Halku sat up and bringing both knees tight against his chest hid his face between them, but the cold was just as biting. It seemed as though all his blood had frozen, that ice rather than blood filled his veins. He leaned back to look at the skies. How much of the night was still left! The Dipper had not yet climbed half the sky. By the time it was overhead it would probably be morning. Night was not even three hours gone.

Only a stone's throw from Halku's field there was a mango grove. The leaves had begun to fall and they were heaped in the grove. Halku thought, 'If I go and get a pile of leaves I can make a fire of them and keep warm. If anybody sees me gathering the leaves in the dead of night they'll think it's a ghost. Of course there's a chance some animals hidden in my field waiting, but I can't stand sitting here any longer.'

He ripped up some stalks from a nearby field, made a broom out of them and picking up a lighted cowdung cake went toward the grove. Jabra watched him coming and ran to him wagging his tail.

Halku said, 'I couldn't stand it any more, Jabra. Come along, let's go into the orchard and gather leaves to warm up with. When we're toasted we'll come back and sleep. The night's still far from over.'

Jabra barked his agreement and trotted on toward the orchard. Under the trees it was pitch dark and in the darkness the bitter wind blew, buffeting the leaves, and drops of dew dripped from the branches.

Suddenly a gust carried the scent of henna blossoms to him. Where's that sweet smell coming from, Jabra? Or can't your nose make out anything as fragrant as this?'

Jabra had found a bone lying somewhere and he was chewing on it. Halku set his fire down on the ground and began to gather the leaves. His hands were frozen, his bare feet numb. But he'd piled up a regular mountain of the leaves and by making a fire out of them he'd burn away the cold.

In a little while the fire was burning merrily. The flames leapt upward licking at the overhanging branches. In the flickering light the immense trees of the grove looked as though they were carrying the vast darkness on their heads. In the blissful sea of darkness the firelight seemed to pitch and toss like a boat.

Halku sat before the fire and let it warm him. After a while he took off his shawl and tucked it behind him, then he spread out both feet as though challenging the cold to do its worst. Victorious over the immense power of the winter, he could not repress his pride in his triumph.

He said to Jabra, 'Well, Jabra, you're not cold now, are you?' Jabra barked as though to say, 'How could I feel cold now?'

'We should have thought of this plan before, then we'd never have become so chilled.' Jabra wagged his tail. 'Fine, now what do you say we jump over the fire? Let's see how we manage it. But if you get scorched I've got no medicine for you.'

Jabra looked fearfully at the fire.

''We mustn't tell Munni tomorrow or there'll be a row.'

With that he jumped up and cleared the fire in one leap. He got his legs singed but he didn't care. Jabra ran around the fire and came up to him. Halku said,'Go on, no more of this, jump over the fire! He leaped again and came back to the other side.

PART - IV

The leaves were all burned up. Darkness covered the orchard again. Under the ashes a few embers smouldered and when a gust of wind blew over them they stirred up briefly, then flickered out again.

Halku wrapped himself up in his shawl again and sat by the warm ashes humming a tune. The fire had warmed him through but as the cold began to spread he felt drowsy.

Jabra gave a loud bark and ran toward the field. Halku realised that this meant a pack of wild animals had probably broken into the field. They might be nilgai. He distinctly heard the noise of their moving around. Then it seemed to him they must be grazing; he began to hear the sound of nibbling.

He thought, 'No, with Jabra around no animal can get into the field, he'd rip it to shreds. I must have been mistaken. Now there's no sound at all. How could I have been mistaken?'

He shouted, 'Jabra! Jabra!'

Jabra went on barking, and did not come to him.

Then again there was the sound of munching and crunching in the field. He could not have been mistaken this time. It really hurt to think about getting up from where he was. It was so comfortable there that it seemed intolerable to go to the field in this cold and chase after animals. He didn't stir.

He shouted at the top of his lungs, 'Hillo! Hillo! Hillo!'

Jabra started barking again. There were animals eating his field just when the crop was ready. What a fine crop it was! And these cursed animals were destroying it. With a firm resolve he got up and took a few

steps. But, suddenly a blast of wind pierced him with a sting like a scorpion's so that he went back and sat again by the extinguished fire and stirred up the ashes to warm his chilled body. Jabra was barking his lungs out, the nilgai were devastating his field and Halku went on sitting peacefully near the warm ashes. His drowsiness held him motionless as though with ropes. Wrapped in his shawl he fell asleep on the warmed ground near the ashes.

When he woke in the morning the sun was high and Munni was saying, 'Do you think you're going to sleep all day? You came out here and had a fine time while the whole field was being flattened!'

Halku got up and said, 'Then you've just come from the field?'
'Yes, it's all ruined. And you could sleep like that! Why did you bother to put up the shelter anyway?'

Halku sought an excuse. 'I nearly died and just managed to get through the night and you worry about your crop. I had such a pain in my belly I can't describe it.'

Then the two of them walked to the edge of their land. He looked: the whole field had been trampled and Jabra was stretched out underneath the shelter as though he were dead.

They continued to stare at the ruined field. Munni's face was shadowed with grief but Halku was content.

Munni said, 'Now you'll have to hire yourself out to earn some money to pay off the rent and taxes.'

With a contented smile Halku said, 'But I won't have to sleep nights out here in the cold.'

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

calamity (n) : great, distress, disaster
tenant (n) : one who pays rent for the use of land, building etc.

muzzle (n) : the nose and the mouth of an animal
whimper (v) : moan, whine
torment (n) : extreme mental suffering
furrows (n) : long narrow cut in the ground
cripple (n) : damage, to harm, lame person
stalk (n) : the stem of a plant
trot (n) verb : to talk with quicker
beast (n) : an animal
coax (v) : talking in kind and gentle way
blanket (n) : a large cover, made of wool
pierced (v) : affecting you very strongly, causing pain
drowsiness (n) (abstract Noun) : state of being sleepy.
flattened (v) : to be destroyed
niche (n) : small hallow place on the wall

Exercises

Let's Discuss

1. Suppose you are Munni, the land lord comes to your house and asks you to pay the rent. What will you do then?
2. Animals also possess the ability to understand human feelings. Elaborate this statement keeping in view the role of Jabra in the story.
3. Halku didn't go to the field even when he knew that animals were devouring the crops. Had you been there what would you have done?
4. How many characters are there in the story? Who (m) do you like most? Give reason for your choice.
5. Give the main idea of the story.

* * *

ALLERGY

Dr. Rana S.P. Singh



Dr. Rana S.P. Singh, born on 23 January 1976 in Machhagar Lachiram (Hathua) village in Gopalganj district, is a reputed physican who has specialsed on 'Allergy'. He has written a number of articles on healthcare which have found favour of publication in leading newspapers as well as medical journals. Third son of a police Inspector, Mr. Ramdhyan Singh, Dr. Rana S.P. Singh has several degrees to his credit, such as MBBS, MD (PMCH, Patna) and D.A., R.C.G.P. (London). He has read a number of papers in different national seminars, the recent being a seminar on 'epilepsy' organised by Department of Neurology, Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Science, Patna. The present article contains useful tips on how to avoid allergy.

A. Answer these questions orally :

1. **Have you noticed that certain food items or the change of weather affect you adversely ? What happpens to you when you take such food items or find yourself in such a weather ?**

ALLERGY

One morning Prem Shankar woke up with an itching sensation of pain all over his body. He could not understand what was the problem with him. He went to a clinic. The doctor examined him and assured him that he would be O.K. in a few days. 'It's just an instance of allergy', he observed. Prem wanted to know what allergy is. So, the Doctor explained:

Allergy, you can say, is a malfunction of the human immune system causing a violent reaction against normally harmless substances in our natural environment. (You may call such substances "allergens"). The reaction creates an inflammation which, in turn, can lead to a variety of symptoms such as hay fever, eczema, asthma and other conditions popularly referred to as allergies.

There are genetic and environment risk factors. To develop allergic symptoms, one must first be exposed to the specific allergens for some time to build up the allergic sensitivity, and then once more to trigger the allergic reaction. Environmental factors, such as smoking and pollution, will also add to the risk.

PLASSOL PATNA

Initially, allergy often appears as seemingly benign condition, such as hay fever during the pollen season. In fact, many people gradually build up on allergic condition over many years before experiencing, any symptoms whatsoever. However, for some unfortunate people, a certain food or drug or an ordinary insect bite can result in sudden, life-threatening anaphylactic shock. Furthermore, of those allergies which start as eczema or gastrointestinal problems, many evolve into asthma, frequently involving respiratory symptoms such as hyper-reactivity and obstruction of the airways. This direct path of development is widely referred to as "the allergy march".

Our basic understanding of allergy has evolved from the discovery in 1967 of a previously unknown antibody, Immunoglobulin E or "IgE", by scientists in Uppsala and Baltimore. The most significant property of IgE antibodies is that they can be specific for hundreds of different allergens. Continued research has significantly advanced our knowledge regarding, for example, the interaction between IgE and inflammatory cells.

For effective asthma medication, one needs to look beyond the obvious symptoms. Anti- histamines, for example, may provide temporary relief by masking the symptoms, but have virtually no effect on the underlying inflammation. Other pharmaceuticals, known to be effective for seasonal allergy, must be administered weeks before exposure. The clinical use of inhaled steroids is currently gaining ground due to their anti-inflammatory effects, although overtreatment may have serious side-effects. To ensure the lowest effective dosage throughout the treatment, the laboratory can periodically monitor the occurence in serum of ECP released from inflammatory cells. Eosinophilic Cationic Protein is a protein generated in certain white blood cells actively engaged in the immune defense system. Using a diagnostic test, developed by Phadia, ECP can be detected in body fluids.

Treatment of Allergies

There are three general approaches to the treatment of allergic diseases such as allergic rhintis: avoidance of the allergen, medication to relieve symptoms and allergy shots.

Suggestions to aovid allergen

- Wear a pollen mask when moving the grass or housecleaning.

- Stay indoors in the morning (when the pollen count is at its highest) and on windy days.
- Read and understand food labels (for people with food allergy).
- Keep windows and doors closed during heavy pollination seasons.
- Rid the home of indoor plants and other sources of mildew.
- Don't allow dander-producing animals in the house.
- Change feather pillows, woollen blankets and clothing to cotton or synthetic materials.
- Enclose mattress, box springs and pillows in plastic barrier cloth.
- Wash sheets, mattress pad and blankets weekly in hot water (at least 130 F).
- Remove carpets and upholstered furniture (drastic measure).
- Use acaricide (a chemical that kills house-dust mites) or a tannic acid solution (solution that neutralises the allergen in mite droppings).

Some measures for those who can afford :

- Use the air conditioner in the house and car.
- Use air filters.
- Use a dehumidifier.

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

Treatment : Clinically, a doctor can perform following procedure to assess and ascertain the severity of the allergic disease and take appropriate measure if the disease is progressing towards the severe complications.

1. Family history and nature of symptoms.
2. Physical examination and investigations.
3. Differential diagnosis between allergic and non-allergic.

A number of studies indicate that early treatment of allergy can change the course of disease progression.

Allergens : Any substance capable of producing allergy. Allergens are of two types; Seasonal Allergens and Perennial Allergens. ***Seasonal Allergens :*** Pollens and outdoor mold spores most frequently cause seasonal allergic rhinitis (sneezing); the most troublesome allergen in North America is ragweed pollen. Tree pollen occurs predominantly in April to May, grass pollen in May to June, and ragweed pollen in August to October. Outdoor mold spores occur in soil, water and rotting matter, and are released into the air when lawns are disturbed by mowing of grass and by raking of leaves. The spores are ubiquitous, stay airborne over long periods, and are most prominent from July through November. ***Perennial Allergens :*** Perennial allergic hinitis is caused by indoor allergens, such as house dust mites, animal dander, cockroaches and indoor mold spores. Dust mites thrive in humidity > 50% and damp conditions within the home encourage the growth of indoor molds.

Hyper-reactivity = Denoting increased response to stimuli

Obstruction = The blocking of iand of an opening.

Allergy = A sensitivity of the body to substances which in themselves are not irritating to the normal or exaggerated susceptibility to various foreign or substances. Allergic conditions include urticaria, shock, bronchial asthma, allergic rhinitis and eczema etc.

Immunoglobulin - A type of protin acting as an antibody, formed by the lymphocytes and plasma cells–

Inflammatory - Relating to or having an inflammation.

Inflammation - swelling of any part of the body

Hay fever - one form of allergy affecting the nose and the eyes and prevalent in the falls

Genetic - relating to reproduction

Benign - mild, not malignant

Genetic - relating to reproduction

Pollen - the male cells of certain plants

Anaphyctic shock - severe allergic reaction occuring after an injection of substance to which a person is sensitive

Gastrointestinal - relating to stomach and the intestine

Medicine - Drugs taken internally or applied externally

Histamine - A naturally occuring chemical substance in the body tissue which is powerful stimulant of gastric secretion

Pharmaceutical - Relating to the pharmacy or drugs

Inhale - To draw in the air or drug

Immune - Not susecptible to an infection

Mildew - Destructive growth on plan

Exercises

Let's Discuss

1. What are the symptoms that tell you that you are suffering from any allergic disease? What precaution would you take to overcome it ?
2. Which types of common allergic diseases are generally found in children of 0-6 years of age ?
3. What is 'allergy march' ? Explain.
4. Name some particular diseases which are caused due to change of weather. Also, mention its remedial measures.
5. Can allergic reactions be life- threatening ? Name a few such instances of allergy.
6. Suggest a few possible ways to avoid allergy.

Let's Do

1. Make a chart paper presentation of 'do's' and 'don'ts' on how to lead a healthy life.
2. Enact a Role play. One of you act as a doctor and the other as a patient suffering from cough and cold.
3. Make a list of some common allergies which people suffer. Also, suggest remedies.
4. Suggest some preventive measures to be taken by people who suffer from allergy.

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THE BET

Anton Checkov



The *Russian author Anton Checkov was born on January 17, 1860 in Taganrog in South Russia on the Azov Sea. He is among the major short-story writers and drammatists in history. He wrote seventeen plays and almost six hundred stories.*

A. Think Before you read

Imagine you are a young lawyer and you take a bet with a friend who is a rich banker. The bet is that if you stay in a lonely cell in a prison for fifteen long years, you will win two million roubles. Will you accept the bet? Can you live all by yourself for fifteen years? If you succeed, would the banker be willing to part with two million roubles? Let's read the story and find out.

It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was pacing from corner to corner of his study, recalling to his mind the party he gave in the autumn fifteen years before. The guests, among them not a few scholars and journalists, for the most part disapproved of capital punishment. Some of them thought that capital punishment should be replaced universally by life imprisonment.

"I don't agree with you," said the host. "I myself have experienced neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment, but in my opinion capital punishment is more moral- and more humane than imprisonment.

'Execution kills instantly, life imprisonment kills by degrees.'

"They're both equally immoral," remarked one of the guests, "because their purpose is the same, to take away life. The state is not God. It has no right to take away that which it cannot give back, if it should so desire.

Among the company was a lawyer, a young man of about twenty-five. On being asked his opinion, he said.

"Capital punishment and life imprisonment are equally immoral: but if 1 were offered the choice between them, would certainly choose the second. It's better to live somehow than not to live at all."

There ensued a lively discussion. The banker, who was then younger and more nervous, suddenly lost his temper, banged his fist on the table, and turning to the young lawyer, cried out:

"It's a lie. I bet you two millions, you wouldn't stick in a cell even for five years."

"If you mean it seriously," replied the lawyer, "then I bet I'll stay not five but fifteen."

"Fifteen ! Done !" cried the banker. "Gentlemen, I stake two millions."

"Agreed. You stake two millions, I my freedom," said the lawyer.

So this wild, ridiculous bet came to pass. The banker, who at the time had too many millions to count was beside himself with rapture. During supper he said to the lawyer jokingly:

"Come to your senses, young man, before it's too late. Two millions are nothing to me, but you stand to lose three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you'll never stick it out any longer. Don't forget either, you unhappy man, that voluntary confinement is much heavier than enforced imprisonment."

heavier than enforced imprisonment."

And now the banker, pacing from corner to corner, recalled all this and asked himself:

Why did I make this bet ? What's the good ? The lawyer loses fifteen years of his life and I throw away two millions. On my part, it was the caprice of a well-fed man; on the *lawyer's, pure greed of gold.*

He recollected further what happened after the evening party. It was decided that the lawyer must undergo his imprisonment under the strictest observation in a garden wing of the banker's house. It was agreed that during the period he would be deprived of the right to cross the threshold, to see living people, to hear human voices, and to receive letters and newspapers. He was permitted to have a musical instrument, to read books, to write letters, to drink wine and smoke tobacco. By the agreement he could communicate, but only in silence, with the outside world through a little window specially constructed for this purpose. Everything necessary, books, music, wine, he could receive in any quantity by sending a note through the window. The agreement provided for all the minutest details, which made the confinement strictly solitary, and it obliged the lawyer to remain exactly fifteen years from twelve o'clock of November 14, 1870, to twelve o'clock of November 14, 1885. The least attempt on his part to violate the conditions, to escape if only for two minutes before the time, freed the banker from the obligation to pay him the two millions.

During the first year of imprisonment, the lawyer, as far as it was possible to judge from his short notes, suffered terribly from loneliness and boredom. From his wing day and night came the sound of the piano. He rejected wine and tobacco.

During the first year the lawyer was sent books of a light character;

novels with a complicated love interest, stories of crime and fantasy, comedies, and so on.

In the second year the piano was heard no longer and the lawyer asked only for classics. In the fifth year, music was heard again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him said that during the whole of that year he was only eating, drinking, and lying on his bed. He yawned often and talked angrily to himself. Books he did not read. Sometimes at nights he would sit down to write. He would write for a long time and tear it all up in the morning. More than once he was heard to weep.

In the second half of the sixth year, the prisoner began zealously to study languages, philosophy, and history. He fell on these subjects so hungrily that the banker hardly had time to get books enough for him. In the space of four years about six hundred volumes were bought at his request.

Later on, after the tenth year, the lawyer sat immovable before his table and read only the New Testament. The banker found it strange that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred erudite volumes should have spent nearly a year in reading one book, easy to understand and by no means thick. The New Testament was then replaced by the history of religions and theology.

During the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an extraordinary amount, quite haphazardly. Now he would apply himself to the natural sciences, then he would read Byron or Shakespeare. Notes used to come from him in which he asked to be sent at the same time a book on chemistry, a textbook of medicine, a novel and some treatise on philosophy or theology. He read as though he were swimming in the sea among broken pieces of wreckage and in his desire to save his life was eagerly grasping one piece after another.

The banker recalled all this, and thought: Tomorrow at twelve o'clock he receives his freedom. Under the agreement, I shall have to pay him two millions. If I pay, it's all over with me. I am ruined forever....

Fifteen years before, he had too many millions to count, but now he was afraid to ask himself which he had more of, money or debts. Now he was an ordinary banker, trembling at every rise and fall in the market.

"That cursed bet," murmured the old man clutching his head in despair ... "Why didn't the man die? He's only forty years old. He will take away my last farthing, marry, enjoy life, and I will look on like an envious beggar and hear the same words from him every day: 'I'm obliged to you for the happiness of my life. Let me help you.' No, it's too much! The only escape from bankruptcy and disgrace is that the man should die."

The clock had just struck three. The banker was listening. In the house everyone was asleep, and one could hear only the frozen trees whining outside the windows. Trying to make sound, he took out of his safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house. The garden was dark and cold. It was raining. A damp, penetrating wind howled in the garden and gave the trees no rest.

Approaching the garden wing, he called the watchman twice. There was no answer. Evidently the watchman had taken shelter from the bad weather and was now asleep somewhere in the kitchen or the greenhouse.

If I have the courage to fulfil my intention, thought the old man, the suspicion will fall on the watchman first of all.

In the darkness he groped for the steps and the door and entered the hall of the garden wing, then poked his way into a narrow passage

and struck a match. Not a soul was there. Someone's bed, with no bedclothes on it, stood there, and an iron stove loomed dark in the corner. The seals on the door that led into the prisoner's room were unbroken.

When the match went out, the old man, trembling from agitation, peeped into the little window.

In the prisoner's room a candle was burning dimly. The prisoner himself sat by the table. Only his back, the hair on his head, and his hands were visible. Open books were strewn about on the table, the two chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner never once stirred. Fifteen-years' confinement had taught him to sit motionless. The banker tapped on the window with his finger, but the prisoner made no movement in reply. Then the banker cautiously tore the seals from the door and put the key into the lock.The rusty lock gave a hoarse groan and the door creaked. The banker expected instantly to hear a cry of surprise and the sound of steps. Three minutes passed and it was as quiet inside as it had been before. He made up his mind to enter.

Before the table sat a man, unlike an ordinary human being. It was a skeleton, with tight-drawn skin, with long curly hair like a woman's, and a shaggy beard. The colour of his face was yellow, of an earthy shade; the cheeks were sunken, the back long and narrow and the hand upon which leaned his hairly head was so lean and shinny that it was painful to look upon. His hair was already silvering with gray, and no one would have believed that he was only forty years old. On the table, before his bended head, lay a sheet of paper on which something was written in a tiny hand.

Poor devil, thought the banker, he's asleep and probably seeing millions in his dreams. I have only to take and throw this half-dead thing on the bed, smother him with the pillow, and the most careful examination

moment will find no trace of unnatural death. But, first, let us read what he has written here.

The banker took the sheet from the table and read:

"Tomorrow at twelve o'clock midnight I shall obtain my freedom and the right to mix with people. But before I leave this room and see the sun I think it necessary to say a few words to you. On my own clear conscience and before God who sees me I declare to you that I despise freedom, life, health, and all that your books call the blessings of the world"

"For fifteen years I have studied earthly life. True, I saw neither the earth nor the people, but in your books I drank fragrant wine, sang songs, hunted deer and wild boar in the forests, loved women..."

"Your books gave me wisdom. Human thought created in the centuries is compressed in my skull. I know that I am cleverer than you all."

"And I despise your books,despise all wordly blessings and wisdom. Everything is visionary. Though you be proud and wise and beautiful, yet death will wipe you from the face of the earth like the mice underground; and your posterity, your history, and the immortality of your men of genius will be burnt down together with the globe."

"That I may show you in deed my contempt for that by which you live, I waive the two millions of which I once dreamed as of paradise, and which I now despise. That I may deprive myself of my right to them. I shall come out from here five minutes before the stipulated term, and thus shall violate the agreement."

When he had read, the banker put the sheet on the table, kissed the head of the strange man, and began to weep. He went out of the wing. Never at any time, had he felt such contempt for himself as now. Coming

home, he lay down on his bed, but tears kept him a long time from sleeping....

The next morning the poor watchman came running to him and told him that they had seen the man who lived in the wing climb through the window into the garden. He had gone to the gate and disappeared. The banker instantly went with his servants to the wing and established the escape of his prisoner. To avoid unnecessary rumours he took the paper from the table and, on his return, locked it in his safe.

Exercises

Let's Answer

1. What were the terms and conditions of the bet? Do you think them proper?
2. Why was the banker afraid of honouring the bet?
3. What did the banker do to kill the lawyer?
4. What did the banker do to know that the lawyer had escaped? Why did he weep to read the notes of the lawyer?

Let's Discuss

1. Is betting a good habit?
2. Is capital punishment justified?

***

QUALITY

John Galsworthy



***John Galsworthy** (1867-1933), educated at Horrow, began to write at the age of twenty-eight for his own amusement. He considered **The Island Pharisees** (1904) was his first important work. As a novelist Galsworthy is chiefly known for his **The Forsyte Saga**. He wrote a considerable number of novels, short stories, and plays. His works often deal with specific social grievances such as the double standard of justice as applied to the upper and lower classes.*

A. Think Before you read

Can a shoemaker be called an artist? Yes, if he has the same skill and pride in his trade as any other artist, and the same respect for it too. Mr. Gessler, a German shoemaker settled in London, is a perfect artist. Read this story and see how he devotes his life to his art.

I knew him from the days of my extreme youth, because he made my father's boots; inhabiting with his elder brother two little shops let into one, in a small by-street,now no more, but then most fashionably placed in the West End.'[1]

The shop had a certain quiet distinction. There was no sign upon its face other than his own name of Gessler Brothers; and in the window a few pairs of boots. He made only what was ordered, and it seemed so

inconceivable that only what he made could ever have failed to fit. I was promoted to him at the age of fourteen. To make boots—such boots as he made—seemed to me then, and still seems to me, mysterious and wonderful.

I remember well my shy remarks one day, while stretching out to him my youthful foot. "Isn't it awfully hard to do, Mr Gessler?" And his answer, given with a sudden smile from out of the redness of his beard: "Id is an Ardt!"[2]

It was not possible to go to him very often—his boots lasted terribly, having something beyond the temporary—some, as it were, essence of boot stitched into them.

One went in, not as into most shops, in the mood of "Please serve me and let me go!" but restfully, as one enters a church, and sitting on the single wooden chair, waited—for there was never anybody there. Soon, over the top edge of that sort of well—rather dark and smelling soothingly of leather—which formed the shop, there would be seen his face, or that of his elder brother, peering down. A guttural[3] sound, and the tip-tap of his slippers beating the narrow wooden stairs and he would stand before one without coat, a little bent, in leather apron, with sleeves turned back, blinking—as if awakened from some dream of boots, or like an owl surprised in daylight and annoyed at this interruption.

And I would say: "How do you do, Mr Gessler? Could you make me a pair of Russian leather boots?"

Without a word he would leave me retiring whence he came, or into the other portion of the shop, and I would continue to rest in the wooden chair inhaling the incense of his trade. Soon he would come back, holding in his thin veined hand a piece of gold-brown leather. With eyes fixed on it he would remark; "What a beautiful biece!.[4] When I too had admired it, he would speak again. "When do you wand dem?"[5] And

I would answer: "Oh! As soon as you conveniently can." And he would say; "Tomorrow fordnighd?"[6] Or if he were his elder brother: "I will ask my brudder."[7]

Then I would murmur; "Thank you! Good morning, Mr Gessler." "Good morning!" he would reply, still looking at the leather in his hand. And as I moved to the door, I would hear the tip-tap of his slippers restoring him up the stairs, to his dream of boots.

I cannot forget that day on which I had occasion to say to him; "Mr. Gessler, that last pair of boots creaked, you know."

He looked at me for a time without replying, as if expecting me to withdraw or qualify the statement, then said; . "Id shouldn'd'ave greaked.[8]

"It did, I'm afraid."

"You god dem wed before dey found demselves.[9] "I don't think so."

"At that he lowered his eyes, as if hunting for memory of those boots and I felt sorry I had mentioned this grave thing."

"Zend dem back," he said; "I will look at dem." [10]

"Zome boods," he continued slowly, "are bad from birdt. If I can do noding wid dem off your bill.[11]

Once (once only) I went absent-mindedly into his shop in a pair of boots bought in an emergency at some large firm. He took my order without showing me any leather and I could feel his eyes penetrating the inferior covering of my foot. At last he said:

"Dose are nod my boods." [12]

The tone was not one of anger, nor of sorrow, not even of comtempt, but there was in it something quiet that froze the blood. He

put his hand down and pressed a finger on the place where the left boot endeavouring to be fashionable, was not quite comfortable.

"Id urds you dere," he said: "Dose big virms ave no self- respect."[13] And then, as if something had given way within him, he spoke long and bitterly. It was the only time I ever heard him discuss the conditions and hardships of his trade.

"Dey get it all," he said," Dey get id by advertisement, nod by work, Dey take id away from us, who lofe our boods.Id gomes to dis - bresently I haf no work. Every year it gets less.You will see. And looking at his lined face I saw things I had never noticed before, bitter things and bitter struggle—and what a lot of grey hairs there seemed suddenly in his red beard !

As best I could, I explained the circumstances of those ill-omened boots. But his face and voice made so deep an impression that during the next few minutes I ordered many pairs. They lasted more terribly than ever. And I was not able conscientiously to go to him for nearly two years.

When at last I went I was surprised to find that outside one of the two little windows of his shop another name was painted, also that of a bootmaker. And it was longer than usual, too, before a face peered down, and the tip-tap of slippers began. At last he stood before me and gazing through those rusty iron spectacles, said: Mr. — , isn'd it?"[15] Ah! Mr. Gessler," I stammered, "but your boots are really too good, you know! See, these are quite decent still !" and I stretched out to him my foot. He looked at it.

"Yes," he said, "people do nod wand good boods, id seems."[16] To get away from his reproachful eyes and voice I hastily remarked "What have you done to your shop?"

He answered quietly: "Id was too exbensif. Do you wand some boods?" [17]

I ordered three pairs, though I had only wanted two, and quickly left.

It was many months before my next visit to his shop. This time it appeared to be his elder brother, handling a piece of leather.

"Well, Mr. Gessler," I said, "how are you?" He came close, and peered at me. "I am breddy well," he said slowly, "but my elder brudder is dead." [18]

And I saw that it was indeed himself — but how aged and wan ! And never before had I heard him mention his brother. Much shocked, I murmured: "Oh ! I am sorry!"

"Yes," he answered, "he was a good man, he made a good bood[19] but he is dead." and he touched the top of his head, where the hair had suddenly gone as thin as it had been on that of his poor brother, to indicate, I suppose, the cause of his death. "Do you wand any boods ?"[20] And he held up the leather in his hand. "Id's a beautiful biece.[21]

I ordered several pairs. It was very long before they came — but they were better than ever. One simply could not wear them out. And soon after that I went abroad.

It was over a year before I was again in London. And the first shop I went to was my old friend's. I had left a man of sixty; I came back to one of seventy-five, pinched and worn, who genuinely, this time, did not at first know me.

"Do you wand any boods?" he said. "I can make dem quickly; id is a slack dime."[22]

I answered: "Please, please! I want boots all around-every kind!"

I had given those boots up when one evening they came. One by one I tried them on. In shape and fit, in finish and quality of leather they were the best he had ever made. I flew downstairs, wrote a cheque and posted it at once with my own hand.

A week later, passing the little street, I thought I would go in and tell him how splendidly the new boots fitted. But when I came to where his shop had been, his name was gone.

I went in very much disturbed. In the shop, there was a young man with an English face.

"Mr Gessler in?" I said.

"No sir," he said. "No, but we can attend to anything with pleasure. We've taken the shop over."

"Yes, yes," I said "but Mr Gessler?"

Oh! he answered, dead, "Dead! But I only received these boots from him last Wednesday week."

"Ah!" he said; "poor old man starved himself." "Good God!"

"Slow -starvation, the doctor called it! You see he went to work in such a way! Would keep the shop on; wouldn't have a soul touch his boots except himself. When he got an order, it took him such a time. People won't wait. He lost everybody. And there he'd sit, going on and on — I will say that for him — not a man in London made a better boot. But look at the competition! He never advertised! Would have the best leather too, and do it all himself. Well there it is. What could you expect with his ideas?"

"But starvation — !"

"That may be a bit flowery, as the saying is — but I know myself he was sitting over his boots day and night, to the very last. You see, I

used to watch him. Never gave himself time to eat; never had a penny in the house. All went in rent and leather. How he lived so long I don't know. He regularly let his fire go out. He was a character. But he made good boots."

"Yes," I said, "he made good boots."

ABDUL SOLUTIONS ABSOL PATNA

Exercises

Let's Discuss

1. Who was Mr. Gessler? How did the author know him?
2. What was the author's opinion about Mr. Gessler as a shoe maker?
3. The work style of Mr. Gessler was unique. Explain.
4. Mr. Gessler was not successful in his trade. Why?
5. Big firms are selling their products and making hold on the market through advertisement, offers and big shows. Low scaled and skilled artists are being out of trade. How? Give your own opinion with reference to the lesson "Quality".
6. Suppose, you are one of the customers of Mr. Gessler's shop. You know how Mr. Gessler struggles for the existence of his trade. What will you suggest to protect the trade from the onslaught of big firms?
7. The story of Mr Gessler is the story of the struggle of an individual artist against industrialisation that threatens to devour individual artist and trades man. Explain.

Let's Do

Do a project work on the trade, economic condition and social status of low scaled shoe makers in your locality.

End notes:

1. West End: A fashionable section in the western part of London.
2. It is an art.
3. Harsh and grating.
4. What a beautiful piece!
5. When do you want them?
6. Fortnight.
7. Brother.
8. It should not have cracked.
9. You got them wet before found themselves.
10. Send them back, he said: I will look at them.
11. Some boots are bad from birth. If can do nothing with them off your bill.
12. Those are not my boots.
13. It hurts you there. Those big films have no self respect.
14. They get it all. They get it by advertisement not by work. They take it away from us, who love our boots. It comes to this presently I have no work. Every year it get less. You will see.
15. isn't it ?
16. Yes, people do not want good boots, it seems.
17. It was too expensive. Do you want some boots?
18. I am pretty well, but my elder brother is dead.
19. boot.
20. Do you want any boots ?
21. It's a beautiful piece.
22. Do you want any boots? I can make them quickly. It is a slack time.

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SUN AND MOON

Katherine Mansfield



KATHERINE MANSFIELD (1888-1923) is a writer of short stories. Her stories followed in the foot steps of the Russian writer chekhov. She was an impressionist in her art and sought to portray with objectivity "The significant moment of human relationship." Her stories are marked with a note of sombreness and are characterised by a haunting sense of sadness and sympathy. Her touch was always right and accurate. Her growth was directed towards the intensity of feeling and maturity of vision. From a rather broad and crude satirist she developed into a master of irony. Her stories ***Prelude, To the Bay, The Fly, The Garden Party*** *reflect the subtle Psychology. This story shows the authoress's sensitive perception of subtle feelings and emotions especially of children whose heart and mind, she studied with rare insight.*

A. Work in small groups and discuss:

1. ***Interact with your clasmates and try to be familiar with their names. Now find out how many names are similar to the meaning of the Sun and the Moon.***

SUN AND MOON

Part-I

In afternoon the chairs came, a whole big cart full of little gold ones with their legs in the air. And then the flowers came when you stared down from the balcony at the people carrying them. The flower pots looked like funny, awfully nice hats nodding up the path.

Moon thought they were hats. She said : 'Look. There's a man wearing a palm on his head.' But she never knew the difference between real things and not real ones.

There was nobody to look after Sun and Moon. Nurse was helping Annie alter mother's dress which was much-too-long-and-tight-under-the-arms and mother was running all over the house and telephoning father to be sure not to forget things. She only had time to say: 'Out of my way, children !'

They kept out of her 'way—at any rate Sun did. He did so hate being sent stumping back to the nursery. It didn't matter about Moon. If she got tangled in people's legs they only threw her up and shook her till she squeaked. But Sun was too heavy for that. He was so heavy that the fat man who came to dinner on Sundays used to say : 'Now, young man, let's try to lift you.' and then he'd put his thumbs under Sun's arms and groan and try and give it up at last saying; 'He's a perfect little ton of bricks.'

Nearly all the furniture was taken out of the dining-room. The big piano was put in a corner and then there came a row of flower-pots and then there came the goldy chairs. That was for the concert. When Sun looked in a white-faced man sat at the piano—not playing, but banging at it and then looking inside. He had a bag of tools on the piano and he had

stuck his hat on a stature on the wall. Sometimes he just started to play and then he jumped up again and looked inside. Sun hoped he wasn't the concert.

But of Course the place to be in was the kitchen. There was a man helping in a cap like a blancmange, and their real cook, Minnie, was all red in the face and laughing. Not cross at all. She gave them each an almond finger and lifted them up on to the flour bin so that they could watch the wonderful things she and the man were making for supper. Cook brought in the things and he put them on dishes and trimmed them. Whole fishes, with their heads and eyes and tails still on, sprinkled with red and green and yellow bits; he made squiggles all over the jellies, he stuck a collar on a ham, and put a very thin sort of fork in it; he doted almonds and tiny round biscuits on the creams. And more and more things kept coming.

'Ah, but you haven't seen the ice pudding,' said Cook. 'Come along.' Why was she being so nice, thought Sun as she gave them each a hand. And they looked into the refrigerator.

Oh! Oh! Oh! It was a little house. It was a little pink house with white snow on the roof and green windows and brown door and stuck in the door there was nut for a handle.

When Sun saw the nut he felt quite tired and had to lean against Cook.

'Let me touch it. Just let me put my finger on the roof,' said Moon, dancing. She always wanted to touch all the food. Sun didn't.

'Now, my girl, look sharp with the table,' said Cook as the housemaid came in.

'It's a picture, Min,' said Nellie. 'Come along and have a look.' So they all went into the dining-room. Sun and Moon were almost lightened.

They wouldn't go up to the table at first, they just stood at the door and made eyes at it

It wasn't real night yet but the blinds were down in the dining-room and the lights turned on—and all the lights were red roses. Red ribbons and bunches of roses tied up the table at the corners. In the middle was a lake with rose petals floating on it. "That's where the ice pudding is to be"—said Cook.

Two silver lions with wings had fruit on their backs, and the salt-cellars were tiny birds drinking out of basins.

'Are people going to eat the food ? Laughed Cook, laughing with Nellie. Moon laughed, too; she always did the same as other people. But Sun didn't want to laugh. Round and round he walked with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he never would have stopped if Nurse hadn't called suddenly.

'Now then, children. It's high time you were washed and dressed.' And they were marched off to the nursery.

While they were being unbuttoned mother looked in with a white thing over her shoulders; she was rubbing stuff off her face.

'I'll ring for them when I want them, Nurse, and then they can just come down and be seen and go back again,' said she.

Sun was undressed first, nearly to his skin and dressed again in a white shirt with red and white daisies speckled on it, breeches with strings at the sides and braces that came over, white socks and red shoes.

'Now you're in your Russian costume,' said Nurse, flattening, down her fringe.

Am I? said Sun.

'Yes. Sit quiet in that chair and watch your little sister.'

Moon took ages. When she had her socks put on, she pretended to fall back on the bed and waved her legs at Nurse as she always did, and every time Nurse, tried to make her curls with a finger and a wet brush she turned round and asked Nurse to show her the brooch or something which stuck out, with fur on it, all white; there was even fluffy stuff on the legs of her drawers. Her shoes were white with big blobs on them.

'There you are, my lamb,' said Nurse. 'And you look like a sweet little cherub or a picture of a powder-puff.' Nurse rushed to the door. 'Ma'am, one moment.'

Mother came in again with half her hair down.'Oh,' she cried. 'What a picture !'

'Isn't she!' said Nurse.

And Moon held out her skirts by the tips and dragged one of her feet. Sun didn't mind people not noticing him—much....

Part-II

After that they played clean tidy games up at the table while Nurse stood at the door and when the carriages began to come and the sound of laughter and voices and soft rustlings came from down below she whispered: 'Now then children, stay where you are.' Moon kept jerking the table-cloth so that it all hung down her side and Sun hadn't any—and then she pretended she didn't do it on purpose.

At last the bell rang. Nurse pounded at them with the hair brush, flattened his fringe, made her bow stand on end and joined their hands together.

'Down you go!' she whispered.

And down they went. Sun did feel silly holding Moon's hand like that but Moon seemed to like it. She swung her arm and the bell on her coral bracelet jingled.

At the drawing-room door stood mother fanning herself with a black fan. The drawing-room was full of sweet smelling, silky, rustling ladies and men in black with funny tails on their coats—like beetles. Father was among them, talking very loud, and rattling something in his pocket.

'What a picture!' cried the ladies. 'Oh, the ducks ! Oh, the lambs! Oh, the sweets! Oh, the pets!'

All the people who couldn't get at Moon kissed Sun, and a skinny old lady with teeth that clicked said: 'Such a serious little poppet,' and rapped him on the head with something hard.

Sun looked to see if the same concert was there, but he was gone. Instead, a fat man with a pink head leaned over the piano talking to a girl who held a violin at her ear.

There was only one man that Sun really liked. He was a little grey man, with long grey whiskers, who walked about by himself. He came up to Sun and rolled his eyes in a very nice way and said:

'Hullo, my lad.' Then he went away. But soon he came back again and said: 'Fond of dogs ?' Sun said: 'Yes.' But then he went away again, and though Sun looked for him everywhere he couldn't find him. He thought perhaps he'd gone outside to fetch in a puppy.

'Goodnight, my precious babies,' said, mother, folding them up in her bare arms. 'Fly up to your little nest.'

Then Moon went and made a silly of herself again. She put up her arms in front of everybody and said: 'My daddy must carry me.'

But they seemed to like it, and Daddy swooped down and picked her up as he always did.

Nurse was in such a hurry to get them to bed that she even interrupted Sun over his prayers and said:

'Get on with them, child, do.' And the moment after they were in bed and in the dark, except for the night-light in its little saucer.

'Are you asleep ?' aked Moon.

'No,' said Sun. 'Are you ?'

'No,' said Moon.

A long while after Sun woke up again. There was a loud, loud noise of clapping from downstairs, like when it rains. He heard Moon turn over.

'Moon, are you awake ?

'Yes, are you ?'

'Yes. Well, let's go and look over the stairs.'

They had just got settled on the top step when the drawing-room door opened and they heard the party cross over the hall into the dining room. Then that door was shut; there was a noise of 'pops' and laughing, then that stopped and Sun saw them all walking round and round the lovely table with their hands behind their backs like he had done.

Round and round they walked, looking and staring. The man with the grey whiskers liked the little house best. When he saw the hut for a handle he rolled his eyes like he did before and said to Sun' : 'Seen the nut ?'

'Don't nod your head like that, Moon.'

'I'm not nodding. It's you.'

'It is not. I never nod my head.'

'O oh, you do. You're nodding it now.'

'I'm not. I'm only showing you how not to do it.'

When they woke up again they could only hear father's voice very loud, and mother, laughing away. Father came out of the dining-room, bounded up the stairs, and nearly fell over them.

'Hullo,' he said 'By Jove, Kitty, come and look at this.'

Mother came out. 'Oh, you naughty children,' said she from the hall.

'Let's have 'em down and give 'em a bone,' said father. Sun had never seen him so jolly.

'No, certainly not,' said mother.

Oh, my daddy, do! Do have us down,' said Moon. 'I'm hanged if I won't,' cried father. 'I won't be bullied. Kitty—way there.' And he caught them up, one under each arm.

Sun thought mother would have been dreadfully cross. But she wasn't. She kept on laughing at father.

'Oh you dreadful boy!' said she. But she didn't mean Sun.

'Come on, kiddies. Come: and have some pickings,' said this jolly father. But Moon stopped a minute. 'Mother ! your dress is right off one side.'

'Is it ?' said mother. And father said 'Yes' and pretended to bite her white shoulder, but she pushed him away.

And so they went back to the beautiful dining-room. But—oh! what had happened. The ribbons and the roses were all pulled untied. The little red table napkins lay on the floor, all the shining plates were dirty and all the glasses winking. The lovely food that the man had trimmed was all thrown about, and there were bones and bits an fruit peels and

shells everywhere. There was even a bottle lying down with stuff coming out of it on to the cloth and nobody stood it up again.

And the little pink house with the snow room and the green windows was broken—broken—half melted away in the centre of the table.

'Come on, Sun,' said father, pretending not to notice. Moon lifted the tip of her pyjama legs and shuffled up to the table and stood on a chair, squeaking away.

'Have a bit of this ice, said father, smashing in some more of the roof.'

Mother took a little plate and held it for him; she put her other arm round his neck.

'Daddy, Daddy,' shrieked Moon. 'The little handle's left. The little nut. Kin I eat it? And she reached across and picked it out of the door and scrunched it up, biting hard and blinking.

'Here, my lad,' said father.

But Sun did not move from the door. Suddenly he put up his head and gave a loud wail.

'I think it's horrid-horrid-horrid!' he sobbed.

"There, you see!' said mother. 'You see!'

'Off with you,' said father, no longer jolly. 'This moment. Off you go!'

And wailing loudly, Sun stumped off to the nursery.

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

stared down (vp) *:* to look into somebody's eyes for a long time until they feel embarassed.

stumping (v) *:* to walk with heavy steps

tangled (v) *:* twisted together

concert *(n)* *:* a public performance of music

blancmange (n) : a sweet dish made with milk

ham (n) : food, pig's meat

petals (n) : delicate coloured part of flower

speckled (adj) : covered with small marks or spots

fringe (n) : front part of hair hanging over forehead

stuff (n) : substance, material, groups of object which unwanted

blobs (n) : a small amount or drop or a small area of colour.

squiggle (n) : lines or dots

swooped (v) : to fly quickly and suddenly downwards

bully (v) : to frighten, to hurt a weak person

snuffled (v) : breathed noisely

squeak (v) : to make a short high sound

Exercises

Let's Discuss

1. Suppose you are Sun. There was a party at your house last night; but you were not allowed to attend it. How did you feel? How did you face such situation?
2. Do you think the young children should also have right to attend the party especially designed for adults. Why not? Give reasons.
3. A young boy is sometimes reprimanded when he interferes while the elders are talking. Have you ever faced such a situation? Write your views or feelings.
4. What message does katherine Mansfield want to give to the readers. Explain.

Let's Do

Make a list of

(a) What do you like to do ?

(b) What do your parents not like you to do ?

***

TWO HORIZONS

ABDIEL SOLUTIONS ABSOL PATNA

Binapani Mohanty

Binapani Mohanty was born in 1936. She is a well known Oriya short story writer with several collections. She also won Orissa Sahitya Akademy award and Sahitya Akademy Award for ***Pata Dei,*** *(1990). The present story is translated from Oriya by Jayanta Mahapatra.*

A. Answer these questions

Have you ever felt lonely ? What do you do when you feel lonely ?

MA,

I tried, my utmost to do as you said. Tried to change everything and build new dreams. But I did not get lost simply in my dreams, Ma; I indeed worked hard to fulfil those I had. The many sleepless nights, those innumerable moments which cowered before pain, that I suffered without a thought. And you used to worry just because I laughed my way through life. Was it my own laughter, Ma ? This body is soaked in the consciousness of an ordinary human being of flesh and blood. It was only your existence inside my that made me laugh on, as if I had not a care in this world. Not only did I learn the secret of laughter from you; I also learned the mantra of loving pain and hardship, of loving life. Could you ever imagine how the river of blood flowed on inside when your ever-smiling daughter's lips opened with bursts of laughter ?

Ma, how without a word of protest I shouldered those responsibilities heaped on me. How I managed so well to overcome the grievances of the family - of both parents-in-law, of sister and brother-in-law, and of my husband and children. Nobody can ever tell you that you didn't know how to bring up your daughter! You must have heard praises, I am sure, as to how good a daughter-in-law I was! And how that must have made you happy!

But now, Ma, I don't wish to dream any more. Life has become so mechanical that my shoulders are weary with the loads I bear. I can run no longer, I have lost my quickness. Today I observe you, Ma, and see in spite of your advancing years the undiminished enthusiasm with which you have your early morning bath and worship the sun. Also how your zest for life scatters like abundant pollen everywhere, as you hold on those moments that have gone by in your routine-bound existence! I don't even know what nectar you spill as you circle round like a homing pigeon. I have never noticed your weariness nor have seen you anytime, downcast or sorrowful. Although I am unaware of what you do, secreted inside the puja-room. Not only I, but Father too, I feel certain, know nothing of those silent moments of yours, this moon's unseen face. And this other side is not just a matter of a few minutes. I don't know if you try to measure the depth of your fulfilment during this time, Ma! But afterwards, your fair and bright countenance splashes like sunlight around the house. And I, take my nourishment from it like a tiny, new sapling. Today, even if I don't see you, your face looms up in front of me, all the time. And that is enough.

I remember when I was leaving, you had hugged me and said, "Daughter, don't be afraid. No one can live on in this world in fear. One has to bring out that power from within oneself and face the world. Our ways are dark. It's only the light of one's own eyes which shows

the way. Can one live with another all his life? Still, my soul will always be there beside you, like your own shadow."

Then you patted your moist eyes with your sari and in a sudden gesture took a little vermillion from the parting in your hair to put it in mine. Mothers ordinarily do not do this.

From that day on I tried to give shape to my dreams in plan and action through all these years. Now there seems to be a huge emptiness inside. But why ? There are no great worries at home. Your son-in-law is and has always been a child, the grandchildren are no doubt insensitive, but they are not without reason or worth. I have earned a name in the work I do. And no one has ever pointed a finger at me for anything.

When these successes wave their flags of victory around me, I see no reason for this weariness I feel. Why don't I get the fulfilment you have? Why is there so much of restlessness, so much of emptiness in me? Has the sound of your anklets been lost in the body of the sea's sands or have you sat down somewhere, tired and weary? I don't know if I should look back or not, Ma. I cannot understand why the air outside is choked with suspicion and unbelief!

And I realise, Ma, if I look back you will turn into stone. And if I take a step ahead, I'll place my feet in fathomless deeps. I am unable to see my way. Yet, my whole being scents like the cluster of mango blossoms in a branch of the tree that embraces the earth. A storm seems imminent in the sky.

Can you tell me, Ma, why is it that I am not able to achieve your fulfilment in my consciousness? What have I done, Ma? Why can't I do as you? Why is this weariness of mine?

Your daughter.

The world appeared more blurred to Ma when she read the letter in the already- blurring light of her eyes. Her daughter's ruffled hair falling across her sweat-covered face suddenly danced before her. At times she had seen the glint of a tear in those eyes half hidden by the long hair. She had appeared not to notice it. A clay figure can be set right if the mind is torn apart by little things, not a being of flesh and blood. So she had accepted the ways of life and had remained silent. But what was this? Her daughter was never the one to be exhausted after these many years. What then had brought on this fatigue in her? And where did she herself have the strength, both in mind and body, that she would rush off, getting over a two-day-long journey! Couldn't her daughter understand how difficult it was for her to travel and be near her ?

Ma wiped her glasses and read the letter again. Some concealed pain made her shiver. Time and again she went into the puja-room and shut the door, locking herself in. Her god's face was unchanged, as of everyday. Until today she had told him all now she had to tell her daughter a few things, sitting before him. Ma looked at her own face in the mirror. Nothing there, no beauty at all under the wrinkled skin and bone. None of the sunlight or pollen that radiated earlier from her eyes. She felt weary all of a sudden, seeing herself. She straightened herself and sat down. Had her daughter's weariness entered her somehow? She closed her eyes and looked at her god and saw her daughter's face float before her. The sweaty face of a child.

Dear Daughter,

I got your letter. I was delighted to receive a long one from you after so long. You don't have the time to come here, and I don't have the strength to come to you even though I have the time. Still, I am there by your side, like your own shadow.

You seem a little tired, me daughter. This happens. Who does not get tired? I was too, on life's long road. At times I have sat down under a tree, at other times waited in the harsh noonday sun by the road, my skin on fire. Sometimes blinded by sunlight, sometimes walked on fearlessly in the total dark of a moonless night. Laughing or crying. Then, living for a moment during the whole day, to die in the next, and be resurrected again. Do you know who made me fall and made me get up, who killed me and brought me to life again? I was I myself, the I who is only mine; nobody else was there with me. Nor was there anyone to whom I could turn for help at any time that I can remember. How very different the times are, that and this, like between heaven and hell! And so I couldn't have told anyone what I went through. Who would have listened to me?

Once, I remember, I had complained of something before your father. He was getting ready to leave for his office. It was as though he hadn't heard what I had said. When I repeated my words, he had answered gruffly, "I don't forget what I hear once. Is it necessary for you to remind me?" Suddenly how strange, how stern had this face of a man I'd known for years become - a man who usually smiled and was prone to light-hearted banter! It was as if my feet had lost their wings and had come down in unknown deeps. How could I have imagined I'd meet a stranger after so many years? From then on I never said anything to him, nor did I face that stranger again.

Another time, in the midst of some talk, your grandmother reproached your father. She never said anything to me about the dowry I had brought along when I was married; on the other hand, she extolled every virtue of mine. On that occasion, however, I had answered back in anger. Her face tore open in obvious irritation, it seemed as if every visage of motherhood had vanished in a moment. I was amazed,

shocked. The entire world suddenly appeared poor to me. And later, I began to ignore whatever she said, even tried not to go into the meaning of such words when I overheard them.

Have you observed the mimosa plant, my daughter? Seen the millipede of the monsoon months? How it curls itself into a tiny ball when touched? My whole life long I have been that. But now I feel certain of one thing, that all of them could not have gone on without my help. And so, like the new day, I was reborn every morning. I never found the time to look into myself. I wonder whether you have seen much of me, but I have never considered looking carefully at myself.

You speak of being whole, of fulfilment. Is fulfilment something which can be bought? Can it be gifted to someone if he wants to? You still remember, don't you, of the tale of the crocodile befriending a monkey! The more one comes closer to someone, the more one eats into the other. But can one remain conscious and alert at all times? I realise now how my insides must have been eaten up. Or, is it that I have thrown my heart away? Or else why should I be experiencing this vast emptiness after reading your letter?

If you think that I possess this deep sense of fulfilment, then I'd say it is but the simplicity of an innocent child. The companion of my joys and sorrows is only my god who is there before me. I have surrendered myself to him. To him my pain and tears, my losses and agonies.

But you will find no use for the key to my own fulfilment. You have to seek within yourself, find for yourself the key you need. You are knowledgable and intelligent, and you possess the gift of searching for things, with the glittering world before you. Never try to become an innocent child. Your discontent will disappear slowly on its own.

A whole new world lies right before you. That god who kept my own faith alive will certainly keep your path clear for you. But remember, my child, the circle of fulfilment is always limited, while unfulfilment grows on, boundless. I do not know myself how far is the reach of that boundlessness. I believe you can touch the horizon of that infinite. The deeper the measure of unfulfilment, the closer to you will be your fulfilment.

Be well,

Your Ma.

Exercises

Let's Answer

1. Point out the features of the two letters in terms of their format, language and tone.
2. 'It was only your existence inside me that made me laugh on'. Why does the daughter say so? What does she mean by 'laugh on'?
3. Comment on the bond between the mother and her daughter.
4. 'Nobody can ever tell you that you didn't know how to bring up your daughter!' What does 'bring up your daughter' imply here?
5. Sketch the character of the mother. How far does your mother resemble her?
6. Why is the daughter filled with a sense of weariness and emptiness? Have you ever experienced like her?
7. What did the mother feel after going through her daughter's letter?
8. How does the mother analyse the situation? Do you agree with her analysis and the solution that she suggests?
9. What picture of the status of women in the family is represented in "Two Horizons" ? Do you find any trace of generation gap in the

approach to life shown by the mother and her daughter?

Let's Discuss

1. "Circle of fulfilment is always limited, while unfulfilment grows on, boundless."
2. The deeper the measure of unfulfilment, the closer to you will be to your fulfilment.
3. Modern woman versus Traditional woman.

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LOVE DEFILED

ABDIEL SOLUTIONS ABSOL PATNA

By Giridhar Jha



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"If I become an IAS officer, dearie, I'll marry you," I sounded maudlin as I clasped her hand tightly. She flashed her disarmingly endearing smile; put her other hand on mine the gently said with a glint in her eyes, "....and if for some reason, you don't, then I'll marry you."

It was so typical of her-witty to the hilt, understanding to a fault. For eight years, we lived our lives together, becoming in the process emotional anchor for each other. We laughed, we cried, we fought and we invariably kissed and patched up. We were more than platonic lovers, taking things as they came. Separation was the last thing on our minds and we were labelled as the "made-for-each-other" couple whose formal alliance was a foregone conclusion.

Destiny, however, had other ideas. Faced with parental opposition and bellicose kin, I developed cold feet when it came to tying the knot with the girl I had so passionately loved. My early jibes at those who loved and parted when it came to the crunch stared in my face as I cooked up thousand and one excuses to snap my ties with her.

Having had an impartial assessment of my grey cells, coupled with my inability to burn the midnight oil, I had already decided to spare the bureaucracy from myself, falling back upon journalism which my girlfriend always wanted me to pursue.

A beauty who never failed to turn many heads, she was least conscious of her charms which often made me realise that her real beauty was actually not visible to the naked eyes. Her simplicity ran contrary to my proclivity of overdoing things. Tall, boorish and just short of being called an anthropologist's delight, my insecurities made me more voluble about my seemingly non-existent qualities. The louder I talked about my virtues, the faster I made a fool of myself.

Still she was the only one who understood me, overlooked my shortcomings and made me feel confident about myself. For many years, I visualised my life as totally barren without her. She was my life force, my source of inspiration and my alter ego, all rolled into one. Little wonder I felt part of myself being sliced off when I decided to say goodbye.

She was wearing a canary yellow dress, my favourite, when I called her for the last time. With myriad thoughts crowding my mind, I entered the restaurant with trepidation, rehearsing flimsy excuses, adding lachrymose sentimentality to my side of the story — so ingenuously laced with all kinds of mundane reasons, ranging from caste, creed, culture and language to sheer helplessness, my tragic flaw of character and our stormy future.

She heard my cock-and-bull story patiently, never showed any emotions and insisted on footing the bill. "You don't have any complaints, dear?" I asked with moist eyes and choked voice, all affected. She clasped my hand with both hands. "How can I have complaints against a man who has given me so many moments of happiness? I think if you are happy this way, I should not be so mean as not to feel happy for you. Goodbye, and take care."

That was the last I saw of her. I fought shy of inviting her to my wedding and never mentioned about her to my wife. Her dad had been transferred in the meantime and the story of my romance appeared to be part of my cherished memory. My 'life' for eight years seemed dead until a phone call brought back cascades of nostalgic sentiments.

She was on the other side of the line, exactly two years later, inviting me to her wedding reception. I had realised my monumental folly of having let go of her and I resolved to attend her wedding, unescorted by my better-half, of course. As I shook hands with her husband, a handsome IAS officer, at her reception, she flashed her disarmingly endearing smile: "Meet my husband! How strange, he wanted to be a journalist."

I struggled to retain my plastered grin when her hubby told me: "Thanks, but for you I would not have got her. Still, I wonder why on earth did she have to leave a guy like you?"

For a while it looked as though I had lost all reasons to live. Here was a woman who was ditched by me, and yet had no hesitation in not only giving me a clean chit but also telling her husband about her past prior to embarking upon the conjugal life.

For the first time in my life, I realised I was also ugly from within and despite our eight years of togetherness, her goodness had not rubbed off on me in any way.

Exercises

Let's Answer

1. 'It was so typical of her - witty to the hilt, understanding to a fault.' Sketch the character of the girl in the light of this statement.
2. 'The louder I talked about my virtues, the faster I made a fool of myself.' Sketch the character of the narrator in the light of this statement.
3. 'For the first time in my life, I realised I was also ugly from within and despite our eight years of togetherness, her goodness had not rubbed off on me in any way.' What made the narrator feel so?
4. Has the goodness of some one ever made you feel very mean? Explain.
5. Why did the narrator leave the girl he loved so passionately? Was he honest in his relation?

Let's Discuss

1. Live-in relationship is against our social values.
2. One should listen to one's heart rather than anything else.

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वन्दे मातरम्

सुजलां सुफलां मलयजशीतलाम्
शस्य-श्यामलां मातरम्।
वन्दे मातरम्॥
शुभ्र-ज्योत्स्ना-पुलकित-यामिनीम्
फुल्ल-कुसुमित-द्रुमदल-शोभिनीम्
सुहासिनीं, सुमधुरभाषिणीम्
सुखदां, वरदां, मातरम्।
वन्दे मातरम्॥

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राष्ट्र-गान

जन-गण-मन-अधिनायक जय हे,
भारत - भाग्य - विधाता।
पंजाब सिंध गुजरात मराठा,
द्राविड़ - उत्कल - बंग।
विंध्य - हिमाचल - यमुना-गंगा,
उच्छल - जलधि - तरंग।
तव शुभ नामे जागे,
तव शुभ आशिष मागे
गाहे तव जय गाथा।
जन-गण-मंगलदायक जय हे,
भारत - भाग्य - विधाता।
जय हे, जय हे, जय हे,
जय जय जय जय हे।

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