

CONFLUENCE – I

Additional English Text Book
An Anthology of Prose, Poetry and Fiction
For I semester Undergraduate students



Editor
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PRASARANGA
BENGALURU CENTRAL UNIVERSITY
(BCU)
Bengaluru

CONFLUENCE - I: Additional English Textbook for all the I Semester Courses coming under the Faculty of Arts, Commerce and Science of the Bengaluru Central University (BCU) is prepared by the Members of the Textbook Committee, Bengaluru Central University.

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FOREWORD

CONFLUENCE-I, the Additional English Text Book for all the I Semester courses coming under the Faculty of Arts, Commerce and Science, Bengaluru Central University (BCU), has been designed with the dual objective of inducing literary sensibility and developing linguistic skills in students. This is the first Additional English Text Book for Undergraduate students of BCU, Bengaluru, prepared by the Members of the Textbook Committee.

I congratulate the TextBook Committee on its efforts in the preparation of the material, which includes a variety of literary pieces and a language component for honing language skills. I thank the Director of Bengaluru Central University Press and their personnel for bringing out the textbook neatly and on time.

I hope the text will motivate the teachers and the students to make the best use of it and develop literary sensibility as well as linguistic skills.

Prof. S. Japhet

Vice-Chancellor

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PREFACE

The Additional English Course book for I Semester, **CONFLUENCE-I**, introduces undergraduate students to a spectacular kaleidoscope of literary selections that cover a wide range of subjects and issues. These model pieces of writing cast in different genres and forms are meant not only to cultivate literary sensibilities in students but also to sensitize them to social concerns. It is assumed that the thinking practices and pre-reading activities incorporated as part of every lesson would help students interpret literature as a form of cultural expression. The language component is designed to perfect and hone the soft skills of students pertaining to effective verbal expression and communication.

It is hoped that the students would make best use of the present anthology and understand the importance of acquiring fine language skills while engaging with a verbal medium like literature.

I would like to thank the concerned Chairperson and her team of teachers who have put in their time and effort into the realization of this textbook. I thank the Vice Chancellor and Registrar of Bangalore Central University for their consistent support. I also thank the publisher who helped us to bring out the book on time.

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Objectives of the Text Book

Under the auspices of Bengaluru Central University, Confluence - I offers Additional English as a second language to the students coming from various corners of the country and outside. Considering the ethnic and linguistic diversities of the students taking up this paper, the design is to capture multiple sensibilities from different cultures through texts in translation or texts by the regional writers in English.

The objectives of the present syllabus is to

- ◆ introduce the Indian regional writings
- ◆ understand the salient aspects of the study of various regional ethos
- ◆ put forward the need to absorb the diversity of cultures
- ◆ foster and develop a greater holistic perspective of culture, growing out of one's local cocoon
- ◆ sharpen language skills such as reading and writing
- ◆ enhance the right usage of vocabulary

Text Book Committee

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THE ROGUE

- Athulananda Goswamy

Pre-reading activities

- i) *Have a group discussion on 'Poaching of animals is a cruel and heinous act'. What are the various ways in which the animals are being poached and what is the remedy or measure to overcome it?*
- ii) *Prepare a collage on 'Man – Animal Conflict: Causes, Consequences and Solutions'.*
- iii) *Create slogans and captions for protecting animals. Let it become a campaign for 'animal rights'.*

Word spread like wildfire. The *rogue* is coming this way!

Panic gripped the whole village. What should they do? What could they do?

Men gathered in someone's front yard to plan a strategy: There must be enough firewood stacked up in one place; a big fire should be lit at that end; the elephant would appear from that end.

Women were everywhere, like anxious hens before a storm, as they tried to herd their young ones to the safety of their homes. The elders sat looking at the frightened women. Then they shouted. Didn't the women realize that their bamboo and thatch huts were but matchboxes for a wild elephant? One nudge from him would *raze* these to the ground.

A wild elephant has gone mad! It is a big tusker. It was seen coming out of the sanctuary and heading westward. It has not only damaged several houses in its frenzied march but has killed some five or six people. News had already reached the village. A bride trampled to death in one village, a couple in another. A peasant has been killed on his way to the field. An old man, returning one evening from the weekly market was kicked around like a football. Who knows how many houses have been destroyed?

The Government too has been aroused. On the advice of the local authorities they have issued a public notification declaring the elephant a rogue which must be caught and killed. They have announced an award. But the villagers are not interested in administrative details.

Has the rogue been killed? No?

They say that it is coming this way? Forest guards have spotted it?

The dreaded news hits every villager like a bullet. They are hysterical with fear. They forget their meals. Anyway there is nothing to eat. The women have forgotten to cook.

The elephant has gone mad, someone explains. It is all because of a poacher. He gave it chase. The tusks were big. You see. They were too tempting for the ...

Let it be, let it be! What use is this talk? Just tell us- Has it been killed? Can we breathe in peace now? Oh God, send us some kind message in this hour of crisis.

Villages to the east have organized a night watch. Drums, empty tins, even threshing pins were being sounded intermittently. Big oil torches were kept ready. Fire frightens an elephant.

This village is a lonely one. It's not far from a forest. To the north is the big river. A few hillocks to the south, mounds really. The forests provide sustenance for several households. And though it is unlawful these days, they fell trees on the sly and make charcoal. They burn the logs in a shallow pit inside the forest itself. The task is tough and demands much strength, stamina.

Gajala has been fretting for the last two days. He had prepared a full pit and set it on fire. It took him an entire day to fell the chosen trees, cut it to the measured pieces, stacked them in the proper way. Then he had had to cover the pit with a thick mat of grass and twigs and mud on the outside before he could ignite it. He left for the night, deciding to come back early next morning to repair any cracks that might have appeared on the plaster.

When he reached home, everyone was talking about the rogue. Two days have gone by. Galaja couldn't take his mind off the state of the mud plaster; if it has cracked, the pit will have burst into flames. A lesser yield. All his efforts wasted. He yearns to go out there and save his charcoal, but he is not allowed to utter a word. Nor does anyone volunteer to go with him.

Fear is contagious, especially in such places. And Gajala is afraid.

But the charcoal? He expects more than four hundred rupees from the pit. If the plaster gives way, the upper layer will turn to ashes. What will be left for him then?

Two days and still no news about the rogue. Someone says the whole thing was a hoax. But still who would dare prove him right?

Gajala was sure that the rogue, if there was one, had changed its course. Its movements would have been known otherwise. I must go to the charcoal pit, he decided. Today, if the fire was caught properly, the charcoal will be done by now. Two days for it to cool, and it will be ready to bring home to sell. He had already asked two of his friends to help him carry it back.

Immediately after his midday meal, Gajala left for the pit, a little over three kilometres away. The site was at the foot of a big mound near a small brook. If you walk along it, the thin flow of water can take you back to the village. Gajala and his friends used to picnic here sometimes. They cooked their food in tender bamboo joints which gave the food a rich, pleasant aroma.

Gajala had his handy knife with him. He was in a hurry now. The job must be finished soon, and he must return home in time.

He was pleased with the mud plaster. The charcoal burned to his satisfaction, he walked around the pit taking one last look before turning back.

He had barely gone a hundred paces when he heard the sound. Someone was treading loose mud. Gajala stopped dead in his tracks. It must be the elephant! But where was it? In which direction should he run for his life? He knew the forest inside out, but now he was afraid to choose a path.

The elephant must be watching him from behind those trees. It might rush on him any moment. He stood shivering, rooted to the spot, straining his ears. If only he could hear the elephant's steps, he'd know which way to run. With his heart booming in his ears, he slowly looked around. No sound at all. And then... He saw the trunk of the elephant lying on the ground twisting like a massive python!

The sight cast a spell on him. He could not move. Then he turned and fled. But soon he stopped. Why was the trunk lying on the ground?

Gajala turned around. Yes, there was a trunk on the ground. The elephant seemed to wave it as if calling him nearer.

He walked a few paces towards it.

The elephant was in pain. He was sure of that. The giant animal had fallen into the deep hole that lay hidden under the thicket and could not get out.

How could there have been such a deep pit under the thicket?

Gajala walked a few more steps towards the animal. He stooped and stretched out his hand to touch the trunk. The elephant seemed to have been waiting for just such a gesture. It moved its trunk from side to side. Gajala felt bolder. He went closer. The elephant was calm and docile. Probably exhausted.

It was the rogue alright. Gajala saw the tusks. He hadn't seen any domesticated elephants with tusks such as this! He walked around the hole examining it carefully. No, the elephant would never be able to come out of the hole on its own. It was narrow and deep. The animal filled it completely and, unless helped, it would have to die there.

Impulsively, Gajala turned to run to the village for help. He would ask some of his friends to come help the elephant out of the hole and back into the forest.

But he stopped again. Would it be wise to inform the villagers about the elephant? Would they believe him? Would they help a killer rogue? Would they not rather collect whatever weapons they could lay their hands on and rush here to massacre the animal in turn? Any talk of helping a rogue would be construed as the babbling of an idiot. Gajala looked at the large animal in distress.

No, he would not return to the village. It would mean sure death to the elephant.

He went back and inspected the elephant once more. The elephant raised its trunk to touch Gajala as if imploring for help. Or so Gajala thought. The knave had submitted itself to his mercy.

Gajala gently touched the rogue's trunk. "Wait. I'll do something." The elephant raised its trunk as if in acknowledgement. Gajala cut through the thicket to one side of the hole to reach his coal pit. He had left some branches to dry there. They had been too soft for coal. But he had thought they would serve for firewood. Now he chose a few straight and sturdy pieces out of them. Squatting, he sharpened the ends to make a hoe of each and returned to the hole. He sank the crude hoe at one end and started digging. A sloping path would have to be cut to make a way out for the elephant.

The elephant was apparently puzzled at the young man's lone efforts. But it could somehow understand that he was doing something for its benefit.

As he worked briskly, Gajala started talking with the elephant. "But how could you have fallen into such a hole? Have you lost your senses? You are a creature of the forest and yet..."

The pointed stick got blunt soon. Gajala sharpened the end again, shortening it in the process. A sloping path was yet to take shape. Gajala did not know how long it would take. He did not know how long he had been at work. It was getting dark.

The elephant raised its trunk and rested it on Gajala's hand.

A satisfactory ramp was emerging. Gajala threw away the small stick and took another. He was sweating all over now.

The elephant guessed what the man was trying to do. It tried to heave itself up.

“Patience!” Gajala shouted, raising his stick as if to hit the elephant.

The animal flinched like a child, saving itself from the wrath of its mother. The single eye that Gajala could see closed shut.

Gajala softened.

“Don’t you see I am working? Have I stopped? It’s for you, don’t you realise? You scamp! You’ll come out when I’m done. Wait a little.”

It was a difficult task. Had he gone home for a real hoe and some help, the job could have been finished by now. He felt as if he was trying to scoop out a mountain with a needle. But there was no way out. He would not let the animal be killed by a mob.

His palms turned raw and painful. Besides, it was quite dark now. He stopped the digging, overcome by fatigue. Throwing the stick aside he sat down, put his arms around his knees and rested his head on them.

“You must wait a little,” he told the elephant. “I’m too tired, let me get some rest.” He sank deep into sleep in that uncomfortable position.

Time slipped by. Gajala rocked and almost fell on top of the animal. The elephant nudged him gently, as if trying to push him back into his sitting position.

Gajala woke up with a start. It took him a few minutes to realise where he was. Then he saw the elephant. He grinned apologetically.

“Oh, I didn’t know I had fallen asleep. Come. Let me help you out.” He started digging again.

By the time a ramp had been finally cut, the eastern sky was lighting up. Gajala held out his hand to the elephant.

“Come.”

Gajala took hold of the elephant's outstretched trunk and gave a tug. It was a painful process. The elephant shuffled from one foot to another as it slowly inched forward to level ground. It was early dawn by the time the whole operation was through.

Gajala moved his hand over the elephant's body. "Hmm. There's mud all over you. Wait..."

Then, something compelled him to look closely at the elephant as if it were tame.

"What is this? What happened to you?"

There was a big gash just above the right front leg of the animal. It was putrid and still oozing pus. Gajala touched the gaping wound. The elephant jerked away sharply but did not move. It should have rushed away into the forest the moment it was out of the hole. Was it too exhausted to do so?

Gajala held one of its huge ears and pulled. "Come, I'll wash the wound."

The elephant walked towards the brook on Gajala's command. Gajala walked slowly, muttering to himself. "I know; this is the job of a poacher. They are after your tusks; don't you know that you dumb devil?"

Reaching the brook, Gajala commanded the elephant to remain still while he went on to get dried grass. He took his *gamocha* off his shoulders and dipped it into the stream. Then he wrung it over the wound. "Is this why you ran amok?" Gajala asked as he gently rubbed the rot from the gash with the dried grass. It was evidently painful for the animal, for it gave a few jerks again, but did not protest further.

"These tusks are your death, do you know that? Lucky you weren't killed by that bullet. But tell me, why you got that angry. Should you have mauled so many people? Can you guess what has befallen those families after your murderous march?"

Gajala railed at the mute animal while cleaning the wound.

It was day now. Gajala put his hand on the elephant's trunk and asked it to stand still.

"Wait right here. Let me see if I can get the plants I'm looking for. I will apply them to your wound."

He did not get the poison fern he wanted. Instead he plucked a few *arum* leaves and stems. He crushed them on a stone and applied the pulp to the wound. The elephant jerked again.

"I know, I know it burns. But it'll help. If I could've taken you home, Elder Cheni *kaka* would have healed the wounds in two days flat. He knows the right herbs. But how can I take you there? The whole village would raise hell, and you may do something stupid again, wouldn't you? That's why I'm going to send you right back into the jungle. Never come near us men again. Do you hear me? Never!"

The elephant gave another jerk.

"Stop. Don't you dare vex me!" Gajala snapped.

He stared at the eye he could see above him. The elephant raised its huge ear and placed its trunk on Gajala's back.

Maybe it wanted to remove his hand from the painful wound.

"Ah, calm down, it's for your own good, you dumb one. It's over, see? Now go back. Don't you kill anyone any more. Mind you..."

Gajala never finished his sentence. A gunshot split the silence. The elephant trumpeted, jerking its head up. A tusk hit Gajala's head. It sent him flying to the edge of the brook. He lay still, his head cracked open like a ripe bael fruit. Blood flowed to mix with the meagre water of the brook.

The elephant knelt down on its front legs. Then it rolled to one side, its trunk stretched towards Gajala, stopping only a couple of inches from his lifeless feet.

The hunter, equipped with a licence to kill the rogue, had been tracking the elephant all day. He had hunted cautiously through the night. He was told in the village that a young man had come this way but had not returned. The disappearance could mean only one thing, and none could utter the cursed word.

He and his gun-carrier reached the hillocks only towards dawn. They saw the elephant from the top of a mound. It was well within the range of his Magnum 404.

The single, hard-nosed bullet felled the elephant. Yet, the hunter fired a further confirmatory shot. Then they rushed to the fallen giant in great jubilation. Reaching the spot, the hunter clapped a hand to his mouth and stared at the man lying dead behind the elephant.

“Look!” he said, pointing, “The rogue has killed yet another man. The seventh so far, isn’t it?”

The villagers too heard the shot. At the second shot, reassured that the rogue had indeed been cracked down, they set out in search of Gajala.

Glossary:

- Rogue** : a savage animal, or elephant cast out or withdrawn from the herd; a mischievous person.
- Raze** : to lay level with the ground
- Putrid** : state of rottenness
- Poacher** : an illegal intruder who kills game
- Gamocho** : a soft cotton towel
- Kaka** : uncle

Comprehension I

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1. What is the public notification issued by the government?
2. Who is Gajala? Why has he been fretting for the last two days?
3. What does Gajala encounter when he goes to the forest?
4. What is the first thing that Gajala sees that indicates the presence of the elephant?
5. What did Gajala notice about the elephant once it was out of the pit?
6. What does Gajala apply to the wound of the elephant?
7. What is the conclusion reached by the hunter when he sees Gajala's lifeless body?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

1. What damage does the rogue elephant cause?
2. What precautions did the villagers take against the rogue elephant?
3. Explain the method of making charcoal used by the villagers.
4. Write a short note on how Gajala extricates the elephant from the pit into which it had fallen.

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two

1. Who do you think is the real "rogue" in the story? Justify.
2. Human greed causes nature to revolt. Analyse with reference to the text.

About the author:

Athulananda Goswami (1935-) has been intensively involved in translating English, Oriya and Bengali works into Assamese. He has been closely associated with Kamarupa Anusandhana Samithi, the oldest research institute of the North-East. His novel “Namgharia” won the Assam Sahitya Sabha award and has been serialised both by Doordarshan and the All India Radio. The story “The Rogue” was first published in Assamese as “Bolla Haathi”, in Krantik, Guwahati.

About the text:

In this story, a rogue elephant leaves the forest and terrorises the village surrounding the forest. It is a reflection of human-animal conflicts in the North- East and all over India. It is a commentary on the consequences of human greed on the natural world as well as humans.

THE UNPALATABLE OFFERING

- Vasudhendra

Pre-reading activities:

- i) *What are your views about urban lifestyle?*
- ii) *Compare urban lifestyle with rural lifestyle. Has city life become more materialistic and a rat race against time?*
- iii) *What do you know about sexual minorities?*
- iv) *Do you think they have been recognized and accepted in the society? What might be the insecurities and identity crises they have?*

Mohanaswamy lost his bearings completely when he saw the building. It looked as though it had jetted out from under the earth, splitting the surface wide apart. It was an eight - storey apartment complex, still under construction. Hundreds of people were busy at work. The place was filled with the bustle of labourers, supervisors and machines. Cranes, taller than the building, were lifting and placing loads from one place to another. How did such mammoth machines come strolling here? Mohanaswamy pondered.

There was dust everywhere. Sand, cement, iron rods and bricks lay scattered. A narrow path through that clutter led to a signboard which read, 'Way to the apartment office., Strangely, that board was clean and free of dust.

I shouldn't have come here, Mohanaswamy thought. In fact, until an hour back, he had no plans of going there. Why would the idea of purchasing a house come to Mohanaswamy when he was all set to leave for a foreign country the next evening for four years? Last evening, he had gone to his friend Gururaja's house for a quick farewell. He had hoped that his wife would offer him some home - cooked food he had been craving for long. Gururaja would often ask him to stay back for lunch or dinner. 'No, Guru,

I don't want anything. Why do you take the trouble? I just had my food', Mohanaswamy would say, but Gururaja wouldn't Listen. 'So, what? Have some more,' he would urge him affectionately. This gesture would melt Mohanaswamy's heart and fearing that his voice may choke with tears, he would just nod his head.

At first he used to pity himself for his desperate hankering for food at Gururaja's house. He would say a strict no and then go to a nearby Darshini, the fast - food chain, for dinner. But of late, if someone offered him home-made food, he ate it without leaving a tiny bit on his plate. Sometimes, he even asked for a second serving without hesitation.

Gururaja understood his friend's pain and loneliness all too well. So, without raking up his woes, he would, in his authority as a friend, often ask him to eat at his place. They had been close friends for the last fifteen years, right from their college days. Mohanaswamy took comfort in the fact that he was not physically drawn to this friend. It was a matter of great relief that though he shared a bed with Gururaja on several occasions, he never felt the urge to touch him. Many of Mohanaswamy's past friendships had gone sour in an instant; something he regretted for months after. His efforts to mend these broken bonds failed; he eventually lost all his friends and was shrouded in loneliness. 'How will I live without friends? Oh Krishna, save my friendship with Gururaja. May my evil eye not befall him', he often prayed.

Some young boys had come to Gururaja's house that evening. Clad in dhotis and bright shalyas and wearing naama - all religious identification marks - prominently on their bodies, the boys were evidently busy. Gururaja's mother explained the occasion, "Today is Subraya's Shrashti. I have invited five bachelor boys to hand them the offering of sacred thread and a towel. I have been afflicted with Naga Dosha since birth. It seems my grandfather had killed a pair of cobras while building a house. That curse came upon me. I remained unmarried for many years. Finally, somebody advised me to observe Subraya's Shrashti, and I did. It paid off. I got a proposal, got married and had children.

Since then I have been observing this rite every year without fail.”

Gururaja’s wife served hot dosas to Mohanaswamy. “We won’t get to see him for the next four years. He is going abroad. Serve him more dosas,” Gururaja told her, extending warm hospitality to his friend. Gururaja’s little son Aniketa was sitting on Mohanaswamy’s lap pulling off his spectacles and knocking off the pen, paper chits and mobile phone from his pocket. Mohanaswamy fondly took the child’s tiny hands in his hand and brushed them against his cheeks, enjoying the divine touch. “Anee, don’t trouble uncle,” Gururaja chided, but the child continued playing, with intermittent peals of laughter. Every now and then, he pestered Mohanaswamy for a piece of dosa. But Mohanaswamy did not dare to place even a morsel from his plate into the boy’s mouth. “Go ask your mother. You are a good boy, aren’t you?” he consoled the child.

Suddenly a thought flashed through Gururaja’s mind, “Mohana, You said you won’t be coming back for the next four or five years. Why don’t you buy yourself an apartment before you leave? I’m sure money won’t be a problem. You can even apply for a loan if required. By the time you are back the loan amount would have shrunk considerably. And you would have your own house to live in!” he said.

Mohanaswamy panicked at the idea. He had never thought of buying a house. All his friends had already bought house and held house-warming ceremonies, serving sumptuous meals to guests. Mohanaswamy had attended all these ceremonies, giving gifts and savouring food to his heart’s content.

He remembered Gururaja narrating the difficulties of building a house. He used to take Mohanaswamy along with him for some work or the other like giving documents to contractors, buying lamps from Avenue Road, meeting a lawyer at his office on St Marks Road and so on. But Mohanaswamy never felt the urge to have his own house. It did not seem relevant to him. When his parents were alive, they had raised the matter a couple of times, but after their death, there was no one to bring it up again.

“What will I do with a house? It is meant for family men like you” he said while laughing sheepishly.

“A bachelor or a family man, shelling out large sums of money for house rent in this dammed city is nothing but foolishness. If you have a roof over your head, it gives you so much peace of mind. Don’t go for an independent house. A flat in an apartment complex will serve your needs better. Security and maintenance won’t be a headache. A good complex is coming up about four kilometres away from here and I heard many people in my office booking flats there. You should book one for yourself before going abroad. You can either come back for registration or I will get it done for you”, Gururaja urged him.

Mohanaswamy considered the proposal for a while. If he owned a house he wouldn’t have to put up with pesky landlords, he thought. Of course, landlords had never really troubled him so far. He left for office in the morning only to return in the evening. Moreover, he had a predilection for keeping the house spotlessly clean. He used minimum water, created no nuisance and paid rent promptly every month, agreeing to the ten per cent annual increment. Which landlord wouldn’t like to have such a tenant? Even then, wasn’t it better to have one’s own house?

Just then Gururaj’s mother interrupted his thoughts. “Mohana, you have come at the right time. We had invited five brahmachari boys for the puja, but only four turned up. You be the fifth one and accept the tambula” she said.

He was quite embarrassed. “Aunty, I am already thirty-five how can you count me as a brahmachari?” He asked with bashful smile.

“So, what? You aren’t married yet, right? That makes you a brahmachari. Now don’t delay my puja. Come accept the offering of sacred thread and towel”, she instructed.

He looked at Gururaja. “Go and take it, nothing will happen” Gururaja said.

Mohanaswamy sat with those four young boys and received the tambula. The boys chuckled, looking at the uncle sitting next to them who was almost their father’s age. Mohanaswamy was amused too and laughed along with them. After accepting the offering the boys bent low in obeisance

to Gururaja's mother. She blessed them saying 'Study well and pass with good marks'. But when Mohanaswamy bowed she pronounced, 'get married soon'.

The mention of marriage didn't scare Mohanaswamy these days. Instead, a hope sprang up in his heart. How beautiful life would be if this mother's blessings brought about a miraculous change in me, kindling a desire for females, he thought. Then I too could get married and settle down! He dreamt on, but soon realized the futility of his musings. May your wish come true, aunty. Then I will buy you whatever you demand," said Mohanaswamy.

"You just say yes, and I will put a garland of brides around your neck!", she said with a laugh and went inside.

"Oye, will you get married?" Gururaja asked, teasing his friend.

"You keep quiet my friend, don't make fun of me", Mohanaswamy said in his old usual style.

When Mohanaswamy was preparing to leave, Gururaja insisted again that he should immediately go to the apartment complex and look for a flat. Knowing that his dear friend wouldn't relent, Mohanaswamy decided to give it a go. "Please come with me," he requested Gururaja but he was busy. "My wife wants me to go with her to some place, Mohana. You go and see the house. Just make sure that water, electricity, generator, Lift and all other amenities are in place. I will give you some more tips tonight", he said.

Mohanaswamy did not feel all that bad. About seven - eight years ago, he wouldn't go anywhere without the company of his friends. Be it for going to a shop to buy a handkerchief or to see a movie or to a restaurant for coffee, he would need some company. He would forget the whole world, prattling, laughing and arguing with them. But as time passed, all his friends got married and were no longer easily available. Whenever he phoned them, they would speak for a while and hang up, saying 'I am a little busy, will call you later'. In a couple of years, they all had children. Then they were not even available on phone.

So Mohanaswamy started getting used to being alone and feeling lonely.

Initially he would stay home, doing nothing. But for how long could he live like that? Left with no option, he began going out alone, for movies, to buy clothes and even to tourist spots. At first, he felt frightened to roam around all by himself. - When he sat in an ice - cream parlour, polishing off a big Gudbud alone, he felt uneasy and the ice-cream tasted bitter. He felt like everyone in the parlour was staring at him. But slowly he got used to all this. He could go home at any hour; he could wake up late and he could go anywhere. There was no one to question him. Yet sometimes his loneliness would bring him a lot of misery.

One day in office, he suddenly developed a severe stomachache. He doubled up with pain. He had never had it so bad before. He couldn't even walk. His colleagues were about to call a doctor. then the pain subsided. Full of fear and anxiety, he went to a hospital the next day.

Mohanaswamy loved hospitals. Doctors and nurses speak to you with so much concern! You become their centre of attention. "Does it pain?", nurses ask you with so much care! Doctors too listen to you with rapt attention.

After examining Mohanaswamy, the doctor asked him to get endoscopy done. And so, he bravely went to the hospital again the next day, all alone. His stomach had been completely empty from the previous night. He didn't have a clue about endoscopy. He had imagined that it must be something akin to a blood test or a BP check - up. But it was not that simple. The test required him to lie down on the bed with his hands and legs strapped up. A long rubber pipe would be slipped into his stomach through his mouth. A camera affixed to the end of the pipe would scan the inside of his abdomen and display the images on the screen.

The nurse had to struggle a lot to insert the pipe into Mohanaswamy's stomach. Whenever the pipe slid past his throat, he panicked, writhing in acute agony. He wanted to take the pipe out and throw it away, but he couldn't do so as his hands and legs were tied. He squirmed in pain and the nurse had to take out the pipe, though he was on empty stomach, he threw up some water and that caused further pain.

“You must relax. Otherwise we won’t be able to do the test,’ the nurse told him repeatedly. But no matter how hard he tried to stay composed, the moment the pipe went inside his throat, he felt like he was at death’s door and he panicked. It took over forty - five minutes for the test to get over. Finally, after the test was over, his limbs were quivering. “Sir, please relax for a while. Why did you come alone? You should have brought someone along,’ the nurse said wearily.

When he came out and sat down on a chair to relax, he was overwhelmed with sorrow. I should have brought a friend along, he said to himself. But who would take the day off from work and come with him? He felt dejected. The only solace was that the doctors who went over his medical reports told him, “You are fine. You don’t have any serious problem. The stomachache was due to gas trouble, that’s all.’

So, they sent him away. Mohanaswamy knew that if his health ever took a bad turn, he would be done for and would die alone. Such was his plight that even if he was down with a slight fever, there was no one to boil some gruel for him. No one to remind him to take his medicines in time. And no one to take him to a doctor. So, it was imperative that he did not fall sick. Mohanaswamy therefore became more careful and conscious about his health.

But today, the task at hand was simple- just seeing a house. It wasn’t mandatory to bring someone along. At the apartment office, he had to wait for over forty-five minutes for his turn. Two families were deliberating over the details of the flats they were planning to buy.

A couple were fighting over the design of windows-the husband wanted a French window, but the wife brushed it aside arguing that it lets too much light in. In the other family, it was the wife’s parents, who were dominating the discussion, raising too many queries. Mohanaswamy guessed that the wife’s parents must have given some money to buy the house. The father-in-law insisted on a toilet with an Indian commode while the mother-in-law was arguing that the house would be incomplete without a puja room. The husband was negotiating over per square feet rate. The couple’s children were bored by

all this and were about to sneak out to the construction site. The moment the mother realized this; she ran behind them. “Be careful! Iron roads and nails will prick you! She screamed, dragging them back in. They started crying. “Look, Pandu, don’t cry. I will tell this uncle to keep a separate room for you in the new house, okay? We will put up all the cartoon posters on the wall,” she told the child, trying to pacify him.

It took over forty-five minutes for both the families to get done with their questions, negotiations and suggestions for changes. The manager, who looked worn out, now came to Mohanaswamy. Though he was visibly exhausted, he beamed a charming smile at Mohanaswamy. “My name is Rajesh. Sorry, I kept you waiting for long. What type of flat are you looking for, sir? What are your requirements?” he asked.

Mohanaswamy had not come prepared for this question. He had simply come to look at flat. I need a small one, he replied.

“The smallest we have is a 2BHK. But sir when you have set out to buy, why settle for less? Go for a three-bedroom house. Once your children grow up, you will need more room,” he suggested.

“I don’t really need such a big house. Show me the smallest you have”, Mohanaswamy repeated with a shrivelled smile.

“Do you care for vastu, Sir?”

“No, none of that, just show me a flat - a small and nice one?”

“Oh, finally someone who doesn’t insist on vastu! These days it is easy to build a palace sir, but not so easy to build even a small toilet without considering vastu”, he said with a laugh and asked Mahanaswamy to follow him. Though the apartment complex was still under construction, a fully- furnished model flat was ready for display.

The door opened to a huge hall. Mohanaswamy was taken aback by its size and hesitated to step inside. He held on to a beam tightly and stood outside the entrance. He came to his senses only when Rajesh alerted him, “Come inside, sir. There is no need to remove your shoes.” Mohanaswamy went inside. A big LCD TV was placed in a corner. Surrounding it was a big sofa set. A six-

seater dining table stood in another corner. A spacious kitchen and a storeroom abutted the dining area. There was a separate space to keep the washing machine and refrigerator. The walls were lined with cabinets to arrange utensils and other household items. There were two bedrooms, including a master bedroom with an attached bathroom and a big white bathtub gleamed inside. The rooms had big wardrobes, a dressing table with a long mirror and open cabinets overhead. Finally, the hall opened out into a capacious balcony.

Mohanaswamy's head began reeling. The attached toilet of the master bedroom alone was big enough for him to live a peaceful life, he thought, why would he need any more space? All his clothes could be crammed into a single cupboard. Washing machine, fridge, microwave oven and geyser - he did not possess any of those appliances. He had never felt the need to buy them either. A small auto rickshaw could hold the entirety of his belongings, so in which corner of this enormous flat would he arrange them? What would he - who enjoyed having food sitting on the floor and watching TV-, do with those bulky sofas and armchairs? Who would use the dining table?

Mohanaswamy suddenly felt very small. Rajesh, playing the part of a seasoned salesman, went on describing the features of the flat. "See, we have fixed grills to the balcony for children's safety. You can keep as big a bed as you want in the master bedroom. You can view the TV screen even from the kitchen. We have made this arrangement especially for the lady of the house, so that she won't get bored. If you want one or two more wardrobes, there is space for them as well. We have designed the building in such a way that neighbours cannot have even a small glimpse into your house. We believe in complete privacy for the family. Your balcony faces the children's playground. Sitting in the balcony you can watch your children play. We will give you two car parking slots... Mohanaswamy was even more frightened now and he felt like running away from that place.

Pausing for a while, Rajesh asked, if you have anything particular in mind, please tell me, sir we, will get everything done. Tiles, wall colour, Kitchen material, Plywood, windows...

Mohanaswamy had nothing to say. "This is enough ... it's nice. I don't

want anything else. If you kindly let me know the amount to be paid as advance, I will write out a cheque today itself,” he said.

Now it was Rajesh’s turn to be taken aback. “Aiyoo...There is no urgency sir. Let your family too come and see the house. Let your children, Parents, in - laws, all of them come and have a look first. Everyone will have their own preferences, right? Take a week’s time sir, no problem. I will keep a flat reserved for you. If you rush into it, we may both land in trouble later, Rajesh tried to convince him.

“Please, there is no need for all that. If I say okay, that’s final. Please tell me how much I have to pay as advance,” Mohanaswamy urged.

Without trying to persuade further, Rajesh said, “You will have to pay lakh rupees as advance. The remaining thirty- eight lakhs can be paid at the time of registration. Registration charges will be separate.”

“And in whose name should the cheque be drawn?”, Rajesh gave him a pamphlet, underlining the name of the company with a pen Mohanaswamy hurriedly wrote out a cheque with trembling hands and handed it to Rajesh.

Rajesh was still a little puzzled and he didn’t react for a while. Then he remembered his lines and shook Mohanaswamy’s hands and said, “Congratulations, sir! We will give you two air tickets to Singapore as a complementary gift. You can go there with your family for three days and two nights. Food and accommodation will be taken care of. You will get further details in a couple of days.’

Mohanaswamy did not say a word as Rajesh gave him an application form. “Sir, please fill in all these columns,” he requested. Mohanaswamy ran his eyes over the page. There were more than fifty queries for customers relating to interiors: the choice of tiles, bathroom fittings, French window, wall paint, cross-ventilation, TV cables, internet connection and so on. Certain choices would inflate the cost. At the end of the form, the house buyer had to put his signature.

Mohanaswamy neither had the interest nor the courage to answer those queries. He feared that if he stood there for some more time, he might collapse.

He had made up his mind not to present himself as a lachrymose to Rajesh, a total stranger. But soon he sensed his determination crumbling, bit by bit. He did not tick any of the checkboxes, but simply signed off at the end of the form and returned it to Rajesh. “You please fill it up for me. I’m not particular about all these things. Anything you say is okay, don’t worry about money, Please, he said. A bemused Rajesh simply nodded his head. “Do I have to sign anywhere else?” Mohanaswamy enquired.

“No sir, you will have to come back at the time of registration, that’s enough. Please leave your mobile number and address.”

“I am going abroad tomorrow. My friend will help you in all these matters. I will give him the power of attorney. I will share his address and contact number. Is that okay?” he asked. Rajesh nodded.

Mohanaswamy rushed out of the apartment complex like a bat out of hell. The experience had been more harrowing than that endoscopy. He strongly felt that he should have had a low-paying job so that he would always be compelled to live in rented rooms. ‘Will I be able to live in this big house once I return?’ He grew anxious. Whatever it is, one thing is for sure, ‘I will not hold a housewarming ceremony. I swear, I won’t do it!’ He said to himself repeatedly.

Rajesh stood in the balcony as he watched this strange fellow disappear into the dust, perplexed why he bought a house worth forty lakh rupees in just thirty minutes.

Glossary:

Unpalatable : unpleasant to the taste

Bearings (n) : Relevance, connection

Hankering : a strong, restless desire

Subraya’s Shrashti : Also known as Subrahmanya Shrashti, (in December) an auspicious day (sixth day) according to Hindu calendar on which Lord Subrahmanya (King of Snakes) is worshipped.

Pesky	:	annoying, irritating, troublesome predilection liking, a tendency	:
Prattling	:	foolish speech	
Tamboola	:	an offering made either to God or to the receiver with betel leaves, arcane and the gift in any form like clothes, money etc.	
Rapt	:	interested, absorbed	
Squirmed	:	to twist in discomfort	
Vastu	:	vāstu śāstra is a traditional Hindu system of architecture	
Endoscopy	:	the examination of a bodily organ using an endoscope	
Lachrymose	:	tearful, sad	
Harrowing	:	acutely distressing	

Comprehension I

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1. Where did Mohanaswamy go? Why?
2. Why was Mohanaswamy apprehensive of going there?
3. Who was Mohanaswamy's friend? How did he help Mohanaswamy to come out of his loneliness?
4. Mention the early thoughts of Mohanaswamy on buying the house.
5. Why did Mohanaswamy visit Gururaja's house that day?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

1. What did Gururaja's mother ask Mohanaswamy to do? Why?
2. Give an account of Mohanaswamy's social life when compared to his friends.
3. Explain the difficulties that Gururaja faced while buying the house.
4. How did Gururaja convince Mohanaswamy to buy the house?
5. Narrate the way the two families had a discussion before buying the flat and how it influence Mohanaswamy in booking his flat?
6. Describe Mohanaswamy's struggle with loneliness.

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two.

1. Bring out the socio - cultural practices which are depicted in the short story.
2. In what way did the urban lifestyle contribute to Mohanaswamy's loneliness?
3. Discuss Mohanaswamy's life in the backdrop of his sexual identity.
4. How does Mohanaswamy struggle to live 'normally' in the society?
5. Why did Mohanaswamy feel that he should have had a low paying job?
6. Mohanaswamy stands apart from the urban/ metropolitan mindset of the people who dream of owning a house in the city. Elaborate.

About the author:

Vasudhendra was born at Sandur in Bellary district in Karnataka. He graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering degree from National Institute of Technology, Karnataka as a gold medallist. He then did his Master of Engineering from Indian Institute of Science. He had been software professional for 20 years. He was also the Vice President at Genisys Software. Vasudhendra now runs his own publication house, Chanda Pustaka, which publishes and encourages new writing in Kannada and has instituted the Chanda Pustaka Award which recognizes young short story writers. He is also associated with local support groups for LGBT individuals. He is the first writer in Kannada to write exclusively about homosexuality. The author of thirteen books in Kannada, that have sold over 80,000 copies, Vasudhendra has won many literary awards, including the Kannada Sahitya Academy Book Prize, the Da Raa Bendre Story Award and the Dr U.R. Ananthamurthy Award.

This short story has been translated from Kannada by Rashmi Terdal, a journalist and a writer who is passionate about Kannada poetry and fiction.

About the text:

The present short story brings out the perplexity of the corporate world in a metropolitan city. The protagonist of the story struggles with his loneliness which is a part of his unrevealed sexual identity. He prays for the unmistakable companionship which would help him thrive in this world where he longs for a sustainable relationship. Though he is financially sound, the other requirements to lead a happy and stable life seem missing in his life. His decision of buying a flat with in thirty minutes without any specifications bemuses the readers.

THE LETTER

- *Dhumketu*

Pre-reading activities:

- i) *To grow old, alone and helpless, is one of the worst factors to befall a human being. Discuss.*
- ii) *In this day of electronic communication, ask the students to compose a letter to any of their family members staying away from them.*
- iii) *Can human nature change as you age? Can repentance for your past make you a better person?*

In the grey sky of early dawn stars still glowed, as happy memories light up a life that is nearing its close. An old man was walking through the town, now and again drawing his tattered clothes tighter to shield his body from the cold and biting wind. From some houses came the sound of grinding mills, and the sweet voices of women singing at their work, and the sounds helped him along his lonely way. Except for the occasional bark of a dog, the distant steps of a workman going early to work, or the screech of a bird disturbed before its time, the whole town was wrapped in deathly silence. Most of its inhabitants were still in the arms of sleep, the sleep which grew more and more profound on account of the intense winter cold; for the cold used sleep to extend its sway over all things even as a false friend lulls his chosen victim with caressing smiles. The old man, shivering at times but fixed of purpose, plodded on till he came out of the town-gate on to a straight road. Along this he now went at a somewhat slower pace, supporting himself on his old staff.

On one side of the road was a row of trees, on the other side the town's public garden. The sky was darker now and the cold more intense, for the wind was blowing straight along the road, on which they fell like frozen snow, only the faint light of the morning star. At the end of the garden

stood a handsome building of the newest style and the light gleamed threw the crevices of its closed doors and windows.

Beholding¹ the wooden arch of this building, the old man was filled with the joy that the pilgrim feels when he first sees the goal of his journey. On the arch hung an old board with the newly painted letters “Post Office.” The old man went in quietly and squatted on the veranda. The voices of two or three people busy and their routine work could be faintly heard threw the wall.

“Police Superintendent,” a voice called sharply. The old man started at the sound, but composed himself again to wait. But for the faith and love, that warmed him, he could not have borne the bitter cold.

Name after name rang out from within as the clerk read out the English addresses in the letters and flung them to the waiting postmen. From long practise he had acquired great speed at reading out the titles - Commissioner, Superintendent, Diwan Sahib and Librarian - and in flinging the letters out.

In the midst of this procedure a jesting voice from inside called, “Coachman Ali!” The old man got up, raised his eyes to heaven in gratitude and stepping forward put his hands to the door.

“Gokul Bhai!” “Yes, who is there?”

“You called out coachman Ali’s name didn’t you? Here I am. I have come for my letter.”

“It’s a mad man, sir, who worries us by calling everyday for letters that never come,” said the clerk to the postmaster.

The old man went back slowly to the bench on which he had been accustomed to sit for five long years.

Ali had been a clever shikari. As his skill increased so did his love for the hunt, till at last it was as impossible for him to pass a day without hunting as it is for the opium-eater to forgo his daily portion. When Ali sighted the

earth- brown partridge, almost invisible to other eyes, the poor bird, they said, was as good as in his bag. His sharp eyes saw the hare crouching. Even when the dogs failed to see the creature cunningly hidden in the yellow brown scrub, Ali's eyes would catch the sight of his ears; and in another moment it was dead. Besides this he would often go out with his friends, the fishermen.

But when the evening of his life was drawing in, he left his old ways and suddenly took a new turn. His only child, Miriam married and left him. She went off with a soldier into his regiment in the Punjab, and for the last five years he had no news of this daughter for whose sake alone he dragged along a cheerless existence. Now he understood the meaning of love and separation. He could no longer enjoy the sportsman's pleasure and laughter at the bewildered terror of the young partridges bereft of their parents.

Although the hunter's instinct was in his very blood and bones, such loneliness had come into his life since the day Miriam had gone away, that now, forgetting his sport, he would become lost in the admiration of the green cornfield. He reflected deeply and came to the conclusion that the whole universe is built up through love and that the grief of separation is inescapable. And seeing this, he sat down under a tree and wept bitterly. From that day he had risen each morning at 4 o' clock to walk to the post office. In his whole life he had never received a letter, but with a devout serenity born of hope and faith, he persevered and was always the first to arrive.

The post office, one of the uninteresting buildings in the world, became his place of pilgrimage. He always occupied a particular seat in a particular corner of the building, and when the people got to know his habit they laughed at him. The postmen began to make a game of him. Even though there was no letter for him they would call out his name for the fun of seeing him jump up and come to the door. But with a boundless faith and infinite patience, he came every day, and went away empty-handed.

While Ali waited, peons would come for their firms' letters and he would hear them discussing their masters' scandals. These smart young peons in their spotless turbans and creaking shoes were always eager to express themselves.

Meanwhile, the door would be thrown open and the post-master,

a man with a face as sad and as inexpressive as a pumpkin, would be seen sitting on his chair inside. There was no glimmer of animation in his features; such men usually prove to be village schoolmasters, office clerks or postmasters.

One day, he was there as usual and did not move from his seat when the door was opened.

“Police Commissioner!” the clerk called out, and a young fellow stepped forward briskly for the letters. “Superintendent!” Another voice called.

Another peon came. And so the clerk, like a worshipper of Vishnu, repeated his customary thousand names.

At last they had all gone. Ali got up too and saluting the post-office as though it housed some precious relic, went off. A pitiable figure a century behind his time.

“That fellow,” asked the post-master “is he mad?”

“Who sir? Oh, yes,” answered the clerk “no matter what the weather is he has been here every day for the last five years. But he doesn’t get many letters.”

“I can well understand that! Who does he think will have time to write a letter every day?”

“But he is a bit touched sir. In the old days he committed many sins; and maybe he shed some blood within sacred precincts and is paying for it now,” the postman added in support of his statement.

“Mad men are strange people,” the postmaster said.

“Yes. Once I saw a postman in Ahmedabad who did absolutely nothing but make little heaps of dust. And another had a habit of going to the riverbed in order to pour water on a certain stone everyday!”

“Oh! That’s nothing” chimed in another. “I knew one mad man who

paced up and down all day long, another who never ceased declaiming poetry and a third who would slap himself on the cheek and then begin to cry because he was being beaten.”

And everyone in the post office began to talk of lunacy. All working-class people have the habit of taking periodic rests by joining in general discussion for a few minutes. After listening a while, the postmaster got up and said, “It seems as though the mad live in a world of their own making. To them perhaps we too appear mad. The mad-man’s world is rather like the poet’s, I should think!”

He laughed as he spoke the last words, looking at one of the clerks who wrote indifferent verse. Then he went out and the office became still again.

For several days Ali had not come to the post-office. There was no one with enough sympathy or understanding to guess the reason, but all were curious to know what had stopped the old man. At last he came again; but it was a struggle for him to breathe and on his face was clear signs of approaching end. That day he could not contain his impatience.

“Master Sahib”, he begged the post-master, “have you a letter from my Miriam?”

The postmaster wanted to get out to the country and was in a hurry.

“What a pest you are, brother!” he exclaimed.

“My name is Ali,” answered Ali absent-mindedly.

“I know! I know! But do you think we’ve got your Miriam’s name registered?”

“Then please note it down, brother. It will be useful if a letter should come when I am not here. For how should the villager who had spent three-quarters of his life hunting know that Miriam’s name was not worth a piece to anyone but her father?”

The postmaster was beginning to lose his temper. “Have you no sense?” he cried.

“Get away! Do you think we’re going to eat your letter when it comes?”

and he walked off hastily. Ali came out very slowly, turning after every few steps to gaze at the post office. His eyes were filled with tears of helplessness, for his patience was exhausted, even though he still had faith. Yet how could he still hope to hear from Miriam?

Ali heard one of the clerks coming up behind him, and turned to him
“Brother!” he said.

The clerk was surprised, but being a decent fellow he said, “Well!”

“Here, look at this!” and Ali produced an old tin box and emptied five golden guineas into the surprised clerk’s hands. “Do not look so startled,” he continued.

“They will be useful to you, and they can never be to me. But will you do one thing?”

“What?”

“What do you see up there?” said Ali, pointing to the sky. “Heaven.”

“Allah is there, and in His presence I am giving you this money. When it comes, you must forward my Miriam’s letter to me.”

“But where---where am I supposed to send it?” asked the utterly bewildered clerk.

“To my grave.” “What?”

“Yes. It is true. Today is my last day: my very last, alas! And I have not seen Miriam; I have had no letter from her.” There were tears in Ali’s eyes as the clerk slowly left him and went on his way with the five golden guineas in his pocket.

Ali was never seen again, and no one troubled to inquire after him.

One day, however, trouble came to the postmaster. His daughter lay ill in another town, and he was anxiously waiting for news of her. The post was brought in, and the letters piled on the table. Seeing an envelope of the colour and shape he expected, the postmaster eagerly snatched it up. It was addressed

to Coachman Ali, and he dropped it as though it had given him an electric shock. The haughty temper of the official had quite left him in his sorrow and anxiety, and had laid bare his human heart. He knew at once that this was the letter the old man had been waiting for: it must be from his daughter Miriam.

“Lakshmi Das!” called the postmaster, for such was the name of the clerk to whom Ali had given his money.

“Yes sir?”

“This is for your old coachman, Ali. Where is he now?”

“I will find out, sir.”

The postmaster did not receive his own letter all that day. He worried all night, and getting up at three, went to sit in the office. “When Ali comes at four o’ clock,” he mused, “I will give him the letter myself.”

For now the postmaster understood Ali’s heart and his very soul. After spending but a single night in suspense, anxiously waiting for news of his daughter, his heart was brimming with sympathy for the poor old man who had spent his nights in the same suspense for the last five years. At the stroke of five he heard a soft knock on the door: he felt sure it was Ali. He rose quickly from his chair, his suffering father’s heart recognizing another, and flung the door wide open.

“Come in, brother Ali,” he cried, handing the letter to the meek old man, bent double with age, who was standing outside. Ali was leaning on a stick, and the tears were wet on his face as they had been when the clerk left him. But his features had been hard then, and now they were softened by lines of kindness. He lifted his eyes and in them was a light so unearthly that the postmaster shrank back in fear and astonishment.

Lakshmi Das had heard the postmaster’s words as he came towards the office from another quarter. “Who was that, sir? Old Ali?” he asked. But the postmaster took no notice of him. He was staring with wide-open eyes at the doorway from which Ali had disappeared. Where could he have gone? At last

he turned to Lakshmi Das. “Yes, I was speaking to Ali,” he said.

“Old Ali is dead, sir. But give me his letter.” “What! But when? Are you sure, Lakshmi Das?”

“Yes, that is so,” broke in a postman who had just arrived. “Ali died three months ago.”

The postmaster was bewildered. Miriam’s letter was still lying near the door; Ali’s image was still before his eyes. He listened to Lakshmi Das’ recital of the last interview, but he could still not doubt the reality of the knock on the door and the tears in Ali’s eyes. He was perplexed. Had he really seen Ali? Had his imagination deceived him? Or had it perhaps been Lakshmi Das?

The daily routine began. The clerk read out the addresses- Police Commissioner, Superintendent, Librarian - and flung the letters deftly.

But the postmaster now watched them as eagerly as though each contained a warm, beating heart. He no longer thought of them in terms of envelopes and postcards. He saw the essential human worth of a letter.

That evening you could have seen Lakshmi Das and the postmaster walking with slow steps to Ali’s grave. They laid the letter on it and turned back.

“Lakshmi Das, were you indeed the first to come to the office this morning?”

“Yes, sir, I was the first.”

“Then how.... No. I don’t understand....” “What, sir?”

“Oh, never mind,” the postmaster said shortly. At the office he parted from Lakshmi Das and went in. The newly-wakened father’s heart in him was reproaching him for having failed to understand Ali’s anxiety, for now he himself had to spend another night of restless anxiety. Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait.

Glossary:

Tattered : Old and torn; in poor condition.

Crevices : a deep line in an old person's face, or a deep fold in someone's body or a small, narrow crack or space, especially in the surface of rock

Jesting : To say something intended to be funny.

Partridge : a bird with a round body and a short tail that is sometimes hunted for food

Bereft : Sad and lonely

Devout : totally committed to a cause or belief.

Precincts : an area in a town designated for specific or restricted use

Lunacy : stupid behaviour that will have bad results, mental illness

Brimming : fill something so completely that it almost overflows.

Perplexed : to confuse, difficult to understand or solve

Reproaching : expressing disapproval or disappointment. Or to criticize someone, especially for not being successful or not doing what is expected

Remorse : deep regret or guilt for a wrong committed or a feeling of sadness and being sorry for something you have done .

Comprehension I**I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.**

- 1) Who was Ali? What peculiar obsession did he have?
- 2) What proved Ali's talent as a shikari?
- 3) When did Ali realize the pain of separation?
- 4) Why did the clerks and postmen consider Ali as a mad man?

- 5) Why is the post office said to be a pilgrim place for Ali?
- 6) Why did Ali give five gold coins to Lakshmi Das?
- 7) What bewildered and puzzled the postmaster?
- 8) “Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait.” Who is tortured by doubt and remorse? Why? What is he waiting for?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

- 1) Why was visiting the post office a pilgrimage for the old man?
- 2) What are the instances cited which make one realize that Ali was an accomplished hunter?
- 3) The postmaster realizes his mistake but by then it is too late. What mistake has the postmaster made? How does he realize it?
- 4) What impression do you form about Coachman Ali after reading the story?

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two.

- 1) “Ali displays qualities of love and patience”. Give evidence from the story to support the statement.
- 2) ‘Pain of separation is a thing to be experienced rather than heard of’. Discuss.
- 3) Both Ali and the Postmaster are the two sides of the same coin. Explain.
- 4) ‘One feels other’s pain only when one goes through it himself’. Explain.
- 5) Discuss the incidents which led to the post master’s change of heart and give reasons for it.

About the author:

Dhumketu (1892–1965) was the pen name of Gaurishankar Govardhandas Joshi, a prolific writer, who is considered one of the pioneers of the Gujarati short story. He published twenty-four collections of short stories, as well as thirty-two novels on historical and social subjects, and plays and travelogues. His writing is characterized by a poetic style, romanticism and powerful depiction of human emotions.

About the text:

The Letter is a short story of an old man (once an active hunter) Ali and his visit to the post office every day to check whether his daughter Miriam has written a letter to him. Miriam has been sent off to a distant place after her marriage, and there has been no communication from her for five long years. The story shows Ali's undying hope that Miriam will write to him one day and that one day his visits to the post office will not be futile. The postmaster and all the people working at the post office habitually make fun of Ali who comes every day to the post office expecting a letter from his daughter Miriam. Sadly after a long wait of five years Ali dies before receiving Miriam's letter. At the end of the story, the postmaster understands Ali's plight and regrets making fun of him.

THE TAXI DRIVER

- *Karthar Singh Duggal*

Pre-reading activities:

- i) *Imagine a day of strike by drivers.*
- ii) *Do you have any friend whose father is a driver? Have you visited their house?*
- iii) *Most of the drivers choose this profession under compulsion. Discuss.*
- iv) *Is there any need to change our perception towards drivers?*

“These damned rich!” exclaimed Dittu contemptuously. As he parked his taxi opposite his kholi, he noticed a wallet lying on the back seat bulging with currency notes. Evidently it belonged to some passenger. Rather than feel happy about it - it was a windfall - Dittu felt frightfully uneasy. What should he do with it? It was already late in the evening. He had been plying his taxi throughout the length and breadth of the town the whole day. His last passenger he had picked him up on the roadside and dropped him at the railway station. Where could he look for the owner of the purse?

Dittu was convinced that money found like this was always accused. He had already suffered once. Some hussy had forgotten her attaché - case in his taxi. They hardly have their wits about them. These moneyed people. Every article in the attaché - case was like the plague. It was then that his wife contacted leukoderma. She put on someone else’s blouse and sari. The stupid woman! And was afflicted with the incurable malady.

For a long time thereafter, whosoever engaged his taxi, Dittu would first ask the name and address of the passenger. People thought that the Sikh taxi driver was crazy. Dittu explained to them, “You rich folk are most careless. You may leave something behind in the taxi. And then it becomes a problem for the poor taxi driver. He can neither return it nor retain it.”

Dittu had to give up this practice because every time he asked this question, the passengers would start arguing with him. And today it had happened again. Now if only he knew the name and address of the passengers, he could have gone and returned the purse and have done with it.

Whenever he saw the white blotches on his wife's face, he told himself, "I will never have anything to do with what doesn't belong to me,"

With someone else's wallet in his hand today. Dittu remembered an incident that had taken place several years ago in the main bazaar of their home town back in Pakistan. He was then not Dittu, the refugee: he was young Hardit Singh, son of well to do parents. He had just finished his matriculation examination. One evening when he was passing through the bazaar on his bicycle, he saw a parcel lying in the middle of the road. He got down from the bicycle and picked it up. It was properly sealed. It was also fairly heavy. He looked around. The traffic in the bazaar seemed endless. The shopkeepers were preoccupied with their customer. Nobody seemed to have noticed him. Without giving it any thought. Dittu put his feet on the pedal and rode out of the bazaar with the parcel. At the very first opportunity, he stopped in a secluded corner and started to open the parcel - one layer of the packing paper, another, still another, and then layer after layer. It looked as though someone had played a trick. The parcel was so many layers of packing paper, and nothing else. The shopkeepers who are maligned day in and day out were obviously testing the honesty of the common citizens. And Dittu felt he had blackened his face. He felt like a bewitched hen. Every bit of his body seemed to be disintegrating. Some shopkeeper had made a fool of him. He ought to have handed over the parcel to one of the shopkeepers around. The one who had supposedly lost it would have come looking for it and the shopkeeper could have restored it to him. On the contrary, Dittu had picked it up and hurried out of the bazaar riding his cycle.

It was a godsend for him that the country was partitioned soon after and they had to leave their home town, otherwise Dittu would never have been able to pass through that bazaar again.

A similar problem confronted him today. For a moment he thought he would leave the wallet as it was on the back seat, but then that would be stupid. His little son would come to clean the car the first thing in the morning. What would he think? Besides, he himself would be driving the taxi all through the day. How could he let a stranger's wallet lie unclaimed like that? It was like inviting someone to pocket it.

Lost in thought, Dittu walked into his kholi, Banti was waiting for him, which as a devoted wife she did every evening. Finding the wallet in Dittu's hands, she pounced and in the twinkling of an eye she snatched it from him. She could guess from the predicament writ large on her husband's face that the wallet had been left behind by someone in the taxi. Her husband had never had any use for a wallet. Whatever he earned he shoved it into his pocket. On returning home, he emptied it for his wife who started sorting it out, currency notes on one side and coins on the other.

“Didn't I tell you it's not wise to keep money in a wallet? If the wallet is lost, all the money goes.”

“But who's the blessed one that has left it in our taxi?” asked his jubilant wife. If Dittu only knew it, he would have long gone back and restored it to him.

“Banti, we should have nothing to do with other people's money.” Dittu told his wife.

There was agony on his face. He knew his wife wouldn't listen to him.

She never listened to him in such matters.

“Who said I am going to have anything to do with it? I'll pass it on to the creditors who keep on pestering me,” said Banti casually.

“She is an impossible woman!” Dittu muttered to himself. “What is wrong with it?”

Banti had heard him curse her.

“Is this hole of a room a place fit to live in? Dark and dingy. How long are we going to languish here? Not many days and my son would be school going age. The daughter is now small but girls hardly take any time to grow up. Our neighbour started worrying about the dowry immediately after she delivered a baby girl. Everyone says the only remedy for my wretched ailment is good wholesome food.”

“I agree but why must we think all this now - with money that doesn't belong to us?”

“How does it not belong to us? It's our own money. We haven't gone and robbed anyone. Someone left his purse in our taxi: are we expected to throw it away?”

“Stop it, stop this nonsense,” Dittu was trying to turn deaf.

“What's nonsense about it”, shouted back Banti, “Does anyone ever lose his honest earnings? Had it been hard - earned money, do you think he would be so casual about it?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean the fellow lost his money the way he got it. It was our good luck that we found it.”

“Rubbish I'll not allow you to touch the money that doesn't belong to us.” “May I know what you are going to do with the wallet?”

“I'll offer it to a deity.”

“Deities are looked after by cheats - the pujaris.” “I'll give it to some needy person.”

“Who is needier than us?”

“Banti, I ask you not to have anything to do with the money that doesn’t belong to us.”

“If I do...”

“I’ll skin you alive,” Dittu shouted. He had never been so rude to his wife before.

Fearing that he might lose his temper again, Dittu got into bed and went to sleep.

Dittu had not slept for long when he started having bad dreams. He dreamt that he had hardly left his house in his taxi in the morning when the sentry on duty on the main road challenged him for no fault of his. He begged him to forgive him, again and again, but he wouldn’t listen to him. When Dittu tried to touch his feet, the wretched policeman gave him a kick in his belly. He arrived at the taxi stand, as usual, long before the other, and yet no one turned up to engage him. He waited and waited, all day, eventually, tired of waiting; he pulled out his taxi and went out looking for a passenger on the road. He had hardly gone a kilometre when a military truck speeding headlong rammed into his taxi crushing the car and killing the driver instantly.

Dittu woke up from his sleep. He was perspiring profusely. Banti was fast asleep in her bed; she had the wallet held firmly to her bosom. Dittu tried to snatch it from her. She woke up suddenly and grappled with her husband. In the struggle, Dittu lost his patience and smacked Banti on her face. Banti gave a loud shriek. Dittu gave her another blow.

Such scuffles were not unusual in the quarters Dittu lived in. Taxi drivers were used to such scenes. While none of the neighbours bothered about it, their son Gullu woke up. Rubbing his eyes, he rushed to his mother. She was hurling filthy abuse at his father.

Dittu felt ashamed of himself. He should not have behaved the way he did. He had never lost his temper like that in his life. In utter remorse, he slipped into his bed and covered his face with the blanket.

“Why did Bapu hit you, Ma?” Gullu asked his mother. Banti didn’t reply.

“It doesn’t matter, child. Husbands sometimes beat their wives. “Banti tried to explain to her son.

And then, as if nothing unusual had happened, taking her son into her arms, Banti put out the lantern and went back to bed. A little later she got up again. Lighting the lantern, she started counting the currency notes in the wallet Dittu had found. She counted out the notes for long. Then she called out to her son who was still struggling to go to sleep.

“Gullu, have you ever seen a hundred rupee note?” “No, Ma.”

“Gullu, have you ever seen a fifty rupee note?” “Gullu have you ever seen a twenty rupee note?” “No, Ma.”

“Gullu, have you ever seen ...”

And then she found that Gullu too had gone off to sleep, just like her taxi driver husband, fast asleep in his bed across the room.

Glossary:

Contemptuously	:	Showing or expressing contempt or disdain; scornful; disrespectful
Windfall	:	An amount of money that you win or receive unexpectedly.
Predicament	:	An unpleasant and difficult situation that is hard to get out of.
Devoted	:	Very loving or loyal.
Grappled	:	To get hold of somebody/something and fight with or try to control him/her/it.
Filthy	:	Very dirty.
Remorse	:	A feeling of sadness because you have done something wrong.

Comprehension I

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1. What did Dittu feel when he saw the wallet on the back seat of his taxi?
a) happy b) sad c) uneasy
2. What disease did Dittu's wife contract? What is the reason attributed by Dittu for it?
3. What was Dittu's name in his past? Where was he from?
4. Why did Dittu hit Banti? Why were the neighbours indifferent to Banti's screams?
5. What was Banti's reply to her son when he asked why his father had hit her?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

1. What was the incident that happened in the main bazaar of Pakistan with Dittu many years ago?
2. Why did Banti snatch the wallet from Dittu?
3. Why did Dittu get frightened of his dream?
4. What happened after Dittu woke up from his sleep?
5. Why did Banti call out to her son again and again while counting money?

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two.

1. The story 'The Taxi Driver' reflects two different principles about life. Elaborate.

2. Drivers keep the nation moving. Do you feel that drivers deserve more respect in the society?
3. What is your opinion about the service/ contribution of the drivers towards the society?
4. Throw light to the sacrifices of drivers who spend most of the time of their lives on roads for us.

About the author:

Kartar Singh Duggal (1 March, 1917 – 26 January, 2012) was an Indian writer who wrote in Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and English. His works include short stories, novels, dramas and plays. His works have been translated into Indian and foreign languages. He has served as Director, All India Radio. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Fellowship, the highest honour given by Sahitya Academy.

About the text:

The story contains a dilemma between principles and practicality. Dittu is honest even though he is poor. Banti who suffers from health problems feels it a blessing in disguise. She believes nutritious food would be a better solution which could be obtained if they had more money. However, she is ready to use the money from the wallet for their better prospects. Dittu seems helpless in convincing Banti about not utilising the money.

NILA

- Vijay Nambisan

Pre-reading activities :

- i) *Gather the expressions that would describe a river.*
- ii) *Water which gives life can destroy it too. Discuss.*
- iii) *Come up with some measures to save the water bodies around us.*

Mornings in late July
Stern in the steel-grey skies
Warnings of thunder cried
Reminders of gain

Looked at the hard earth which
Spoke of our dearth, and rich
Smoke curled over the bridge
Praying for rain.

Nila lay cold and stark
Silver though was her spark
Filament of the dark
Thread in the sun

River so kind and cool
Reliever of summer's rule
Giver when to our cruel
Loom she be spun.

Who shall applaud her now?
When in thrall this is how
The call of the arrow
Summons the bow:

In coil on coil the snake
 Steels all her strength to make
 Always without mistake
 That one springing blow.

2

Slowly she rose above
 Lowly reef, spit and cove
 Flowed to that one remove
 Beneath the town

Then broke the waters pent
 One stroke the pattern rent
 Dark cloaked the firmament
 The rain came down.

Rising to embrace us
 Twining through embrasures
 Smiling she increases
 Giver of wealth –

Winding where she pleases
 Minding no man-measures
 Why should she displace us
 But for our health.

Swelling a mile each way
 Felling the palms to lie
 Telling their tales to grey
 Unmannered sky

Motionless in her sweep
 Ocean is not more deep
 Chosen secrets to keep
 Than this of eye.

Blood and bone cannot stand
Flood and famine at hand
Rudely we understand
The day is now

One hour from the end
All ours may pretend
But powers of a friend
Have become foe.

How she batters the wall!
How she gathers her all
Howling the southwest falls
Upon a shore

That yesterday was ours
That festival and flowers
And arrested lovers
Kept tame ever more.

Lashing our flesh with cane
Smashing to mud again
Cash and the hoarded grain
And our tall walls

Believe, animals yet
Relive, or else forget
To scrive the alphabet
At that one call.

4

Goddess or madness, this
Glorious gladness is
Tore from us anxieties
Living a lie

Storm and suddenness shook
Form from fate, eye from look
Dormant the master woke
O thus to die.

Brown corpses rent across
Town, village counted loss
Blown and battered alas
We are still here

River we worshipped once
Stealer of spoiled sons
Deceiver, while she runs
What should we fear.

Fever of sacrifice:
Ever the victim vies
With the haruspices'
Vision of time:

Grey water running free
Straight to tomorrow's sea
Faith that I cannot keep
Go, and keep mine.

Glossary :

Stern	:	Strict, uncompromising
Dearth	:	Scarcity
Stark	:	Stiff, Rigid
Thrall	:	Slave
Summons	:	Order
Scrive	:	to engrave, to write
Haruspices	:	(in ancient Rome) a religious official who interpreted omens by inspecting the entrails of sacrificial animals.

Comprehension I

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1. When are heavy rains expected in Kerala?
2. What was the condition of the earth that spoke of its dearth?
3. Mention any four adjectives that the poet uses to describe the river?
4. What is the anger of the river compared to?
5. Who do you think is the 'giver of wealth'?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

1. Describe the atmosphere in July before the rains?
2. How does the river show its anger?
3. In what way is the river a 'giver of wealth'?
4. How does the speaker describe the 'rain coming down'?
5. Why does Nila displace mankind?
6. How does Nila change from being a friend to a foe?

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two.

1. Describe the nature of River Nila.
2. In spite of being known for its calm and forgiving qualities, nature reacts harshly to human intrusion. Do you agree? Elucidate.
3. Nature is both creator and destroyer. Comment with reference to River Nila.
4. Nature's fury creates havoc on mankind. Elaborate.

About the poet:

Vijay Nambisan was a poet, writer, critic and journalist of India writing in English. He won the First Prize in the first All India Poetry Competition in 1990 organized by The Poetry Society (India) in collaboration with the British Council. Nambisan won the first ever All India Poetry Champion in 1988 for his poem Madras Central. The poem has since received rave reviews from critics as well as lay reader. Vijay Nambisan was 54 years old when he died.

About the poem:

The poem is taken from his collection, 'First Infinities'. Niḷa is a local name for the Bhāratapuzha, which flows across north-central Kerala to the Arabian Sea. The speaker uses images of bow and arrow and snake to concretize his ideas.

OUR CASUARINA TREE

- *Toru Dutt*

Pre-reading activities:

- i) *Prepare a write up on your childhood memories.*
- ii) *Discuss in groups how your childhood memories have shaped your personality now.*
- iii) *Prepare charts on the beauty and utilities of trees. Put the charts on the bulletin boards of your college.*

LIKE a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Where on all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.

When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;

Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest
 A gray baboon sits statue-like alone
 Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
 His puny offspring leap about and play;
 And far and near kokilas hail the day;
 And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
 And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
 By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
 The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

But not because of its magnificence
 Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
 Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
 O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
 For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear.
 Blend with your images; it shall arise
 In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!
 What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
 Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
 It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
 That haply to the unknown land may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
 Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away
 In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
 When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith

And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,
When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon:
And every time the music rose,—before
Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those
Who now in blessed sleep for aye repose, -
Dearer than life to me, alas, were they!
Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done
With deathless trees—like those in Borrow dale,
Under whose awful branches lingered pale
“Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
And Time the shadow;” and though weak the verse
That would thy beauty fain, oh, fain rehearse,
May Love defend thee from Oblivion’s curse Toru Dutt

Glossary:

Indent : broken into the edge or surface.

Cluster: number of things of the same kind growing closely together.

Repose : to take rest.

Casement : windows.

Puny: small and weak.

Enmassed: in a mass, all together.

Dirge: song sung at a burial or for a dead person.

Eerie: causing a feeling of mystery or fear.

Haply: by chance, perhaps.

Wraith: apparition of a person seen shortly before or after the death.

Consecrate: set apart as sacred or for a special purpose

Shingle-beach: referred as rocky beach or pebble beach.

Blent: a simple past tense and past participle of blend.

Sublime: of very great excellence or beauty.

Clime: a region considered with reference to its climate.

Borrow-dale: the yew trees

Fain: glad or joy, obliged

Oblivion: the state of being unaware or unconscious of what is happening around one.

Comprehension I

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

- 1) What is the vivid description of the tree that the poet reveals?
- 2) What is 'the creeper' compared to in the poem?
- 3) How do the water -lillies appear in the shadow of casuarina tree?
- 4) What is the elegiac murmur that the poet hears?
- 5) According to the poet, what lies in a trance?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

- 1) Write a short note on the images of the Casuarina Tree at dawn as portrayed by the poet.
- 2) What kind of feelings does the tree arouse in the poet?
- 3) What are the ways in which the poet has created the right atmosphere in the poem?

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two.

- 1) How does the poet bring out the fascinating memory of her childhood in the poem "Our Casuarina Tree."
- 2) Elaborate on the significance of the Casuarina Tree in the life of Toru Dutt

About the poet:

Toru Dutt- The pride of Indian womanhood was born in Rambagan, Calcutta on March 4th, 1856 brought up in an atmosphere of 'sweetness and light' and from her early childhood, she inherited the cultural and literary values. The knowledge of Sanskrit made a deep impression on her young mind and an ardent lover of India's glorious past. She was very pious and had deeply read the Hindu religion and myths credited with being the first Indian English poet extensively to use Indian myths. Toru Dutt is one of the most talented poets in Indo-Anglian literature. Her poetry comprises 'A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields' consisting of her translations of French poetry into English and 'Ancient Ballads' and 'Legends of Hindustan' which compiles her translations and adaptations from Sanskrit literature. She has also written the poem 'A Sea of Foliage'.

About the text:

The poem was published in 1881. Toru Dutt celebrates the majesty of the Casuarina tree that she used to see by her window in the garden and remembers her happy childhood days spent under it. She revives her memories with her beloved siblings. The memory of the tree is the only link she has been left with, about her past and the cheerfulness of that memory is what makes her re - live her childhood.

MOONRISE

-Savithri Rajeevan

Pre-reading activities:

- i) *Have a group discussion on what the Moon represents both mythological as well as religious. Ask students to share stories they heard about the moon when they were children*
- ii) *Have a debate on Science vs Faith. Divide students into two groups, for the motion and against and let them pit their wits against each other.*
- iii) *Let the student share stories on the special relationship he shares with the grandparents and how significant that bond is in his life.*

“Dear God!

keep my grandchildren and children safe,”

prayed the grandmother to the moon, rising in the sky.

No one had told her it was England, 1969,

nor did she know it was July the 20th.

Unknown to the grandmother
did the weekend paper carry
an Armstrong strong-arming her
Moon God, a naive Vamana
foot
raised
and all . . .

and hence,

stunned was she,

when her granddaughter,

held out for her to see,

two large figures,
shining in the moonlight,
like the Asuras fighting the Devas.

To this,
her eyes shimmered open,
vexed and anxious.

Eyes closed,
water in her cupped hands, a prayer in her mouth . . .
she threw the water up to the night sky,
thrice.

As she looked on,
the blemishes on the moon ran away as rainclouds,
and was one with the night sky.

And then?

It looked at the grandmother and her grandchild,
and smiled . . .

The grandmother,
with a glad face and smile,
turned to her little grandchild with another story of the moon,
with a prince and princess,
across rivers and the forests,
they went,
through the shadows of a moonbeam,
they flew
to the moon.
In the end,
her eyes opened,
and lost were Armstrong and Aldrin.

Through the clear rain-swept sky,
the same moon glowed.
The same moon?

Glossary:

July 20th, 1969 : Commander Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, both American, landed the Apollo Lunar module on the Moon's surface at 20:17 UTC on July 20, 1969. Neil Armstrong became the first person to step on to the lunar surface followed 19 minutes later by Buzz Aldrin.

Vamana : Vamana is the fifth avatar of Hindu god Vishnu who becomes a Dwarf in order to restore cosmic balance by defeating the Asura king Mahabali, who had acquired disproportionate power over the universe. By taking three gigantic steps, the benevolent god Vishnu reclaims the universe from the King.

Naïve : showing a lack of experience, wisdom or judgement.

Asuras : Power seeking deities considered to be 'enemy of the gods'.

Devas : Benevolent supernatural deities, heavenly and divine

Blemishes : small marks or flaws which spoil the appearance of something

Vexed : annoyed, frustrated or worried

Comprehension I

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1. What does the grandmother pray for in the beginning of the poem? Whom does she pray to?
2. What is the news carried by the weekend paper and what was its significance?
3. What has Armstrong been compared to in the poem?
4. What was the reaction of the grandmother when her granddaughter shows her the picture in the newspaper?
5. What are ‘the two large figures shining in the moonlight’ compared to?
6. What happens when the grandmother offers her prayers to the Moon “vexed and anxious”?
7. How does the grandmother offer her prayers to the Moon? What is her ritual?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

1. What is the historic event that the grandmother is unaware of? What is her reaction to it?
2. Write a short note on the mythological references in the poem. What is the significance of these references?
3. What does the grandmother do to make the Moon ‘smile’? What are the changes that the Moon undergoes as a result of the grandmother’s prayer?
4. Write a short note on ‘another story’ told by the grandmother to her grandchild. Explain the significance of it with reference to Armstrong and Aldrin.
5. Discuss in a short note the symbolism associated with the Moon in the poem.

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two.

1. 'Moonrise' is a poem of unflinching, unconquerable, enduring faith'. Explain this statement in context to the poem.
2. What does 'the same moon' signify at the end of the poem? What is the doubt in the poet's mind?
3. How do Armstrong and Aldrin 'get lost' in the poem? Can we interpret it as 'the eternal conflict between Man and Nature'? What is your take on it?
4. 'The grandmother in the poem represents the traditional vs modern theme.' Do you agree with this interpretation? Critically analyse.
5. Write a detailed note on the title of the poem 'Moonrise'.

About the poet:

Savithri Rajeevan (August 22, 1956) is a noted Malayalam poet and short fiction writer, based in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. She holds a post-graduate degree in Malayalam literature from the University of Kerala and another from the MS University, Baroda, in fine art criticism. She has taught art history in the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, and is currently an advisory board member of the Central Sahitya Academy for Malayalam. Widely anthologized, she has published a volume of short fiction and four collections of poetry, most recently Ammaye Kulippikkumbol in 2014 for which she was conferred with the Kerala Sahitya Academy award for poetry in 2018. Besides being a poet and a short fiction writer, Ms. Rajeevan is also an artist and has held many solo and group exhibitions.

Savithri Rajeevan's ability to notice and observe even the minute detail in every subject she writes on makes her poetry powerful, effective and evocative. She is a skillful weaver of metaphors and crafts her subjects with great clarity as is evident in her poem 'Moonrise'.

About the poem:

The poem Moonrise is set in the backdrop of a very significant event in mankind's history- Man's landing on the Moon. The gigantic step by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin is contrasted with the simplicity of a grandmother praying to the Moon god to keep her family safe in the strong belief that as

long as the Moon is invincible and continues to glow in the sky, her prayers will always be answered. The conquest of the Moon is sharply pitted against the unconquerable faith of the grandmother that can de-colonise the Moon, erase the footprints of Armstrong and reclaim its terrain and its power to enchant. To eternally glow in the sky 'blemish less'. But can it? The poem ends on a note of doubt allowing the readers to come up with their own interpretation of the classic battle between 'tradition and modern thought. But the last line of the poem leaves the readers grappling with a question that is based on the eternal conflict between Science and Faith, Man and Nature. A question that the Poet wants us to debate on, a question that may not even have an answer...eternal.

WHY I WANT A WIFE

- *Judy Brady*

Pre-reading activities:

- i) *Evaluate the present status of wife in the present world.*
- ii) *Is a wife given all the freedom that she deserves as a human in an educated society?*
- iii) *Who in your opinion should take the responsibility of home and children? Discuss*
- iv) *What are the rights and duties of a couple in a family?*

I belong to that classification of people known as wives. I am a Wife.

And not altogether incidentally, I am a mother.

Not too long ago a male friend of mine appeared on the scene fresh from a recent divorce. He had one child, who is, of course, with his ex-wife. He is looking for another wife. As I thought about him while I was ironing one evening, it suddenly occurred to me that I, too, would like to have a wife. Why do I want a wife?

I would like to go back to school so that I can become economically independent, support myself, and, if need be, support those dependent upon me. I want a wife who will work and send me to school. And while I am going to school, I want a wife to take care of my children. I want a wife to keep track of the children's doctor and dentist appointments and to keep track of mine too. I want a wife to make sure my children eat properly and are kept clean. I want a wife who will wash the children's clothes and keep them mended. I want a wife who is a good nurturant attendant to my children, who arranges for their schooling, makes sure that they have an adequate social life with their peers, takes them to the park, the zoo, etc. I want a wife who takes care of the children when they are sick, a wife who arranges to be around when the children need

special care, because, of course, I cannot miss classes at school. My wife must arrange to lose time at work and not lose the job. It may mean a small cut in my wife's income from time to time, but I guess I can tolerate that. Needless to say, my wife will arrange and pay for the care of the children while my wife is working.

I want a wife who will take care of my physical needs. I want a wife who will keep my house clean. A wife who will pick up after my children, a wife who will pick up after me. I want a wife who will keep my clothes clean, ironed, mended, replaced when need be, and who will see to it that my personal things are kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the minute I need it. I want a wife who cooks the meals, a wife who is a good cook. I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary grocery shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying. I want a wife who will care for me when I am sick and sympathize with my pain and loss of time from school. I want a wife to go along when our family takes a vacation so that someone can continue to care for me and my children when I need a rest and change of scene.

I want a wife who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties. But I want a wife who will listen to me when I feel the need to explain a rather difficult point I have come across in my course studies. And I want a wife who will type my papers for me when I have written them.

I want a wife who will take care of the details of my social life.

When my wife and I are invited out by my friends, I want a wife who will take care of the baby-sitting arrangements. When I meet people at school that I like and want to entertain, I want a wife who will have the house clean, will prepare a special meal, serve it to me and my friends, and not interrupt when I talk about things that interest me and my friends. I want a wife who will have arranged that the children are fed and ready for bed before my guests arrive so that the children do not bother us. I want a wife who takes care of the needs

of my guests so that they feel comfortable, who makes sure that they have an ashtray, that they are passed the hors d'oeuvres, that they are offered a second helping of the food, that their wine glasses are replenished when necessary, that their coffee is served to them as they like it. And I want a wife who knows that sometimes I need a night out by myself.

I want a wife who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly when I feel like it, a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied. And, of course, I want a wife who will not demand sexual attention when I am not in the mood for it. I want a wife who assumes the complete responsibility for birth control, because I do not want more children. I want a wife who will remain sexually faithful to me so that I do not have to clutter up my intellectual life with jealousies. And I want a wife who understands that my sexual needs may entail more than strict adherence to monogamy. I must, after all, be able to relate to people as fully as possible.

If, by chance, I find another person more suitable as a wife than the wife I already have, I want the liberty to replace my present wife with another one. Naturally, I will expect a fresh, new life; my wife will take the children and be solely responsible for them so that I am left free.

When I am through with school and have a job, I want my wife to quit working and remain at home so that my wife can more fully and completely take care of a wife's duties.

My God, who wouldn't want a wife?

Glossary:

Rambling : Long and digressing

Hors de 'oeuvres : A small bit of appetizing food

Replenish : Refill

Comprehension I

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1. When did the idea of having a wife for herself occur to the author's mind?
2. What does the author want to do after getting a wife?
3. What are the expected responsibilities of the wife with respect to her children?
4. "My wife must arrange to lose time at work and not lose the job". What does the author mean by this?
5. What is expected of the wife when a new wife is replaced in her position?

Comprehension II

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph or a page.

1. Explain how a wife is expected to take care of both her family and her job?
2. What are the duties of a wife as a good host?

Comprehension III

III. Answer the following questions in a page or two.

1. "Why I Want a Wife" is a mirror to stereotypes of patriarchy. Substantiate.
2. What is Judy Brady's definition of a wife or of being a wife in 'Why I Want a Wife'?

About the author:

Born in 1937 in San Francisco, Judy Brady was a writer, editor, mother, environmentalist, breast cancer activist, and a self-described “cancer victim,” a label she used to emphasize the injustice of the cancer industrial complex. She played an active role in the feminist movement of the late 1960s, and was well-known for challenging conventional stereotypes of the “good” wife and mother with her famous essay “Why I Want a Wife,” which was first printed in the premiere issue of *Ms. Magazine* in 1972. She also co-founded San Francisco-based Green Action for Health and Environmental Justice and published essays in *Greenpeace Magazine* and *Women’s Review of Books*

About the text:

The essay “Why I Want a Wife” by Judy Brady, is a very intense essay written by a great feminist writer of her time.

It speaks about how men expect too much from their wives. Brady shows this by listing all of the responsibilities expected from a mother and wife. The list she provides is rather mind-boggling, and proves that some of the things men require are just too demanding. The essay was written in 1971, and is about how a wife should conduct herself in the eyes of a male figure. When the essay was written, it had a great impact on the feminist movement of the early 1970’s. Many male figures of the time heckled and despised her essay, but for the women of the 1970’s it was a huge step towards their own freedom from what, at the time, was considered the norm. The tone of this essay is serious, but at the same time can be conceived as humorous, sarcastic, and even dramatic. It may have not have seemed very serious to men at the time, but woman could relate to this essay in more than one way.

Language Component

1. Comprehension Exercises

The word ‘Comprehension’ means the ability to understand what you listen or what you read. It is an exercise which aims at improving or testing one’s ability to understand a language.

The major goal of reading comprehension is to help students develop the knowledge, skills and strategies they must possess to become proficient and independent readers.

In a comprehension test, students are given a passage or a paragraph or two. The stories, the poems, the questions, and answers were unseen to them before they read them. These paragraphs show the idea or mood concerning issues and solutions that the author provides. The main task is to answer the questions asked from the passage.

The following passages are designed to test not only one’s ability to understand and comprehend the texts but also to test the vocabulary and grammatical skills necessary and crucial to enhance linguistic abilities.

The following sample passage is worked out in order for students to understand how to approach comprehension passages.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions set on it.

World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day is held on June 20 each year. This day was arranged by the United Nations General Assembly. It is a day to raise awareness about the difficult situations that refugees are in around the world. It was first held on June 20 in 2001. The UN chose to do this because 50 years earlier an agreement about what rights refugees have was made.

To mark this day, many countries hold events. In fact, there are different events in more than 100 countries. Famous people, members of governments, aid workers and refugees participate in these events. At some events, films are played to show how refugees have to live and the terrible conditions they are in. Some people write letters to their government. They ask for more help for the refugees. Other people who want to see changes to how refugees are treated hold protests. These people are usually called activists.

The UN Refugee Agency is involved in this day. Their logo is associated with World Refugee Day. The logo has two olive branches which symbolize peace. Inside the two branches are two hands. They are surrounding the figure of a person. The two hands are protecting the person. The pictures on the logo are usually in blue on a white background, but sometimes they are white on a blue background.

1. When is World Refugee day held?
For answer refer to the first paragraph.
2. Which institution is associated with World Refugee Day?
For answer refer to the first paragraph.
3. When was the first World Refugee day held?
For answer refer to the first paragraph.
4. Name two ways by which people mark this day?
For answer refer to the second paragraph.
5. Describe the Logo of the World Refugee Day
For answer refer to the third paragraph.
6. What are people who hold protests called?
 - a. Actors
 - b. Activists
 - c. Activates

Ans: b. Activists

7. Identify the synonym of the word 'Symbolism' from the following words
 - a. Represent
 - b. Simplify
 - c. Entertain

Ans: a. Represent

8. Make a sentence using the following word 'Protest'
Ans: A protest was held in Freedom Park by the Eco- activists against the cutting down of trees in Cubbon Park.
9. What is the antonym of the word 'Progress'? Select from the following:
 - a. Advancement
 - b. Regress
 - c. Growth

Ans: b. Regress

10. Create a slogan to mark World Refugee day in about five to six words.
Ans: 'The World is a refuge for everyone'.

Practice exercise –1

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions set on it.

Reality Television

Reality television is a genre of television programming which, it is claimed, presents unscripted dramatic or humorous situations, documents actual events, and features ordinary people rather than professional actors. It could be described as a form of artificial or “heightened” documentary. Although the genre has existed in some form or another since the early years of television, the current explosion of popularity dates from around 2000.

Reality television covers a wide range of television programming formats, from game or quiz shows which resemble the frantic, often demeaning programmes produced in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s (a modern example is *Gaki no tsukai*), to surveillance- or voyeurism- focused productions such as *Big Brother*.

Critics say that the term “reality television” is somewhat of a misnomer and that such shows frequently portray a modified and highly influenced form of reality, with participants put in exotic locations or abnormal situations, sometimes coached to act in certain ways by off-screen handlers, and with events on screen manipulated through editing and other post-production techniques.

Part of reality television’s appeal is due to its ability to place ordinary people in extraordinary situations. For example, on the ABC show, *The Bachelor*, an eligible male dates a dozen women simultaneously, travelling on extraordinary dates to scenic locales. Reality television also has the potential to turn its participants into national celebrities, outwardly in talent and performance programs such as *Pop Idol*, though frequently *Survivor* and *Big Brother* participants also reach some degree of celebrity.

Some commentators have said that the name “reality television” is an inaccurate description for several styles of program included in the

genre. In competition-based programs such as Big Brother and Survivor, and other special-living-environment shows like The Real World, the producers design the format of the show and control the day-to-day activities and the environment, creating a completely fabricated world in which the competition plays out. Producers specifically select the participants, and use carefully designed scenarios, challenges, events, and settings to encourage particular behaviours and conflicts. Mark Burnett, creator of Survivor and other reality shows, has agreed with this assessment, and avoids the word “reality” to describe his shows; he has said, “I tell good stories. It really is not reality TV. It really is unscripted drama.”

1. What is reality television?
2. Name two reality shows mentioned in the passage
3. In which year did reality television become popular?
4. What is the potential of reality television on its participants?
5. Why do some commentators say that the name reality television is inaccurate in its description of the genre?
6. Pick out the appropriate synonym of the word surveillance from the words given below
 - a. Scrutiny
 - b. Mysterious
 - c. Powerful
7. Pick out the correct meaning of the word ‘Misnomer’ from the following words
 - a. Honest and truthful
 - b. Bold and ruthless
 - c. Wrong and inaccurate
8. Give the antonym of the word ‘Ordinary’.
9. Make a sentence with the following phrase ‘Living up to your potential’.
10. Use the word ‘fabricated’ in a sentence of your own.

Practice exercise – 2

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions set on it.

Floods are second only to fire as the most common of all natural disasters. They occur almost everywhere in the world, resulting in widespread damage and even death. Consequently, scientists have long tried to perfect their ability to predict floods. So far, the best that scientists can do is to recognize the potential for flooding in certain conditions. There are a number of conditions, from deep snow on the ground to human error, that cause flooding.

When deep snow melts it creates a large amount of water. Although deep snow alone rarely causes floods, when it occurs together with heavy rain and sudden warmer weather it can lead to serious flooding. If there is a fast snow melt on top of frozen or very wet ground, flooding is more likely to occur than when the ground is not frozen. Frozen ground or ground that is very wet and already saturated with water cannot absorb the additional water created by the melting snow. Melting snow also contributes to high water levels in rivers and streams. Whenever rivers are already at their full capacity of water, heavy rains will result in the rivers overflowing and flooding the surrounding land.

Rivers that are covered in ice can also lead to flooding. When ice begins to melt, the surface of the ice cracks and breaks into large pieces. These pieces of ice move and float down the river. They can form a dam in the river, causing the water behind the dam to rise and flood the land upstream. If the dam breaks suddenly, then the large amount of water held behind the dam can flood the areas downstream too.

Broken ice dams are not the only dam problems that can cause flooding. When a large human-made dam breaks or fails to hold the water collected behind it, the results can be devastating. Dams contain such huge amounts of water behind them that when sudden breaks occur, the destructive force of the water is like a great tidal wave. Unleashed dam waters can travel tens of kilometres, cover the ground in metres of mud and debris, and drown and crush everything and creature in their path.

Although scientists cannot always predict exactly when floods will occur, they do know a great deal about when floods are likely, or probably, going to occur. Deep snow, ice-covered rivers, and weak dams are all strong conditions for potential flooding. Hopefully, this knowledge of why floods happen can help us reduce the damage they cause.

1. How does deep snow cause flooding?
2. What happens when ice begins to melt in the rivers?
3. How can dams cause extensive damage?
4. Scientists can accurately predict floods- Yes/No
5. What are the strong conditions for flooding to take place?
6. Use the word 'destruction' in a sentence of your own.
7. Give the antonym of the word 'predictable'
8. Pick out the correct synonym for the word 'crush' from the following words
 - a. Compress
 - b. Push
 - c. Break
9. Make a sentence by using the following phrase 'like a tidal wave'
10. Give an appropriate title to the passage.

Practice exercise – Passage 3

Read the following passage and answer the questions based on it.

How long will a baby born today live? A hundred years? A hundred and twenty years?

Scientists are studying genes that could mean long life for us all. There are already many, many people who live to more than a hundred. In fact, there are now so many healthy elderly people that there's a name for them: the elderly. These are people over the age of eighty who have no major illnesses, such as high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes.

There are many scientific studies of communities where a healthy old age is typical. These include places like Calabria in southern Italy and the island of Okinawa in Japan. In Calabria, the small village of Molochio has a population of about 2,000. And of these 2,000 people, there are at least eight people over a hundred years old. Researchers ask people like this the secret of their long life. The answer is almost always about food and is almost always the same: 'I eat a lot of fruit and vegetables'; 'I eat a little bit of everything'; 'I never smoke, I don't drink'.

So, in the past, scientists looked at things such as diet and lifestyle for an explanation of long life. But these days they are also looking at genetic factors. Researcher Eric Topol says that there are probably genes that protect people from the effects of the ageing process. The new research into long life investigates groups of people who have a genetic connection. One interesting group lives in Ecuador. In one area of the country there are a number of people with the same genetic condition. It's called Laron syndrome. These people don't grow very tall – just over one metre. But Laron syndrome also gives them protection against cancer and diabetes. As a result, they live longer than other people in their families. On the other side of the world, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, there's another group of long-lived men. They are Japanese-Americans but they have a similar gene to the Laron syndrome group.

In Calabria, researchers constructed the family trees of the 100-year-old people. They looked at family information from the 19th century to today.

They think that there are genetic factors that give health benefits to the men. This is interesting because generally, in Europe, women live longer than men.

So what really makes people live longer? Probably, it's a combination of genes, the environment and one more thing – luck.

1. What are happy, elderly people called?
2. What is unique about the village of Molochio?
3. What is Laron Syndrome? What does it protect from?
4. What are the three factors that make people live longer?
5. Apart from diet and lifestyle, what is the other factor that scientists are looking at to study 'longer lives'?
6. Identify the name of a disease from the passage that is caused due to sugar.
7. Identify the synonym of the word 'investigate' from the following words
 - a. Explore
 - b. Navigate
 - c. Expose
8. Give the antonym of the word 'healthy'
9. Make a sentence with the following idiom 'the luck of the draw'
10. Suggest an appropriate title for the passage

Practice exercise – Passage 4

**Read the following passage and answer the questions based on it.
(Extract from ‘The Thirty-Nine Steps’ – by John Buchan)**

I did not give him very close attention. The fact is, I was more interested in his own adventures than in his high politics. I reckoned that Karolides and his affairs were not my business, leaving all that to him. So a lot that he said slipped clean out of my memory. I remember that he was very clear that the danger to Karolides would not begin till he had got to London, and would come from the very highest quarters, where there would be no thought of suspicion.

He mentioned the name of a woman—Julia Czechenyi—as having something to do with the danger. She would be the decoy, I gathered, to get Karolides out of the care of his guards. He talked, too, about a Black Stone and a man that lisped in his speech, and he described very particularly somebody that he never referred to without a shudder—an old man with a young voice who could hood his eyes like a hawk.

He spoke a good deal about death, too. He was mortally anxious about winning through with his job, but he didn’t care a rush for his life. ‘I reckon it’s like going to sleep when you are pretty well tired out, and waking to find a summer day with the scent of hay coming in at the window. I used to thank God for such mornings way back in the Blue-Grass country, and I guess I’ll thank Him when I wake up on the other side of Jordan.’

Next day, he was much more cheerful and read the life of Stonewall Jackson much of the time. I went out to dinner with a mining engineer I had got to see on business, and came back about half-past ten, in time for our game of chess before turning in.

1. How has the old man been described in the passage?
2. What did Karolides do with much of ‘his time’?
3. What does the following line analogize? “I reckon it’s like going to sleep when you are pretty well tired out and waking to find a summer day with the scent of hay coming in at the window.”

- a. What the narrator imagines the experience of death to be like.
 - b. The sensation of “winning through” with one’s job.”
 - c. The speaker is describing his fluctuating mood as the danger to Karolides approaches.
 - d. What the narrator’s companion imagines the experience of death to be like?
4. It can be gathered from the passage that Karolides:
- a. Is the narrator’s companion
 - b. Is presently in danger
 - c. Will be ruined by corporate sabotage
 - d. Will be threatened by surreptitious forces
5. The narrator’s greater interest in his companion’s “adventures than in his high politics” suggests that:
- a. The narrator is not a political man.
 - b. The narrator is indifferent to his companion.
 - c. The narrator is a man of action.
 - d. The narrator does not want to be implicated in his companion’s plot.
6. Find the synonym of ‘unsafe’ in paragraph one of the passage.
7. Find the antonym of ‘sad’ in paragraph three of the passage.
8. Make a sentence of your own using the word ‘anxious’.
9. Pick out the correct meaning of ‘decoy’ from the following:
- a. Bait
 - b. Threaten
 - c. Magic
10. The word ‘lisp’ refers to an impairment of_____.
- a. Speech
 - b. Sight
 - c. Taste

Paragraph Writing

Paragraph writing is a full and logical development of a single idea. The single idea maybe one in a series of related ideas which form the general subject matter of an Essay; so a paragraph is a subdivision of the main subject. Generally, a new paragraph begins when we introduce a new idea, time or place.

The structure of a paragraph is simple. The theme of the paragraph is often expressed in one sentence – generally the First. This sentence is called the **topic sentence** because it states the topic. The Topic sentence is supported by relevant information explaining or amplifying the stated topic.

A good paragraph must have unity, coherence & variety.

Unity:

Each paragraph usually deals with one idea or statement. All the sentences in the paragraph are logically connected to the central idea. This is known as the unity in the paragraph.

Coherence:

Coherence involves having the parts of a piece of writing in a meaningful order. The ideas in a paragraph must be so arranged as to make their logical relation clear. Ideas in a paragraph can be arranged in a logical order – either in the order of their occurrence or in the order of their importance.

Variety:

Variety is the spice of life. A standard paragraph maintains the interest of the reader. It avoids monotony by having many types of words, images, examples and sentences. The writer ensures that he uses both short and long sentences: and sentences of different structures.

Steps involved in developing a Paragraph:

- Think of a specific topic.
- Do brainstorming and collect idea
- Choose the topic sentence.
- Put the ideas in order around the topic sentence.
- Make your first and last sentences cryptic & effective.

Different types of paragraphs:

- **Descriptive:**

Describe: I am going to describe a sunset!

Sunset is the time of day when our sky meets the outer space solar winds. There are blue, pink, and purple swirls, spinning and twisting, like clouds of balloons caught in a whirlwind. The sun moves slowly to hide behind the line of horizon, while the moon races to take its place in prominence atop the night sky. People slow to a crawl, entranced, fully forgetting the deeds that must still be done. There is coolness, calmness, when the sun does set.

- **Narrative**

Narrate: I am going to narrate a story about the Apollo 11 space mission.

It was July 21, 1969, and Neil Armstrong awoke with a start. It was the day he would become the first human being to ever walk on the moon. The journey had begun several days earlier, when on July 16th, the Apollo 11 launched from Earth headed into outer space. On board with Neil Armstrong were Michael Collins and Buzz Aldrin. The crew landed on the moon in the Sea of Tranquility a day before the actual walk. Upon Neil's first step onto the moon's surface, he declared, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." It sure was!

- **Persuasive**

Persuade: I am going to persuade my neighbors to buy tickets to the school fair.

The school fair is right around the corner, and tickets have just gone on sale. We are selling a limited number of tickets at a discount, so move fast and get yours while they are still available. This is going to be an event you will not want to miss! First off, the school fair is a great value when compared with other forms of entertainment. Also, your ticket purchase will help our school, and when you help the school, it helps the entire community. But that's not all! Every ticket you purchase enters you in a drawing to win fabulous prizes. And don't forget, you will have mountains of fun because there are acres and acres of great rides, fun games, and entertaining attractions! Spend time with your family and friends at our school fair. Buy your tickets now!

- **Argumentative**

Argue: I am going to present a logical argument as to why my neighbor should attend the school fair.

The school fair is right around the corner, and tickets have just gone on sale. Even though you may be busy, you will still want to reserve just one day out of an entire year to relax and have fun with us. Even if you don't have much money, you don't have to worry. A school fair is a community event, and therefore prices are kept low. Perhaps, you are still not convinced. Maybe you feel you are too old for fairs, or you just don't like them. Well, that's what my grandfather thought, but he came to last year's school fair and had this to say about it: "I had the best time of my life!" While it's true that you may be able to think of a reason not to come, I'm also sure that you can think of several reasons why you must come. We look forward to seeing you at the school fair!

Suggested topics for writing Paragraphs:

- That is why I prefer to live in a city.
- Good health is the most precious of all possessions.
- Sunday is my favorite day of the week.
- Journey on a Metro Train.
 - Today banks offer a wide range of services to their customers.

Communicative Skills

There is general agreement that speech in communication is what defines us as humans and it is critically important part of our interaction with others. The context of spoken language is to explore the ways in which it is influenced and altered by the people and the situation we encounter.

Generating interview questions:

This exercise aims at improving the communicative skills of the learners. The task is to generate five questions and to interview any achiever or inspiring personality from any field, from past or present. The language used in this context is formal, tone is polite and these questions have to be creative and framed grammatically right. Personal questions to be avoided. Chose questions wisely. Take notes and listen carefully.

Example – 1

Imagine you are interviewing Sudha Murthy for your weekly magazine. You may ask her

- a) Good morning, congratulations for being honoured with the Padmashree award. How do you feel about it?
- b) Could you please throw some light on your social work?
- c) Do you have any plan of coming out with a new book?
- d) Would you share some of your childhood memories which have inspired you?
- e) What is the first decision you would take if you become the Prime Minister of the country?

Example – 2

What are the five questions that you would like to ask to Mary Kom?

- a) Congratulations on being nominated as a member of Rajya Sabha. Do you feel you are more responsible after being nominated as the member of Rajya Sabha?

-
- b) Could you please tell us about your initial struggle as a boxer?
 - c) Is it difficult to take up boxing as a profession?
 - d) Who is your inspiration?
 - e) What is the message that you want to give out to today's youth?

Task – 1

You are interviewing the state minister for education for your news channel. Frame five questions.

Task – 2

Assume you are interviewing Mother Teresa. What would you like to ask her?

Task – 3

You are interviewing the soldier who has survived the war. What questions would you ask him?

Additional English
I Semester Question Paper Pattern

Time: 3 hours

Max. Marks: 70

SECTION – A

- I. Answer any 5 out of 8 questions in one or two sentences each.** **5x2=10**
- II. Answer any 4 out of 6 questions in a paragraph of about 120 words each.** **4x5=20**
- III. Answer any 2 out of 4 questions in about two pages each.** **2x10=20**

SECTION – B

- I. Unseen passage for comprehension:**
- i. Comprehension questions** **5 Marks**
 - ii. Vocabulary exercises** **5 Marks**
- II. Writing a paragraph of 80 to 100 words on a given topic** **5 Marks**
- III. Generating interview questions.** **5 Marks**

Model Question Paper

Time: 3 hour

Max. Marks: 70

Section - A

I. Answer any Five questions in about in one or two sentences each:

5x2=10

- 1) Who is Gajala? Why has he been fretting for the last two days?
- 2) Where did Mohanaswamy go? Why?
- 3) Who was Ali? What peculiar obsession did he have?
- 4) Why did Dittu feel uneasy seeing the wallet in his taxi?
- 5) How was the earth that spoke of the dearth in poem Nila?
- 6) How does the enmassed snow appear in the shadow of Casuarina Tree?
- 7) What does the grandmother pray for in the beginning of the poem Moonrise? Whom does she pray to?
- 8) When did the idea of having a wife for herself occur to the author's mind in Why I Want a Wife?

II. Answer any Four questions in about a paragraph of 120 words:

4x5=20

- 1) What precautions did the villagers take against the rogue elephant?
- 2) How did Gururaja convince Mohanaswamy to buy the house in The Unpalatable offering?
- 3) What impression do you form about Coachman Ali after reading the story?
- 4) How will the river show its anger in the poem Nila?
- 5) What feelings arise in the poet when she sees the Casuarina Tree?
- 6) What is the historic event that the grandmother is unaware of? What is her reaction to it in the poem Moonrise?

III. Answer any Two questions in about two pages each:**2x10=20**

- 1) How did money create a rift between husband and wife in the short story The Taxi Driver?
- 2) Human greed causes Nature to revolt. Analyze with reference to the text The Rogue?
- 3) The grandmother in the poem Moonrise represents the traditional v/s modern theme. Discuss.
- 4) Why I Want a Wife is a mirror to the stereotype of patriarchy. Substantiate.

Section-B**IV. Read the following passage and answer the questions set on it.****1x10=10**

This long letter is because I'm writing before breakfast. Oh, the beautiful vine leaves! The house is covered with a vine. I looked out earlier, and Mrs. Wilcox was already in the garden. She evidently loves it. No wonder she sometimes looks tired. She was watching the large red poppies come out. Then she walked off the lawn to the meadow, whose corner to the right I can just see. Trail, trail, went her long dress over the sopping grass, and she came back with her hands full of the hay that was cut yesterday—I suppose for rabbits or something, as she kept on smelling it. The air here is delicious. Later on I heard the noise of croquet balls, and looked out again, and it was Charles Wilcox practicing; they are keen on all games. Presently he started sneezing and had to stop. Then I hear more clicketing, and it is Mr. Wilcox practicing, and then, 'a-tissue, a-tissue': he has to stop too. Then Evie comes out, and does some calisthenic exercises on a machine that is tacked on to a greengage-tree—they put everything to use—and then she says 'a-tissue,' and in she goes. And finally Mrs. Wilcox reappears, trail, trail, still smelling hay and looking at the flowers. I inflict all this on you because once you said that life is sometimes life and sometimes only a drama, and one must learn to distinguish t'other from which, and up to now I have always put that down as 'Meg's clever nonsense.' But this morning, it really does seem not life but a play, and it did amuse me enormously to watch the W's. Now Mrs. Wilcox has come in.

1. What is the reason given by the writer for ‘the long letter’?
2. What is the house covered with?
3. Who was in the garden and why was she there?
4. What was the game practiced by Charles Wilcox?
5. What, according to the writer must ‘one distinguish’? What is the conclusion he arrives about ‘that morning’?
6. Pick out the correct meaning of the word ‘Calisthenics’
 - a. Traumatic
 - b. dangerous
 - c. a form of gymnastic exercise
7. Pick out the correct synonym for the word ‘amuse’
 - a. Criticize
 - b. Entertain
 - c. Divert
8. Frame sentences of your own with the following set of words to bring out the difference in meaning
 - a. Trail
 - b. Trial
9. Use the word ‘inflict’ in a sentence of your own
10. The Comprehension passage is in the form of an essay/dialogue/ letter.
Choose the right option

V. Write a paragraph on ‘Using bicycles for a healthy life’ in about 80 to 100 words. **5 marks**

VI. Imagine you are interviewing the legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan for your weekly magazine. Frame five interview questions. **1x5=5**
