



SCEPTRE – III

ADDITIONAL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

as per SEP 2024

SEMESTER – III

Published by:

**Bengaluru City University Press
Bengaluru City University (BCU)
Central College Campus
Bengaluru – 560 001**

SCEPTRE – III

Additional English Textbook for all III Semester Courses coming under the faculty of Arts, Commerce and Science of the Bengaluru City University (BCU) is prepared by the Members of the Textbook Committee, Bengaluru City University.

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FOREWORD

Bengaluru City University's primary goal is to provide high-quality education. Providing pupils with interesting and educational reading material is one way to deliver a high-quality, targeted education. For the benefit of the vast intellectual community at the University, we have produced extensive course materials for those seeking undergraduate degrees here.

It is an enormous work that cannot be completed by one person to develop the book, ensure correctness, and prepare it in a way that best meets the demands of the student, both academically and practically. It takes a team effort and many important contributions from many people. The compilers of this book are seasoned academicians who are aware of the demands placed on students. It has also been carefully examined to eliminate any mistakes. The members of the Board of Studies - English have been of great help with editing. The contents of this book are selected in consonance with the vision of State Education Policy (SEP) 2024, where the University focuses on producing trained human resources who have extensive knowledge, modern skills, diverse abilities, leadership qualities, entrepreneurial skills, and strong cultural and ethical values. Most significantly, the curation of this text offers a nexus between higher education and employment market.

The University is currently in a good position to capitalize on these early years, and we reaffirm our commitment to offering top-notch instruction to students from diverse backgrounds; and fostering an atmosphere that enhances the development of each student's unique personality. As the Vice-Chancellor of Bengaluru City University, I take great pride in welcoming students to pursue virtue and knowledge through interdisciplinary study opportunities, with a focus on developing their overall personality.

I am excited about the new perspectives and enthusiasm you will bring to our school. I commend the Text Book Committee for their enormous work in putting together the content, which covers a range of language components to brilliant literary pieces. My sincere gratitude to the Director of Bengaluru City University Press and all the staff for releasing the textbook on time and in a methodical manner. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Chairperson and the Members of the Board for their enjoyable and thorough exploration of numerous subjects and grammatical components. It is my sincere wish that both educators and learners will find great inspiration in the book to utilise it to the fullest and enhance their language and literary comprehension.

Prof. K. R. Jalaja
Vice Chancellor (Acting)
Bengaluru City University

PREFACE

Why study Language?

Any language study programme should be viewed as a chance to introduce pupils to the sociocultural experiences, traditions, and communication patterns of people from around the globe. Students may use this as a chance to learn more about themselves, their neighbours, and those who live in different countries. One way to help with this is to assign readings to students, which serve as a record of human history and development over time, both real and imagined.

Naturally, one might wonder why literature is recommended for studying the linguistic characteristics of a language. Here, we want to stress that no language training should be designed to be value neutral. Language classes make a significant contribution to the intellectual and personal growth of students, serving not only as a means of communication but also as tools for personal development. Reading as such will aid the students in their development of mature thought.

It is quite apt to mention the collaborative thinking of Phipps and Gonzales here, where they say, “languages are more than skills; they are the medium through which communities of people engage with, make sense of, and shape the world. Through language, they become active agents in creating their environment. This process is what we call ‘linguaging’. Linguaging is a life skill. It is inextricably interwoven with social experience in a living society. And it develops and changes constantly as that experience evolves and changes.”

This issue is offered in print and electronic versions to ensure maximum accessibility and ongoing relevance. We believe that instructors will find this volume to be a helpful resource and a priceless source of reference.

For this edition, I feel obligated to offer my expertise, analysis, and conclusions. The literary component aims to make students socially and culturally aware of history and current-day issues. In contrast, the language component seeks to enhance students’ soft skills related to proficient verbal expression and conversation. It is intended that students will utilise the text to its fullest potential and recognise the value of developing fine language skills while interacting with spoken materials, such as literature.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar of Bengaluru City University for their unwavering support. I would like to express my gratitude to the publisher for helping us release the textbook on schedule and to all the committee members for their enormous efforts.

Dr. T. N. Thandava Gowda
Chairperson – UG Board of Studies
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OBJECTIVES OF THE TEXT

Food is far more than sustenance – it is a memory, an identity, a culture, a resistance, and a celebration.

SCEPTRE - III brings together a curated collection of literary and non-literary texts that explore the theme of food as a powerful narrative force. Across genres and geographies, these lessons highlight how meals and ingredients carry personal histories, mark social hierarchies, preserve tradition, and challenge norms.

From kitchen-table stories and colonial recipes to hunger memoirs and poetic meditations on taste, the selections in this book invite readers to consider the many layers of meaning embedded in what we eat, how we cook, and why we remember food.

Each chapter/lesson in the Literary section offers opportunities to engage critically with texts that foreground food — whether as a metaphor, a plot device, or a cultural symbol — while also encouraging interdisciplinary inquiry into history, anthropology, gender, class, and migration.

In the Language section, Food Review Writing has been introduced, it is a practical way to engage with grammar in context while developing a marketable communication skill. With growing digital opportunities, this skill bridges English language proficiency with real-world applications in media, hospitality, and freelance content creation.

Designed for students of literature, cultural studies, and food humanities, this textbook aims to sharpen analytical skills while cultivating an appreciation for the sensory, symbolic, and political dimensions of food. As you read, discuss, and reflect, these narratives have the potential to deepen your understanding of how food shapes — and is shaped by — the human experience.

Textbook Committee

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

The new Additional English syllabus for undergraduate courses at Bengaluru City University broadly aims to develop students' literary sensibilities and enhance their intermediate language skills over four semesters. The course materials reflect this holistic approach. The III Semester textbook hence has the following components:

- a. An anthology with poems, drama, short stories, essays (prose) & TED Talk to develop literary sensibilities.
- b. A workbook to comprehend English grammar at an intermediate level.

Aspects of modern relevance, including human values, spatiality, discrimination, and resistance, are addressed in the selected literary texts. They come from translations as well as other scholarly works. The goal is to help students develop literary sensibility by understanding and responding to the linguistic and cultural intricacies of the texts. The non-canonical nature of the selections allows for a learner-centred approach and provides an opportunity for classroom interactions to reveal numerous levels of significance.

Literary Component

Pre-reading Activities accompany each selection to help students understand the context of the subject matter. A range of questions are included in the post-reading portion to help with factual, inferential and evaluative understanding. The main purpose of these instructional questions is to get students talking in class and provide them a platform to voice different viewpoints.

The glossary component is included in every selection. This aids the students to develop their vocabulary and comprehension of new words. The component also serves as a valuable tool to showcase various forms and the range of possible meanings of words in context.

Further Reading section is provided at the end of every selection. The suggestive texts are included to stimulate students' interest in related reading contexts and provide scope for sustained reading.

Language Component

With the help of the grammar section, students may brush up on fundamental sentence patterns progressively advance to learning a variety of communication skills. This grammar material aims to shift the emphasis from the conventional 'grammar-translation' technique to 'context-based' learning.

This selection of grammar topics is designed for intermediate language building skills. Therefore students are expected to have a reasonable grasp of the fundamental language skills (listening, speaking, writing and reading) skills and proceed to comprehend the nuances of language through context-based learning.

Textbook Committee

CONTENTS

LITERARY COMPONENT

1	PARASAKTI AND OTHERS IN A PLASTIC BOX - Ambai	2
2	FINDING OUR FOOD IDENTITY - Gina Keatley	10
3	THANKS GOD FOR THE FOOD - S. Y. Wong	15
4	BLACKBERRYING - Sylvia Plath	18
5	THE GRANDMOTHER - Lynne Geary	22
6	FOOD DIPLOMACY	27
7	WATER! - Komal Swaminathan	35

LANGUAGE COMPONENT

1	NOTICE WRITING	71
2	TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE	77
3	FACT FILE	80
4	FOOD REVIEW WRITING	82
	Question Paper Pattern	86
	Model Question Paper	87

LITERARY COMPONENT

PARASAKTI AND OTHERS IN A PLASTIC BOX - AMBAI

Pre-reading Activities:

1. *Can individuals from different generations bridge the gap and effectively communicate with each other to understand each other's perspectives and experiences? Discuss.*
2. *Think of instances where inter-generational dialogue has led to positive outcomes or resolutions.*
3. *How do mothers foster a sense of independence and self-reliance in their children and how have the roles and expectations of mothers evolved across different cultures?*
4. *How can one cultivate self-reliance and create one's own space for personal and professional growth?*

Introduction to the Author:

Dr. C. S. Lakshmi (1944) is an Indian feminist writer and independent researcher in women's studies with over thirty years of experience. She writes under the pseudonym Ambai, which means 'woman' in Tamil. She has served as a research officer at the Indian Council of Historical Research and as a lecturer at a college in New Delhi.

Dr. C. S. Lakshmi is a renowned Tamil fiction writer, whose works have been translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom. Some of her notable works include *In a Forest, A Deer* (2006); *Fish in A Dwindling Lake* (2012); *A Purple Sea* (1992), *A Meeting on the Andheri Over bridge* (2016), and the collection of short stories *A Kitchen in the Corner of the House*. Most of Ambai's works reveal the lives of traditional women their feelings, love, courage, will-power, search for identity, self-respect and equality; they celebrate the lives of women, their resilience and achievements.

One of her famous works, *Andhi Maalai*, published in 1966, won the "Kalaimagal Narayanaswamy Ayiar" Prize. This award recognized her early work and contributed to her growing reputation as a significant Tamil writer.

In 1988, Ambai founded Sound and Picture Archives for Research On Women, a non-governmental organization for documenting and archiving the work of female writers and artists. As of 2009, she continues to serve as the organisation's Director and a member of its Board of Trustees. She is a current member of the University of Michigan's Global Feminisms Project. She considers herself a "feminist who has lived without compromise".

About the Text:

In the story, *Parasakti and Others in a Plastic Box*, Bharathi and Dhanam share their expressions about their mother, Kumudha, through letters. The narrator's ageing mother needs more space than just enough for the plastic box in which she keeps her gods. This story affirms that women need equal consideration more from the family than from the society. Embeddedness is a cardinal virtue in Ambai's world, one that appears in her female characters' ability to store life in the smallest of spaces, and to infuse ordinary objects with a significant history.

She portrays the traditional mother Kumudha as a goddess because she always carries a plastic box containing four idols of gods. 'Parasakti' is an Indian goddess who protects

SCEPTRE - III

her worshipers like a mother protects her child. Moreover she is the mother of other gods in the box like Ganesha, Murugan and Little Krishna. Ambai has drawn a parallel between the traditional mother, Kumudha, who protects her family, and the Parasakti, who protects humanity as a whole. Similar to her locking up of the idols in the plastic box, she has locked up all her emotions and feelings within her. She never revealed her emotions to her daughter, but they have finally come to understand her feelings and found a way to appreciate her motherhood.

The author portrays the life of traditional women being confined to the window sill and the kitchen, and how the definitions of freedom differ according to Kumudha and Bharati. The story delineates how the younger generation, seeking their own freedom, unconsciously hinders the freedom of older generations without understanding their values, sentiments, and attachments. The story delves into themes of motherhood, tradition, and the challenges of navigating cultural shifts and personal loss.

Spreading out some rice mixed with ghee on the windowsill, and giving it a sharp tap with the back of her spoon, Amma called to the crows in Telugu, “Krishna, *raa*.” What was so special about Telugu remained a mystery. Though Dhanam’s father was transferred often, and to such different places as Assam, Ahmedabad, Orissa, and Bangalore, Amma’s language to the crows never changed. Even in faraway Assam, the crows came flocking to her, as soon as she called, “Krishna, *raa*.” Perhaps crows are united in this matter of language. Amma had taught this very same language signal to everyone who was close to her. Even Dhanam’s younger brother Dinakaran’s American wife’s child by her first husband called out to the crows, “Krishna, *raa*,” whenever he came to India. The windowsill her base, and scorning all border disputes, Amma had established for herself a world where crows recognized no difference among states and nations.

Yet, sometimes it seemed to Dhanam that although it appeared to encompass only these small things - a drop of ghee, a spoonful of rice, and a windowsill - Amma’s space wasn’t just contained there. She imagined that the tapping of the spoon against the windowsill drew to it everything that happened outside that window, too. It would seem to her that her mother’s space wasn’t confined to a single identifiable shape, but was ever spreading outward.

Dhanam’s elder sister Bharati’s marriage had taken her to America, and then ended in divorce. Bharati was devastated by this. She was greatly distressed; overcome by panic, fear, and shame. Every time she took a step, she felt as if there was no firm ground beneath her feet. Amma agreed to their father’s plea, boarded a plane, and went to her daughter’s aid. Ten days later, a long letter arrived from Bharati.

Dhanam, Amma has arrived here. Two days after she came, the inland airline company on which she travelled telephoned, harassing her to accept a contract to make wild-lime pickle for them. Apparently, Amma declared it at the customs’ examination. They must have tasted it as a check. As if this weren’t enough, on the fourth day, when I came home from work, I saw that she had just finished stirring up some *paal-kova*, which she had made out of a couple of litres of milk. When I asked her about it, she said that she had seen three pregnant women in the neighbourhood. The *paal-kova* would be good for their health. Then she dragged me along with her, explained to them that these were milk-sweets, pointed out that they contained saffron, and left me to enlarge on the many wonders wrought by saffron for both mothers and children. (Amma has brought a small container of high-quality saffron with her.

She hasn't explained, to date, why she felt obliged to bring it. It's exactly like the lack of answers to questions about the wild-lime pickle.) Now I'm terrified that these women will invite her to be present when they give birth.

There's plenty of sunshine here. I can guess that Amma's hands are itching to make *vadagam*. Do you remember how, in Bangalore, she used to wear a hat against the sun, and squeeze out vadagam? How she used to leave us both on guard, with an open umbrella tied to a stone beside us, to frighten away the crows? Do you remember how we used to imagine that we were like Valli and her friends when they were chasing the birds away, in that old play from Independence times, "*Valli's Wedding*," and how we used to sing, "O white, white storks"? What Independence struggle did we see; what after all did we understand by "*aalolam*"? It was that song that Amma taught us, wasn't it, that went, "You sparrows who come from elsewhere, who squat upon our land and peck at our fields, despoiling India..."? How furious we used to get as we sang those words! Even today, it seems to me, if Amma were to make vadagam, we could sing the same song with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in mind.

My window here doesn't have a sill. I've put in a wooden attachment, though, to hold flowerpots. Amma lays out rice there, and calls, "Krishna, raa" every day. How can there be crows here? But from the second day, the squirrels began to arrive. Now, as soon as they hear the sound of the spoon tapping, they turn up, big as bandicoots. Amma's friends. Even amongst these, she's looking out for a couple of pregnant ones. Maybe she'll mix an herbal potion into their rice who knows? When I think about it, it seems to me that this coded language in which Amma speaks to crows and squirrels is actually one which binds the earth and sky together. In a strange way, it's like *vajram*, cementing us together and keeping us from withering away.

Amma hasn't asked me a single word about Kumarasamy. Nor has she spoken about the divorce. She carries on with her own business, making mustard seasonings, fragrant with ghee. If I am gazing out of the window, she nags at me to come and grind a chutney in the blender. Or, she will explain to me at length how a *poriyal* of finely chopped banana flowers, when soaked in buttermilk and cooked with a well-ground masala of onion, ginger, cumin seeds, and coconut, is very good for the health. How is this information useful to me here, in this town, where banana flowers are not to be found? But all the same, Dhanu, the backyard of Paatti's house in Coimbatore spreads out in my mind. How many banana trees stood there! In the front courtyard, by the threshold, there were traveller's palms with fan-shaped leaves. Do you remember that photograph of the two of us, sitting on the *thinnai* there? I can see it even now, my narrow face, hair combed flat, plaited with a fibre ribbon and taken over my shoulder; all my teeth showing in a grin. I often wonder about the eucalyptus sapling that we planted together before Thaatha sold the house, and whether the present owners have let it grow and not cut it down.

When I asked her to come and take care of me, I never imagined she'd create all these jobs for herself with the speed of a whirlwind. In a street close by, where they sell Indian groceries, there's a shop run by a Tamil. Amma has had a couple of conversations with him already, about Tamil Nadu politics. She is trying to break up the everyday routine and discipline that I need so much for my work. She irritates me no end. She makes me yell, "Amma, leave me alone!" All the same - you won't believe this - I've gained a whole kilo in just these ten days.

Day before yesterday, when I came home Amma was singing "*Dikku theriyaada kaattil...* In the forest where I cannot find my way." After expanding on the line, "Flowers like fragrant embers in the heart," when she came to the words "Weary of limb I sank down to the

SCEPTRE - III

ground,” Dhanu, I leaned against the door and wept. You sang that very song at school, at the Bharati song competition, wagging your head and shaking your two plaits, this way and that.

We went to visit the Sivanesan, who work at the University here, at their home. During the conversation, Amma discovered that Tilakam Sivanesan’s mother was her childhood friend Shenbagam from Vilaatthikulam. It seems Shenbagam’s family were very much involved with the Self Respect Movement. Amma then sang the Bharatidasan song she used to sing with Tilakam’s mother, “Rise up, you noble Tamil women, like many moons in a single sky! Arise and make good the humiliation to your finest heritage, the Tamil language!” Tilakam was completely overwhelmed. It seems that her mother died when Tilakam was still a child. She was so moved, and kept saying over and over again that she had not known all this about her mother.

“All the same, my mother has kept her belief in God” I told her.

“Amma, do you go in for elaborate *pujai* and all that?” Tilakam asked.

“I’ve only brought four idols or so in a small plastic box,” Amma said in reply.

When you open Amma’s plastic box, you’ll find a small Amman, a Sivalingam, Ganapati, Murugan, a baby Krishna on all fours, and some other gods. I really don’t know, Dhanu, whether she has come here as a woman on her own, or whether she has rolled up the whole world and brought it with her in her bag.

Once Bharathi was connected again to the squirrels, to the minutiae of her neighbours’ lives, to food tasting of salt and tamarind and chilli, and to the Tamil songs that she had totally forgotten, their mother returned home. It was only later that they realized that she had actually met and spoken to Kumarasamy. Some members of his family came one day to bring back various pieces of jewellery, silver vessels, and such things. Amma served them an elaborate meal and sent them on their way. When Dhanam asked her, “Why, Amma, did you ask them to return all this, then?” she retorted, “All this belongs to Bharathi, doesn’t it? Didn’t we give it to her for her own use?”

Nobody spoke about Kumarasamy after that. A couple of years later, when Bharathi came home, having married a Gujarati, Amma gave her the jewellery. She sold the silver vessels, and gave her the money, to spend in India.

As Dhanam watched her mother calling to the crows, Amma turned round and came towards her.

“Have you eaten, Dhanam?”

“I ate a dosai at the restaurant before I came. I didn’t actually plan to come here. That’s why.”

Amma sat down to eat. Once she had begun eating, Dhanam asked her, “What have you decided, Ma?”

Amma was quiet for a while. A month had gone by since Appa died. The owners of the house kept on asking for it to be vacated.

“Tell me, Ma.”

“What can I say? Your father left me in this state. How much I nagged him to build our own house! He always said, “Why do we want such a headache.” Now he has left me to struggle alone, without a place of my own...”

“Why do you say that, Amma? You must stay only with Bharathi and with me. You can go occasionally to Dinakaran, if you want to.”

“That’s a fine thing. When you yourself are having such a difficult...” she dragged the words out, hesitantly.

Dhanam’s husband Sudhakar had tried to set up a business, and had overreached himself. There had been a huge loss, to the extent that all their savings were gone. It was this that Amma meant.

“That’s nothing, Amma. I will take you home and look after you,” Dhanam told her.

“I didn’t say no, now, did I? Do I need a mansion or a palace, after all? Rice for one meal, rice-water for the next, that’s it. It is love that is important, di.”

“Don’t all your things have to be packed?” asked Dhanam.

“What things do I have, di? I’ll just put my four deities into a plastic box, and be ready to leave.”

But it was only when Dhanam and Sudhakar came to help her pack, having taken a couple of days’ leave, that certain matters became clear. Everything that Amma possessed had a story: the shiny, dark red stone with stripes which she had picked up in Haridwar before Bharathi was born, the frying pan that she had bought for eight annas when Bharathi was just one year old, the tiered standing-lamp with her name, Kumuda, etched on it, which had been presented to her when she visited her parents for the first time after her wedding. She went round and round the house in vain, unable to decide what to keep and what to throw away. It didn’t look as if she would get rid of anything, easily - not the chest of drawers with a mirror that she had brought away after Paatti died, nor the dolls that Bharathi, Dhanam, and Dinakar had stored away, nor the bound volumes of serialized stories, nor the green trunk full of letters, nor their recipes for Siddha medicines and the cookery notes that she still collected. Like the rakshasa who would die if you crushed the bee that was hidden in a small box and placed in the hollow of a tree across the seven seas, Amma’s very life was buried in each and every one of these things.

Dhanam and Sudhakar made a few quick decisions. For the time being, they rented a car-shed that was not in use, two houses away, and deposited all Amma’s things there, carefully. And after that, Amma came to stay in Dhanam’s house with seven or eight pieces of luggage - including the plastic box - and her *vinai*. That *vinai* had been packed with care every time Appa was transferred. A *vinai* that had been bought for Amma in Andhra, when she was only six years old. A *vinai* carved out of dark wood. She had made a cover for it out of an old sari, to keep it free of dust. There was not enough space in Dhanam’s house for it to lie horizontally as it should. They had to lean it upright against a wall, supported by a piece of wood.

Amma looked for a suitable place, in Dhanam’s atheistic household, to open her plastic box. In the end, the box with Amman and the other deities climbed on to one of a set of shelves intended for books, which they had fixed behind a door.

SCEPTRE - III

One evening, a week later, Dhanam sat close to the table at a window writing a letter, while watching the parrots as they alternately flew about or settled down on the fruit tree outside.

Bharathi, Amma has come to my house now. But she is not at peace. There isn't the fuss and excitement of preparing meals every day, here. Until he can decide on what to do next, Sudhakar is mostly at home. Some bread and an egg, and his meal is done. At the most he'll make a *kichidi* with rice, dal, and vegetables all cooked together, and eat that. The regular cooking is only for Amma. A couple of times she tried to insist that Sudhakar should eat. Then one day I said to her, "Amma, Sudhakar will cook for himself whatever he needs. Leave him to his own ways. We must allow each other that much freedom, Ma."

"Is that what you call freedom? I can't understand it," she fretted.

As soon as she arrived, she was anxious to make all those things like *rasam* and *sambar* powders before the monsoons set in. Now, look, within one week, all these powders are ready in my house. And there are still three months to go before the beginning of the rains! Day before yesterday she went and bought a quantity of limes, chopped them up, and made salt pickle and hot pickle in two separate lots. Ginger *murabha* and ginger pickle have also been prepared. Because of something that I said casually during the course of conversation, she went out in the hot sun, bought a lot of greens, which she has now cleaned and kept ready. She thinks that we have to do so much thinking for our jobs and such, so she has boiled up some oil with hibiscus flowers in it, for massaging our heads. In anticipation of Sandhya's holidays from the Rishi Valley school, she has made fried snacks and packed them in a tin. Meanwhile, all sorts of divisions have been established in our house: good water (which Amma has collected) and ordinary water (which we have collected); vessels in which meat and eggs have been cooked, and vessels in which they have not; Amma's plates and our plates.

Of course, the plastic box for the gods is quite a small one. But within three days, this matter of Amma's pujai has expanded, spilling along the wooden plank beneath, accompanied by a brass pot, a plate for the camphor offering, a decorative *kolam* pattern, incense sticks, sandalwood paste, *kumkumam*, and flowers. Her jobs in connection with the gods keep on increasing: scrubbing them with tamarind and bathing them; offering them milk and raisins; dressing Amman in different skirts and *davanis*, and decorating her with sandalwood and kumkumam. The little girl from next door is roped in, because the milk and raisin *prasadam* needs a recipient. Then, because the little girl's mother's sister-in-law doesn't have any babies, Amma has to prepare a Siddha medicine for her. When Lingamma's husband, from the house opposite to us, has a headache, she'll grind up a mixture of dried ginger and pepper in milk, at nine o'clock at night.

Amma's gods can be contained in a small plastic box, it is true. She can pick up that box and fly wherever she chooses. But in order to return, she needs a place which contains the brass vessels etched with her name, Kumuda; her teakwood cabinet; her bureau with its wire-mesh doors; a place with windowsills. A place with a jasmine bower and a snake-gourd vine; a place where her *vinai* can be laid as it should be, horizontally. She might sing that Thevaram which begins, "Forsaking all other attachments, on your sacred feet alone my mind is intent." but Amma is one who is deeply bound to the earth. Even though she might float free like cotton wool, she'll always feel the need to touch the earth again. Certainly, she could stay either at my house or at yours. But it is bound to be hard for her. She'll tell a thousand little lies: this one to hide that, that to hide this. It's not just that Amma needs a place to live; she must reign indisputably in that space. Because Amma isn't just an individual, she's an

institution. Her need is not simply a small space in which she can keep her plastic box. The pity is, she is wandering about seeking after a realm of her own. And if you and I wish to do so, we could give it to her. The jewellery that you and I possess were all given to us by Amma. If we were to sell these, we could give her house back to her. The owners are still trying to sell it. Dinakaran can send her a fixed amount each month. In a couple of months, Sandhya will finish her schooling and come home. She is eager to go and stay with her Paatti. So with many long-term schemes such as learning English so that she can talk to your children, embroidering *salwar-kameez* sets that Sandhya can wear to college, giving music lessons, planning her autobiography, grafting roses, and setting out spinach plots, Amma will live happily in her own house.

When she had finished writing, she looked up to see her mother seated in the easy chair, gazing out at the street. The green parrots had ceased their restless flying about and were quiet, hidden among the leaves.

Glossary:

1. **plastic box:** a metaphor for the burdens and attachments of the past that individuals carry with them
2. **scorning:** feel or express contempt or disdain for
3. **disputes:** a disagreement or argument
4. **harass:** subject to aggressive pressure or intimidation
5. **wild-lemon:** specific variety of lemon or a related citrus fruit used in various cuisines in South India and Southeast Asia
6. **paal-kova:** a popular and favourite Indian sweet which is literally milk thickened to halwa consistency, with sugar
7. **vadagam:** refers to small, dried balls of spiced and seasoned ingredients, often used in South Indian cuisine
8. **aalolam:** flapping of wings; rustling sound
9. **despoil:** steal or violently remove valuable possessions from; plunder
10. **gaze out:** to look steadily or for a long time, especially out of a window or from a specific location
11. **nag out:** to repeatedly annoy someone by complaining or asking them to do something
12. **thinna:** porch, verandah or a raised platform
13. **Vilathikulam:** a town in the Tamil Nadu, India
14. **minutiae:** the small, precise or trivial details of something
15. **ginger murabba:** ginger candy that is used as home remedy for many illnesses in South India - sweet jam pickle
16. **Thevaram:** a collection of devotional hymns dedicated to Lord Shiva; sacred hymn

Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)

1. What kind of world had Amma established for herself?
2. Name the places Dhanam's father was transferred to.
3. What is Amma's peculiar way of calling crows?
4. What kind of harassment did Bharati's mother face?
5. Why is Bharati terrified in the story?
6. Mention the song on freedom that Amma had taught to Bharati and Dhanam.
7. What according to Bharati binds the earth and sky together?
8. What did Kumuda carry in the plastic box?

SCEPTRE - III

9. Name some of Kumuda's belongings and why they were important to her.

Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)

1. Describe the memories recollected by Bharati after her mother's visit.
2. Discuss how Kumuda's life is confined to the window sill and the kitchen.
3. Explain why Tilakam was completely overwhelmed.
4. 'Kumuda asked Kumaraswamy's family to return all the things that were gifted to Bharati at the time of her wedding'. Elaborate.
5. How does Dhanam explain about Kumuda being deeply bound to the earth?
6. Write a note on Dhanam's description on her mother's happiness.
7. "Amma isn't just an individual, she's an institution." Discuss.

Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)

1. "She is trying to break up the everyday routine and discipline that I need so much for my work." Explain with reference to the story.
2. Explain briefly what Bharati shares regarding her mother's visit and the changes that occurred, through a letter to her sister.
3. "I really don't know, Dhanu, whether she has rolled up the whole world and brought it with her in her bag." Elaborate.
4. Discuss how Kumuda navigates her daughters' lives and their own choices.

Further Reading:

1. *Arranged Marriage* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
2. *In a Forest, A Deer* by Ambai
3. *Everyday Use* by Alice Walker

FINDING OUR FOOD IDENTITY

- GINA KEATLEY

Pre-reading Activities:

1. *What do you understand by the words 'Identity' and 'Food'? Discuss.*
2. *Do you think food is a universal language which binds us all?*
3. *Analyse how food helps to form our identity.*
4. *Do you think there is any connection between food and culture? Discuss with relevant examples.*

Introduction to the Speaker:

Gina Keatley (born on 9th March, 1980) is an American nutritionist, media personality and television host. She is better known for her food-focused television shows and her approach to health and weight loss. She is the founder of 'Bushwick Gallery' and Professor of International Cuisine and Culture at City University at New York.

Her work reflects a deep engagement with global narratives and modern expression, brought to life through the acclaimed *Untamed Moderns* - a bold series of abstract compositions exploring themes of identity, transformation, and cultural intersections. Her journey into the art world is shaped by her extensive career in food media and cultural storytelling. As a former creative for leading food publications and a trusted expert featured on major TV networks – including CNN, BBC, the Food Network and Amazon Prime's *Deliciously Diverse* – she has built a reputation for blending tradition, innovation, and global perspectives. Her years of engaging with international cuisines and cultural narratives inform her artistic vision, bringing a unique depth and vibrancy to her abstract works.

She was awarded the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition Community Leadership Award in 2013.

About the Speech:

Gina Keatley proficiently researches the concept of 'food identity', drawing from her rich experiences as a Professor of International Cuisine and an ardent food explorer. She has a unique ability to intertwine food, culture and personal experiences, which is truly inspiring. Through her speech, she not only encourages embracing diversity in our diets, but even provokes us to challenge our preconceptions about food, and in this process she reminds that food is not merely about what is on our plates, but about the people we share it with and the experiences we gather along the way.

Hello everyone, I'm Gina Keatley. I'm Professor of International Cuisine at the City University of New York. I teach Culture through Cuisine, which is basically an examination of the world's culture through lecture and lab. I've worked in culinary, food media, nutrition and I currently work in International Business. Yes! It's been a big place worth but it all has one thing in common - food and well, me. Today we're going to talk about food and you, and why the 'you' matters so much. Your relationship and experience with food are the core elements to your food identity, it could shape your life whether savory or sweet. Every meal is a fresh start, so let's get cooking.

SCEPTRE - III

My definition of food identity is a mixture of behaviors, beliefs, personality traits, form, and/or expression that characterize a person or group and their relationship to food.

According to Dr. Burt these developments can be either internal or external, but to understand food you can generally lead with three fundamentals. I'm broad brushing here, so no emails please, but for 95% of the population these matter a lot - Religion, Location and Socioeconomic Status.

By understanding these three core elements, you can learn a lot about a person and what they're most likely to eat, including yourself. But to understand food you really have to get to the gist - that food is not just about food! Food is about people, this is the biggest mistake I see people make learning about food and identity. Yes! Of course, the food has to taste good. But the real experience is where and when you experienced it? Who do you eat those street tacos with? What made it a memorable experience? It is not just the sauce, but the intangible ingredient - people. I'm not suggesting cannibalizing here. However, should we eat our own meat grown from ourselves in a lab? (that's another Ted Talk altogether).

So, how do we find our food identity? Here are six points for finding 'your food identity' and embracing strength to diversity. Let's start at the end, and plan your last meal. I'll always tell everyone to think about every meal like it could be their last because one day it will be; it's not to scare them. Well, maybe it's to scare them a little, but to motivate them, to motivate them to live a delicious life, taking a moment to make a meal more decadent or beautiful will create a more flavorful moment overall. Selecting a reverse menu creates a sense of interest, not to mention, fills your nutrient needs. You can only absorb so much of a vitamin and mineral at a time, so diversity builds both Body and Soul. What would your last meal be? Would it be steak and red wine? or Curry and tea? Maybe both? I'm greedy and I want a lot but this puts real exclamation point on what you love creating and consuming. Now that you're hungry for change you need to listen to yourself and what other people say about you even when you think you're right. Here's a quick trip about my first trip to Asia.

It's 2 a.m. lying in a tube wide awake. I must be in Japan. Yes I'm at one of the famous capsule hotels. Upon my arrival, a front desk worker gives me oversized sleep shirt, slippers and a key to a mini locker. After I climb my tiny tube, pull down my privacy curtain and tuck myself in, I hear a knock on my clock door. It's a Japanese woman and she gently says, please leave my tube. Well, I stick my head out and I say this is my tube, and how dare this woman in a matching night robe harass me? Probably show my keys - see, Tube 91! She probably takes my key turns it around and says, "I'm so sorry, you are Tube 16!" With a wave of 'oops' running down my face she politely waits as I say, "My bad", grab all my goodies and get out of there. Besides looking at things in another way, Japan happens to have the best fish in the world and some pretty adorable snow monkey action... He's touching me, it's horrible...

We all get busy and tired, we go on autopilot; we have to ask ourselves 'what do we like?', 'what do we dislike?', 'why do we dislike it?' Just because you dislike something, you might be wrong! If you didn't like crab as an eight-year old you might want to revisit that ingredient or entire seafood category altogether. After all it's been a minute since you were eight. Ask yourself as an adult - 'what do I like?', 'what do I dislike?' and listen to yourself, after some tasty research of course, you might have been wrong all along. This will help clarify your current food identity. However, we must be ready for resistance. After getting thrown off every cooking show I could (that's right), I created my own cooking show here in New York. And after four seasons and great ratings might I add, I was told they wanted me to boil the pasta and not the rice! So yet again I created my food documentary - exploring locations that interest me, regardless of what look, what nationality I am. Live in a global society, you need

to be something, to highlight and appreciate it, that doesn't mean you shouldn't use the help of experts, but you don't have to start off as an expert yourself! Just be generously curious with an open heart and an empty stomach.

My most recent project was making tea from olive leaves in Italy. If you want to see resistance, try being an Italian in Italy that doesn't speak the language. Maama mia... getting a property overseas developing a product and pushing it through e-commerce how hard can it be. Let me tell you it can be crazy hard. Change can be difficult and this includes the expansion of a country's food identity.

The tea is called Mochi and is 100% powdered olive leaves. Yes, it's a totally fresh product in a region of the world more known for cappuccinos than chai but that's what makes it great. It's bold, challenging in a blend of cultures just like Sicily where the olive leaves come from. I don't speak Italian yet, I'm learning, however I do speak food. What food language do you speak? Here's the hard part of finding your food identity - it's outrageous to believe but not everybody's on board for our projects or how did they appreciate your corn bread or value your flambé. But the truth is not all people love diversity, learning new things and traditions puts you and them at risk for failure. If you know someone in your life who only eats chickens or could care less about artisan bread development in San Francisco, then you understand. You don't learn and grill for them, you taste and conquer for yourself. Being a chef in your kitchen is being your own boss, enjoying your own praise and taking your own lumps when you disappoint yourself. The only person that can define you is yourself, you must take time to curate whom you want to be with every meal that you consume. This includes new meals who expand your food identity.

Here's a creepy story about bug eating - there are few places further from anything or everything than Cambodia. The Angkor Wat complex which is over 400 Acres wasn't seen by westerners until the 19th century. So after a 20-hour flight I decided I would embrace the local transportation, a six-hour long bus ride across the countryside to Angkor Wat, with water buffalo sightings. I made the mistake of not having a full breakfast so after a couple hours in I was famished. After our little bus unloaded we were welcomed by two-foot deep fried bug mounds... yes, two-foot deep fried bug mounds with several parts to choose from; spicy spiders - instructions, only eat the legs; garlic-dusted locusts - instructions, don't eat the legs; sweet silkworms - instructions, no legs no worries. Yes, as a food professional of course I have eaten bugs before, like at a Mexican resort, but these roadside treats even took me by surprise; tried them all, not exactly filet mignon, but outrageously sustainable and packed with protein. The locals loved showing us how to eat them and watching our expressions as we noshed and nibbled. This is why we go on travel adventures - to try new things, to eat new things, and to be new things. As a new entomologist, person who eats bugs, I can tell you, as gross as you think, being open to new cuisines and cultures makes you a better guest in the country you visit and expands your food identity.

Food culture is constantly changing for both individuals and groups. People think being authentic means doing it traditionally all the time; well it doesn't, we don't have to limit ourselves, shackle ourselves or trap ourselves in old ways. Dare I say with the invent of food technology fresh may not be best, you can buy hyper-local and disturbingly international shamelessly, you can be more than one thing and you can be more than yourself. Just because things have been done that way before doesn't mean they have to be done that way forever, recipes are just guidelines and I've been living my life recipe-free forever.

SCEPTRE - III

What's one of the best meals you ever had? Mine was in Cairo, Egypt, at a Pizza Hut-KFC, believe it or not because it's the best view of the pyramids, it's true. But one of my best experiences there was teaching a man to eat a dessert; after we had dined on double-stuffed pigeon in traditional Egyptian fair I moved from the busy streets of Cairo to the tranquil oasis of a hotel serving afternoon tea. To my delight, they had a fondue station as part of the dessert spread, I watched as an older Middle Eastern man, maybe in his 70s observes the chocolate fountain with apprehension; he leans in, it's a spoon, tiny spoon struggling to reach the dark decadent cocoa. As an interfering American, I went over there and showed him how to fondue. I grabbed my skewer full of fruit spreads and marshmallows, showed him how to grab, dip, eat and repeat. I retreat back to my table and watch as he goes through the process. The look of pure bliss on his face when he bit into the chocolate-dipped marshmallow was priceless. Now this man's food identity includes fondue-lover...who knew...? I knew. Because I know, all men young or old, rich or poor, love delicious cuisine.

One of the major keys in change in food identity is joy over fear, and I leave you with my best point, are you ready? are you ready? Be reckless and continue the adventure. The world is huge and full of great last meals, be open to the next course. Wander into that restaurant you've had your eye on but didn't think you belonged. As an American food explorer, I've had the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of those who have explored before me and even though it's a bit more carved out than has been in the past, it still is wild and untamed as ever. Book that food adventure even if you don't speak the language, you can barely find it on a map. Good things are out there if you're willing to try. Very few people can stop you but no one can start you by yourself. Now go eat something delicious, tell me about it.

Glossary:

1. **savory:** food belonging to the category that is salty or spicy rather than sweet
2. **cannibalizing:** to eat parts of another of one's own species
3. **flambé:** a cooking technique where alcohol (brandy or rum) is added to a hot pan and ignited, creating a brief burst of flames.
4. **Angkor Wat:** a complex of temples in Cambodia
5. **filet mignon:** a steak cut of beef taken from the tenderloin of a steer or heifer
6. **hyper-local:** a very small area

Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)

1. What is the biggest mistake people do learning about food and identity?
2. How does the speaker define food identity?
3. What are the fundamentals to understand food?
4. What is Mochi?
5. Why does the speaker start her own cooking show?

Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)

1. What does the speaker say about resistance?
2. Describe the speaker's experience during her visit to Japan.
3. What is the significance of the bug eating story?
4. Why does the speaker describe her meal at Cairo, Egypt as her best experience?

Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)

1. Comment on how the three factors - Religion, Location and Socioeconomic Status contribute to one's food identity.
2. Elucidate the significance of 'change' about which the speaker emphasises in her talk.

Further Reading:

1. *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada* (2024) by Shahu Patole
2. *The Stinking Rose* by Sujata Bhatt
3. *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

THANKS GOD FOR THE FOOD

- S. Y. WONG

Pre-reading Activities:

1. *Brainstorm in small groups about the emotional, cultural, and personal meanings of food. (e.g., celebration, survival, identity, comfort, waste)*
2. *How often do you throw away food? How much do you buy in excess? Discuss.*
3. *Food choices reflect social inequality. Do you agree?*
4. *In your opinion, how can personal food habits reflect larger global issues like inequality or sustainability?*

Introduction to the Poet:

S. Y. Wong is a contemporary poet, known for his reflective and introspective poetry. Aged 61 years, Wong views writing as a cherished hobby through which he explores themes such as solitude, life's complexities, and the passage of time. His poems often employ simple yet evocative language and nature imagery to convey deep emotions and thoughts. Notable works like *The Lonely Bird* and *Better Things* highlight his ability to express independence, self-awareness, and the value of meaningful experiences. Wong's poetry resonates with readers through its clarity and emotional depth, offering thoughtful insights into the human condition.

About the Poem:

The poem offers a sharp yet reflective commentary on modern society's relationship with food. While it begins with gratitude, it quickly shifts into a critique of over-consumption, greed, and food waste. The poet highlights how food has become not just a necessity but an obsession, fuelled by desire rather than need. Phrases like "mix greed with our saliva" and "indirectly we are some prisoners-of-food" suggest how deeply entangled food is with both pleasure and guilt.

The poem juxtaposes abundance with global hunger and hoarding with thoughtless waste, urging readers to reflect on privilege, responsibility, and ethical consumption. It warns that gluttony and poor planning could lead to future scarcity. Despite its ironic tone, the poem closes with a reminder not to judge others "never call another a glutton" emphasizing humility and shared human weakness.

I believe we eat more than we need
things that we feed on
hardly we can resist.
Look around, the talk
is mostly about food.
Fantastic foods! Fantastic!
So many different kinds!
When we mix greed with our saliva
Food tastes even better.
But when we sleep, guilt comes to
strangle.

Buying more than we need
Someone is hoarding, forgetfully.

Maybe, one day, we may not have enough to eat
 A glutton cannot stop eating!
 Too bad, bad planning.
 Throwing away precious foods, sometimes.
 There's enough to feed a truck full of people!

I used to tell others and remind them not to hoard
 I'd say, This place is not war-torn.
 We are not living in a flatten place!
 Indirectly we are some prisoners-of-food

The agenda is to eat
 _ a priority.

Thanks God for all the foods.
 But never call another a glutton!

Glossary:

1. **resist:** to fight against or try to control a strong urge or desire
2. **saliva:** the liquid produced in the mouth that helps digest food
3. **greed:** an intense and selfish desire for more than is needed, especially food or wealth
4. **guilt:** a feeling of responsibility or remorse for doing something wrong
5. **hoarding:** collecting and keeping large amounts of something unnecessarily
6. **glutton:** a person who eats or consumes too much food
7. **flatten:** to destroy or level
8. **fantastic:** extremely good or attractive
9. **indirectly:** not in a direct way; implying something without stating it openly
10. **agenda:** a list or plan of things to be done or prioritized

Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)

1. What makes food taste better, according to the poem?
2. What emotion visits us after overindulgence?
3. Why is hoarding mentioned as a problem?
4. What warning does the poet give about the future?
5. What is the consequence of being a glutton?
6. How is food waste criticized in the poem?
7. What metaphor does the poet use to describe our relationship with food?
8. What final advice does the poet give?

Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)

1. What emotions does the poet associate with eating and food consumption?
2. Discuss the role of greed in our food habits.
3. Explain the significance of the phrase “prisoners-of-food”?
4. Why does the poet warn against calling others “gluttons”?
5. How does the poet use irony in the poem?

SCEPTRE - III

Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)

1. How does the poet explore the contradiction between gratitude and greed?
2. In what ways does the poem critique consumerism and food waste in modern society?
3. Explain how the poem exposes the contradiction between thanking God for food and then acting irresponsibly towards it.
4. Discuss the emotional journey presented in the poem—from desire to guilt.

Further Reading:

1. *Eating Together* by Li-Young Lee
2. *Fat Is Not a Fairy Tale* by Jane Yolen
3. *A Hunger Artist* by Franz Kafka

BLACKBERRYING

- SYLVIA PLATH

Pre-reading Activities:

1. *Close your eyes and imagine walking alone through a blackberry path on a late summer day. What do you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste? Discuss the sensory impressions after a minute of visualization.*
2. *Being alone in nature helps us understand ourselves. Do you agree?*
3. *Expectations often lead to disappointment. Discuss.*

About the Poet:

One of the most captivating and significant authors of the 20th century is Sylvia Plath (1932-1963). Plath, an American poet, novelist, and short story writer, is most recognised for her candid writing, which fearlessly tackled issues of identity, mental illness, morality, and the constraints placed on women in a patriarchal culture. Psychological depth, emotional intensity, and striking imagery are characteristics of her writing.

Plath was a gifted student and an aspirational writer from a young age. She received her education at Smith College and then at Cambridge University on a Fulbright scholarship. Much of her later work was influenced by her creatively significant and profoundly turbulent marriage to the English poet Ted Hughes.

The Bell Jar (1963), Plath's sole book, is a semi-autobiographical story about a young woman's journey into mental illness. Her fame was solidified by her posthumous poetry collection, *Ariel* (1965), which is praised for its innovative style and intense emotional sincerity. Plath tragically committed suicide when she was thirty years old.

In addition to being a significant literary character, Sylvia Plath is now seen as a representation of female innovation limited by social norms, whose voice endures for decades.

About the Poem:

The poem is a moving, contemplative voyage through nature that delicately addresses themes of loneliness, impermanence, and the pursuit of meaning. The poem, which has three stanzas and is written in free verse, follows the speaker as she makes her way to the sea through a blackberry bush. On the surface, the poem seems to extol the sensory delights of nature, particularly the luxuriant profusion of blackberries, which are vividly and tactilely depicted.

But there is a deeper emotional stream running beneath the surface. Even though the natural world is alive and bright, everything feels uncaring and the speaker is alone. The water at the end of the journey is not the expected site of insight or tranquility, but rather a 'nothing' that 'blunts my sight', and the poem's tone changes as the blackberries give way to prickly, hostile terrain. This conclusion suggests that the voyage was not just physical but also psychological or spiritual, which arouses feelings of existential despair.

Thus, Plath's complicated relationship with nature and her inner conflicts are captured in 'Blackberrying'. This poem explores the human search for meaning in the world, only to be confronted with ambiguity or silence, as well as the coexistence of beauty and emptiness, and the interplay between expectation and disappointment.

SCEPTRE - III

Nobody in the lane, and nothing, nothing
but blackberries,
Blackberries on either side, though on the
right mainly,
A blackberry alley, going down in hooks,
and a sea
Somewhere at the end of it, heaving.
Blackberries
Big as the ball of my thumb, and dumb as eyes
Ebon in the hedges, fat
With blue-red juices.
These they squander on my fingers.
I had not asked for such a blood sisterhood;
they must love me.
They accommodate themselves to my
milkbottle, flattening their sides.

Overhead go the choughs in black,
cacophonous flocks—
Bits of burnt paper wheeling in a blown sky.
Theirs is the only voice, protesting,
protesting.
I do not think the sea will appear at all.
The high, green meadows are glowing,
as if lit from within.
I come to one bush of berries so ripe it is a
bush of flies,
Hanging their bluegreen bellies and their
wing panes in a Chinese screen.
The honey-feast of the berries has stunned
them; they believe in heaven.
One more hook, and the berries and bushes end.

The only thing to come now is the sea.
From between two hills a sudden wind
funnels at me,
Slapping its phantom laundry in my face.
These hills are too green and sweet to have
tasted salt.
I follow the sheep path between them.
A last hook brings me
To the hills' northern face, and the face is
orange rock
That looks out on nothing, nothing but a

great space
Of white and pewter lights, and a din like
silversmiths
Beating and beating at an intractable metal.

Glossary:

1. **alley:** a narrow passageway between or behind buildings
2. **heaving:** (of a place) extremely crowded
3. **Ebon:** dark brown or black; ebony
4. **hedges:** a fence or boundary formed by closely growing bushes or shrubs
5. **squander:** waste in a reckless and foolish manner
6. **choughs:** a black Eurasian and North African bird of the crow family, with a downcurved bill and broad, rounded wings, typically frequenting mountains and sea cliffs
7. **cacophonous:** involving or producing a harsh, discordant mixture of sounds
8. **funnels:** guide or channel (something) through or as if through a funnel
9. **pewter:** a grey alloy of tin with copper and antimony (formerly, tin and lead)
10. **din:** a loud, unpleasant, and prolonged noise
11. **silversmiths:** a person who makes or sells silver objects
12. **intractable:** hard to control or deal with

Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)

1. Where is the speaker in the poem, and what is she doing?
2. What does the speaker compare the blackberries to? What effect does this have?
3. How does the tone of the poem shift from beginning to end?
4. Why do you think Plath includes the image of the “blood sisterhood” in the poem?
5. What role does nature play in the poem?
6. What is the significance of the ‘sea’ at the end of the poem?
7. Why might the speaker feel isolated or alone in the poem?
8. What is the overall tone of the poem?

Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)

1. How does Sylvia Plath use sensory imagery in ‘Blackberrying’ to create atmosphere and mood?
2. Explore the theme of isolation in ‘Blackberrying’.
3. In what way does Plath use language and form to mirror the speaker’s psychological state in ‘Blackberrying’?
4. What role does the sea play in the poem, both literally and symbolically?

Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)

1. Examine the journey motif in Sylvia Plath’s ‘Blackberrying’.
2. How does ‘Blackberrying’ reflect elements of confessional poetry?

SCEPTRE - III

3. Explore the duality of beauty and menace in the natural world as depicted in the poem.

Further Reading:

1. *The Moon and the Yew Tree* by Sylvia Plath
2. *Walking in the Blue* by Anne Sexton
3. *In a Dark Time* by Theodore Roethke

THE GRANDMOTHER

- LYNNE GEARY

Pre-reading Activities:

1. *What does 'family support' mean to you? Have you ever felt more supported by someone in your extended family than by your parents?*
2. *Can food and shared meals provide comfort in difficult times? Discuss.*
3. *Why might a teenager avoid spending time at home?*
4. *What role can grandparents play in a child's life? Do you think a grandparent can be as important as a parent? Why or why not?*

About the Author:

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About the Story:

This short story is a moving exploration of love, neglect, and loss through the eyes of a teenage boy named Tony. After his father is sent to jail and his mother becomes emotionally distant, Tony finds comfort in the quiet, unconditional care of his grandmother. Her home becomes a haven where he is fed, accepted, and never questioned. The story highlights how simple acts, such as cooking a meal or offering a place to rest can provide emotional healing. Told in a reflective first-person voice, it captures the loneliness and silent grief of a child forced to grow up too soon. The sudden death of the grandmother is a heartbreaking turning point, leaving Tony to face the world without the one person who offered him warmth and love. Through its subtle storytelling, the narrative reveals how deep human connections can form in silence and how their loss can leave a lasting void.

After Tony's father was sent to jail, his mum didn't have much time for Tony any more – she said he reminded her too much of his dad. So, when he came across his grandmother's address, Tony began visiting her as often as he could.

I remember visiting my grandmother better than most things from when I was 14 or so. When everything was shit. I have a vivid memory of her standing at the stove mashing red kidney beans and anchovies into tomatoes, making a sauce for pasta. Draining the pasta in an old colander with no handle, flipping it into a bowl. Pouring a little olive oil then scooping the sauce out of the pan. Setting the steaming bowl down on the table in front of me. Handing me a fork. She did it all so quickly it seemed I hardly had time to sit down and adjust my chair. "There you are Tony, that'll put some flesh on your bones."

While I ate she rinsed the pan and the colander and put them aside to be washed later. Then she made herself a cup of coffee and sat to watch me finish everything to the very last mouthful.

I was always so hungry, could never remember my last meal, though sense would tell me I must have had lunch, or breakfast. Hollow legs and growing pains, Mum said when I groaned

SCEPTRE - III

in the night from the pain in my legs, if she said anything at all. I didn't know why growing should hurt, unless it was that I wanted so badly to grow up my body hurt with the effort.

My grandmother didn't laugh when I told her, only nodded and looked a bit grim.

"I don't know about these growing pains," she said, "Seems strange to me." Then she got on with whatever she was cooking for me. Something quick because I was always hungry and often in a hurry, on my way to basketball or going to hang out with Jamie. Gran never asked me why I visited, just smiled and let me in and cooked me something quick.

"Here you are. You've got time for this. It'll see you through till tea."

I wondered sometimes if she guessed there might not be any tea, that I might get home and everything would be gone, cleaned away, nothing left on a plate in the oven, maybe some bread in the bin. She didn't ask questions, just made me pasta and sauce, or a big pile of pancakes, or even a couple of chops. She never seemed surprised to see me, or annoyed; nothing like that, just let me in with a smile and made me something quick to eat.

She usually looked as if she'd been working in her garden, long grey hair falling out of a ponytail, leaves and bits of twig on her pants, dirt on her shoes. Her hands were always clean though. I checked, worried she would handle the food with dirty hands. Sometimes she was wearing a big old hat when she opened the door and I knew she'd hurried inside so I wouldn't think she was out. She never was out though, except once and then she left a note on the door in case I came, telling me to let myself in, there was soup on the stove and a loaf of bread on the table.

I had a key. She gave it to me early on. She said, "You never know when this might come in handy." I didn't say anything. I liked having the key and made sure I always carried it. The time she left the note it turned out she'd gone to the hospital with her neighbour, a very old bloke, because he fell and broke his hip. I did go in and I ate the soup and bread but it wasn't the same. I rinsed the bowl afterwards but I didn't visit again for a few days because I didn't want to find another note on the door.

I always felt better after I'd eaten at her place, whatever she cooked for me. She would touch me on the shoulder as I ate. "There you go, Tony." A pat on the shoulder. Sometimes I was scared I'd cry if she left her hand there, but she never did. Just a pat before she reached for the coffee pot. She liked real coffee, never drank the instant stuff, and the smell would fill the kitchen. It made me feel like I wanted some, too, even though I never drank it back then.

I remember at the time thinking she was so old. She would have been in her fifties I suppose, but old to me at 14, with her grey hair and wrinkles around her eyes. She lived on her own for as long as I knew her, from when I was 13 and we had moved from Sydney to Melbourne. I didn't know my grandfather, her husband, and I don't know what happened to him. She never said and I didn't ask. Not because I couldn't, I just wasn't interested. She never talked about my father either though she must have known where he was and why.

We moved from Sydney because my mother said she couldn't bear being in the same town as him, even if he wasn't in Sydney but down in Cooma where she said they put people like him. I didn't know what she meant. He was my father. I had to pack up my stuff and leave my school and my best friend and all the kids in the street and move to Melbourne. After a while, school was OK.

I made friends with Jamie and got onto the basketball team. I made sure I had something to do most days after school so I didn't have to go home.

I don't remember Gran and me talking much though sometimes she asked how I was going at school and remembered when I had a big game coming up. She never asked me questions like the teachers and the social workers and the police did, all looking at me like they already knew the answers and just wanted me to agree. I just wanted them to go away. Losers. I still had the Xbox and a stack of games Dad bought when he and I played together and I got into them. He was good. Really fast. After he was gone I tried to get to his score but never made it.

If I'd been able to stay I would have gone to her spare room, lain on the bed with the Mexican rug, pulled the rug over me, and gone to sleep for a very long time. But I had to go home eventually. My mother never knew I visited and would have gone ballistic if she'd found out. She never had anything nice to say about my grandmother, blamed her somehow for what happened even though it was my sister who caused all the trouble. I don't know how she thought my grandmother had anything to do with it. So I couldn't stay.

I found out where she lived by accident. Before we moved, I found a letter from my dad. It had been addressed to me but Mum had hidden it. I was looking for something, I don't know what, but I found the letter and read it and in it he said he hadn't done anything wrong, that it was all a mistake.

He wrote that he loved me and my sister and he wrote that my grandmother lived in Melbourne and here was her address. I copied it down then a while after we moved I found out she lived close to my school and one day I went to her house. I didn't phone or anything, I just went and when she answered the door, I told her my name. She stood dead still and stared at me for a long time. My heart was beating so hard I couldn't say anything. And finally she said, "Well Tony, you'd better come in."

So I went in and her house was cool and sort of dark inside and we walked down a hallway to the back of the house and went into the kitchen and there was a big kitchen table. She said, "Sit down Tony. I'll bet you are hungry." And suddenly I was starving. I felt like I hadn't eaten for days and days. She looked at me a bit more and then started cooking. It was pancakes that first time. I ate about eight of them, couldn't get enough. I only stopped when she ran out of batter. "Well Tony," she said, "I'm glad you like pancakes. I like them too." I remember nodding and feeling like I wanted to curl up and fall asleep at the table.

I went to her house one day, a very hot day I remember, on my way to the pool. Her door was open. That was unusual but I didn't think much about it. Just went inside and there were all these people, men in suits and women with handkerchiefs. They were all in the sitting room. Someone was crying loudly. Everyone stopped talking and turned to look at me. I just stood there and one of the men said, "And who are you?"

I said, "Where's Gran?"

"Gran?" said a man in a suit, "You're Peg's grandson?"

I nodded.

"What's your name, then?" he said.

SCEPTRE - III

“Tony,” I replied, then said: “Where is Gran?”

He stared at me for a moment and someone behind him said, “He takes after her Peter, look, he’s got Peg’s eyes.”

The man came over and stood very close to me.

“I’m very sorry, son, but your Gran died this morning.”

He went to put his arm around my shoulder but I pushed him off.

“I don’t believe you. You’re lying.” My face was on fire. I wanted to punch him.

“I’m really sorry, Tony, but it’s true. She was working in the front garden and she collapsed. She died instantly. One of the neighbours was walking past and called the ambulance.”

Other people started to speak but they sounded as though they were under water. Words were muffled, disjointed; tragedy, sudden heart attack, in her garden. Doing what she loved. Someone started sobbing. I turned and ran out of the house. A man yelled after me, “The funeral’s the day after tomorrow. St Aidan’s,” but I kept running. It was the day before my 15th birthday.

If she hadn’t died, maybe I could have gone to live with her and slept in the bed in her spare room. Had tea with her every night. Had coffee in the morning. Learned how to make it in the pot on the stove. I used to imagine moving in with her and leaving my mum and my sister to their life together. After we moved Mum turned right off me, started to say I reminded her of him. If I walked into the room when she and my sister were watching television they cuddled up together and turned their backs on me. Mum always liked my sister more than me anyway, and it got worse after Dad went away. The one time I asked when he was coming home Mum screamed, “That pervert, that bastard, what do you want to have anything to do with him for?”

I stayed away as much as I could. Went into my room, played the games and looked up stuff on the internet.

Daydreamed about living with Gran.

On the day of the funeral I went to the church but didn’t go inside. I couldn’t believe she was really dead. Later that day, I went to her house and let myself in. The house was cold and smelled empty. I walked into the kitchen and sat in my usual chair. There was silence. I put my head on the table and fell asleep.

When I woke the light was fading. I picked up the coffee pot from the stove and went into the spare room. I wrapped the pot in the Mexican rug, walked down the hall, dropped my key on the floor just inside the door and left, pulling the door tight behind me.

Glossary:

1. **colander:** a bowl with holes used for draining water from food like pasta or vegetables
2. **rinsed:** quickly washed with water
3. **growing pains:** aches in the muscles or bones, common in children as they grow, sometimes also symbolic of emotional struggle
4. **ballistic:** extremely angry or furious
5. **pervert:** a person whose behaviour is considered morally wrong or inappropriate, often used harshly
6. **under water (figurative):** a way of describing sound as muffled and unclear, often used to convey shock or confusion
7. **spare room:** an extra room in a house, often used for guests
8. **sobbing:** crying loudly with gasping sounds
9. **dark inside (figurative):** a description that may refer to both lighting and mood, giving a sense of emotional heaviness
10. **let myself in:** to enter a place using your own key

Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)

1. When did Tony start visiting his grandmother?
2. According to Tony's mother, Tony reminded her of _____.
3. What vivid memory of the grandmother did Tony have?
4. Why did the grandmother go to the hospital with her neighbour?
5. Why did Tony and his mother move to Melbourne?
6. How did Tony get his grandmother's address?

Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)

1. Describe the relationship between Tony and his grandmother.
2. How does the author use food and cooking to symbolize care and connection?
3. What role does silence play in the story — between characters, and within Tony himself?
4. How does the story explore the theme of growing up and loss?
5. What do you think the grandmother felt when Tony came to visit?

Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)

1. How does the story show the importance of emotional support in a young person's life?
2. Compare Tony's home life with his time at his grandmother's house.
3. What role does memory play in the story?
4. How does the ending of the story affect the reader?

Further Reading:

1. *Thank You, Ma'am* by Langston Hughes
2. *Oranges in No Man's Land* by Elizabeth Laird
3. *My Beloved Charioteer* by Shashi Deshpande

FOOD DIPLOMACY

Pre-reading Activities:

1. *Explain how Indian cuisine showcases culinary traditions and promotes cultural understanding?*
2. *Discuss how a cuisine becomes a tool to promote a nation's values, traditions and overall appeal?*
3. *How does a nation use soft power to enhance its international image?*

About the Article:

Food Diplomacy is an article published by The Consulate General of India in Hamburg. The Consulate publishes articles and information on its website, and utilises press releases and social media to share information. According to the Consulate, the website contains information on consular services, bilateral relations, media, commerce, student information, and more.

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Indian cuisine reflects a 5000-year history of intermingling of various communities and cultures, leading to diverse flavours and regional cuisines. The arrival of the Mughals, the British, and Portuguese further added variety to Indian cuisine.

The consequent fusion in cuisines resulted in what is today known as '*Indian Cuisine*'. Indian cuisine also means a wide variety of cooking styles. Sometimes it seems referring to it as Indian cuisine is a misnomer, since regional dishes vary tremendously from region to region.

Indian cuisine has also shaped the history of international relations; the spice trade between India and Europe is often cited by historians as the primary catalyst for Europe's Age of Discovery. Spices were bought from India and traded around Europe and Asia. It has also influenced other cuisines across the world, especially those from Southeast Asia, it has also influenced other cuisines across the world, especially those from Southeast Asia, the British Isles and the Caribbean.

As food influences travelled to India, so has Indian cuisine travelled abroad. Particular dishes have gained popularity or subtle influences through spices have seeped into cuisines the world over.

History of Food

There is no concrete record of the food habits of the Indus civilization. With the coming of the Aryans around 1500 BC, literary sources reveal distinct dietary behaviour. The food was simple as the early Aryans were semi-agriculturist, semi-nomadic people. As they began around 1000 BC to settle down in the fertile Gangetic plains their food became more complex and elaborate.

Barley and wheat seem to have been the chief produce of the field, and consequently the principal articles of food. Various kinds of cakes were prepared from these grains and used as food and offered to the gods. Frequent allusions to animal sacrifices and to the cooking of meat, roasted and boiled, meant that the early Aryans were non vegetarians.

As the agrarian economy grew, cattle and other domesticated animals became more useful in agrarian and related food production activities; it became increasingly expensive to slaughter animals for meat. This was the beginning of vegetarianism in India. With the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in the 6th century BC, the doctrines of non-violence took religious connotations and meat eating became taboo in the Aryan culture.

Till early medieval times, vegetarianism was the mainstream food habit of the Aryan people; they ate grains, fruits and vegetable and milk products. A warm climate and cultivation of a large number of herbs and spices, the preparations became more complex. This remained for two thousand years as the main food habit with large sections of traditionally vegetarian Indian families - particularly in North India.

During this period, Indian cuisine gained immensely from interaction with foreigners who came to the subcontinent as migrants, traders and invaders -- making it a unique blend of various cuisines.

India's first taste of foreign flavours came with the Greek, Roman and Arab traders who used many of the important herbs and spices, and most importantly, saffron.

Another important influence from a different culinary world was from Arab traders who introduced coffee. The Arabs also left an indelible mark on Kerala's cuisine now known as Kerala Muslim (or Moplah) cuisine. Syrian Arab Christians fleeing persecution at the hands of the Muslims took refuge under the King of Kerala and also left a heavy influence on the cuisine of Kerala.

Persian Zoroastrians arrived next and gave to India what is known as Parsi cuisine. Some believe that it was the Zoroastrians who first brought *biryani* to India, before the Mughals made it popular.

The Mughals revolutionized Indian food with their penchant for elegant dining and rich food with dry fruits and nuts, a style which eventually came to be known as Mughlai cuisine.

Tomato, chilli, and potato, which are staple components of today's Indian cuisine, were brought to India by the Portuguese. The Portuguese also introduced refined sugar, before which only fruits and honey were used as sweeteners.

Hindu refugees from Afghanistan brought with them a style of an oven, which led to an entirely new stream of dishes - *tandoori*.

The British infused in Indians their taste for tea. With an ideal tea growing climate, India rapidly joined the ranks of tea lovers of the world. The British not only influenced what Indians ate, they also changed "how" Indians ate. For the first time Indians used knives and forks. The dining table replaced the kitchen floor.

Flavours of India

Herbs and spices, or *masalas*, play a vital role in Indian food. Masala means a 'blend of several spices' which varies from dish to dish. *Garam masala* is the most important blend and an absolute essential for an Indian preparation. Each state in India has its own particular blend of *garam masala*.

The role of spices and herbs, in fact, goes beyond just cooking. Ancient Ayurvedic texts prescribe them for curative and therapeutic functions. Though knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs and spices have been lost to most of today's generation, with flavor and

SCEPTRE - III

palette becoming dominant but the fact remains that locked in traditional wisdom are age-old secrets of the benefits of herbs and spices.

The story of Indian spices is more than 7000 years old. Centuries before Greece and Rome had been discovered, sailing ships were carrying Indian spices, perfumes and textiles to Mesopotamia, Arabia and Egypt. It was the lure of these that brought many seafarers to the shores of India.

Long before the Christian era, Greek merchants thronged the markets of South India, buying many expensive items amongst which spices were included. It is believed that the Parthian wars were being fought by Rome largely to keep open the trade route to India. It is also said that Indian spices and her famed products were the main lure for crusades and expeditions to the East.

It was in AD1492, that Christopher Columbus discovered the New World. Five years later, under the guidance of Captain Vasco Da Gama a new route to the spice lands of Asia was being searched. While Columbus failed to achieve this goal, Da Gama succeeded. The ships brought back a cargo of spices and other products worth 60 times the cost of the said voyage. Da Gama's successful voyage intensified an international power struggle for control over the spice trade. For three centuries the nations of Western Europe -- Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, and Great Britain -- fought bloody sea-wars over the spice-producing colonies.

By the year AD1000, Arabians had conquered the Indus valley. They brought cumin and coriander that was mixed with Indian pepper, ginger and turmeric, that centuries later British sailors spread throughout the world as curry powder. In India, Arabian traders got rare and exotic spices of the Far East from local spice merchants. India had spent the previous two millennia spreading its culture to the Spice Islands of the east.

Culinary Styles

Cuisine differs across India's diverse regions as a result of variations in local culture, geographical locations and economics. It also varies seasonally.

North India

This cuisine is perhaps the most popular and widely served in restaurants around the world. It is broadly characterized by meats and vegetables cooked in the *tandoor* (coal fired barbecue), use of cream in dals and yogurt in marinades.

Wheat is produced in the north and therefore a range of breads - *naan*, *tandoori roti*, *chapatis* or *paranthas* are traditionally eaten with foods of this region.

The best known North Indian food is Mughlai cuisine. **Mughlai cuisine** is a style of cooking developed by the imperial kitchens of the Mughal Empire and broadly non-vegetarian in content. This cuisine is characterized by the use of yogurt, fried onions, nuts and saffron. There are tender kebabs, creamy kormas, rich pasandas...

The most notable ingredient in Kashmiri cuisine is mutton, of which there are over 30 varieties. Traditional Kashmiri cooking is, almost like an art called Wazwan reflecting strong Central Asian influences. The Wazwan experience means primarily non vegetarian dishes, each aromatic with herbs and the fresh produce of the region. The unique feature of Kashmiri

cuisine is that spices used are boiled rather than fried, which gives them a unique and distinctive flavour and aroma.

Punjabi cuisine is not different from other cuisines in the sense that most of the cuisine is inspired by the Central Asian and Mughlai cuisines since it was the entry spot for Muslim invaders. Punjab has also bequeathed the institution of *dhaba* a wayside eating joint, especially on highways. Mah ki Dal, Sarson da Saag and Makki Di Roti, meat curry like Roghan Josh and stuffed paranthas are some of the popular dishes of this cuisine.

Awadhi cuisine bears similarities to those of Persia, Kashmir, Punjab and Hyderabad. The *bawarchis* and *rakandars* of Awadh gave birth to the *dum* style of cooking. Dum, i.e., the art of sealing ingredients in a large handi and cooking over a slow fire, which relates very well with the relaxed outlook and attitude of the people of the region. The richness of Awadh cuisine lies not only in the variety of cuisine but also in the ingredients used like mutton, paneer, and rich spices including cardamom and saffron.

South India

In South India, food is characterized by dishes cooked on the griddle such as dosas, thin broth like *dals* called sambar and an array of seafood. The region is also known for its heavy use of 'kari' leaves, tamarind and coconut.

Andhra Pradesh is known for its Hyderabad cuisine which is greatly inspired by the Mughlai cuisine. The wealthy and leisured aristocracy of the erstwhile Nizam State as well as the long peaceful years of their dominance contributed largely to the development of this cuisine. Some of the most traditional Hyderabad dishes are biryani, chicken korma and sheer khurma.

Varieties in the cuisine of Karnataka has similarities with its three neighbouring South Indian states, as well as the states of Maharashtra and Goa to its North. Karnataka has two main styles of cooking, the Brahmin cuisine that is strictly vegetarian and the cuisine of Coorg which is noted for its pork dishes.

The Chettinad cuisine of Tamil Nadu has transcended the boundaries of the state to carve a worldwide following. Generally the dishes are hot and pungent with fresh ground masalas and a typical menu resembles the aristocratic way of the Chettinad people.

The rich intermingling of cultures in Kerala has contributed to a vast melting pot of mouth-watering delicacies that are churned out. Appam and stew, ulli theeyal and of course the ubiquitous banana chips is something most are familiar with, however, in the northern region of Kerala or the Malabar coast Muslim Moplah cuisine rules the roost. Arab influence is predominant in many of its dishes like the Alisa, which is a hearty wheat and meat porridge. South of Central Kerala is where the art of Syrian Christian cooking remains the pride of many a homemaker. Their contribution to the Kerala cuisine has been manifold and the most noted are the hoppers, duck roast, meen vevichathu (red fish curry) and the isthew (stew).

East India

Bengali cuisine is the only traditionally developed multi-course tradition from the Indian subcontinent that is analogous in structure to the modern service '*a la russe style*' of the French cuisine, with food served course-wise rather than all at once. Bengali cuisine has a high emphasis on chilli pepper along with mustard oil and tends to use high amounts of spices. The cuisine is known for subtle flavours with emphasis on fish, vegetables, lentils, and rice. Fresh sweet water fish is one of its most distinctive features; Bengalis prepare fish

SCEPTRE - III

in many ways, such as steaming, braising, or stewing vegetables and sauces based on coconut milk or mustard.

The flavours of Oriya cuisine are usually subtle and delicately spiced and fish and other seafood such as crab and shrimp are very popular.

The food of India's eastern states such as Sikkim, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur varies quite dramatically due to their geographical location. These areas are heavily influenced by Tibetan, Chinese, and even Western Cuisine.

West India

Rajasthani cuisine is quite diverse. On one side of the spectrum, the love for shikaar (a good hunt) among the erstwhile royalty creates a culinary art form that is unimaginable. And on the other side of the spectrum, is the equally grand all vegetarian food of Marwar or Jodhpur with popular dishes such as choorma laddoo and daal baati.

Gujarat has a large populace that has been mainly vegetarian for religious reasons and therefore Gujarati cuisine is strictly vegetarian. The popular dishes in this cuisine are oondhia, patra, khaandavi and thepla. Gujarati food tends to be sweet.

Parsi food is the hallmark of India's Zoroastrian community - ancient Persians. The Parsis' main dish is Dhansakh (caramelized onions and brown rice served with a mix of dals, vegetables and meat) which is eaten on Sundays and at all weddings and functions. Goan cuisine has a strong Portuguese influence since it was previously a Portuguese colony. The gravys are chilly-hot, spices are ground with vinegar and coconut. Some examples of this cuisine are Balcao, Xacuti, Vindaloos, Sorpotel and Moehlos.

Malvani/Konkani cuisine is the standard cuisine of the Hindus in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, Goa and northern parts of West Karnataka. Although Malvani cuisine is predominantly non-vegetarian, there are many vegetarian delicacies. Malvani cuisine uses coconut liberally and is usually very spicy; however, the 'Konkanastha Brahmin' style of food of the region is quite bland and also vegetarian.

Celebrating with Food

Due to the diversity of geographical features and religions, festivals, small or big, are celebrated all year long in India. These festivals offer a great opportunity for people to enjoy traditional delicacies that are associated with each festival. Special dishes are prepared and offered to the respective deities. For example, milk pudding, butter and curd preparations signify cowherd Krishna's birthday, *Janmashtami*, while Modakas of fresh coconut, regional varieties of murukku, laddu and kajjaya are thought to be favourites of Ganesh and are offered on Ganesh Chaturthi.

There are so many varieties of *mithais* as one moves from North to South or East to West and within different ethnic groups that one gets overwhelmed. While rasgulla, cham cham, sandesh and laddoo, gulab jaman, kaju katli are popular in West Bengal and North India respectively, messu, monthar and ghevar are the order of the day in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Indian Food the Worldover

Indian migration has spread the culinary traditions of the subcontinent throughout the world. These cuisines have been adapted to local tastes, and have also affected local cuisines. For example, curry's international appeal. Indian tandoor dishes such as *chicken tikka* enjoy widespread popularity.

Indian cuisine in the Middle East has been influenced greatly by the large Indian diaspora. Centuries of trade relations and cultural exchanges have resulted in significant influence on each region's cuisines, the most notable being the *Biryani*. It was introduced by Persian invaders into Northern India and has since become an integral part of the Mughlai cuisine.

Indian cuisine is very popular in Southeast Asia, due to the strong Hindu and Buddhist cultural influence in the region. Indian cuisine has also had considerable influence on Malaysian cooking styles and also enjoys popularity in Singapore. Singapore is also known for fusion cuisine combining traditional Singaporean cuisine with Indian cuisines. The spread of vegetarianism in other parts of Asia is often credited to Hindu and Buddhist practices that originated in India.

Chicken tikka masala has been called "a true British national dish." In 2003, there were as many as 10,000 restaurants serving Indian cuisine in England and Wales alone. According to Britain's Food Standards Agency, the Indian food industry in the United Kingdom is worth 3.2 billion pounds.

Glossary:

1. **cuisine:** a style or method of cooking, especially as characteristic of a particular country, region or establishment
2. **intermingling:** mix or mingle together
3. **misnomer:** a wrong or inaccurate name or designation
4. **catalyst:** any substance that speeds up a chemical reaction during food processing or digestion, without being consumed in the process
5. **subtle influences:** a gentle, indirect or understated way of affecting someone or something
6. **seeped into:** describes a gradual and subtle understanding or influence that penetrates or permeates something like a concept or a situation
7. **allusions:** an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference
8. **slaughter:** to kill animals for food
9. **vegetarianism:** the practice of not eating meat or fish, especially for moral, religious or health reasons
10. **taboo:** a social or religious custom prohibition or forbidding discussion of a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place or thing
11. **undeniable:** unable to be denied or disputed
12. **persecution:** hostility and ill-treatment, especially on the basis of ethnicity, religion or sexual -orientation or political beliefs.
13. **penchant:** a strong or habitual liking for something or tendency to do something
14. **elegant:** pleasingly graceful and stylish in appearance or manner
15. **refugees:** a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster
16. **infused:** to soak in liquid to extract the flavour or healing properties
17. **curative:** able to cure disease

SCEPTRE - III

18. **palette:** a person's sense of taste and their ability to distinguish and appreciate different flavours
19. **seafarer:** a person who regularly travels by sea
20. **throng:** a large, densely packed crowd of people
21. **Parthian wars:** refer to a series of conflicts, primarily between the Roman Empire and the Parthian Empire, spanning from 54 BC to 217 AD
22. **exotic:** originating in or characteristic of a distant foreign country
23. **millennia:** a period of a thousand years
24. **bequeathed:** leave property to a person or their beneficiary by a will
25. **handi:** a traditional Indian cooking pot (made out of clay or metal) typically deep and round, used for slow-cooking dishes like biryani and various curries
26. **griddle:** a heavy, flat iron plate that is heated and used for cooking food
27. **array:** an impressive display or range of a particular type of thing
28. **aristocracy:** the highest class in certain societies, especially those holding hereditary titles or offices
29. **erstwhile:** former
30. **pungent:** having a sharply strong taste or smell
31. **ubiquitous:** present, appealing or found everywhere
32. **stew:** a dish of meat and vegetables cooked slowly in liquid in a closed dish or pan
33. **analogous:** comparable in certain respects, typically in a way which makes clearer the nature of the things compared
34. **la russe style:** a method of serving food where courses are brought to the table sequentially and served individually to each guest; this style became popular in the 19th century, particularly in formal dining settings
35. **braising:** fry food lightly and then stew it slowly in a closed container
36. **populace:** the people living in a particular country or area
37. **caramelized:** convert or be converted into caramel through heating; cook or be cooked so as to develop the characteristic brown colour and nutty flavor of caramel
38. **balcao:** a wide, shaded porch with built-in seating, perfect for relaxing and spending time with family and neighbors (kitchen counter)
39. **xacuti:** also spelled chacuti or shagoti is a popular Goan curry, known for its complex blend of spices, often including white poppy seeds, toasted grated coconut and large dried red chillies
40. **vindaloos:** a very hot and spicy curry
41. **sorpotel:** a spicy and tangy Goan pork curry of Portuguese origin
42. **Indian diaspora:** refers to people of Indian origin who have migrated from the territories of present-day India to other countries, either temporarily or permanently

Comprehension I: (Short Answer Questions)

1. What was the mainstream food habit of the Aryan people?
2. What proved that the early Aryans were non-vegetarians?
3. How did meat-eating become a taboo in the Aryan culture?
4. Who introduced coffee to India?
5. Who brought Parsi cuisine to India?
6. Who introduced biryani to India, and who popularised it here?
7. What were the sweeteners that were used before refined sugar was introduced?
8. What led to a new stream of dishes called tandoori?
9. What is the unique feature of Kashmiri cuisine?
10. _____ is called "a true British national dish".

Comprehension II: (Paragraph Answer Questions)

1. Explain in brief the history of food as discussed in the article.
2. Herbs and spices or ‘masalas’ play a vital role in Indian Food. Explain.
3. Write a note on the culinary style of the South.
4. What are some popular dishes from Eastern and Western India?

Comprehension III: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)

1. As food influences travelled to India, so has Indian cuisine travelled abroad. Elaborate.
2. Compare the richness of South Indian cuisine with that of North Indian cuisine.
3. What made Indian cuisine a unique blend of various cuisines?
4. How do ingredients and cooking styles vary between Eastern and Western India?

Further Reading:

1. “*Nutrition, Food and Diet in Health and Longevity: We Eat What We Are*” by Suresh I S Rattan and Gurcharan Kaur. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>
2. “*The Rise of Nut Consumption in India and their international competition*”
<https://recipes.timesofindia.com>
3. “*India’s consumption boom: How demographics, urbanization and aspirations are shaping consumer markets*” by Rajesh Bhatia. <https://cafemutual.com>

WATER!

- KOMAL SWAMINATHAN

Pre-reading Activities:

1. Examine the life of villagers in a growing economy like India.
2. Analyse the poverty-stricken lives of the majority of Indian population against the backdrop of changing political conditions.
3. Discuss the struggle of the poor, for basic necessities. Do you think their living conditions would ever improve?
4. Conduct a brief study on class struggle and social injustice in post-colonial India.

Introduction to the Playwright:

Komal Swaminathan (27 January 1935 – November 1995), from Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, was a congressional activist in his early years, a Tamil theatre personality, film director and journalist. His work was highly commended by critics and widely followed by popular audiences. *Water!* (Thaneer, Thaneer - 1980) is his most significant work and may be regarded as an excellent example of a species of political drama influential in the 1970s, not only in the Tamil theatrical world but in India in general. He was initiated into Tamil drama through his association with S. V. Sahasranamam's Seva Stage—a drama company and nursery of theatrical and cinematic talent.

Initially involved in production, Swaminathan wrote his first play, *Pudiya Paathai* (New Road), in 1960. Concern with social issues is a marked feature of his best-known plays. Aside from *Water!* other successes include *Oru Indhiya Kanavu* (An Indian Dream), *Nawab Naarkali* (Sir Chair), *Chekku Maadugal* (Work Horses), and *Swarga Bhoomi* (Heaven).

It was translated into English by Subramanian Shankar, a critic and novelist. He is also the author of the novel *A Map of Where I Live* (1997) and the volume of criticism *Textual Traffic: Colonialism, Modernity, and the Economy of the Text* (2001). He teaches in the Department of English, Rutgers University, Newark.

About the Play:

Water! deals with issues such as water scarcity and political corruption. Inhabitants of the drought-ridden village of Athipatti, Tamil Nadu, attempt a cooperative method to bring water to their village. Still, their efforts are hindered by corrupt politicians who exploit the water problem for their own political gain.

Water! was written at the end of the 1970s—a turbulent, radical period in Indian history marked by Marxist-Leninist insurrection in various parts of the country. The play touches upon post-colonial issues such as the meaning of democracy, the efficacy of developmentalism, the role of women in society, the value of tradition, the place of religion, and the idolization of bureaucracy.

It has been staged more than 250 times and still finds the occasional production, both for urban and rural audiences. So successful was the play that it was made into a Tamil film, *Thaneer Thaneer*, in 1981, directed by the reputed K. Balachander, and won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Tamil and Best Screenplay.

CHARACTERS

VELLAISAMY - vagabond
ATAIKAPPAN - elder of the village of Athipatti
KANTHAIYAN - elder of Athipatti
KOVALU - radical young man of Athipatti
GURUSAMY - young man of Athipatti
SEVANTHI - daughter of Kanthaiyan
VAITHILINGAM - schoolteacher of Athipatti
MARIMUTHU - priest of Athipatti
KUPPAN - carpenter of Athipatti
TWO YOUNG MEN
VELUSAMY NAICKER - rich man from neighboring Vandipettai
O. V. - Journalist from Madras
AZHAGIRI - police officer and Sevanthi's husband
AZHAGIRI'S FATHER
PWD ENGINEER
VILLAGERS

Scene 1

(In the auditorium, a middle-aged man appears, walking unsteadily. His clothes are dirty. His face is unshaven. His food has been tied up in a cloth bundle that hangs from a stick resting against his shoulder. In a shoulder bag he is carrying his dirty clothes. He stops, looks all around, and lets out a big sigh. The name of the traveler is Vellaisamy. He is about forty. From the opposite direction, a villager is seen approaching.)

VELLAISAMY: Sir! Is there a village near here?

VILLAGER: If you walk for another three miles and turn to your left, you will come to a narrow trail. If you walk for another mile from there, you will come to a village called Athipatti. But tell me... Who do you know in Athipatti?

VELLAISAMY: No one. I have slept under a tree for ten days. At least tonight I would like to spend in a village.

VILLAGER: Go on, then... Go on... You can pass the night in Athipatti. Go on.

(The villager leaves. Vellaisamy continues his walking. He makes his way up to the stage and walks across it from left to right. As he comes to the right-hand side, the curtain is raised. A village is revealed. Three modest village-style houses with mud walls, raised mud platforms in front, and thatched roofs are visible.)

Scene 2

(Vellaisamy seats himself on a rock in front of the houses, opens his food bundle, and begins to eat. Ataikappan appears and stands before him. In a few moments, Kanthaiyan arrives. Beginning with Gurusamy and Kovalu, four or five villagers gather around. They glare at Vellaisamy.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Who are you?

SCEPTRE - III

VELLAISAMY: A stranger.

GURUSAMY: We can see that. Why have you come to this village?

VELLAISAMY: No reason. I am a traveler. I will eat my food, spend the night, and leave in the morning.

ATAIKAPPAN: You come here and open your food bundle! Don't you know about this village?

(Vellaisamy gets an attack of hiccups.)

VELLAISAMY: Can I trouble you for a little water? *(All four laugh. Vellaisamy continues hiccuping.)*

VELLAISAMY: Why do you laugh when I ask for water?

KANTHAIYAN: Now you know why we asked if you knew about this village.

KOVALU: To ask a man for his wife is not a sin in this village. But to ask him for water is a great sin.

(Vellaisamy looks bewildered. He begins to hiccup once again.)

VELLAISAMY: I don't understand. Have some pity. Give me some water.

ATAIKAPPAN: You scoundrel! You come into this village, eat your food, and start this bloody hiccuping. Now you have no choice but to hiccup and hiccup and die of your hiccuping!

VELLAISAMY: Don't you have any compassion? I feel as if I might choke. Please, give me some water.

(Sevanthi comes to the entrance to her house.)

KOVALU: We don't have any compassion? It is the millions of people who live outside this village who have no compassion for us.

VELLAISAMY: Water! Please... Please, give me just a little bit of water.

(From within her house, Sevanthi brings some water in a small pot.)

SEVANTHI: Here... Drink.

(Vellaisamy takes the pot and drinks up the water greedily.)

VELLAISAMY: Thank you. I feel better now.

ATAIKAPPAN: Sevanthi, how did you get that water?

SEVANTHI: I went with a pot to the spring last evening and brought back some water.

GURUSAMY: To the spring?

ATAIKAPPAN: Seven and seven. Fourteen miles. You went fourteen miles by foot?

SEVANTHI: Yes, I did. What's wrong with that?

ATAIKAPPAN: Silly girl! For one pot of water, this girl made the trip by herself, on foot, over stone and thorn for fourteen miles.

SEVANTHI: If I had not gone, what would this man have done today? *(Retrieves her pot and leaves.)*

ATAIKAPPAN: O Kanthaiya... If we don't have water, so be it. We will go thirsty and be ruined. Is that a reason to send your daughter all this way by herself?

KANTHAIYAN: I did not send her. Do you think she listens to me if I tell her anything, this disobedient daughter?

VELLAISAMY: What are you all saying? Is there no water in the village?

ATAIKAPPAN: Water? We are accursed creatures. We have been suffering for five years without water to drink. Once upon a time, we too farmed. But for five years there has been no rain and the land is turning into a desert. Now we do coolie work in farming villages and feed ourselves. Some of us carry sacks in Kovilpatti market. Half the people of the village have left. For various reasons, those of us who remain here are unable to leave. We live on—hoping that the rains will return, that we too will get water, that we too will return to our farming. But God has judged us faithless and turned away from us. We have seen not even a drop of rain here.

KANTHAIYAN: What village are you from?

VELLAISAMY: I belong to no village. I am a homeless wanderer.

KANTHAIYAN: Wife and children?

VELLAISAMY: None.

ATAIKAPPAN: You can spend the night on the platform in front of my house and be on your way in the morning. Kovilpatti is fifteen miles from here. You will get work there.

VELLAISAMY: All right.

(Vellaisamy ties up his bundle and goes to the platform fronting Ataikappan's house in the anterior part of the stage. Ataikappan brings out an old sleeping mat from within and gives it to Vellaisamy.)

Scene 3

(Light spreads in the house on the left side. Morning. Schoolteacher Vaithilingam is sitting on the platform fronting his house and reading his newspaper. Around him, Ataikappan, Kanthaiyan, and others are seated. In her house, Sevanthi stands with her hand on the doorframe.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Halloo... What's the news in the paper? Please read it and tell us.

VAITHILINGAM: Here it is. Garland Canal Project. Canals should be dug from the Ganga so that the rivers of India are joined together. Not only will water be brought to those areas without water, but the danger of flooding in the Ganga and the Brahmaputra will be removed. The prime minister said that as part of this project a canal should be dug to Athipatti in Thirunelveli district, so that water will be brought to it.

KANTHAIYAN: Teacher! You mean water will come to our village?

Hey! Kovalu! Gurusamy! Come here! *(The two of them come running.)*

KANTHAIYAN: Our village is to get water! It's printed in the paper.

GURUSAMY: What? Water? Hooray! Hooray! We will soon have water.

Athipatti will soon have water. Hooray! *(The two of them dance in excitement.)*

VAITHILINGAM: Hey! Hey, you useless fellows! Stop! Athipatti is not going to get any water.

KANTHAIYAN: You said it was printed in the paper!

VAITHILINGAM: Not even in the time of your grandson will water come to Athipatti. Go to your work!

KANTHAIYAN: Teacher has been simply joking . . .

(The villagers disperse in disgust. Teacher Vaithilingam is engrossed in the paper.)

SCEPTRE - III

ATAIKAPPAN (*shaking Vellaisamy, who is sleeping on the platform fronting his house*): Here, stranger... How long are you going to sleep? You will have to start out right away if you want to reach Kovilpatti before it gets hot.

VELLAISAMY: I am awake. It's the tiredness from having walked from Madurai. It's hard to rouse myself. So I am lying here quietly. (*He gets up and rolls up the mat.*)

VAITHILINGAM: Who is this? Looks to be somebody new.

ATAIKAPPAN: He is a stranger. Said he wanted to spend the night. I let him sleep on the platform fronting my house. (*Takes the mat and goes into his house.*)

VAITHILINGAM: What is your name?

VELLAISAMY: Vellaisamy.

VAITHILINGAM: What are you going to Kovilpatti for?

VELLAISAMY: Why do I go any place? The dust of no place sticks to my feet.

VAITHILINGAM: Where are you from? The north?

VELLAISAMY: Yes. The north.

VAITHILINGAM: How old are you?

VELLAISAMY: My father used to say I was born when the flag of the white man came down over Delhi Red Fort and the tricolor went up. The white man was leaving this country. In his memory, my father gave me this name, Vellaisamy. Maybe it's because I was born on the day of independence... Like independent India, I too live the life of a dog.

VAITHILINGAM: You talk as if those who were born before independence led happy lives. I was born before independence. I live the hard life of a mad dog.

VELLAISAMY: How do you mean?

VAITHILINGAM: You want me to tell you my life's story? I was a teacher in a village near Thirunelveli. The son of an MLA was studying in the school. He knew how to count from one to ten. Maybe that's why he only got three or four marks in his tests. I failed him in the third grade. The MLA asked me to pass him. An education department official supported him in this request. I said no. "You bastard," he said, "I will transfer you to a waterless jungle." And so they dumped me here. Here there is neither water nor jungle. In this Sahara Desert there is a one-teacher school. Of this school, I am the teacher. The students come to school in the afternoon—in the time that is left after catching crabs. They eat their school lunch and vanish.

VELLAISAMY: Do you live alone here?

VAITHILINGAM: I have a wife. She says the dirt from her body will be washed off only if she lives by the Tamiravarni River and bathes in its waters.

VELLAISAMY: Sir, I too am thinking of staying on in this village.

VAITHILINGAM: Have you gone mad? One by one, everyone is leaving this village, and you want to stay here?

VELLAISAMY: I like this village.

VAITHILINGAM: The soil of this village is dry and hard.

VELLAISAMY: But the hearts of its people are full and tender.

VAITHILINGAM: The hearts are full and tender! Are you planning to stick a tap in the heart and draw water to drink from there?

VELLAISAMY: I wish to stay in this village because of its people.

VAITHILINGAM: What are you? A man? Or a camel?

VELLAISAMY: Why do you ask me this question?

VAITHILINGAM: Only a camel is able to store water for six months in its stomach. Have you put a bag in your stomach?

VELLAISAMY: No matter where I go, I will have to work with my two hands and do what I have to do to survive. Why not do it in this village?

VAITHILINGAM: That is hard. What work is there in this village? The village is full of thorny trees. Perhaps you think you can cut and sell firewood. Your body will be covered with blood before you cut a single branch. The land is desert.

(Enter Marimuthu, the temple priest.)

MARIMUTHU: What now, Teacher? Have you declared a holiday in your school?

VAITHILINGAM: Welcome, Priest! Mine is after all a night school.

What brings you here?

MARIMUTHU: I come in search of a pinch of tobacco. My mouth is itching for it.

VAITHILINGAM: Why a pinch? Take more. *(Hands Marimuthu the tobacco pouch.)*

Tell me, Priest. When do you bathe the idol of Mariamman in your temple?

MARIMUTHU: Why do you ask me this question? You know I bathe the idol and decorate it only on the day of the new moon. *(He notices Vellaisamy.)* Who is this fellow?

Is he a relative?

VAITHILINGAM: No, he is not a relative. But he could be considered one.

MARIMUTHU: Teacher, you always speak with some double meaning. *(Leaves.)*

VAITHILINGAM: He is the priest of the village's Mariamman temple. And also the medicine man.

VELLAISAMY: Also the medicine man? What do you mean?

VAITHILINGAM: He is the doctor. If you are sick, he will give you medicine. Did you hear what he said? The Mariamman of this village bathes only once a month.

VELLAISAMY: The work I plan to do in this village will change all that. I mean to have the Mariamman of your village bathe daily. All of you should have enough water daily to quench your thirst.

VAITHILINGAM *(rising in alarm)*: Who do you think you are? Are you the Sai Baba of Puttaparthi to bestow a blessing upon us?

VELLAISAMY: This is not a blessing. It is a feasible proposition.

VAITHILINGAM: You are going to bring water to slake the thirst of the people of this village? Something is wrong with your mind.

VELLAISAMY: There is nothing that human beings cannot achieve.

VAITHILINGAM: The MLA of this area . . . the president of the village council . . . the collector . . . the minister who once visited this village . . . are they not human beings? Even they were not able to bring water to this village...

VELLAISAMY: True, they are human. But they had no humanity. Human beings have flattened mountains. They have cleared the jungle and made it cultivable. With their two hands, they have worked with nature and bent it to their convenience.

VAITHILINGAM: What you say about the two hands of human beings is true enough. But it has no relevance to Indians.

VELLAISAMY: What do you mean?

VAITHILINGAM: The two hands of an Indian are good for taking bribes. They are good for taking dowry, and for throttling the throats of others, and for wringing in disgust if someone else is doing well.

VELLAISAMY: No. You speak like this because of all the distress you have experienced. We Indians have also done great things.

VAITHILINGAM: But now we are mud!

VELLAISAMY: This mud can also be transformed into diamonds.

VAITHILINGAM: How is that possible?

VELLAISAMY: If all 600 million people are of one mind for one minute...

VAITHILINGAM: You mean they are not of one mind now?

SCEPTRE - III

VELLAISAMY: Each one has a separate purpose. We don't have a leader who can bring them all together and turn them into a single force.

VAITHILINGAM: We have so many leaders now!

VELLAISAMY: Our current leaders are dolls decorating the chairs they sit on. Remove them from their chairs and they become worms twitching frantically to get back on.
(Prepares to leave.)

VAITHILINGAM: Wait. You came into this village and said you were a coolie, a vagrant, a traveler. Now you are speaking out of character. Who are you? Spit out the truth!

VELLAISAMY: And if I don't spit out the truth?

VAITHILINGAM: I will spread rumors among the villagers that you kidnap children. I will incite them to beat you up.

VELLAISAMY: Oh, no! Please don't do that. As it is, my body is a battered, tattered thing. I will tell you who I am.

VAITHILINGAM: Go on, then. Tell me.

VELLAISAMY: I haven't cleaned my teeth yet. And I haven't had my gruel.

VAITHILINGAM: To clean your teeth there is charcoal in my wood stove. The second thing you mentioned—gruel—that I don't have even for myself.

(Sevanthi has stood watching all this while.)

SEVANTHI: Teacher, wait. I'll be back in a moment. *(Goes into the house and brings back gruel in a small pot.)* There is gruel here for two people. Eat.

VAITHILINGAM: Have you added salt?

sevanthi: Would I give you gruel without salt?

VELLAISAMY: Thank you.

VAITHILINGAM: It is not customary to say these words in this village. This kind of helping out happens a great deal here. We don't say thank you every time. Come, we'll clean our teeth and then eat our gruel.

(Vaithilingam and Vellaisamy go into Vaithilingam's house. Sevanthi goes into hers. Enter Kanthaiyan.)

KANTHAIYAN: Sevanthi, is there any gruel?

SEVANTHI: I gave the gruel that we had to Teacher and the stranger who arrived yesterday.

KANTHAIYAN: You gave them just gruel?

SEVANTHI: I looked in the pot. There was no pickle.

KANTHAIYAN: Here! I brought some pickle for myself from Gurusamy's mother. Give it to them.

(Kanthaiyan gives the packet of pickles to Sevanthi. She goes into Vaithilingam's house with it.)

Scene 4

(Vellaisamy is seated on the rock. Ataikappan and Gurusamy are in front of their respective houses. Kanthaiyan and Sevanthi are also in front of their house. Vaithilingam is sitting in front of his house.)

ATAIKAPPAN: What is it you wanted, Teacher? You said you had something to tell us. Why are you silent now?

VAITHILINGAM (*gesturing toward Vellaisamy*): This man says he wants to live in this village. What do you all think?

MARIMUTHU: He wants to stay here? How is that possible?

ATAIKAPPAN: That's the way it is. Do you own the village? How do you have the right to ask that question? Teacher! Why does this man need anyone's permission to stay in this village? Why doesn't he simply do it?

MARIMUTHU: That's all very well. Maybe he doesn't need permission to stay. But what work will he do here?

VAITHILINGAM: There is something for him to do. He says he will bring water in a cart for the people of this village.

KANTHAIYAN: Water in a cart? Where will he get this water?

ATAIKAPPAN: From your mouth! Stop all this interrupting. Teacher is about to tell us. Teacher, tell us in detail. This fool has nothing better to do but ask useless questions.

VAITHILINGAM: He says he will go the seven miles to the spring and bring back water for each and every house. For that he needs a cart and a bull.

ATAIKAPPAN: Cart and bull? Where are we to go for that?

KANTHAIYAN: If I ask a question, I am a fool! But this gentleman here, he can ask all the questions he wants. Fool.

ATAIKAPPAN: Hey! You, *Kanthaiyan*! You are arrogant.

GURUSAMY: Come, come. Should elders fight like this? Look at them. They have grown old. And they won't leave this world either.

ATAIKAPPAN (*getting up*): Ay! Gurusamy! First your arrogance needs to be cut down to size.

GURUSAMY: It's a joke, Uncle. I don't mean to offend you.

VAITHILINGAM: This is how you all are being ruined. I am wasting my time. As the saying goes, the lazy donkey spoils the good one. Put aside your silliness and pay attention. Or else I'll go about my work.

ATAIKAPPAN: We are listening, Teacher.

VAITHILINGAM: This man says if we get him a bull and a cart he will make sure we won't want for drinking water.

GURUSAMY: Is it enough if we get water to drink? Don't we need water to brush our teeth, bathe, wash our faces?

ATAIKAPPAN: Listen to him. Here our throats are dry without water to drink and he wants water for a wash! There is no water for such luxury here.

VELLAISAMY: Washing your face is a luxury?

ATAIKAPPAN: Yes. In this village, bathing or washing your face is a luxury.

VAITHILINGAM: Gurusamy, let's first take care of the drinking water. We can wash our faces only if there is still life in our bodies. What do you say about the bull and the cart?

KANTHAIYAN: Where will we get money to buy a bull and a cart?

VAITHILINGAM: With three hundred rupees, we can buy a good calf.

ATAIKAPPAN: How about the cart?

VAITHILINGAM: He has made a plan for that. Vellaisamy, why don't you tell them yourself?

VELLAISAMY: There are all these useless trees around the village. If we cut down two trees we can make a cart. Is there not a carpenter in this village?

ATAIKAPPAN: Where is Kuppan the carpenter?

(*Kuppan, the carpenter, comes to the front of the crowd.*)

KUPPAN: No need to yell. I am here.

VELLAISAMY: Can you make a cart?

SCEPTRE - III

MARIMUTHU: Good question! It's been five years since this man has held a chisel in his hand.

KUPPAN (*looking at Marimuthu*): Why do you want to make fun of me? Look, brother! I can make a main door, a beam, and things like that. But I don't know enough to make a wheel for the cart from a plank.

VELLAISAMY: I know how to do that. I too have done carpentry. You can help me. What I need are a chisel, a carpenter's plane, and a saw.

MARIMUTHU: Carpenter, do you have these tools? Or have you sold them and eaten up the money?

KUPPAN: No matter how bad the drought, a worker does not sell his tools. You should know that.

KOVALU: Does this priest of our village sell his god and eat?

MARIMUTHU: This is what I get for speaking hastily.

VELLAISAMY: Then we can make the cart. Is there a blacksmith here to make metal bands for the wheels?

ATAIKAPPAN: In this village, who is left that knows a trade? There is no farming here. Who will live here eating wild leaves for the rest of their lives? Chinnasamy the blacksmith has left the village. Now, even for a screwdriver, we have to take the bus to town.

VELLAISAMY: Then let's go to Kovilpatti and fix the iron band on the wheels. Everything will cost six hundred rupees. There are three hundred families in the village. If each family gives two rupees, we can do it.

KANTHAIYAN (*rising in a hurry*): You have spoilt the fairy tale! How can we do all this?

ATAIKAPPAN: We sweat blood for gruel. And what does he say? He wants two rupees. We are wasting our time here. Let's go.

GURUSAMY: It is difficult for us to put together even two rupees a day. How can we collect contributions from that?

MARIMUTHU: Vellaisamy, talk about what is possible. Let's spend six hundred rupees to buy a goat, sacrifice it to Mariamman, and offer cooked rice to the goddess. You'll see. The sky will turn into a blanket of clouds and pour down a torrent of rain. Instead, you talk about bulls and carts.

VELLAISAMY: Please! Listen to what I have to say. It is not our fate that we have to suffer until the day we die. We have our two hands. With these two hands we can do anything. Think for a moment.

KOVALU: If these people had the ability to think, would they be like this? We get twenty paise per sack that we carry in Vandipettai, where the carts and the trucks come to be loaded. I said to them, "Let's ask them to give us a little more. Let's all go together and make this demand." But do you think these fellows agreed? They said they dared not make an enemy out of the boss. Their livelihood would be lost.

ATAIKAPPAN: Kovalu, what do you care? If you are not able to make a living lifting sacks here, you will go away somewhere and still manage. Our life is not like that. We live by the grace of the bosses.

KOVALU: If you find a problem in every suggestion, you will achieve nothing. Understand that. (*Leaves.*)

ATAIKAPPAN: Listen. Forget this business of collecting money and think of other options.

VELLAISAMY: I am asking for only six hundred rupees, not a million. Two rupees from every family.

VAITHILINGAM: Vellaisamy, leave it alone. Hey! Where is Madasamy's son? (*A boy comes forward, dragging himself over the ground.*)

VAITHILINGAM: Look at this! Wasn't he running around and doing his work just fine? How did he get like this? Like a toad or a spider!

ATAIKAPPAN: That is his fate.

VAITHILINGAM: At once you blame fate. How convenient! Vellaisamy! Two miles from this village, there is a well. There was a little water in it. There are seven or eight huts of low-caste Pariahs there. No one here would go to that well and get water. This boy, Madasamy's son, belongs to the Pariah caste. He drank water from the well. Now he is in this condition.

ATAIKAPPAN: How is that possible, Teacher? How can this happen to your arms and legs from drinking that water?

VAITHILINGAM: The water of that well is such. I took this boy to Kovilpatti one day. I was told this is a disease called fluorosis. A poison called fluoride is present in the water this boy drinks. If you drink such water, this is what will happen to your arms and legs, the doctor said. Now, there is no water in any well in our village. Now, the people of this village drink water from the same Pariah well they once avoided because it was low caste. If they continue drinking this water, they'll be crabs, spiders, and toads before the next harvest festival.

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher, you are putting a curse on us!

VAITHILINGAM: So? You are not able to produce two rupees per family, but you have dreams of bringing the Ganga to Athipatti!

KANTHAIYAN: That is not fair. Are we refusing to give money that we have?

VAITHILINGAM: Why don't you fast for one day and save the two rupees?

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher, you talk as if we eat every day.

VELLAISAMY: Fine. Then there is no use in my staying here. When I came here, I saw that this village had become a wasteland. No one was able to give water to a man hiccuping after eating food. So I thought I could operate a water cart and bring water to you all. I felt this would also be a job for me. But none of you are ready to accept me because of the condition of this village. I have no choice but to leave. *(He goes into the house and returns with his stick and bundle.)* I thank all of you for letting this homeless vagabond stay in your village for a day. Good-bye.

(Sevanthi comes forward.)

SEVANTHI: Brother! *(She comes forward quickly, retrieves a two-rupee note from a knot in her sari, and gives it to Vellaisamy.)* Why are you leaving? Here. Here is my family's contribution.

KANTHAIYAN: Sevanthi, how did you get this money?

SEVANTHI: I saved it as an offering to the goddess.

VAITHILINGAM: In this village, a man like me doesn't have the courage of a girl. Vellaisamy, here is my contribution. Let's give up trying to get the remaining money from these men. We may as well ask these useless trees for the money.

(He takes two rupees from under his waistcloth and gives it to Vellaisamy.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Kanthaiyan! Your daughter and Teacher have shamed us. Hey, you useless fellows! Have we lost our manhood? Before dawn tomorrow, each one of us will bring two rupees as his family's contribution. If any fellow fails in this, one hard knock and his brains will tumble out of his skull.

MARIMUTHU: Ataikappan, why are you raising such a ruckus? Don't you feel there is something suspicious here?

ATAIKAPPAN: Something suspicious?! Hey, you fellows, get a stick.

We'll knock this priest's brains out.

SCEPTRE - III

Scene 5

(Light spreads in Kanthaiyan's house. Enter Kanthaiyan. He is returning home. He wipes the sweat from his face and seats himself on the platform fronting his house.)

KANTHAIYAN: Sevanthi! Bring some water in a pot.

(Sevanthi brings water in a pot, Kanthaiyan speaks between sips of water.)

KANTHAIYAN: You can say what you like, but water from the spring is real water. Sweet as molasses!

SEVANTHI: The villagers should build a temple to Vellaisamy. He is the reason we are able to drink good water.

KANTHAIYAN: It seems Vellaisamy's idea of bringing water to the village has come to the attention of the newspaper people. They have put Vellaisamy's picture in the newspaper. Here. Look! *(Gives Sevanthi the newspaper he is holding in his hand.)*

SEVANTHI: Yes. It is his picture. Where did you get it?

KANTHAIYAN: They were selling it in the market in Kovilpatti. I bought the newspaper because the picture seemed to be Vellaisamy's. Can you figure out what is written?

SEVANTHI: There is a padlock on Teacher's door.

KANTHAIYAN: Who should we ask to read the newspaper article?

Gurusamy has studied up to the fifth grade. I will call him.

SEVANTHI: Ataikappan knows how to read.

KANTHAIYAN: He knows nothing! He is an illiterate like me. He just goes about boasting he knows how to read.

(Kanthaiyan leaves. Sevanthi turns the paper round and round in her hands. Kanthaiyan returns with Gurusamy.)

GURUSAMY: Why did you buy the paper if you don't know how to read? Are you trying to pretend you are literate?

KANTHAIYAN: What are you saying? Vellaisamy's picture is in the paper. Read it and tell us why.

(Gurusamy takes the paper from Sevanthi and reads.)

GURUSAMY: "This is Vellaidorai, who has escaped from police custody. Police officials say there is a five thousand rupees reward for capturing this man." Uncle, this is a bombshell!

KANTHAIYAN: Yes. But isn't the name given as Vellaidorai?

GURUSAMY: It is probably a printer's error. Let me read further. Listen, Uncle. "As reported, Mr. Kalamekam belonging to North Arcot district and his wife were found murdered in their room. Believing that Vellaidorai did these murders because of previous enmity, the police arrested Vellaidorai in Javathu Hill. They were taking him in a jeep to the court in Vellore when Vellaidorai escaped. A police official declared that a reward of five thousand rupees would be given to anyone capturing this man or giving information regarding his whereabouts to the police." What is all this, Uncle? It is hard to believe.

KANTHAIYAN: Yes. Is it possible Vellaisamy could have done two murders?

SEVANTHI: Please, read the story carefully. Is that what is really written?

GURUSAMY: Is this a joking matter? That's what is written, child. He did two murders and quietly escaped here.

KANTHAIYAN: Wait a bit! Let me go and tell people of this news. Gurusamy, bring the

newspaper with you. Let's go to the school and tell this news to Teacher.

(Kanthaiyan and Gurusamy leave.)

Scene 6

(Vaithilingam is seated on the platform fronting his house and Vellaisamy on the rock. Ataikappan is in his house. Marimuthu and Kanthaiyan are also present.)

VELLAISAMY: The news in the paper is true. If you tell the police where I am, you will get five thousand rupees. It is for you to decide whether to tell them or not.

ATAIKAPPAN: Did Teacher already know of all this?

VAITHILINGAM: Yes, I did know. He told me the day he arrived.

MARIMUTHU: What else is there to consider? We should take this man straight to the police station and deliver him to the police.

They will give us five thousand rupees. We are three hundred families. Each should take fifteen rupees and the rest should be put in the temple donation box.

VAITHILINGAM: Your arithmetic is good. But we should consider whether we need this arithmetic at all.

MARIMUTHU: What is there to consider? Ever since he came up with the idea of a water cart, I have been suspicious. I told you there was some secret plan. But this man said he would knock my brains out. Shouldn't someone knock out his brains now?

ATAIKAPPAN: Be quiet. We are in trouble now. Should we turn against the government? Or should we hand the police this good man who has brought us water?

KANTHAIYAN: Vellaisamy, I want to ask you . . . what terrible crime have you committed?

VELLAISAMY: There was a man named Kalamekam in our village.

KANTHAIYAN: Your village? Which village is that?

VELLAISAMY: Alankayam in North Arcot district. We were all bonded laborers to this Kalamekam.

ATAIKAPPAN: Bonded laborer? What is that?

VELLAISAMY: At one time, we were farmers working the little bits of land we had. Kalamekam was a very rich man. He had a lot of land. Whenever we needed money, we would get a loan from him. The interest on the loan was no ordinary interest. If we took a hundred rupee loan, we would have to return two hundred rupees the next year. If two years passed, then three hundred rupees.

ATAIKAPPAN: Incredible! What an abnormal arrangement!

VELLAISAMY: Yes. Because of it, my father came to owe him a lot of money. My father lost his land to him and still the loan was not repaid. And so my father worked for him without pay. He became a bonded laborer. I was in school at that time. My father wanted to make me study, come what may, so he took more and more loans from Kalamekam. But when I finished tenth grade and came back to my village, my father died. At once this Kalamekam called me and said, "Hey you, Vellaidorai, your father's loan still isn't repaid. Only if you too work for me will the loan be repaid." I had no option but to work for him. I did backbreaking work twenty-four hours a day. I thought the loan would be repaid more quickly if two people worked and so I married. My wife used to work in Kalamekam's house. I used to work in the threshing ground. One day Kalamekam came to the threshing ground. "Hey you, Vellaidorai, I have taken your wife in place of the remaining loan. Don't bother looking for her anymore," he said and went away. My blood boiled. I felt as if my wife were asking me if I had married her only to exchange her for the loan. That night I

SCEPTRE - III

broke into Kalamekam's house. On the bed were Kalamekam and my wife. When I saw Kalamekam, I slashed furiously at him with my sickle. It was only afterwards that I saw I had killed two people. I ran away to the jungle of Javathu Hill. But the police caught me. They put me in a jeep to take me to Vellore, to keep me in custody there. On the way, I jumped out of the jeep and escaped.

KANTHAIYAN: How is it that your wife agreed to be with him?

VELLAISAMY: There is no question of agreeing here. If she had not agreed, they would have cut my wife in two and thrown her by the canal. She would have been disfigured so badly that no one would have been able to claim her.

KANTHAIYAN: What is it you want us to do now?

VELLAISAMY: From the moment of my birth to the time of my escape from the police, I have been a slave. It is only after I came to this village that I became a free man. If you give me up to the police, my story will come to an end. If you don't give me up, I will do any- thing for you.

ATAIKAPPAN: How long can you live in hiding? One day the police will certainly catch you.

VELLAISAMY: Until that day, I would like to think I am not a slave to anyone. I would like to live freely by the labor of my own hand.

VAITHILINGAM: He is not lying when he says he will do anything for you. He said he would bring water in a cart and so he did.

MARIMUTHU: Well, we give him gruel every day!

VAITHILINGAM: Why does your brain work in this fashion? Is he doing this hard work for the sour gruel you give him at the end of the day? You should do the backbreaking work of walking fourteen miles through wasteland under a fiery sun. Then you would know.

KOVALU: What does he care? He sits all day at his window, chewing and spitting out tobacco and telling stories about his grandfather who went on a tiger hunt. We will send the priest tomorrow to bring water.

MARIMUTHU: Sinner, will you prosper? Goddess Mariyayi! Come and show your tricks to this fellow just once. Torment him!

KOVALU: Goddess Mariyayi! Come and show me your tricks. And include this fellow also.

VAITHILINGAM: Kovalu! What is this? Don't say anything more.

VELLAISAMY: If you people have compassion, let me stay in the village. If not, every family will get fifteen rupees, as the priest says. You will also be able to put five hundred rupees in the temple's donation box. I will be happy that you'll be able to eat for ten days because of me. Take me right now to the police.

MARIMUTHU: You all talk about getting water daily in the village. For a long time now, I have been saying we should build a sacrificial platform for the temple. The goddess has sent this man here to give us the money. None of you understands the plans of the goddess.

ATAIKAPPAN: Priest, if we raise money for the sacrificial platform by sending this man to the gallows, the goddess will put out our eyes.

MARIMUTHU: If we hide a murderer in the village, the police will put out our eyes.

GURUSAMY: Your eyes look like the eyes of a vulture. They are the ones the police will put out first.

MARIMUTHU: These days, youngsters have become disrespectful.

GURUSAMY: What do you expect? We will hide this Vellaisamy like the eyelids hide the eyes. We will see which cop puts out eyes.

KOVALU: Gurusamy, what you say is right. If we listen to the advice of these elders, we'll be left to catch crabs on the canal bank for the rest of our lives.

ATAIKAPPAN: Hey you, Kovalu! Why do you lump us all together as elders? Do you think we have lost all our pride?

KOVALU: What else can I say? No matter what happens, we stand mutely like buffaloes in the rain. Of course the village will turn into a place where dead bodies are burnt.

ATAIKAPPAN: What do you want us to do about this? What can we do? We are ordinary laborers who live by lifting sacks at Vandipettai.

KANTHAIYAN: Ataikappan, of course Kovalu will speak the way he does. Day before yesterday, there was a big procession in Kovilpatti organized by the Communist Party.

Kovalu marched at the head of that procession holding a red flag. What is the slogan you were shouting?

KOVALU: Long live the revolution!

ATAIKAPPAN: Kovalu, don't bring political parties into this village.

We may suffer without water, but let's not have parties here.

VAITHILINGAM: Where have you all jumped to now? Let's talk about Vellaisamy's problem. Should he stay in the village or not?

ATAIKAPPAN: We have no option. Like a hen in a basket, we will hide Vellaisamy in the village.

VAITHILINGAM: Is it enough for you to say this? Everyone has to say the same.

KANTHAIYAN: Even if they slit our throats, we should not betray Vellaisamy to the police. Does everyone agree?

ALL: We agree. . . . We agree. . . .

VAITHILINGAM: All of you are nodding and saying, "We agree, we agree." But what if some traitor gives up Vellaisamy out of greed for the money?

KANTHAIYAN: We will make everyone here take an oath. But there's one other matter. Vellaisamy goes to the spring to bring water. What if the people of Chekanurcharaipatti see Vellaisamy?

ATAIKAPPAN: Listen to this! The people of Chekanurcharaipatti! They couldn't recognize the sun they saw yesterday. Blind fellows! You think these people are going to recognize Vellaisamy?

KANTHAIYAN: Teacher, then let's get the people to take their oaths.

VAITHILINGAM: Sevanthi, bring the camphor plate.

(Sevanthi brings a plate with camphor. Vaithilingam takes the plate and Sevanthi lights the camphor.)

VAITHILINGAM: Priest, you first.

MARIMUTHU: Why are you calling me?

VAITHILINGAM: Aren't you the one who said each family would get fifteen rupees? You must take the oath by putting out the camphor flame.

MARIMUTHU: What should I say?

VAITHILINGAM: I will not tell the police about Vellaisamy.

MARIMUTHU: We could build a sacrificial platform for the temple!

ATAIKAPPAN: I will throttle you! Take the oath and put out the flame.

MARIMUTHU: I will not tell the police about Vellaisamy. *(He puts out the camphor flame.)*

VAITHILINGAM: Gurusamy, take the plate. *(Gurusamy takes the plate.)* Here, take four people with you. Go to every house and make everyone take the oath over the camphor flame.

SCEPTRE - III

Scene 7

(Vaithilingam and Vellaisamy are in Vaithilingam's house. Enter Gurusamy. Two young men are with him.)

GURUSAMY: Teacher, we have taken camphor to all three hundred houses and taken an oath from everyone. Even babies in their cribs were not left out. We made someone else take the baby's hand and put out the camphor flame.

VAITHILINGAM: What have you done? I asked you to make the adults take oaths. You have hurt the hands of the children.

VELLAISAMY: I had no idea the people of this village would shower such love on me.

(Ataikappan enters.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher, yesterday Naicker of Vandipettai saw me and said, "Ataikappan! Tomorrow I am coming to your village. Ask the elders of the village to be present."

VELLAISAMY: Who is this Naicker of Vandipettai?

VAITHILINGAM: He is one of the most powerful men in this region. Collector, MLA, minister—they are all in his pocket. He owns other important officials too.

GURUSAMY: Why is Naicker coming to our village?

VAITHILINGAM: Don't you understand? He is probably coming to ask us for our votes. Don't you know the elections are almost upon us?

ATAIKAPPAN: So that's what it is! Now they will come running and tell us they will turn a cat into an elephant for us... Hey, Gurusamy... Bring out all the tin mugs. Those who win the elections will fill the mugs with milk and honey. Accursed fellows!

VAITHILINGAM: Ataikappan, let him come. Let him say what he has to say. We will listen to him patiently.

ATAIKAPPAN: When I see people like him I feel disgusted.

(Enter Kanthaiyan.)

KANTHAIYAN: Naicker of Vandipettai has come here on his motorcycle. What is the reason?

ATAIKAPPAN: Is he here already? When it's to ask for votes they come roaring on motorcycles... Go and tell the men of the village to gather here.

(Kanthaiyan departs.)

VAITHILINGAM: Vellaisamy, you had better go in the house. Until Naicker leaves the village, you should not come out.

VELLAISAMY: But why? If I meet him, I too can confront him with a few questions . . .

VAITHILINGAM: We will find ourselves in trouble. You will be caught. You had better go in.

(Vellaisamy leaves. In a few moments Velusamy Naicker, the man referred to as Naicker of Vandipettai, the place where the carts and the trucks come to be loaded, arrives. The gathered men signify their respect for him by putting the cloth they carry on their shoulders under their arms. Vaithilingam alone remains seated.)

NAICKER: Ataikappan, are the men of the village on their way?

ATAIKAPPAN: They are on their way.

(In ones and twos, the villagers arrive.)

NAICKER: You know elections have been announced, don't you?

KANTHAIYAN: What do we know? We are so far from town.

NAICKER: Well, am I not telling you? Sithayya Naicker is a candidate from this area.

ATAIKAPPAN: Who is this Sithayya Naicker?

NAICKER: Don't you know Sithayya Naicker of the matchbox factory?

ATAIKAPPAN: Well! Let him stand for election.

NAICKER: The candidate is of our caste. All Naicker votes must come to him without fail.

VAITHILINGAM: Who is the opposing candidate?

NAICKER: Krishnasamy Reddiar. The Reddy fellows are getting all excited about him.

The Naickers should not fail their candidate.

ATAIKAPPAN: Sir . . . all of us here, different castes, are living together in harmony.

And now you are injecting caste into this situation.

NAICKER: What can we get done in this world if we ignore caste? If one of our Naickers goes to the legislature, we can get four or five Naickers government jobs. He can write over some public land in the names of four or five Naickers.

ATAIKAPPAN: All that is for the rich Naickers. It's not for Naickers like us who work to death for a little bit of gruel.

KOVALU: You say you will do wonders for Naickers. What did you do to bring water to this village? Every election they say, "Let the elections be over. Water will pour into this village like a waterfall bursting through a hill." The only thing pouring in this village is our tears.

NAICKER: Who is this? Oh, it's Kovalu! Of course you will talk. You go about saying those who lift sacks and those who pull carts should join a union. Ha! Men who are dying for gruel are joining a union!

VAITHILINGAM: Ofcourse only those who are dying for gruel will join a union. Why would someone who has enough to eat join a union?

NAICKER: What are they going to achieve by joining a union?

KOVALU: We will demonstrate with flags in Vandipettai.

NAICKER: And you think we will immediately run away frightened? Velusami Naicker of Vandipettai is not the man to be frightened by all this.

KOVALU: If you don't change, we will turn the flags around and hit you with the sticks.

(Naicker jumps to his feet astonished.)

NAICKER: What! What did you say?

ATAIKAPPAN: Hey, Kovalu. Get away from here. Fool . . . Doesn't know what to say to whom . . .

KOVALU: Will you be quiet? The days when we were afraid of these threats are long gone. We don't have water to drink. People are drinking all kinds of water and finding that their arms and legs don't work. And in the middle of all this, this man comes around asking for votes.

NAICKER: Hey, you . . . Show me some respect! Or there will be killing here!

ATAIKAPPAN: Sir, I'll take care of it. Kanthaiyan . . . take Kovalu away from here.

SCEPTRE - III

(Kanthaiyan takes Kovalu away.)

KOVALU: Keep your threats for Vandipettai. If you come to my village and threaten me... I'll take care of you. I'll smash you! *(Goes out shouting.)*

VAITHILINGAM: Naicker, please sit down. He is young. He spoke without respect.

NAICKER: It is proper to question someone who has come to ask for votes about water for the village. What am I to do if he starts arguing about other things?

VAITHILINGAM: Why did you drag in the matter of his starting a union? You too don't know what to say or to whom.

NAICKER: Did you say I don't know? Do you think I care about this fellow? Do you think he can touch one strand of my hair?

VAITHILINGAM: Why should he touch your hair? A barber can cut it with scissors.
(Everyone laughs.)

NAICKER: Teacher!

VAITHILINGAM: What is wrong with Kovalu's question? We are asking the question now. Before this you asked us to vote for Gurusamy Naicker. We did as you wished. But there is still no water in the village!

NAICKER: That is why we have put together the Sixth Five-Year Plan.

VAITHILINGAM: You put together five plans before this one. What did you achieve in them?

NAICKER: The plan being put together now has a budget of 900 thousand million rupees.

ATAIKAPPAN: What is this? You are talking of 900 thousand million to people who have never seen a ten-rupee note. You will use all that money to improve the lives of people living in places like Bombay, Madras, and Delhi. What's going to change in this remote village?

NAICKER: You would not talk like this... when did you learn all this?

VAITHILINGAM: I buy the newspaper and read to them from it. They learn that people with ration cards in the city get five kilos of sugar and those in a village get one. Why is this, they ask? Don't we take sugar in our tea and coffee? Do we all have diabetes here?

NAICKER: There is famine in the land because all these fellows who eat gruel daily have started clamoring for tea and coffee.

VAITHILINGAM: Are you saying these people have to eat gruel forever? The people of the town will walk around in nice, clean clothes while these people here are barely alive. Is this what you are saying?

NAICKER: Now I understand. You are the one inciting these people.

VAITHILINGAM: And what do you think should be done about that? Are you going to send me to a waterless wasteland? The only place with less water than this is the Sahara Desert. You don't have the power to send me there.

NAICKER: You are a Reddy. That is why you are setting Naicker against Naicker.

ATAIKAPPAN: What is all this? You keep referring to Naickers and Reddys. Over the past three years, he has been one of us. We remember what caste we are only when people like you come into the village electioneering. Until then, who thinks about caste?

KANTHAIYAN: Ataikappan, Naicker is so free with his words about support for Naickers. Why shouldn't his son study to be a doctor and come back to this village to serve Naickers? Did they consider the fact that the Naickers here have been suffering without a doctor?

ATAIKAPPAN: What money can they earn here? They can make mountains of money in Madras!

KANTHAIYAN: Then it seems there is no need for Naickers if there is no money to be made. Naickers are needed only to cast their votes.

ATAIKAPPAN: Such fellows should be flayed.

NAICKER: What...!

KANTHAIYAN: You can leave now. Don't make our anguish deeper.

NAICKER: Listen to me, all of you! Remember one thing. If Sithaya Naicker loses in this area, this whole village will turn into a cremation ground.

ATAIKAPPAN: And is it a land of plenty now?

(Naicker leaves in anger. Enter Vellaisamy and Kovalu.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher, what should we do?

VELLAISAMY: If we are proud men and our mothers are not whores, not one fellow from this village will cast his vote.

ATAIKAPPAN: So be it.

KOVALU: What are you saying? Will the tall tower of the temple fall because a cow butts it? If they don't have our three hundred votes, will they lose? They will cast three hundred false votes.

VAITHILINGAM: Let them. Anyone who wins by stealing votes will steal in office too. The question for us is this: How can we show our anger? This is what is called a boycott.

ATAIKAPPAN: What is it called?

VAITHILINGAM: Boycott.

ATAIKAPPAN: Then we will most definitely boycott.

Scene 8

(Enter Vellaisamy with O.V. When he arrives at the teacher's house, he calls to him.)

VELLAISAMY: Teacher!

(Vaithilingam emerges from his house.)

VELLAISAMY: This man says he is a newspaper reporter from Madras.

VAITHILINGAM: A newspaper reporter! Please sit down. (O.V. sits down.)

VAITHILINGAM: But no girl has been raped in this village.

O.V.: Why do you say that?

VAITHILINGAM: Is it not true that newspaper reporters like you come rushing only when there's been a rape or a murder? That is what is exciting news for you.

O.V.: My newspaper is not like that.

VAITHILINGAM: Then why have you come here?

O.V.: It seems this village as a whole did not vote in the elections. I have come to find out why.

VAITHILINGAM: So newspapers are now writing about these happenings as well?

O.V.: Of course.

VAITHILINGAM: Cinema actress Sukanya wears only red saris when she goes to work on Fridays. Actress Supriya is frightened of cock- roaches. This is the kind of news you publish.

O.V.: We don't write like that because we want to. Newspaper owners ask for news of that kind. And newspaper owners ask for such stories because the common people like them.

VELLAISAMY: Do you think the common people won't be able to digest their food if they don't know what color sari Sukanya wears on Friday? Look. The government has specified the breadth and the length of the national flag. An Indian villager does not have

SCEPTRE - III

even that much cloth. In this situation, I am sure, it is absolutely necessary for the people to know whether a movie star wears a sari or something else on a Friday.

O.V. : What is this? I have come to interview you and the two of you are badgering me.

VAITHILINGAM: What else do you think we should do? In days gone by, newspapers gave such courage to the common people that they could take on a great empire and win. I am disappointed that newspapers are not like that anymore.

O.V. : What is there left to struggle for today?

VELLAISAMY: You ask what there is left to struggle for! If educated young men like you ask such questions, this country won't improve in a hundred years. Go on, then. There is indeed nothing left to struggle for! Go and find out what color sari Sukanya wears when she goes to work on Wednesdays. Go and make a list of all the actresses who are afraid of cockroaches.

O.V. : Why are you so angry at newspapers?

VAITHILINGAM: Why should we not be? You ask us what there is to struggle for. We have been dying here for five years without water to drink. Three elections have passed. There's no end in sight to our predicament. I should be in my school this very moment. But I am here!

O.V. : Why?

VAITHILINGAM: You give lunch to schoolchildren but there is no water for them to drink. This man has to travel fourteen miles to bring water. By the time he brings the water and lunch is served, it is three o'clock. That is why I take my classes at night by the light of a hurricane lamp. Now I haven't been able to get kerosene for the hurricane lamp. My students study by the light from a wood fire.

O.V. : It's difficult to even listen to this.

VAITHILINGAM: In your Madras, if there is no water in the public taps, you fill pages and pages with stories. There has been no water here for five years. No one has helped. We're Indian citizens too!

O.V. : You could have written to the government.

VAITHILINGAM: We did write. We went to Kovilpatti and gave a memorandum to the minister himself. The minister gave it to his personal assistant. The PA gave it to the collector. The collector took it and sent it to the revenue inspector. The revenue inspector sent it to the village official. The village official came to this village, looked around, and wrote to the revenue inspector, saying, "Yes, it's true. There is no water in the village." The revenue inspector wrote to the collector, saying, "Yes, it's true. There is no water in that village." The collector wrote to the PA, saying, "Yes, it's true. There is no water in that village." The PA wrote a note to the minister, saying, "Yes, it's true. There is no water in that village." And then the minister too admitted it in the legislature. He said, "Yes, it's true. There is no water in that village." It took five years to discover this truth. By that time, half the people had left the village. A few had drunk any old water and died from diseases.

O.V. : Is this why you are angry and have boycotted the elections?

VAITHILINGAM: That is all we could do.

O.V. : Do you believe that the government will take action because of your boycott?

VAITHILINGAM: We don't have such illusions. We know the government does not show any regard for such peaceful struggles. These days it responds only if you burn a bus.

O.V. : Do you think such violent behavior will bring results?

VAITHILINGAM: Whether it brings a result or not, the government will take notice of us only if such violent actions are taken.

O.V. : Isn't such action bad for the country?

VELLAISAMY: The poor cannot bear this injustice any longer. If economic changes are not made quickly, there will be a violent revolution in this country. In that revolution, all of you

will be swept up and thrown out. The poor are not ready to bear all this in the name of god or religion or fate. That armed revolution cannot be stopped.

O.V. : What is this? Why are you talking like this?

VELLAISAMY: I am not the one speaking in this fashion. I am recounting the words of the famous Gandhian V. R. V. Rao from a newspaper.

O.V. : What I suspected is true.

VELLAISAMY: What did you suspect?

O.V. : These are not the words of a village water carrier.

VELLAISAMY: Then what do the words seem like?

O.V. : They sound like the words of Vellaidorai, who escaped from custody in the jungles of Javathu Hill.

VELLAISAMY: Sir...!

VAITHILINGAM: Please, Mr. O.V. . . .

O.V. : Even if they threaten to cut off my head, I won't tell them where you are. My father was a Gandhian. But he hid four radical communists in our home. I am not here to expose you. Also... I will write about all this in the newspaper. I'll raise a ruckus and see that your village gets water somehow or other.

Scene 9

(Ataikappan's house. Ataikappan and Azhagiri, the policeman betrothed to Sevanthi, are in conversation.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Brother, you are very fortunate to be marrying a girl like Sevanthi. She is very well mannered. Her nature is solid gold.

AZHAGIRI: Father took all that into consideration when he agreed to the marriage.

ATAIKAPPAN: So... Your work is in Sivagiri?

AZHAGIRI: Yes. I am a police constable.

ATAIKAPPAN: I know someone who is with the police in Kovilpatti. He used to have a red cap. Now he has a black cap. He used to wear shorts before. Now he wears long pants. But he is still what he was when I was a little boy.

AZHAGIRI: Well, if we catch our cases in good numbers, we get pro- motions. But no one worries about promotions. We get as much from these liquor cases as we do from our government salary.

ATAIKAPPAN: Brother! Then what do you earn in one month?

AZHAGIRI: I don't earn my money like that. My ambition is to catch a lot of criminals and get promoted. I will give you an example. Reports have come in that a murderer who escaped from Javathu Hill has been seen in this area. If I caught him, I would immediately get a promotion.

ATAIKAPPAN *(showing his agitation)*: Forget that. I want to ask you something else.

AZHAGIRI: What?

ATAIKAPPAN: Is it true that women are taken to the police station for interrogation and raped?

AZHAGIRI: Who told you this ?

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher would read in the newspaper and tell us. Does this really happen? Are the papers lying?

AZHAGIRI: I don't know about all that. Nothing like that happens in our police station.

(Enter Kanthaiyan.)

SCEPTRE - III

KANTHAIYAN: What is this, Ataikappan? Are you interrogating the bridegroom?

ATAIKAPPAN: Kanthaiyan, I like your son-in-law. He will take good care of your daughter through the years.

(Enter Azhagiri's father.)

AZHAGIRI'S FATHER: Then it's decided. I'll pick an auspicious day in the month of Thai and write to you. Shall we hold the wedding in Sivagiri?

KANTHAIYAN: That seems a good idea.

AZHAGIRI'S FATHER: Time for us to leave, then. If we don't catch the 5:15 bus we won't get home in time.

AZHAGIRI: Good-bye, Uncle.

(Azhagiri and his father leave.)

KANTHAIYAN: I have given my word. I wonder how things will turn out?

ATAIKAPPAN: Pray to Murugan, the god of Tiruchendur temple. Everything will be fine.

Scene 10

(Vellaisamy's voice is heard offstage.)

VELLAISAMY: Teacher!

(Everyone looks in the direction of the sound. Vellaisamy enters with blood on his body and a bandage on his head.)

VAITHILINGAM: It's Vellaisamy. What happened? Hey, you fellows. Help him here.

(Gurusamy and Kovalu help Vellaisamy.)

VAITHILINGAM: Vellaisamy, what happened?

VELLAISAMY: Four thugs came up to me as I was drawing water from the spring. They said, "You are drawing water for the people of Athipatti. Let them die without water." They hit me hard on the head with a stick. Then they threw the bull and the cart down the hill. The cart was smashed. The bull, which was tied to the cart, was killed.

ATAIKAPPAN: Sinners! I hope the goddess makes them blind.

KANTHAIYAN: This must be the work of the Naicker of Vandipettai.

KOVALU: If I don't rip open that Naicker's throat with my bare teeth, my mother was a whore! *(Makes to leave.)*

VAITHILINGAM: Kovalu, wait. Do you think the police will leave you alone if you rip open that Naicker's throat?

KOVALU: I don't care. Death is death, whether it comes at age six or a hundred. My mother gave birth to me in this wasteland to drink that Naicker's life!

VAITHILINGAM: Well, maybe you'll manage to drink his life. But then the police will descend on this whole village. We'll end up drawing their attention to that same Vellaisamy we took an oath to hide.

ATAIKAPPAN: Yes, Kovalu. Don't destroy the whole village in your anger.

KOVALU: Die, then! Is life so sweet to you? It's better to die than live like dogs in the street, bearing blow after blow on our backs.

ATAIKAPPAN: Careful! Don't be a hasty fool and go against the decisions of the village. Things will turn unpleasant.

KOVALU: Decisions! Gurusamy, get four or five saris from your wife. Let these women here wear them. They won't act for themselves— or let anyone else act. *(Leaves, spitting at them.)*

Scene 11

(Vellaisamy is seated in Vaithilingam's house. Ataikappan, Kanthaiyan, and others come over to Vellaisamy.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher, what is on your mind?

GURUSAMY: A minister from Delhi is coming to Thirunelveli. If the entire village goes to him and gives him a petition, we will certainly get some results.

VAITHILINGAM: Go tend to your work, useless fellow. The local MLA won't see us, and you think a minister from Delhi will see you!

KANTHAIYAN: He will be completely surrounded by the police.

ATAIKAPPAN: Yes. We will end up saying something in anger and the police will beat us up.

KUPPAN: Does that mean we should suffer in this village like ghosts standing guard among the funeral pyres? What if all of us leave the village?

VAITHILINGAM: Where will you go? Will you go to Madurai or to Madras? Will you beg in the streets with your children in your arms and your wives trailing behind you?

KUPPAN: That is not such a bad thing.

VAITHILINGAM: Is this how a man with a family speaks? If you don't eat for two days, you'll want to steal. You will want to put your hand in somebody else's pocket. You will want to snatch the necklace from a child's neck.

KANTHAIYAN: Ugh! It is better to stay in this village than do such dirty work.

VAITHILINGAM: You think it is dirty work. If they had jobs that gave them enough to eat, would they steal? Is one born a thief?

MARIMUTHU: The young fellows in this village say the priest is the only one here to eat a proper meal. Now even gruel has become difficult.

(Enter Kovalu.)

KOVALU: Very good! Let's sit around like this, telling tales to one another and whiling away our time! Unless we act soon, this village will remain like this.

VAITHILINGAM: What is it you want us to do without wasting time?

KOVALU: Isn't the minister coming to Thirunelveli? We should block his car. Or else the whole village could go and block the gate of the Thirunelveli collector's office and shout slogans.

VAITHILINGAM: Whenever this fellow has an idea, it comes down to fighting.

KOVALU: All right. Don't fight. Take a Gandhian approach. Go and ask for help. See what happens to you. They will ignore you. We can get what we want only by struggle. Without struggle, we will remain in darkness. Only those who struggle escape the darkness.

ATAIKAPPAN: What is this struggle he keeps talking about? I don't understand anything. Is he saying we should go get our knives and sticks?

SCEPTRE - III

KOVALU: If it comes to that, we'll have to. It is easy to believe the tiger and the goat can drink from the same pool. But this will happen only if the goat transforms itself into a tiger.

VELLAISAMY: Kovalu, we are stuck in a remote village in Thirunelveli district. If we engage in struggle alone, we will be crushed. I have a plan. Maybe we should try it first.

ATAIKAPPAN: Tell us what it is.

VELLAISAMY: What would you say if I proposed to turn the water from the spring and bring it straight to our village?

VAITHILINGAM: How do you mean? I don't understand.

VELLAISAMY: The water from the spring falls to the south. If we turn it to the north, it will come to our village. A giant boulder blocks the water from coming north. Break the boulder and the spring water will crash down for about a hundred and fifty feet like a waterfall. If we cut a canal from there for seven miles, the water will reach Athipatti.

VAITHILINGAM: It will reach Athipatti, all right. Where will we store it?

VELLAISAMY: There is that dry pond south of the village. Working together, we can remove all the silt and make it clean. We can dig the canal in such a way that the water from the spring flows there directly.

(All look at one another.)

VELLAISAMY: Why is everyone silent?

ATAIKAPPAN: Is this possible?

VAITHILINGAM: Vellaisamy. Breaking the giant boulder. Redirecting the spring water. Digging the canal. Leading the water into the dry pond. All this is a story. Can ordinary people do all this? You suggested a water cart. That is a reasonable suggestion. But this?

VELLAISAMY: Certainly this is possible. Every day I would go to the spring and along the way I would consider the viability of this plan. You must have read in stories that human beings can flatten hills if they wish. Let us show that this is possible.

MARIMUTHU: This is boastfulness. Digging up a mountain to catch a mouse, as the proverb goes. Listen to me. Take up a collection. For each of four full moons, buy a male goat to be sacrificed to the goddess. The sky will darken and pour a flood. The pond will fill to the brim.

KOVALU: I agree with the priest. We should give the goddess a sacrifice. But not a male goat. This priest!

MARIMUTHU: The goddess will make you blind!

KOVALU: Let her. I am not worried. You should not be permitted to remain in this village. Some in this village are like mice in the food bundle. Listen to me. Let's try what Vellaisamy says.

ATAIKAPPAN: We can try. I just think it's a difficult matter.

VELLAISAMY: As long as we sit around and talk about it, it will seem difficult. It won't be so hard to actually do it. No money has to be spent. Only our labor.

ATAIKAPPAN: That is my point. How many will we be able to get?

VELLAISAMY: Won't there be about two hundred strong?

KOVALU: Let's leave out the old and the sick. All of us young, strong men will come together. We'll dig the canal and bring the water here in no time.

VELLAISAMY: It's true. You young men are ready for anything. You are the ones who must bring relief to this village. Even so... Don't you agree we shouldn't break the hearts of our elders?

KOVALU: When have their hearts been whole? You can try all you want to fix their hearts, but you won't be able to make them whole.

KANTHAIYAN: Quiet, Kovalu. We have to consider all points before we come to a decision. Supposing we were to cut the canal through the cultivated fields of the landlords. We'd have a big problem on our hands. They'd attack us.

VELLAISAMY: The canal will not go through cultivated fields, only through public lands. It will be enough if we dig it ten feet wide and six feet deep. Over the years we have dug foundations for the houses of strangers. We have cultivated land for them. We have worked ox-driven water lifts for them. We have carried sacks for them. Why shouldn't we spend all that labor to dig a canal for ourselves?

ATAIKAPPAN: We did not work for the landlords for free. Did we not get paid?

VAITHILINGAM: We'll get paid for this too. We will drink good water all the year round. That is our payment. If the dry pond fills to the brim, we can farm again. We can cultivate tender plants and grain again.

VELLAISAMY: This is our last chance. If we fail in this too, we will be left with no option but to abandon the village and wander from place to place as beggars!

VAITHILINGAM: Bit by bit, we have been worn down and now we can't even be called human. Only a little life is still stuck to our bodies. Let's make this our final challenge. We'll show we can win.

ATAIKAPPAN: Vellaisamy, what do you want us to do?

VELLAISAMY: We must dig the canal.

ATAIKAPPAN: We will dig the canal. What do you all say?

ALL: We will dig it!

VELLAISAMY: We must break the giant boulder.

ALL: We will break it!

Scene 12

(Sevanthi arrives at Kanthaiyan's house. She has a bag in her hand. She sits down on the platform fronting the house. Kanthaiyan arrives.)

KANTHAIYAN: What is this, child? You have come alone! Where is my son-in-law?

SEVANTHI: He wanted to come. I stopped him.

KANTHAIYAN: Why, child? Does a daughter returning home for the Adi festival ever come alone?

SEVANTHI: What's wrong with that?

KANTHAIYAN: What a question! What will the people of the village say if a married girl leaves her husband and arrives alone?

SEVANTHI: I would have brought him. But then he would have stayed a couple of days. Wouldn't he have found out about brother Vellaisamy staying here? That is why I came by myself.

KANTHAIYAN: I did not think of that. But how long can I go without inviting my son-in-law here because of Vellaisamy?

SEVANTHI: However long it is possible. Why, Father,... all these people are working with spades. Why?

KANTHAIYAN: Fresh spring water will soon come to the village, Daughter!

SEVANTHI: What are you saying, Father?

KANTHAIYAN: It's all Vellaisamy's doing. We are going to make an outlet for the spring to the north, dig a canal, and fill the pool. Already the canal is five miles long.

SEVANTHI: Is that right! I came here to spend a couple of days. But, Father, now I will wait for the pool to fill, drink a handful of the water, and then leave for home.

SCEPTRE - III

KANTHAIYAN: That is fine with me if your husband agrees. Come, let's eat some gruel.

(They enter Kanthaiyan's house.)

Scene 13

(Vaithilingam's house. Enter O.V.)

O.V.: Sir!

(Vaithilingam emerges from his house. He has a spade in his hand.)

VAITHILINGAM: What a surprise, O.V.! Welcome, welcome. So did you write about our village in the paper?

O.V.: I was not able to. My boss refused, saying his paper did not need such stories.

VAITHILINGAM: I knew it. They won't let you write these stories.

What did you do then?

O.V.: I left the job.

VAITHILINGAM: Well, you've at least done one thing for the country.

Why have you come to these parts now?

O.V.: I am thinking of doing research about this village on my own. I want to analyze it according to socioeconomic principles and submit my research to the university for a doctorate.

VAITHILINGAM: Using us, you will write a dissertation and get your- self the title of doctor. But nothing will change for us. Henceforth doctorates should not be given to those who write dissertations after having read four or five books. They should only be given after careful consideration of the research of those who have done at least five years of fieldwork.

O.V.: I will do the fieldwork here.

VAITHILINGAM: Very good. But why are you so interested in being a doctor? Listen to me. If you get ahold of the Ramayana of Kamban and make a list of all the places where the name Rama has appeared, the university will give you a doctorate. Instead of getting the doctorate in some such easy fashion, why do you want to come here and suffer in this waterless wasteland? There is a bus to Kovilpatti at 12:15. Take it.

O.V.: What is this? You are rejecting those who come to you and say they want to work for society.

VAITHILINGAM: You are bored and so you are doing social service.

What do we gain by it?

O.V.: Listen. We should look at any issue objectively and consider its underlying causes — the socioeconomic base, the opposing forces obstructing development. And then we should theorize about the issue. Only by keeping all this in mind can we solve any problem. This is what is called a methodology.

VAITHILINGAM: People like you have learned a lot of words that a villager cannot understand. You are fooling everybody with your words. So you too are engaged in the humbuggery of the overeducated, are you? Go ahead. I have no objection to your staying in this village. You can stay in my house. Teach what you can to the children in the mornings.

O.V.: How goes the work of bringing water to the village?

VAITHILINGAM: We don't have faith in anyone anymore. We are digging a canal from the spring. There is a mile left to dig and then there's the work of breaking the boulder.

Anyway... Come, you can get your doctorate later. First take this spade. Let the digging of the canal be your help to us.

(So saying, he hands the spade to O.V.)

Scene 14

(Kanthaiyan's house. Enter constable Azhagiri.)

AZHAGIRI: Sevanthi! Sevanthi!

(Sevanthi emerges from the house. She is surprised when she sees Azhagiri.)

SEVANTHI: What a surprise! You have arrived without sending word.

AZHAGIRI: I had work in these parts. Also, I wanted to see you. And so I came. Isn't your father here?

SEVANTHI: He has gone to work. Come in.

(Azhagiri goes into the house. In a few moments, Vellaisamy arrives, looking tired.)

VELLAISAMY: Sevanthi! Sevanthi!

(Enter Sevanthi.)

VELLAISAMY: I feel feverish. They sent me away saying they would take care of things. They said I should lie down. Will you boil some water for me?

SEVANTHI: Brother, go quickly into the house. I will boil some water and bring it to you later.

VELLAISAMY: Why, Sevanthi?

SEVANTHI: My husband has arrived without warning. He must not see you.

(As Vellaisamy goes into the house, Azhagiri emerges.)

AZHAGIRI: Who was it?

SEVANTHI: Some workmen. They wanted water. I told them to come back later.

AZHAGIRI: They must have come to you because they were thirsty. Why didn't you give them some water? *(Sits down on the platform fronting the house.)*

SEVANTHI: Why have you sat down here? Why don't you come inside?

AZHAGIRI: It's very stuffy inside. I want to get some fresh air.

SEVANTHI: If you come inside, we can talk as I make some gruel.

AZHAGIRI: It's all right, girl. I'll come in in a bit.

(Sevanthi too sits down. Enter Ataikappan. He goes to Vaithilingam's house.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Vellaisamy! Vellaisamy! The medicine man has sent some herbal ointment. He said to apply it to your forehead. If you do as he says and go to sleep, the fever will be gone by morning.

(Vellaisamy emerges. Azhagiri sees Vellaisamy.)

SCEPTRE - III

AZHAGIRI: Uncle, this man... this man...

SEVANTHI: Brother, you have spoiled everything now!

ATAIKAPPAN: Is it Kanthaiyan's son-in-law? When did you come?

AZHAGIRI: Forget that, Uncle. Who is this man?

ATAIKAPPAN: He is a relative of Teacher's.

AZHAGIRI: Is that what he is telling people? This man is a murderer who has hidden himself in these parts. His name is Vellaidorai. He has escaped from the police.

ATAIKAPPAN: Azhagiri, have you gone mad? He really is Teacher's relative. He has come here from near Kallidaikuruchi.

AZHAGIRI: You be quiet. Let me ask him. You! Who are you? Tell me at once.

VELLAISAMY: I am Vellaidorai.

AZHAGIRI: What are you doing here?

VELLAISAMY: You said it yourself. I am hiding from the police.

AZHAGIRI: Uncle! He is a murderer. Did you know he was hiding from the police? Don't keep anything from me.

ATAIKAPPAN: Yes, I knew. The whole village knew.

AZHAGIRI: Sevanthi, did you know?

SEVANTHI: I knew. So what is to be done about that?

AZHAGIRI: What a question! You should have brought him to me.

SEVANTHI: The whole village has taken an oath not to reveal his existence.

AZHAGIRI: Why?

SEVANTHI: You want to know why? For five years now, the earth has been dry. The people of the village have been pushing on from year to year without water to drink, with their tongues stuck to the roofs of their parched mouths. In such a village, this good man drove a cart for fourteen miles every day to bring water. Naicker of Vandipettai put a stop even to that. But still this man did not lose his enthusiasm. He is digging a canal from the spring. Who gains from giving up such a man to the police?

AZHAGIRI: This man has committed two murders. He has thrown dust in our eyes and hidden himself. Our superiors harass us daily about why we haven't caught Vellaidorai yet. And here he sits in great comfort.

ATAIKAPPAN: He did not kill respectable people. What is a man to do with a scoundrel who gives you a loan, takes over all your land, and then demands your wife? What else is he to do but kill him? Is it your opinion that he should fondle him like a baby?

AZHAGIRI: Why do you think courts and laws exist? They will look into the matter.

ATAIKAPPAN: Courts! Laws! Azhagiri, your courts and laws are for those who strut around looking respectable in clean clothes and fill their stomachs to the full. They are not for those dressed in rags, who can't afford to leave the smallest morsel of food behind on their plates. I am a careless fool. I could have brought the medicine another time...

AZHAGIRI: Are you or are you not going to give that man up to me?

SEVANTHI: Why do you make this fuss? If you take this man into custody now, the whole village will spit on my father and me.

AZHAGIRI: I cannot do anything about that. I cannot ignore what I have seen here because people will condemn you two. What is to become of my duty as a policeman?

ATAIKAPPAN: Duty! You talk as if you are responsible for the whole police station. The man pissing in the street, the man on a bicycle without a lamp, the rowdy man drunk on hooch—it is enough if you catch these people. Then your duty is done. If you are so duty conscious, you should have looked for him yourself and caught him. We have kept Vellaisamy in this village. He is in our refuge. And you think you will catch him without exerting yourself? You think the men in this village are women?

AZHAGIRI: Uncle, I don't like this. You are an elder. Be careful what you say. Don't say one word more.

VELLAISAMY: Azhagiri, I am a murderer. I don't deny it. I lusted for a few more days in this world and escaped from the police. I will surrender to you. You will be able to take me to the authorities. But give me some time. The work on the canal is almost over. Tomorrow the whole village is to gather to break the giant boulder. Once it's broken, water will flood into the canal. It will fill the pool. I want to see that with my own eyes and then I will be at your mercy. I would like to see the people of this village joyfully scooping up water from the pool in their cupped hands. Just let me witness that and I'll surrender to you.

AZHAGIRI: Fine words! You are thinking of running away at night.

VELLAISAMY: I swear to you that I will not escape. I cannot live like this anymore, rushing to hide in the house whenever a stranger appears, fear gnawing away at my stomach. I knew things would come to a climax if I confronted you. I have this one desire before my story winds to its end. I am at your mercy. Let me go for now.

(He falls at Azhagiri's feet.)

SEVANTHI: Let this be your good deed. Let this good man keep his life for a few more days. Don't drag him away in the name of duty.

ATAIKAPPAN: Azhagiri, your family will prosper for seven generations. Let him go free.

(Azhagiri is in deep thought.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Don't think. The cooking is almost done. Don't break the vessel now. He will come to you when the canal is finished.

AZHAGIRI: I have my doubts that he will.

VELLAISAMY: I will give myself up to you, Azhagiri. I will keep my promise. Believe me.

AZHAGIRI: All right. I will let you go now. Uncle Ataikappan, you are an elder. My father-in-law too is involved. I am releasing him because of all of you. If you embarrass me later, I will be a terror to you.

Scene 15

(All the villagers are present. Vaithilingam emerges from his house.)

VAITHILINGAM: What is all this? It's time to break the boulder and open the canal. And all of you are dozing here?

(Ataikappan emerges from his house.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher, would we doze on this day of all days? My mother the spring is going to smash the boulder and come flooding out. . . We must celebrate the event! I'm collecting coconut, banana, incense sticks, and incense powder.

(Enter Kanthaiyan.)

KANTHAIYAN: Ataikappan, we should pour turmeric water in the canal before breaking the boulder.

SCEPTRE - III

ATAIKAPPAN: That is the proper way to do it. Don't lecture me as if I don't know the proper custom.

(Gurusamy, Kovalu, Marimuthu the priest, and others arrive.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Hooray! The mother who can bestow prosperity on us is going to come leaping to us...

MARIMUTHU: Ataikappan! You are right. The mother is surely going to come to us. Why don't we sacrifice a goat to keep the mother happy?

ATAIKAPPAN: Why, Priest? Has it been too long since you ate goat curry? Is your mouth watering? We don't need all that.

(Enter Sevanthi with a pot.)

SEVANTHI: Father,... is this pot of turmeric water enough?

KANTHAIYAN: More than enough, girl. It's only for a ritual...

SEVANTHI: Where is brother Vellaisamy?

VAITHILINGAM: Vellaisamy, the people are ready. Come, let's go before it's too late.

(Enter Vellaisamy.)

VAITHILINGAM: Wait. You came into this village asking for water. Now you have brought water to us. You came into the village that day and said there was nothing human beings could not do. Now you have shown this to be true. There was no prior connection between you and this village. But you have endured great troubles for these people abandoned in this desert hell. We do not know whether you will still be on this earth tomorrow. I would only be observing custom if I said we wanted to thank you. We are not able to do much. I wish to honor you with this shawl.

(Puts the silk shawl on Vellaisamy.)

ATAIKAPPAN: Teacher, . . . you have been thoughtful. You have done the right thing. Look at these useless fools standing all around us. They did not have the presence of mind to think of this.

KOVALU: And guess what? This man is the chief of all the useless fools in this village.

ATAIKAPPAN: This idle fellow waits for the right moment to poke fun at me.

KANTHAIYAN: Teacher! Did you save this silk shawl all these days just for this occasion?

VAITHILINGAM: I thought that sooner or later the inspector would come to take a look at the school and I would wear it on that day. But no inspector ever comes to this waterless wasteland. The DEO has forgotten that this school exists. It's time to get going. Vellaisamy, you lead us. Hey, Gurusamy, are the drummers here?

GURUSAMY: They are. They have warmed the drum many times over the fire since morning. *(Looks offstage.)* O drummers,... bang your drums loudly. Teacher says he wants to hear your drumming.

(The sound of drums and trumpets. Kovalu and Gurusamy dance arm in arm. O.V. whistles loudly. The villagers sing:)

A hen that is lost—Ailasa!
 White on the neck—Ailasa!
 O fair girl—Ailasa!
 She laughs as she goes—Ailasa!

VAITHILINGAM (*to O.V.*): What is this? You said you wanted to get a doctorate, and you're whistling like a ruffian...

O.V.: I am happy. A hen that is lost—Ailasa!

(When the villagers start for the spring, a voice calls out, instructing them to stop. The gathered villagers retreat. Enter a PWD engineer. The gathered villagers stare at him, not comprehending who he is.)

ENGINEER: Where are all of you going? Are you going to the spring to break the boulder?

VAITHILINGAM: Yes... Who are you?

ENGINEER: I am a PWD engineer. I have come to throw all of you in jail.

VAITHILINGAM: Throw us in jail! Why do you want to throw us in jail?

ENGINEER: Whose permission did you get to dig the canal?

VAITHILINGAM: Who do we need to ask? That is public land.

ENGINEER: You did say public land, didn't you? Now, is public land your grandfather's property? That is government land.

ATAIKAPPAN: We don't have any such thing in this village. We are the government.

ENGINEER: You are the government? Your arrogance is making you speak in this fashion. It was wrong to dig a canal in government land without the government's permission. It was wrong to dig up the hill without the government's permission. All of this is illegal.

VAITHILINGAM: Yes, it is a crime. When a canal is needed, we must tell the government. They will call for a tender. The contractor will eat up half the money. You engineers, *tehsildars*, and revenue inspectors will each eat up a little. With the people's tax money, gold necklaces will glitter on the necks of your wives. Of course it is illegal for us to dig a canal on a little daily gruel, leaving you no opportunities for all this.

ENGINEER: Watch what you say. I will have the police break your knee-cap.

KOVALU: Quiet. You think you own the police. You are trying to frighten us.

ENGINEER: I'm a government official. I'm doing my duty. Telegrams intimating these criminal activities in Athipatti are whizzing to the collector. The collector has been informed that this village is involved in some traitorous plan.

ATAIKAPPAN: Did you say we are involved in a traitorous plan? We can't even involve ourselves in a plan to get rid of our hunger. Why would we involve ourselves in some traitorous scheme?

ENGINEER: You say you are not traitors, but none of you voted in the election. Isn't voting your fundamental human right?

VAITHILINGAM: We can't even be certain of our continued existence as human beings from day to day. In this situation, what is fundamental and what is right?

ENGINEER: I know nothing about all that. PWD people will close the canal tomorrow. This is by order of the government.

ATAIKAPPAN: The government couldn't stir itself to dig a canal for people dying of thirst. But it loses no time in closing it.

KANTHAIYAN: All the engineers who were never to be seen will now turn up here.

VAITHILINGAM: Sir, we have tried everything but we haven't been able to get a reply from the government. We were forced to this decision to dig the canal. Sir, please be merciful on these poor people and recommend to the collector that the canal not be closed.

SCEPTRE - III

ENGINEER: That is not my job. If you wish, you can petition the government again.

O.V.: The reason for this country's paper shortage is the writing of petitions to the government.

ENGINEER: Mister, who are you? You don't look like a villager!

VAITHILINGAM: He is a newspaper reporter.

ENGINEER (*expressing great respect*): Oh,... you are a newspaper reporter, are you? How do you do? My name is Kothandapani. I am a PWD engineer. Tell me,... are you a reporter for a daily or a weekly?

O.V.: I write for all the newspapers. I am a freelance journalist. Why do you ask?

ENGINEER: Oh, it is a small thing. My daughter has learnt *bharatanatyam* and given a debut dance performance. It would be useful to have a color picture of her appear on the cover of a weekly.

O.V.: Why would that be useful?

ENGINEER: She'd get a chance to dance in three or four venues in Madras.

O.V.: And when will these people get water?

ENGINEER: They will get it, sir. This is a temporary difficulty.

O.V.: Shall we say that in your government dictionary "temporary" means fifty years?

ENGINEER: No,... no... The water will come soon. These days we have all these plans: Sethusamudram Plan, Ganga Canal Plan.

VAITHILINGAM: Sir, don't even mention the Ganga Canal Plan to us. I am tired of hearing about it. If by some accident we were to go to Benaras and see the Ganga, we would feel no respect for it. We would only wish to kick it and charge it with deceiving us with promises of coming to our village.

ENGINEER: Kick the Ganga if you wish. Or, if you wish, jump into it and drown. What do we care? But from now on you are not to go out with your spade to dig canals and break down hills. If you do any of these things, the government won't let you get away with it.

KOVALU: What will you do if we go to break the boulder despite you?

ENGINEER: You are traitors... We knew you would try this. That is why an army of policemen is waiting for you at the spring. (*Leaves.*)

VAITHILINGAM: All our labor has been in vain.

KANTHAIYAN: He has kicked us in the stomach!

ATAIKAPPAN: Camphor! Incense powder! (*Throws both packets on the ground.*) Teacher, won't our difficulties ever end? Will we never see better days? Are we too low to drink clean water? Goddess, why do you keep us alive? Take us all with you. How have we been blessed by being alive? (*So saying, he bangs his head on the boulder and weeps.*)

VAITHILINGAM: Ataikappan,... what is this? This is madness. Get up.

KOVALU: Why are you weeping, Uncle? There is no use in weeping. We have wept all year long. All we have to show for it is water in our eyes. Stop your weeping and raise up your hand. We will smash all the powers stopping us from living normal lives.

VELLAISAMY: Kovalu, we have no other way left to us but yours. Come, let us all go together and break that boulder even if the police shoot us down like birds. Come, let's go!

KOVALU: Let's go! Let the old remain at home. All of you that god made brave! Put rice in your mouths as if you were already dead and come with me!

(*Ataikappan jumps up from the ground.*)

ATAIKAPPAN: Hey, you! Who did you say was old? Only the body grows old, not the heart. Look! Here is the fistful of rice to put in my mouth when I've become a dead body. I

put it in my mouth now! *(He takes rice from the plate and puts it in his mouth. As the villagers prepare to leave, Azhagiri arrives.)*

AZHAGIRI: Where are you all going? Are you going to break the boulder and release the spring? That cannot be. Until the murderer is handed over to me, no one can budge from here.

VELLAISAMY: Sir, I said to you myself that as soon as there was water in the canal I would come to you...

AZHAGIRI: And when will there be water in the canal? Hasn't the collector said the canal is illegal? Now I have no option but to do my duty. Come with me.

ATAIKAPPAN: You, Azhagiri! Don't even touch Vellaisamy. You will come to a bad end!

AZHAGIRI: Why? What will you do?

ATAIKAPPAN: I will break you into tiny parts!

VAITHILINGAM: Ataikappan, you be quiet. Azhagiri, blow upon blow is falling upon us. You are this village's son-in-law. Must you attack us too?

AZHAGIRI: Strange words indeed. I may be the son-in-law. Does that mean I can let thieves and killers escape?

KOVALU: You are safe because you are this village's son-in-law. Otherwise, terrible things would have happened to you because of the uniform you are wearing.

AZHAGIRI: What would you do? The cockiness of worthless fellows has spoiled the manners of this village. The inspector is waiting in his jeep outside the village. He is not waiting there because he is afraid. I am the one who told him that if he came into the village there would be trouble. I told him I would bring Vellaisamy. If the village does not hand this killer over to me, we will have to take appropriate action.

KOVALU: What action would you take?

AZHAGIRI: We will take all of you in the police van and throw you in jail for hiding a killer. In addition, we will impose a collective fine on you. We will add all of you to the list of known criminals. If there is ever trouble in the district again, we will put you in jail.

VAITHILINGAM: Are you saying you will never again treat us as human beings?

AZHAGIRI: If you bow down to the law, why would anybody bother you?

ATAIKAPPAN: We can't bow down any more. If we bow any lower, we will sink into the very earth.

(Sevanthi comes forward.)

SEVANTHI: You are so confident of your own safety because you are the son-in-law of this village. Isn't that why you said what you did to your boss and came into this village?

AZHAGIRI: Suppose I don't come as the son-in-law but as a policeman. What harm would these fellows have done to me?

SEVANTHI: If you had tried you would have found out!

AZHAGIRI: Sevanthi, girl, what are you saying?

KANTHAIYAN: Sevanthi, what has happened to you? Be quiet. Let whatever happens happen.

SEVANTHI: What else is left to happen? The officials have come and closed the canal. The village has become a cremation ground. Death has taken up residence here. Now he comes to hunt brother Vellaisamy as if he were a rabbit. He took an oath that he would not expose Vellaisamy, but he has brought the inspector into the village. Is this a man?

AZHAGIRI: Sevanthi, if you speak to me without respect in front of the whole village... I will divorce you and go away!

SCEPTRE - III

SEVANTHI: You will divorce me? My father did not come looking for you to give me away in marriage. You came and asked for me many times and married me. Do you think I can step into your house ever again? I too have a mind of my own.

KANTHAIYAN: Sevanti, what are you saying? Is this the honor you bring to your father?

SEVANTHI: Stop. Be quiet. (*Indicates her wedding necklace.*) It is because of this wedding chain that he has come into this village with so much arrogance.

(*Removes the wedding necklace.*) Take this back. Before you get your medal from the government, celebrate by putting this necklace around your neck.

(*Azhagiri and the others stand in shock.*)

SEVANTHI: Now the relationship has been broken. If you have courage in your heart, let us see you take brother Vellaisamy with you.

KOVALU: Azhagiri, if you touch Vellaisamy, I'll knock your brains out.

(*The crowd gathers around Azhagiri. Some have sickles and sticks. Azhagiri takes out his whistle and blows it loudly. On hearing it, Vellaisamy runs away swiftly. The crowd stops Azhagiri from capturing Vellaisamy.*)

Scene 16

(*A thorny jungle. Enter Vellaisamy, running. He is breathless and tired from having run many miles. His tongue is stiff and dry. Unable to run anymore in the thorny jungle, he falls to the ground. "Water... water...", he cries out, panting for breath. Gradually his panting begins to subside.*)

Scene 17

(*Vaithilingam is seated in his house. Ataikappan is in his house staring intently at the ceiling. Sevanti stands in the doorway of her house. O.V. is seated on the rock in the middle of the stage, writing his report for a newspaper.*)

O.V. (*writing*): Vellaisamy died in the jungle with a parched mouth. The police did not permit the people of Athipatti even to see his corpse. Kuppan the carpenter, the priest, others like him—they have all left the village.

(*Kuppan the carpenter, Marimuthu the priest, and a few others are seen leaving the village with bundles in their hands.*)

O.V. (*writing*): In the bus stops of Madras and other cities like it, if anyone stretches out a hand to beg from you, it will probably be one of the noble farming people of Athipatti. Kovalu is no longer in the village. No one knows where he went. It might be that he is marching in front of a procession with the flag in his hand. Or else he might be suffering torments in a prison somewhere. It might also be that he has been labeled a terrorist and hanged from the gallows. Gurusamy has rheumatism in his leg. Water contaminated by fluoride has eaten away his strength.

(*Enter Gurusamy limping.*)

O.V. (*writing*): As always, Teacher Vaithilingam brings water in the morning and feeds the children. He conducts classes in the evening. Ataikappan watches the sky wondering

whether a change will come. Sevanthi has become a single woman separated from her husband. She passes the days doing coolie work with her father. And the questions in the minds of all these people: Will we never see better days? Are we not worthy of living? Will our condition never improve? Society must put a full stop to these question marks at once. Otherwise, the day will undoubtedly come when these marks of interrogation turn into marks of violence.

(Light fades out.)

Glossary

1. **vagabond**: a person who wanders from place to place without a home or job
2. **bewildered**: perplexed and confused, very puzzled
3. **choke**: have severe difficulty in breathing because of obstructed throat or a lack of air
4. **compassion**: sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others
5. **spring**: a place where water or oil wells up from an underground source, or the basin or flow formed in such a way
6. **accursed**: under a curse
7. **canal**: an artificial waterway constructed to convey water for irrigation
8. **feasible**: possible to do easily or conveniently
9. **slake**: quench or satisfy one's thirst
10. **cultivable**: capable of being cultivated, meaning it can be used to grow crops
11. **throttling**: attack or kill someone by choking or strangling them
12. **vagrant**: a person without a settled home or regular work who wanders from place to place and lives by begging
13. **incite**: encourage or stir up violent or unlawful behaviour
14. **gruel**: food consisting of some type of cereal such as wheat, rye, or rice, boiled in water or milk
15. **fluorosis**: a chronic condition caused by excessive intake of fluorine compounds, marked by mottling of the teeth and, if severe, calcification of the ligaments.
16. **bonded laborer**: a form of slavery where someone must work to pay off a debt or a loan, most commonly to an employer or landlord
17. **confront**: face up to and deal with a problem or difficulty
18. **clamoring**: make a vehement protest or demand
19. **flayed**: to strip the skin off
20. **boycott**: withdraw from commercial or social relations with a country, organization, or person as a punishment or protest
21. **badgering**: repeatedly ask someone to do something
22. **predicament**: a difficult, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation
23. **illusions**: a false idea or belief
24. **Gandhian approach**: non-violent resistance, truth, and self-reliance to achieve social and political change
25. **viability**: ability to work successfully
26. **humbuggery**: dishonest talk, writing, or behaviour that is intended to deceive people

SCEPTRE - III

27. **fondle**: stroke or caress lovingly
28. **hooch**: alcoholic drink, especially inferior or illicit whisky
29. **climax**: culminate in an exciting or impressive event
30. **DEO**: District Education Officer
31. **PWD**: Public Works Department
32. **tehsildars**: a land revenue officer, also known as a talukdar or mamlatdar
33. **traitorous**: treacherous, disloyal
34. **cockiness**: an excessive amount of confidence in oneself, that can be perceived as arrogant or conceited
35. **rheumatism**: any disease marked by inflammation and pain in the joints, muscles, or fibrous tissue

Comprehension I: (Paragraph Answer Questions)

1. What was the occupation of the villagers? Write a note on their struggle for water.
2. Write a character sketch on Vellaisamy.
3. What was Vellaisamy's strategy for the village?
4. Write a note on the villagers' interaction with Naicker of Vandipettai, in Scene 7.
5. Kovalu says, "Only those who struggle escape the darkness." What did he mean by it?
6. What was the significance of the only female character in the play?
7. Analyse the role played by journalism in the play? Do you think its power was stifled?
8. Differentiate between the rational approach of Vaithilingam and the religious beliefs of Marimuthu.
9. Bring out the Marxist elements in the play.

Comprehension II: (Analytical/Discussion Questions)

1. How does the play show that bureaucracy and politics have failed the common man's aspirations?
2. Write a critical analysis of the ending of the play.
3. How did nature, politics, bureaucracy and law together lead to the tragedy in Athipatti?
4. The villages of India, to this day, remain a mere vote bank during elections. Justify with reference to the play.
5. Do you think the play is prophetic of the situation the world may face, due to the global environmental crisis? Elucidate.

Further Reading:

1. *Godaan* by Munshi Premchand
2. *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya
3. *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand

LANGUAGE COMPONENT

NOTICE WRITING

Objectives:

- *To develop formal writing skills.*
- *To learn how to convey important information briefly.*
- *To enhance the skill of communicating effectively.*

Definition:

Notice writing is a formal way of communicating important information to a specific group of people. It is typically used to inform, announce, or notify people about events, activities, or any important information that needs to be shared with a particular audience.

Notices are usually displayed on notice boards, sent through emails, or published in newsletters, and are meant for a specific audience such as students, employees, or the general public.

Purpose of a Notice:

The primary purpose of a notice is to disseminate information in an organized and concise way. Notices are used in a variety of settings, including academic institutions, government departments, companies, and social organizations. Whether it is announcing an upcoming event like a workshop or fest, a change in schedule, or issuing a warning, a notice ensures that all stakeholders receive the same information uniformly. The importance of notice writing lies in its ability to maintain official records, facilitate smooth communication, and ensure transparency within an organization.

Notices serve to:

- Inform a group about an upcoming event, decision, or activity
- Provide instructions or guidelines
- Make announcements regarding rules, achievements, or changes
- Issue warnings or calls for action (e.g., lost & found, disciplinary actions).

Format of a Notice:

A well-structured notice follows a universally accepted format, ensuring clarity and professionalism:

1. Name of the Institution/Organization

At the top of the notice, mention the name of the institution or organization issuing the notice (e.g., school, college, office).

2. Notice

The next thing is the title, which is usually “NOTICE” and it is written in bold at the top centre of the page to get easy attention.

3. Date

This is written on the left side of the page to denote the date on which this notice was issued.

4. Heading/Title

The heading is where you put the topic or subject of the notice. This clarifies the primary purpose of the notice.

5. Body

Actual details of the notice, like the purpose, content, and everything included in the body, which is further divided into:

- **Opening Statement** - This is the first sentence of the notice that clearly states the purpose of this notice.
- **Details** - This includes the what, where, when, why, and who related to the information.
- **Action Required** - This then includes the action that the reader must take after the notice.
- **Contact Information** - This includes the contact information of the person responsible for further communication on this matter.

6. Signature and Designation

At last, the notice is ended with the signature of the person who issued it along with their designation.

Types of Notices:

Type of Notice	Description
Event Notice	Announcing events such as seminars, workshops, or fests.
Examination Notice	Detailing exam schedules or changes.
Meeting Notice	Calling for general or departmental meetings.
Lost and Found Notice	Reporting lost or found items.
Admission/Enrolment Notice	Notifying about admissions, forms, or registrations
Holiday Notice	Informing about upcoming holidays or leave.
Disciplinary Notice	Issuing warnings or disciplinary measures.
Recruitment/Internship Notice	Sharing opportunities for employment or internships
Public Notice	Intended for general public or wider audience.

Uses of Notice Writing:

- **Academic Institutions:** For informing students about exams, events, and holidays
- **Corporate Offices:** To announce meetings, deadlines, and HR-related updates
- **Government Departments:** To issue public warnings, laws, or civic information
- **Social Groups and NGOs:** To mobilize volunteers, announce activities, or report progress
- **Media and Press:** Legal notices, advertisements, and updates

SCEPTRE - III

Template for Notice Writing:

<p style="text-align: center;">NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION NOTICE</p> <p>Date: DD/MM/YYYY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TITLE / SUBJECT OF THE NOTICE</p> <p>Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What is happening? (Event / Announcement)- When is it happening? (Date & Time)- Where is it happening? (Venue)- Who is it for? (Audience)- Any other necessary information? <p>Signature Name Designation</p>
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Examples of Notice Writing:

Example 1: Event Notice

<p style="text-align: center;">DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTICE</p> <p>Date: 10/06/2025</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON AI</p> <p>All final-year students are informed that a workshop on "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" will be held on 25th June 2025, at the Main Seminar Hall from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Attendance is compulsory.</p> <p>(Signature) Prof. Anil Mehra Workshop Coordinator</p>

Example 2: Lost and Found

<p style="text-align: center;">CITY COLLEGE OF ARTS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTICE</p> <p>Date: 12/06/2025</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LOST WALLET FOUND</p> <p>A black leather wallet containing cash has been found near the library entrance. The rightful owner may collect it from the Administrative Office after proper identification.</p> <p>(Signature)</p> <p>Office Superintendent</p> <p>Administration Dept.</p>

Example 3: Blood Donation Drive

<p style="text-align: center;">Heaven Abode Community, Bangalore</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Notice</p> <p>01st March, 2025</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blood Donation Drive</p> <p>The community members have decided to organize a blood donation drive in collaboration with the ABC hospital on 02nd March 2025. All interested volunteers are requested to assemble in the Society Hall, by 10:00 A.M.</p> <p>DEF</p> <p>Society President</p>
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SCEPTRE - III

Example 4: Recruitment/Internship Notice

XYZ COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY NOTICE

Date: 15/06/2025

INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY AT INFOTECH SOLUTIONS PVT. LTD.

All final-year B.Tech (CSE/IT) students are informed that Infotech Solutions Pvt. Ltd., a reputed IT company, is offering summer internship opportunities in the domains of Web Development, Data Analytics, and Cyber Security.

Details:

- Eligibility: Final-year B.Tech (CSE/IT) students with a minimum CGPA of 7.0
- Duration: 8 weeks (1st July – 31st August 2025)
- Mode: Hybrid (online/offline as per project needs)
- Stipend: ₹10,000/month

Application Process:

Interested students must submit their updated resumes and a short Statement of Purpose (SOP) to the Training & Placement Cell by 20th June 2025. Shortlisted candidates will be informed via email and will undergo an online interview.

For more details, contact:

Prof. R.K. Sharma
Placement Officer
Email: placements@xyzcollege.edu

(Signature)

Prof. R.K. Sharma
Training & Placement Cell

Example 5: Public Notice

<p style="text-align: center;">MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF BENGALURU</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Date: 15/06/2025</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TEMPORARY WATER SUPPLY DISRUPTION IN SOUTH BENGALURU</p> <p>The residents of South Bengaluru are hereby informed that due to essential maintenance and repair work on the main water pipelines, there will be a temporary disruption in water supply on June 18th and 19th, 2025, between 9:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.</p> <p>Affected Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rajajinagar - Koramangala - Indiranagar - MG Road <p>Residents are requested to store sufficient water in advance and use it judiciously during this period. The inconvenience caused is deeply regretted. Regular supply will resume from 20th June 2025.</p> <p>For any queries, please contact the Water Works Department at 1800-123-456.</p> <p>(Signature) Commissioner Municipal Corporation of Bengaluru</p>
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Tasks:

1. Your college is organizing a blood donation camp; as the NSS officer, draft a notice for interested students to participate.
2. You have found a lost dog in the park, write a notice to be put up in your locality.
3. You are the Election Officer, draft a public notice informing citizens about the voter registration deadline for upcoming municipal elections.
4. You are the youth representative of your constituency, write a notice to the people of your ward on the misuse of water.
5. A guest lecture on 'Cyber Security' will be held next week, draft a notice announcing it.
6. Write a notice informing public about the submission deadline for their solar project files.
7. You are part of the Forest Department, draft a public notice warning against illegal hunting and entry into protected forest zones.
8. You are the teacher in-charge of discipline committee, draft a notice warning students about misconduct on college premises.
9. A campus recruitment drive by a reputed company is to take place, inform students through a notice.
10. You work for the Department of Health, draft a public notice creating awareness about dengue prevention during the monsoon season.

TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

Objectives:

- *To introduce basic communication skills.*
- *To learn how to have a polite telephone conversation.*
- *To recognize a formal and an informal telephone conversation.*

What is a telephone conversation and why learn about it?

It is the transmission of a message through a phone. It can be informal, when you call a friend or a relative. It can be formal, when you call an office or a superior.

Since preliminary rounds of job interviews and business discussions often happen over the phone, we must adhere to proper telephone etiquette.

Informal Telephone Conversation:

Speaker 1: Hi Yashna, how is it going?

Speaker 2: Hey man! Cool. You?

Speaker 1: Good!... What about your husband?

Speaker 2: He's working now... something to tell him?

Speaker 1: Yep, if he can call me back please.

Speaker 2: Sure! I'll tell him.

Speaker 1: Thanks Yashna. Take care!

Speaker 2: No problem, you too!

Speaker 1: Bye!

Speaker 2: Bye!

Formal Telephone Conversation:

Speaker 1: Good Morning. I would like to talk to Mr. Tarun please.

Speaker 2: Good Morning, Sir. I am sorry, but Mr. Tarun is not here at the moment. Would you like to leave a message?

Speaker 1: Yes. I'm Kumar from XYZ Ltd., please ask him to contact me.

Speaker 2: Sure, I will let him know. Does he have your telephone number?

Speaker 1: Yes, he has it, thank you.

Speaker 2: You're welcome. Is there anything else I can assist you with?

Speaker 1: That is all for now, good day.

Speaker 2: Goodbye, Mr. Kumar.

Telephone Phrases

A. Answering the phone:

- Hello. Mohan here. (caller unknown) (informal)
- Hi, Janardhan. How are you? (informal)
- Hey, Janaki. What's up? (informal)
- Hello? Susheela speaking. (caller unknown) (formal)
- Radhakrishna speaking. Who's calling, please? (caller unknown) (formal)
- Doctor Govind's office. May I know who's calling, please? (caller unknown) (formal)
- Thank you for calling Jeans Plus. This is Anagha. (formal)
- Hello Varna. Nice to hear from you. (formal)
- Hello Dr Trisha. How can I help you? (formal)
- City Library. Adarsh speaking. What can I do for you, Ranjana? (formal)

B. Introducing yourself

- Hey Ganesh. It's Lokesh calling. (informal)
- Hi. It's Aaradhana from the dentist's office here. (informal)
- Hello Pradhan. This is Vimal calling from Wrench Autobody. (formal)
- Hello, this is Roopa calling. (formal)

C. Asking to speak with someone

- Hi. Is Nina there? (informal)
- Can you put Mukesh on? (informal)
- Can I talk to Yashas? Tell him Venkatesh is calling. (informal)
- May I speak to Mr. Sudarshan in the accounting department, please? (formal)
- Good morning. Is Dr. Tejas available, please? (formal)

D. Connecting the call to someone or transferring the call

- Just a sec. I'll get him. (informal)
- Hang on a moment. I'll see if she's in. (informal)
- One moment, please. I'll see if he's available. (formal)
- Hold the line, please. I'll put you through in a moment. (formal)
- Please hold while I put you through to the manager's office. (formal)
- All of our staff are busy at this time. Please hold for the next available person. (formal)

E. Making a request (formal/informal)

- Could you please repeat that?
- Would you mind spelling that for me?
- Could you speak up a little, please?
- Can you speak a little slower, please. My English isn't very good, I'm afraid.
- Could you let me know when she'll be in the office, please?
- Would you mind calling back in an hour? I'm in a meeting just now.
- Can you call again? I think we have a bad connection.
- Please hold for just a minute. I have another call coming in.
- Please don't call this number again.

F. Taking a message

- Can I take a message?
- Would you like to leave a message?
- Suhas is not in. I can tell him you called if you like. (informal)
- No, that's okay. I'll call him later. (informal)
- I'm sorry, but Lakshmi is not here at the moment. Can I take a message?
- I'm afraid he's stepped out. Would you like to leave a message?
- She's busy right now. Would you like her to return your call?
- He's in a meeting at the moment. Can he call you back when he's free?
- Fine. I'll let him know you called.
- I'll make sure she gets your message.

G. Leaving a message (formal/informal)

- Can I leave a message?
- Would you mind giving her a message?
- Would it be possible to leave a message?
- Could you tell her Aditya called?
- Could you ask him to call Pandu when he gets in?

SCEPTRE - III

- I don't think he has my number. Do you have a pen handy?
- Thanks. It's Karthik and my number is 222 3456.

H. Ending a conversation

- Well, I guess I'd better get going. Talk to you again soon, OK? (informal)
- Thanks for calling. Bye for now. (informal)
- I have to let you go now. (informal)
- I have another call coming through. I'd better run. (informal)
- I'm afraid that's my other line. (informal)
- Thank you for calling XYZ Ltd. Have a nice day! (formal)
- It was wonderful talking to you Mr. Khanna, have a good day! (formal)
- May I call you back in a few minutes, Mr. Sharma? (formal)

Tasks:

1. You are the assistant to a dentist. His clinic is open from 10:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.
Answer the call from a patient and assist in scheduling an appointment with the dentist.
2. You are a student seeking information about a course in Journalism. Speak to Mrs. Anita Rao at SPJ College and find out about the following:
 - Diploma/Degree
 - Duration of the Course
 - Fee
 - Availability of hostel accommodation
 - Possibility of placements
3. You are answering a call. You have been invited to a job interview. Find out:
 - The Venue
 - Time of the interview
 - Documents to carry
 - Dress code, if any
4. Write a dialogue over a telephone conversation based on the following information:
Sara wants to speak to Ram, but he is not at home. His mother says that he will be back later that evening. Sara leaves her number and requests that Ram's mother ask Ram to call her back when he returns.
5. You are talking to a telemarketing customer service executive. Find out these details about the travel iron you want to buy:
 - Model
 - Size
 - Weight
 - Delivery time
 - Price
 - Mode of payment

FACT FILE

Objectives:

- *To inculcate creative, descriptive and informational writing skills.*
- *To learn concise and organised pattern of writing.*

What is a Fact File?

A Fact File is a document or a brief report which comprises essential information (data) about a product, service, personality, place or any given topic. The aim of writing a Fact File is to provide information in a concise, relevant and straightforward manner. In other words, it elucidates the most significant and relevant information on a given subject/topic. Moreover, to prepare a fact file, you are required to research a given subject/topic.

What does it contain?

While creating a Fact File and compiling it, we need to consider certain crucial aspects such as - if you are writing about a person then the data to be included are name, age, place, profession, job, hobbies, religion, nationality, contribution in a given field/domain, post and position, awards, interests and other necessary data.

In other words, it focuses on specific aspects of a given subject and written in to-the-point language using subject-specific vocabulary. It comprises of only facts about a given topic.

For example, if you are asked to write a fact file on a country, then you need to frame the information on the following questions: location in the world map, climate, capital and major cities, languages, population, tourist attractions, culture, distinctive features, etc.

The aspects may change depending on the content and context (relevance) of the fact file. Nonetheless, the idea remains the same.

How to write a Fact File?

In the process of writing a Fact File, you need to follow the following method and structure:

- **Select a Topic/Subject:** Provide an effective synopsis or gist of the subject. It is the core focus of the writing.
- **Audience and Objective:** As a writer, you need to pause and think about the objective and audience of the text before embarking on any writing assignment. Although there are possibilities of diverse audiences for a fact file, the chief objective of it is to inform potential readers.
- **Vocabulary:** As fact files are concise and dedicated, the writing has to be to the point. Do not try to complicate it unnecessarily. The main complexity lies in the type of vocabulary used in writing. The words you choose need to be specific to the subject. In other words, use relevant technical vocabulary.
- **Structure:** It must consist of three important aspects –Title, Introductory section, Headed sections.
 - **Title:** A title should succinctly sum up exactly what the fact file will be about. In other words, the title should accurately depict or describe the content.
 - **Introductory section:** It should provide an overarching idea of what the fact file is about. Although it may not be a detailed study, it offers relevant and necessary information.
 - **Headed sections:** A fact file should consist of sub-sections discussing various aspects of the subject. Here, you need to be careful while shortlisting or preparing content. It should be chosen in accordance to the purpose of the text. You can

SCEPTRE - III

prepare a list of questions which can help you in collecting and selecting the most pertinent data.

Example:

Title: Steve Jobs

Introduction

Steve Jobs was an entrepreneur and inventor best known for co-founding Apple Computer alongside Steve Wozniak. His contributions and guidance to his company produced multiple revolutionary changes in technology, including the creation of the iPhone and iPad. This fact file highlights the key events in Steve Jobs' life and explains why he is so well known worldwide.

Early Life

Born on February 24, 1955, Steve Jobs was an adopted child whom Paul and Clara Jobs brought up. At the age of five, Steve moved to Mountain View, California where he attended school and worked on electronics in his garage. Steve Jobs met Steve Wozniak when he was thirteen and they became close friends. After completing high school, he attended Reed College in Oregon but soon dropped out to begin working for Atari as a video game developer.

The start of Apple Computer

Steve Jobs, along with his close friend Steve Wozniak, sought to establish their own company focusing on creating a personal computer and selling it to the public. This company was founded as Apple Computer in 1976. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak built their first computer, the Apple I, when Steve was just 21 years old. He was also able to persuade investors to invest in their second computer, the Apple II, which proved to be a great success and went public by 1980.

Leaving and returning to Apple

After the next two personal computers from Apple failed to sell well, Steve Jobs worked on the next project, called the Macintosh. However, another computer company, IBM, had also released its own computer, which was cheaper, leading to the Macintosh's decline in sales. Eventually, Steve took responsibility and quit in 1985. Nevertheless, Steve Jobs returned to Apple in 1997 as CEO and began to consider new products, including the iPod and iTunes.

Tasks - Write a Fact File on the following:

1. Dussehra
2. Kashmir
3. Jyotirao Phule
4. Lalbagh, Bengaluru
5. Olympics
6. Eden Gardens in Kolkata
7. Cassowaries
8. The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga

FOOD REVIEW WRITING

Objectives:

- *To use tone, cohesion, and transition effectively in critique writing.*
- *To distinguish between subjective opinions and objective observations in reviews.*
- *To enhance employability by mastering a niche writing skill relevant to media, hospitality, blogging, and food journalism.*

Significance of Food Reviews Today:

In the digital age, food reviews have evolved from casual word-of-mouth recommendations into powerful tools that significantly influence consumer decisions and shape business reputation. Online platforms like Zomato, TripAdvisor, Yelp and Google Reviews thrive on user-generated reviews, and professional food critics contribute to newspapers, magazines, and social media. Reviews help consumers discover dining experiences suited to their taste and budget, while restaurants use them to improve and market their services.

Writing a compelling food review is not merely about stating if a dish was ‘good’ or ‘bad’; it is about capturing the entire experience using vivid language, persuasive techniques, and grammatical precision. A well-written food review demonstrates language control, sensory expression, and critical thinking – skills valuable across many career paths.

A. Employability Relevance of Food Reviewing:

1. Career Opportunities

- a. Food Critics: For newspapers, magazines, or blogs.
- b. Content Writers: For food delivery apps or restaurant websites.
- c. Social Media Influencers: Creating food-related content on YouTube, Instagram, etc.
- d. Hospitality Professionals: Understanding and using feedback effectively.
- e. Travel Writers and Vloggers: Incorporating food culture into travel narratives.

2. Skill Sets Developed

- a. Descriptive writing and storytelling
- b. Critical analysis and evaluation
- c. Use of grammar for tone and clarity
- d. Audience awareness and formatting styles
- e. SEO writing (in digital contexts)

B. How to write a Food Review?

1. Begin with the Basic Details

- a. Name of the restaurant or food brand
- b. Location
- c. Date of visit
- d. Type of cuisine served

Example:

I visited ‘Forbidden Fruit’ in Indiranagar, Bangalore, on a sunny Sunday afternoon. This charming café specialises in organic, farm-to-table dishes, with an emphasis on fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

SCEPTRE - III

2. Describe the Ambience and Service

Help the reader visualize the setting and understand the quality of service:

- a. Décor and overall atmosphere
- b. Cleanliness and maintenance
- c. Noise level or background music
- d. Staff behaviour and efficiency

Example:

The café's interiors featured rustic wooden furniture, hanging planters, and soft music, creating a warm and relaxed atmosphere. The staff were polite, attentive, and knowledgeable about the menu.

3. Comment on the Food

- a. Presentation: How attractively is the food served?
- b. Taste and Texture: Consider flavour balance, seasoning, and consistency.
- c. Portion Size: Is it adequate or generous?
- d. Temperature: Was the food served hot or cold as appropriate?
- e. Value for Money: Was the quality worth the price?
- f. Choose 2–4 dishes or beverages to describe in detail. Use vivid sensory language such as: crispy, succulent, creamy, tangy, aromatic, moist, crunchy, rich.

Example:

The avocado toast was creatively topped with crumbled feta cheese. The toast had a perfect crunch on the outside while staying soft inside. The smoothie bowl, vibrant with fresh berries and crunchy granola, was both healthy and satisfying.

4. Mention Areas for Improvement (if any)

A good review remains fair and balanced. If something could have been better, mention it politely and constructively.

Example:

While the main courses were delightful, the dessert—a dense chocolate tart—lacked richness and felt slightly heavy.

5. Provide an Overall Verdict

- a. Summarise your experience
- b. Would you recommend this place?
- c. Who might enjoy it? (e.g., ideal for families, couples, health-conscious diners)

You may include a rating (e.g., 4 out of 5 stars)

Example:

Overall, 'Forbidden Fruit' is an excellent spot for a relaxed weekend brunch. Ideal for those who appreciate wholesome, well-prepared meals in a peaceful setting. I would rate it 4 out of 5 stars.

Grammatical Focus Areas

Grammar Element	Application in Food Review
Adjectives	Describing taste, appearance, and ambience
Adverbs	Modifying how food is served/cooked
Modal Verbs	Giving suggestions (should try)
Tense Consistency	Usually, the past tense for experience
Passive Voice	For formality or emphasis
Complex Sentences	To compare, contrast, and elaborate
Transition Words	For coherence (e.g., Firstly, Moreover, However)
Subjective vs Objective Tone	Balancing opinions with facts

Sample 1:

Title: A Cozy Delight – The Cinnamon Leaf Café

Review:

Tucked away in a quiet corner of the city, *The Cinnamon Leaf Café* offers a charming blend of rustic décor and gourmet comfort food. I visited on a Sunday afternoon, and the warm lighting combined with soft jazz music created a relaxed ambience perfect for winding down.

The **highlight of my meal** was the *Stuffed Mushroom Risotto*, which was **rich**, **creamy**, and **perfectly seasoned**. Each bite offered a satisfying balance of textures, with the mushrooms adding a delightful earthiness. The *lemon-mint cooler*, on the other hand, felt a bit diluted and lacked the refreshing zing I expected.

The service was **prompt** and **courteous**, with the staff patiently answering questions about the menu. However, the waiting time for the main course – around 30 minutes – was longer than expected, especially considering the café was only half full.

Price-wise, the café leans toward the premium end, but the **portion sizes are generous**. I paid Rs.750 for a meal and drink, which felt justified given the quality and atmosphere.

Final Verdict:

If you are looking for a quiet place to enjoy European-inspired cuisine, *The Cinnamon Leaf Café* is worth a visit. Just make sure you are not in a rush!

Rating: ★★★★★☆ (4/5)

Language and Grammar Highlights from the Sample

Sentence	Grammar/Stylistic Note
“Tucked away in a quiet corner...”	Participle phrase to begin with vivid imagery
“was rich, creamy, and perfectly seasoned.”	List of adjectives, parallel structure
“On the other hand...”	Contrast transition
“Price-wise...”	Colloquial expression for informal yet clear commentary
“I paid Rs.750...”	Objective detail for informative value
“If you are looking for...”	Conditional structure to engage the reader
“Just make sure you are not in a rush.”	Conversational tone with informal imperative

SCEPTRE - III

Sample 2:

Title: Utter Disappointment

I recently had a disappointing experience at a restaurant named Chinese Delite that left me with a sour taste. The service was incredibly slow, with waitstaff seeming disinterested and inattentive.

It took an eternity for our orders to arrive, and when they finally did, the food was underwhelming. The dishes lacked flavour and were poorly cooked. The presentation was sloppy and it was evident that little effort was put into preparation.

To make matters worse, the prices were exorbitant for the low-quality food and subpar service.

Final Verdict:

Overall, it was a regrettable dining experience that I wouldn't recommend to anyone.

Rating: ★☆☆☆☆ (1/5)

Task 1: Vocabulary Building

Match the food descriptors with their meanings:

	Descriptor		Meaning
1	Tangy	A	Pleasant, non-sweet taste like meat or cheese.
2	Savory	B	Smooth and rich like velvet.
3	Umami	C	Hard texture that makes noise when bitten.
4	Crunchy	D	Soft and pleasant to chew.
5	Velvety	E	Sharp, acidic flavour.

Task 2: Review a Dish or a Local Restaurant

Write a review (200-250 words) of a recent food experience. Include the following:

- Setting and ambience
- Description of at least two dishes
- Service quality
- Pricing and value
- Your recommendation and rating

Use adjectives, adverbs, transition words, and modal verbs.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT MARK ALLOTMENT

TESTS	10
ASSIGNMENTS	10
TOTAL	20

QUESTION PAPER PATTERN

ADDITIONAL ENGLISH - III SEMESTER
SCEPTRE - III

Time: 3 hours

Max. Marks: 80

Instructions:

- a. Answer all the questions.
b. Write the question numbers correctly.

SECTION – A

Literary Component – 60 Marks

Poetry/Short Story/Article/TED Talk - 40 Marks

I. Answer any five of the following in 2-3 sentences each. 5x2=10
[any 5 out of 6 questions]

II. Answer any four of the following in about a page each. 4x5=20
[any 4 out of 5 questions]

III. Answer any one in about two pages. 1x10=10
[any 1 out of 2 questions]

Drama - 20 Marks

IV. Answer any two of the following in about a page each. 2x5=10
[any 2 out of 3 questions]

V. Answer any one in about two pages. 1x10=10
[any 1 out of 2 questions]

SECTION – B

Language Component – 20 Marks

VI. Notice Writing 1x5=5
VII. Telephone Etiquette 1x5=5
VIII. Fact File 1x5=5
IX. Food Review Writing 1x5=5

**MODEL QUESTION PAPER
ADDITIONAL ENGLISH
III SEMESTER
FOR ALL UG PROGRAMMES**

Time: 3 hours

Max. Marks: 80

Instructions:

- a. Answer all the questions.
- b. Write the question numbers correctly.

**SECTION - A
(Literary Component - Poetry/Short Story/Article/TED Talk)**

I. Answer any FIVE of the following in 2-3 sentences each: **5x2=10**

1. What are the factors to be considered for real experience of food?
2. What colour are the berries described as in the poem 'Blackberrying'?
3. What warning does the poet give about future in the poem 'Thanks God For the Food'?
4. Why did Tony and his mother move to Melbourne?
5. What is Mochi? Where is it from?
6. Name the places Dhanam's father was transferred to.

II. Answer any FOUR of the following in about a page each: **4x5=20**

1. How does Ambai use the plastic box as a metaphor for Kumudha's personal life?
2. Summarise Gina Keatley's three key elements that shape our 'food identity'.
3. What critique of modern consumerism does S. Y. Wong offer in 'Thanks God For The Food'?
4. Explore the narrative technique that shifts between past and present in 'Parasakti and Others in a Plastic Box'.
5. Comment on Sylvia Plath's use of nature imagery to convey isolation in 'Blackberrying'.

III. Answer any ONE of the following in about two pages: **1x10=10**

1. Discuss the intergenerational dynamics and cultural continuity in Ambai's 'Parasakti and Others in a Plastic Box'.
2. Evaluate the concept of 'food identity' in Gina Keatley's TED Talk. How does she connect personal experience with global food culture?

**SECTION - B
(Literary Component - Drama)**

IV. Answer any TWO of the following in about a page each: **2x5=10**

1. Sketch the character of Vaithilingam in the play 'Water!'.
2. How does Vellaisamy embody the play's message of individual agency against systemic neglect?
3. Examine the significance of the recurring motif of the canal in the play 'Water!'.

V. Answer any ONE of the following in about two pages: **1x10=10**

1. 'Water is both a physical necessity and a political tool.' Analyse this statement with reference to the play.

2. 'The Third World War will be fought over water'. Do you agree with the statement? Justify your answer with reference to the play 'Water!'.

SECTION - C
Language Component

VI. Draft a Notice for any ONE of the following: **1x5=5**

- a. Draft a notice for your college bulletin board announcing a one-day workshop on 'Digital Storytelling in English', to be held on 15th September 2025. Include date, time, venue, registration procedure and contact details.

OR

- b. A campus recruitment drive is organised in your college by the Placement Cell. Write a notice informing final year students to attend the drive on 18th August 2025.

VII. Write a Telephone Conversation for any ONE of the following: **1x5=5**

- a. A formal telephone conversation (in script form) between a student and the college librarian enquiring about issuing reference books for term-end projects. Use at least five professional phone-call phrases.

OR

- b. You are answering a call. You had recently entered a contest and have won a trip for two, to Singapore. Write a formal telephone conversation seeking information about travel arrangements, date of travel, and other necessary information.

VIII. Write a Fact-File on any ONE of the following: **1x5=5**

- a. IPL
b. Digital Marketing

IX. Write a Food Review on any ONE of the following: **1x5=5**

- a. A 200-word review of a local café you recently visited, focusing on ambience, two signature dishes, service and value for money. Conclude with a recommendation.

OR

- b. A review of your favourite dish you had at two different restaurants, at different times. Compare the two in terms of taste, quality, quantity, price and overall experience.
