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Ser NO	Course	Vacancies Per Course	Age	Qualification	Appln to be received by	Training Academy	Duration of Training
1.	NDA	300	16½ - 19 Yrs	10+2 for Army 10+2 (PCM) for AF, Navy	10 Nov & 10 Apr (by UPSC)	NDA Pune	3 Yrs + 1 yr at IMA
2.	10+2 (TES) Tech Entry Scheme	85	16½ - 19½ Yrs	10+2 (PCM) (aggregate 70 % and above)	30 Jun & 31 Oct	IMA Dehradun	5 Yrs
3.	IMA(DE)	250	19 - 24 Yrs	Graduation	May & Oct (by UPSC)	IMA Dehradun	1½ Yrs
4.	SSC (NT) (Men)	175	19 - 25 Yrs	Graduation	May & Oct (by UPSC)	OTA Chennai	49 Weeks
5.	SSC (NT) (Women) (including Non- tech Specialists and JAG entry)	As notified	19 - 25 Yrs for Graduates 21-27 Yrs for Post Graduate/ Specialists/ JAG	Graduation/ Post Graduation /Degree with Diploma/ BA LLB	Feb/Mar & Jul/ Aug (by UPSC)	OTA Chennai	49 Weeks
6.	NCC (SPL) (Men)	50	19 - 25 Yrs	Graduate 50 % marks & NCC 'C' Certificate (min B Grade)	Oct/ Nov & Apr/ May	OTA Chennai	49 Weeks
	NCC (SPL) (Women)	As notified					
7.	JAG (Men)	As notified	21 - 27 Yrs	Graduate with LLB/LLM with 55% marks	Apr / May	OTA Chennai	49 Weeks
8.	UES	60	19-25 Yrs (FY)18-24 Yrs (PFY)	BE/B Tech	31 Jul	IMA Dehradun	One Year
9.	TGC (Engineers)	As notified	20-27 Yrs	BE/ B Tech	Apr/ May & Oct/ Nov	IMA Dehradun	One Year
10.	TGC (AEC)	As notified	23-27 Yrs	MA/ M Sc. in 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> Div	Apr/ May & Oct/ Nov	IMA Dehradun	One Year
11.	SSC (T) (Men)	50	20-27 Yrs	Engg Degree	Apr/ May & Oct/ Nov	OTA Chennai	49 Weeks
12.	SSC (T) (Women)	As notified	20-27 Yrs	Engg Degree	Feb/ Mar & Jul/ Aug	OTA Chennai	49 Weeks

## वन्दे मातरम्

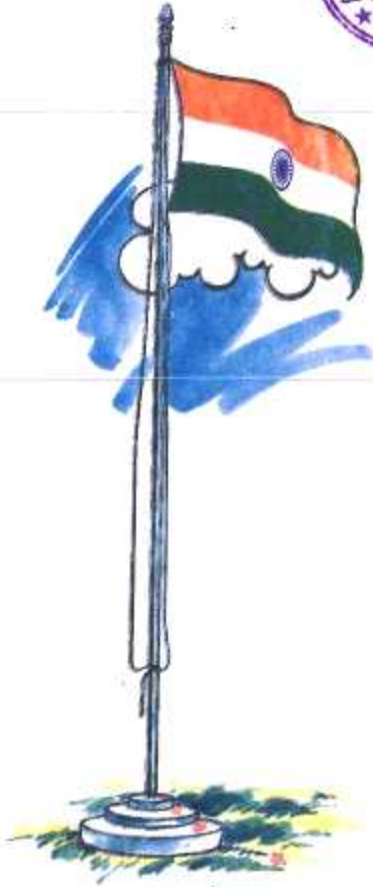
सुजलां सुफलां मलयजशीतलाम्  
शस्य-श्यामलां मातरम् ।

वन्दे मातरम् ॥

शुभ्र-ज्योत्स्ना-पुलकित-यामिनीम्  
फुल्ल-कुसुमित-द्रुमदल-शोभिनीम्  
सुहासिनीं, सुमधुरभाषिणीम्  
सुखदां, वरदां, मातरम् ।

वन्दे मातरम् ॥





## राष्ट्र-गान

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

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**Class-IX**

**PANORAMA**

# **ENGLISH READER**

**PART-1**



# PANORAMA



# ENGLISH READER

**PART - I**

**A Supplementary Reader for Class IX**



**(Developed by SCERT, BIHAR, PATNA)**  
**Bihar State Textbook Publishing Corporation Ltd.**

**Approved by the Director (Secondary Education),  
Education Department, Govt. of Bihar.**



**Courtesy : SCERT, Bihar, Patna for Bihar State.**

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# FOREWORD

Education Department, Government of Bihar has introduced new syllabus for the Class-IX from April, 2009. Books for all languages, Arts & Commerce developed by S.C.E.R.T., Bihar, Patna has been printed with new cover designs by the Bihar State Textbook Publishing Corporation Ltd.

We are extremely grateful to Shri Nitish Kumar, Hon'ble Chief Minister Bihar, Shri P.K. Shahi, Hon'ble Education Minister, Education Department, Bihar and Shri R.K. Mahajan, Principal Secretary, Education Department, Bihar, for their guidance.

We are thankful to the Director S.C.E.R.T., Bihar, Patna for his co-operation.

B.S.T.B.P.C. as an organisation is committed towards systematic upgradation and continuous improvement of its Textbooks. Valuable suggestions from students, guardians, teachers & educationists will be appreciated.

**Bishwa Mohan Patel, I.T.S.**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR**  
Bihar State Textbook Publishing  
Corporation Ltd.

# PANORAMA SUPPLEMENTARY READER

## PART - I

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**Gyandeo Mani Tripathi**

Former Additional Director, SEIMAT (SCERT), Patna, Bihar



## Preface

**Panorama English Reader Part -I** is a supplementary book for class IX. In consonance with the spirit of the NCF – 2005, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Bihar, Patna has developed a new series of instructional materials in English (core course) for the **secondary stage**. It comprises a textbook and a supplementary reader.

The new series of instructional materials in English caters to the need of a composite course, at the secondary level, that can be used effectively in the actual classroom situation. The objective is to inculcate language skills as well as the skill of thinking in the learners so that they can effectively compete with any one in any field of life where we need to use language.

**Panorama English Reader Part-I** has been developed keeping in mind a specific issue - social justice and empowerment. A conscious effort has been made to provide interesting reading materials on this theme. The success stories of the people of socially marginalised class have been included with priority. The stories of successful women especially of marginalised class have also been included.

The entire course has been devised to facilitate maximum participation of the learners. The work that went into the preparation of the present course will be amply rewarded if the book proves to be a useful tool in the hands of the teachers in helping the vast majority of learners of English at the secondary level in Bihar. We feel that there is always room for improvement. We, therefore, are open to suggestions and will be pleased to entertain any suggestions in the subsequent editions.

We are grateful to the Textbook Development Committee for preparing the textbook at such a short notice. Dr. Shaileshwar Sati Prasad (**Chairman**), Dr. Subodh Kumar Jha (**Coordinator**), Emteyaz Alam, Dr. Baban Kumar Singh, Dr. Ashok Kumar Singh, Mr. Shashi Bhushan Dubey, Mrs. Mamta Mehrotra, Mr. Arshad Nizam, Mr. K.M. Tarique and Dr. Abhay Kumar deserve special mention for their painstaking efforts.

Thanks are due also to Gyandeo Mani Tripathi without whose painstaking efforts the entire process of designing curriculum, syllabus and developing textbooks accordingly would not have been so feasible.

We are also thankful to the Bihar State Textbook Publishing Corporation Ltd. for making best efforts to ensure the publication of the textbook as flawless as possible.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not mention the efforts made by Mr. Syed Abdul Moin (Head, Dept. of Teacher Education) and his faculty members in realizing the dream of

writing textbooks for the children of Bihar. Thanks are due also to Dr. Quasim Khurshid (Head, Dept. of Languages) and his faculty member Dr. Surendra Kumar for their active support.

We are grateful to the copyright owners of the texts we have reproduced or used otherwise in **Panorama English Reader Part -I**. Every endeavour has been made to contact copyright owners to seek their permission to reproduce text and apologies are expressed for any omissions. We owe our indebtedness to NCERT, New Delhi, Publications Division (GOI), Sahitya Akademi and the Bihar State Textbook Publishing Corporation Limited for the pieces we have taken from them.

**Hasan Waris**  
**Director**  
**SCERT, Bihar, Patna**

## A Word to the Users

**Panorama English Reader Part -I**, the supplementary reader for class IX, is based on the new syllabus framed in the light of the recommendations suggested in NCF - 2005. As such, it seeks to provide as much opportunity as possible to the learners to analyse, interpret and most importantly to apply their learning to life. One way of achieving this objective is to encourage the learners to read and enjoy the pieces included in this Reader on their own as far as possible. The teacher's intervention should be reduced to the minimum.

The selection of pieces in **Panorama English Reader Part -I** has been made keeping in mind the issues of social justice, social empowerment and social marginalisation. Priority has been given to the pieces which can inspire the learners of emulate the persons who achieved success despite all odds against them or learn to fight against odds.

A number of pieces have been adapted to facilitate comprehension or edited for clarity and to ensure that there is little room for any unwarranted controversy.

Unlike **Panorama Part -I**, the core textbook for class IX, **Panorama English Reader Part -I** does not contain extensive exercises. In fact, there is no such division as *pre-reading tasks*, *while-reading questions* and *post-reading activities*. Here, emphasis is chiefly on enjoyment, comprehension and discussion of the issues under consideration. Exercises are mostly given to hone as well as test the learners' comprehension. However, some of these questions also seek to encourage the learners' ability to evaluate or apply their learning to their immediate surroundings. The topics for discussion are related to the lessons and are meant to stimulate logical thinking in learners, expose them to varying opinions, and encourage them to go beyond the text. The learners at this stage must develop their ability to communicate creatively in a variety of situations.

In **Panorama English Reader Part -I**, attempts have been made to include a variety of questions so that the learners feel encouraged to read the text for a variety of purposes: reading for facts, identifying the central point and supporting details, for developing reasoning and drawing inferences. Some of the exercises are activity-based and they have been introduced to encourage the learners to take help of reference books, an ability which has become so important in the age of globalisation. Once they cultivate a habit to go to the libraries, look up encyclopaedias, read magazines, journals, newspapers and search the Internet for information, they will gradually learn to collect and collate information and write well-knit pieces and present them in the class.

The entire course has been devised to facilitate maximum participation of the learners. The hints and suggestions, offered here, have only one purpose and that is to familiarise the users with the aims and objectives that underlie the preparation of the present supplementary reader so that it is used in the contemporary classroom situations as effectively and rewardingly as possible. The teachers have complete freedom to come out with innovative ideas of their own to meet the objectives. Our efforts will be amply rewarded if the book proves to be a useful tool in learning English at the secondary level in Bihar.

We thank all the esteemed members of the Textbook Development Committee without whose active cooperation the book would not have been in this form. No words can describe the painstaking efforts of Emteyaz Alam, Dr. Baban Kumar Singh, Dr. Ashok Kumar Singh, Mr. Arshad Nizam, Mr. Shashi Bhushan Dubey, Mrs. Mamta Mehrotra, Mr. K.M. Tarique and Dr. Abhay Kumar.

Thanks are due also to Gyandeo Mani Tripathi, the Academic Coordinator of the Syllabus and Textbook Development Committee. The entire process of designing curriculum, syllabus and developing textbooks accordingly would not have been so smooth without his painstaking efforts. He worked round the clock to realise the dream of developing textbooks for the children of the state.

We are thankful to Dr. Shiva Jatan Thakur (University Professor, Department of English, Patna University, Patna) and Dr. Mahjabeen Nishat Anjum (Head, Department of English, Gautam Buddha Mahila College, Gaya) for reviewing the textbook very minutely and incorporating their valuable suggestions.

Thanks are due also to Dr. Amarendra Kumar Sinha (S.M.D. College, Punpun) and Mr. Shamsul Hoda 'Masoom' for going through the manuscripts and providing us with valuable suggestions.

The cooperation of Dr. Syed Moin (HOD, Teachers' Education, SCERT), Dr. Quasim Khurshid (HOD, Department of Languages, SCERT) and Dr. Surendra Kumar deserves special mention. We are thankful also to Mrs. Archana and Dr. Snehashish Das (both Teacher Education, SCERT).

Last but not least we thank Shujauzzaman of Ideal Computers for the layout and Ankita of Vision Computers, Patna for providing great help in composing the manuscript.

**Dr. Shaileshwar Sati Prasad**

**Chairman**

**Dr. Subodh Kumar Jha**

**Coordinator**

**Syllabus and Text Book Development Committee For English**

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**PANORAMA**  
**ENGLISH READER**

**Part -1**

**A Supplementary Reader for class IX**



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## “I’m going to dance again”

**Najmul Hasan**

*Life is not a smooth journey. Turbulence, ups and downs are order of the day. The winner in the game of life is one who overcomes adversities and is undeterred by any challenge. Just as the crushing of a rose brings out its sweet fragrance, so the difficulties of life release the sweetness within us. Many a time adversities shatter our dream. It is only a person of strong will who despite his weakness and shortcomings rises above the sorrow of life to find more meaning to his life. Here is a story of one such dancer who met with an accident but through sheer dedication, devotion and commitment to her dance she could make it back to the stage again. Even that doctors believed Sonal would never dance again. She had met with a serious accident and had lost her legs. But Sonal Mansingh refused to believe the doctors. She believed in her potentialities and ....*



## “I’m going to dance again”

**A**pril 20, 1975. Bombay’s Rang Bhawan was full, the audience waiting impatiently. In the green room, Sonal Mansingh anxiously looked into the mirror and saw beads of perspiration shining on her face. Her hands and feet were cold.

She had felt like this once before – on her maiden performance in Bangalore. But that was fourteen years ago. Since then she had danced in India and abroad; she had been praised by everyone.

Today, however, Sonal was making a new start; this was the first time she would dance in public after a car accident in which she had been seriously injured just eight months earlier. Had her struggle to dance again been worth it? She pulled herself together, and with quick jingling

steps was on the stage. The spotlights were on her; she bowed, hands folded, and began her performance.

\* \* \*

In August 1974, Sonal Mansingh felt on top of the world. Trained at first in *Bharat Natyam*, she had mastered cult style and then had turned to *Odissi*. Now she was among the country's best classical dancers.

She was in Germany that month, teaching a course in Indian classical dance. Late on the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup>, she and her fiancé, George Lechner, were driving at 110 kph down a wet, lonely road. They suddenly saw a deer standing in the middle of the road. Lechner jammed on the brakes. The car slipped sideways, swung around, then turned over and rested on its roof. Lechner, trapped between the seat and the wheel, fainted.

"Sonal, are you all right?" He mumbled as he regained consciousness. There was no answer. He groped about in the darkness. There was no one beside him. As he struggled to free himself, a car pulled up and four men jumped out. They forced open a door of the car and dragged Lechner out. "Where is Sonal?" He asked.

Fetching torches from their car, the men began searching for Sonal. They found her about four meters away, on the road, She was still, eyes closed, as if asleep. Lechner was about to pick her up and say, "Let's get going" but he hesitated. "She doesn't look quite alive," he said to himself. Then sprinkled water on Sonal's face. She shook her head. "I'm cold," she groaned. "Please put a shawl on me". Saying this, she fainted.

At that moment, a police car arrived, and soon an ambulance was called. The ambulance men lifted Sonal carefully on to a stretcher and rushed her to the Municipal Hospital. In the emergency room she was given injections to ease the pain and then hurried to the X-ray room.

The X-rays showed that Sonal had been badly injured and had many broken bones. Her twelfth vertebra, four ribs and a collar-bone were fractured. Luckily her spinal cord had not been damaged in the crash. "She'd better be taken to the University Surgical Clinic at Erlangen," the doctor advised Lechner. "They have better facilities."

"I'm going to dance again"

5

At Erlangen the doctors wanted to operate on her at once, and put Sonal into a cast. But, though semi-conscious Sonal shook her head saying "no" to an operation. "No operation, please, unless it is really necessary," Lechner told them. Two days later, Sonal was out of danger and she was put in a cast. This cast covered her from neck to hip and weighed four kilos.



The surgeon drew Lechner aside. "She is in no danger," he said. "But temporarily she has lost the use of her knees, toes, ankles and elbows, it will take months of exercises and hard work on Sonal's part before she can use them."

Twelve days later, the doctors agreed to allow Lechner to take Sonal to Montreal, where he worked. On the evening of their arrival at Montreal, friends visited them and were shocked at Sonal's condition. "The doctors don't know if Sonal will dance again," Lechner told them. "She will need great strength and will power to get well again." One of his friends suggested him to consult Dr. Pierre Gravel, a well-known Montreal doctor.

Gravel agreed to come immediately. But until he had studied the medical report and observed Sonal for several days, he couldn't say anything.

Sonal knew that soon she would be able to walk normally again. But she was growing more fearful that she would never dance again. "What am I alive for?" she thought. "Dancing is my life." For days, she lay on her bed, simply staring at the ceiling. Her mind was sometimes desperate with thoughts of the future. Her appetite had gone, and her nights were often sleepless.

Finally, Dr. Gravel gave his opinion. He examined her, then stood looking at her seriously. Sonal's heart sank. "I am afraid," he began, "that you may be able to dance again." He gave her a broad smile.

Not believing her ears, Sonal made him repeat what he had said, going over the words again and again. "I'm alive again," she thought. "No matter what happens, I'm going to dance again."

After three months, the cast was removed. Now came the period of hard work. For Sonal had to begin exercising. But every time Sonal moved, her muscles, after five months of disuse, hurt badly. Sometimes the pain was so great that she nearly fainted and was on the point of giving up. But years of dancing had given her great mental discipline. She continued her exercises knowing she would dance again.

Gradually, she learnt to move her toes, then her ankles and knees and then her body. Slowly, her health improved. She put on weight, she gained more control over her body. Six months after the accident, she began the basic dance steps that she had first learnt as a child nearly twenty-five years earlier. She lifted one foot and stamped it on the floor. She repeated the action with the other foot. But she couldn't keep it up. Her eyes filled with tears at her own helplessness. The next day, however, she managed it twice.

In March, Gravel agreed to let her return to India. He refused to be paid for his services. "Watching you recover was enough," he said. After a week with her parents in Bombay, Sonal flew to New Delhi to begin serious practice at home. On the first day, with the musicians sitting around her, she couldn't hold back her tears. Neither could anyone else.

Practising thirty minutes a day at first, Sonal gradually increased it to forty-five minutes, an hour, two hours. As the days went by, her body seemed lighter and her dancing slowly gained its former grace. A month later, she was ready.

\* \* \*

At Rang Bhavan, Sonal danced as she had never danced before. She danced for two and half hours. The crowd was delighted. When the

music ended, she stood still, tears streaming down her face. "I have done it, I have done it," she kept repeating to herself. "I have found myself again."

Sonal married George Lechner in August 1975. Today she coaches classes at her dance academy in New Delhi and performs regularly both at home and abroad. "I now realise how precious life is," she says. "Each of my recitals is a prayer and a thanks-giving."

### EXERCISES

#### A. Let's Answer:

1. Why was Sonal Mansingh making a new start at Rang Bhawan? Explain.
2. If you had undergone a similar experience in your life, what would you have done? Would you have resigned yourself to your fate or fought against the odds?
3. Describe how Sonal's car met with an accident?
4. What happened when the car carrying Sonal met with an accident?
5. How was Sonal rushed to the Municipal Hospital? Have you ever extended a helping hand to anyone who is lying unconscious after a serious accident?
6. This accident left Sonal shattered. She met with serious injuries. Enumerate.
7. How did Sonal react after she regained consciousness?
8. 'Where there is a will, there is a way'. How does it apply to Sonal Man Singh.

#### B. Let's Discuss

- a. Man is the 'Master of His Fate'.
- b. One can always make a beginning.

#### C. Let's Do

1. Collect photographs of some eminent classical dancers.
2. Do a project work on some important dance forms of Bihar.

## SCALING GREAT HEIGHTS

*Santosh Yadav is the only woman in the world that has scaled Mt Everest twice. She was born in the small village of Joniyawas of Rewari District in Haryana. The girl was given the name 'Santosh', which means contentment. But Santosh was not always content with her place in a traditional way of life. She began living life on her own terms from the start. Where other girls wore traditional Indian dresses, Santosh preferred shorts. Looking back, she says now, 'From the very beginning I was quite determined that if I chose a correct and a rational path, the others around me had to change, not me.'*



## SCALING GREAT HEIGHTS

Santosh's parents were affluent landowners who could afford to send their children to the best schools, even to the country's capital New Delhi, which was quite close by. But, in line with the prevailing custom in the family, Santosh had to make do with the local village school. So, she decided to fight the system in her own quiet way when the right moment arrived. And the right moment came when she turned sixteen. At sixteen most of the girls in her village used to get married. Santosh was also under pressure from her parents to do the same.

A marriage as early as that was the last thing on her mind. She threatened her parents that she would never marry if she did not get a proper education. She left home and got herself enrolled in a school in Delhi. When her parents refused to pay for her education, she politely informed them of her plans to earn money by working part time to pay her school fees. Her parents then agreed to pay for her education.

Wishing always to study "a bit more" and with her father slowly getting used to her urge for more education, Santosh passed the high school examinations and went to Jaipur. She joined Maharani College

and got a room in Kasturba Hostel. Santosh remembers, "Kasturba Hostel faced the Aravalli Hills. I used to watch villagers from my room, going up the hill and suddenly vanishing after a while. One day I decided to check it out myself. I found nobody except a few mountaineers. I asked if I could join them. To my pleasant surprise, they answered in the affirmative and motivated me to take to climbing."

Then there was no looking back for this determined young girl. She saved money and enrolled in a course at Uttarkashi's Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. "My college semester in Jaipur was to end in April but it ended on the nineteenth of May. And I was supposed to be in Uttarkashi on the twenty-first. So, I did not go back home; instead, I headed straight for the training. I had to write a letter of apology to my father without whose permission I had got myself enrolled at Uttarkashi."

Thereafter, Santosh went on an expedition every year. Her climbing skills matured rapidly. Also she developed a remarkable resistance to cold and the altitude. Equipped with an iron will, physical endurance and an amazing mental toughness, she proved herself repeatedly. The culmination of her hard work and sincerity came in 1992, just four years after she had shyly asked the Aravalli mountaineers if she could join them. At barely twenty years of age, Santosh Yadav scaled Mt. Everest, becoming the youngest woman in the world to achieve the feat. If her climbing skills, physical fitness, and mental strength impressed her seniors, her concern for others and desire to work together with them found her a special place in the hearts of fellow climbers.

During the 1992 Everest Mission, Santosh Yadav provided special care to a climber who lay dying at the South Col. She was unfortunately unsuccessful in saving him. However, she managed to save another climber, Mohan Singh, who would have met with the same fate had she not shared her oxygen with him.

Within twelve months, Santosh found herself a member of an Indo-Nepalese Women's Expedition that invited her to join them. She then

scaled the Everest a second time, thus setting a record as the only woman to have scaled the Everest twice, and securing for herself in India a unique place in the annals of mountaineering. In recognition of her achievements, the Indian government bestowed upon her one of the nation's top honours, the Padmashri.

Describing her feelings when she was literally 'on top of the world', Santosh has said, "It took some time for the enormity of the moment to sink in... Then I unfurled the Indian tricolour and held it aloft on the roof of the world. The feeling is indescribable. The Indian flag was flying on top of the world. It was truly a spiritual moment. I felt proud as an Indian."

Also a fervent environmentalist, Santosh collected and brought down 500 kilograms of garbage from the Himalayas.



*(Edited and adapted from 'Beehive' NCERT, New Delhi)*

## EXERCISES

### A. Let's Answer

1. How can Santosh Yadav inspire the girls as well as their parents in India?
2. From where did Santosh take the inspiration of mountaineering?
3. "From the very beginning I was quite determined that if I chose a correct and rational path, the others around me had to change, not me." State some changes made by Santosh Yadav in her family custom.
4. Describe Santosh's team spirit during the expedition to Mt. Everest.
5. Describe briefly Santosh's life from a local village school to Uttar Kashi's Nehru Institute of Mountaineering.



**B. Let's Discuss**

- a. Early Marriage is a curse.
- b. Nothing can stop you if you have firm determination to do something.

**C. Let's Do**

1. Collect photographs of some eminent mountaineers.
2. Do a project work on the leading mountaineers in India.



## SAINT KABIR

*Kabir was one of the greatest poets of Bhakti Era. He was the son of a widow and was looked after by a couple, Neema and Neeru in Varanasi. He belonged to the downtrodden society which made him suffer a lot. He was against social evils such as untouchability, religious extremism etc. He wrote against the priests. He is well known for his 'Panchmel', 'Khichdi' or 'Sadhukdi'. His mentor was Sri Ramanand. Whatever he wrote was based on his personal experience. He moved a lot and used whatever local language was used at that time. He was exponent of 'Gyanashrayi' branch of Bhakti Era. He was a worshipper of Abstract form of Ram. His famous works are called Sabad and Sakhi.*



## SAINT KABIR

“I and you are of one blood  
and one life animates us both.  
From one mother is the world born  
What knowledge is this which makes us separate?  
All have come from the same country  
And have landed at one ghat;  
But the evil influence of this world  
Has divided us into innumerable sects.”

The poem given above is the English translation of the poetic outpouring of Saint Kabir by a scholar. Kabir was against caste system and division of mankind on the basis of caste and sect. He is one of the great luminaries who occupy a very distinct position as a ruthless critic of the weaknesses and failings of religions during his period. His songs castigated casteism, ritualism and orthodoxy. He had to wage a relentless

war against obscurantism, orthodox Brahminism and Islam. He lived during the period from 1448 A.D. to 1518 A.D. It is said that he was born of a Hindu mother and later on brought up by a Muslim weaver Niru and his wife Nima. They lived in Banaras now called Varanasi, which was a citadel of Hindu orthodoxy and culture. Kabir and his family lived in abject poverty and hostile environment. During this time Buddhism was waning and the Brahminism was on the ascendancy. Islam was having the royal patronage of Muslim rulers who were hostile to Hinduism. Both the orthodox Hindu priests and Maulavis hated Kabir and they complained against him to Emperor Sikander Lodi who banished him from Banaras itself later in his life.



In his young age Kabir became a disciple of saint Ramananda, who was a Vaishnava ascetic propounding faith in a personal God. His message was that through personal devotion to one's own God irrespective of one's caste or creed or status in social life, one could attain bliss and salvation. Saint Ramananda had among his disciples Sena, the barber; Dhana, the Jat; Ravi Das, the cobbler; and Kabir, the Muslim weaver. Kabir was the foremost among his disciples. Ramananda tutored and moulded Kabir and made him a follower of his liberal, social outlook and concern for the low-caste people. In addition to this, Kabir had also the good fortune of coming into contact with Shaikh Taqqi, who was a Sufi saint. He had the knowledge and influence of both Hinduism and Islam which he utilised fully to face the challenges during his struggle against elitism and orthodoxy. With considerable fortitude and independence he attacked both Hinduism and Islam and pointed out their weaknesses. He rejected the authority of the traditional scriptures and the then prevailing superstitious beliefs and rituals of both the Hindus and the Muslims. He exposed their apparent contradictions in their conduct.

He was against idol worship. He was not in favour of the display of siddhis by yogis and condemned some of their practices. He rejected the varna and caste system with utmost contempt. He vehemently denounced untouchability and despised all those who were perpetuating these unjust and pernicious practices.

While criticising the outward form and superstitions of both the Muslims and the Hindus, he was himself not in favour of creating a new system or propounding a new philosophy. He preached that institutional religions which thrive on sectarian and social differences had no use for him. He was bold and original. Kabir did not believe that only Pundits and Maulavis had the monopoly as guardians of religions and gods. He had no respect for booklore and pedantic platitudes. His approach to people was direct and simple. Kabir's appeal was to the non-literate masses and not to the so-called intellectuals and the elite.

Through contacts with the people and personal experience Kabir was able to convey to them his message of love, compassion and brotherhood. He emphasised that before God there is no Hindu or Muslim. His fortitude and unwavering faith to rid the society of religious bigotry and superstitions was so intense that he announced thus:

*"Kabir is standing in a market place with a burning stick in his hand"*

This declaration by Kabir shows that he was a rebel. He was keen to wipe out the evils in society with a view to bringing about a new social order and authentic religion based on equality and brotherhood.

He preached tolerance. He said that one should give flowers in return to those who give pain and sorrow. It is said that after Kabir's death both the Hindus and the Muslims claimed his body, the former wanting cremation and the latter burial. When the shroud was removed, there was nobody except bunches of flowers. These were shared by both the communities, each acting according to its desires. Thus in death as in life, Kabir symbolised brotherhood among the two major religious communities.

He was a great non-conformist in the tradition of Buddha and other saints in Indian civilization who registered their dissent and protest and sought to reform the Indian society. His teachings in brief are as follows:-

- i) Total rejection of caste system, the practice of untouchability and all divisions based on caste, creed and religion.
- ii) Denial of any special status or authority of the priests and mullas for religious functions or their being holy.
- iii) Repudiation of the authority of the religious scriptures and blind beliefs.
- iv) Mere booklore promoting pride and pedantry without any connection and communication with the common people serves no purpose.
- v) Disapproval of the discord and distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims.
- vi) No preference for any religion.
- vii) Condemnation of idolatory, mythology of divine incarnations, superstitious beliefs and ceremonies and all external ramifications in the name of religion and sectarianism.

Kabir earned his livelihood at the loom and continued to be a weaver all his life. But at the same time, he never departed from his path of virtue and reform.

Kabir was a saint-poet for non-literate masses. And his songs are moving and sung by the common people even today in north India. He was a people's poet. Through his positive approach emphasising unity of men, non-violence, love, compassion, tolerance, truth and belief in one God, he is still remembered and revered by vast masses of the people even after a lapse of about five centuries.

Although there is no evidence to show that Kabir formally organised any sect or initiated any disciples, we have today what is called

'Kabir Panth'. A Large number of sects trace their origin to the preachings of Kabir. Saint Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion, was greatly influenced by Kabir. Adi Grantha, the sacred book of the Sikhs, contains a large number of verses of Kabir. Although there are other sects influenced by Kabir, the point to be remembered is that Kabir's immortal message of equality, love, communal amity and brotherhood without distinctions on the basis of caste, creed and religion remains the beacon light for us. It should continue to inspire and guide us particularly in the present context when the country is passing through crisis resulting from communal violence, caste conflicts, atrocities on the scheduled caste and tribes and the weaker sections, and erosion of ethical and spiritual values in our society.



## EXERCISES

### A. Let's Answer

1. Who was Kabir? What did he think about caste system and division of mankind? Do you agree with his view? Give reasons.
2. Why did orthodox Hindu priests and Maulavis hate Kabir?
3. What did Kabir preach? To whom did he appeal?
4. What happened with Kabir's body after his death?
5. Why is Kabir remembered even today?
6. What kind of social order did Kabir want to bring about?
7. What do you mean by tolerance? What did Kabir say in this connection?
8. Summarise in your own words Kabir's teachings. How far are they relevant in the contemporary society?

**B. Let's Discuss**

- a. The essence of religion lies in love and forgiveness.

**C. Let's Do**

1. Recite two verses of Kabir and translate them into English.
2. Do a project work on 'Kabir Panth and its relevance today'. You may take help of your teacher or consult any reference book in your school library.



## THE EYES ARE NOT HERE

**Ruskin Bond**

*RUSKIN BOND (b.1934) has written over a hundred short stories, essays, novels and books for children. He got the Sahitya Akademi Award for English writing in India in 1992. The present story, "The Eyes Are Not Here", is a highly sensitive and thoughtful story. It deals with the point that insight is superior to eyesight.*



### THE EYES ARE NOT HERE

I had the compartment to myself up to Rohana, and then a girl got in. The couple who saw her off were probably her parents: they seemed very anxious about her comfort, and the woman gave the girl detailed instructions as to where to keep her things, when not to lean out of the windows, and how to avoid speaking to strangers. They said their good-byes: the train pulled out of the station.

As I was totally blind at the time, my eyes sensitive only to light and darkness, I was unable to tell what the girl looked like: but I knew she wore slippers from the way they slapped against her heels. It would take me some time to discover something about her looks, and perhaps I never would. But I liked the sound of her voice, and even the sound of her slippers.

"Are you going all the way to Dehra?" I asked.

I must have been sitting in a dark corner, because my voice startled her. She gave a little exclamation and said, "I didn't know anyone else was here."



Well, it often happens that people with good eyesight fail to see what is right in front of them. They have too much to take in, I suppose. Whereas people who cannot see (or see very little) have to take in only the essentials, whatever registers most tellingly on their remaining senses.

"I didn't see you either," I said. "But I heard you come in."

I wondered if I would be able to prevent her from discovering that I was blind. I thought "Provided I keep to my seat, it shouldn't be too difficult."

The girl said, "I'm getting down at Saharanpur. My aunt is meeting me there.

"Then I had better not be too familiar," I said. "Aunts are usually formidable creatures."

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To Dehra, and then to Mussoorie."

"Oh, how lucky you are, I wish I were going to Mussoorie. I love the hills. Especially in October."

"Yes, this is the best time," I said, calling on my memories. "The hills are covered with wild dahlias, the sun is delicious, and at night you can sit in front of a log fire and drink a little brandy. Most of the tourists have gone, and the roads are quiet and almost deserted. Yes, October is the best time."

She was silent, and I wondered if my words had touched her, or whether she thought me a romantic fool. Then I made a mistake.

"What is it like?" I asked.

She seemed to find nothing strange in the question. Had she noticed already that I could not see? But her next question removed my doubts.

"Why don't you look out of window?" she asked.

I moved easily along the berth and felt for the window ledge. The window was open, and I faced it, making a pretence of studying the landscape. I heard the panting of the engine, the rumble of the wheels, and, in my mind's eye, I could see the telegraph-posts flashing by.

“Have you noticed,” I ventured, “that the trees seem to be moving while we seem to be standing still?”

“That always happens,” she said. “Do you see any animals?” hardly any animals left in the forests near Dehra.

I turned from the window and faced the girl, and for a while we sat in silence.

“You have an interesting face,” I remarked. I was becoming quite daring, but it was a safe remark. Few girls can resist flattery.

She laughed pleasantly, a clear, ringing laugh.

“It’s nice to be told I have an interesting face. I’m tired of people telling me I have a pretty face.”

Oh, so you do have a pretty face, thought I, and aloud I said: “Well, an interesting face can also be pretty.”

“You are a very gallant young man,” she said. “But why are you so serious?”

I thought then, that I would try to laugh for her; but the thought of laughter only made me feel troubled and lonely.

“We’ll soon be at your station,” I said.

“Thank goodness it’s a short journey. I can’t bear to sit in a train for more than two or three hours.”

Yet I was prepared to sit there for almost any length of time, just to listen to her talking. Her voice had the sparkle of a mountain stream. As soon as she left the train, she would forget our brief encounter; but it would stay with me for the rest of the journey, and for some time after.

The engine’s whistle shrieked, the carriage wheels changed their sound and rhythm.

The girl got up and began to collect her things. I wondered if she wore her hair in a bun, or if it was plaited, or if it hung loose over her shoulders, or if it was cut very short.

The train drew slowly into the station. Outside, there was the shouting of porters and vendors and a high-pitched female voice near the carriage door which must have belonged to the girl’s aunt.

“Good-bye,” said the girl.

She was standing very close to me, so close that the perfume from her hair was tantalising. I wanted to raise my hand and touch her hair; but she moved away, and only the perfume still lingered where she had stood.

‘You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will. But the scent of the roses will linger there still.....’

There was some confusion in the doorway. A man, getting into the compartment, stammered an apology. Then the door banged shut, and the world was shut out again. I returned to my berth. The guard blew his whistle and we moved off. Once again, I had a game to play and a new fellow-traveller.

The train gathered speed, the wheels took up their song, the carriage groaned and shook. I found the window and sat in front of it, staring into the daylight that was darkness for me.

So many things were happening outside the window. It could be a fascinating game, guessing what went on out there.

The man who had entered the compartment broke into my reverie.

“You must be disappointed,” he said, “I’m sorry I’m not as attractive a travelling companion as the one who just left.”

“She was an interesting girl,” I said. “Can you tell me – did she keep her hair long or short?”

“I don’t remember,” he said, sounding puzzled, “It was her eyes I noticed, not her hair. She had beautiful eyes – but they were of no use to her, she was completely blind. Didn’t you notice?”

## EXERCISES

### A. Let's Answer

1. Why did the writer ask the man who entered the compartment: 'Can you tell me - did she keep her hair long or short?' What does the man reply? What hint does it

- throw on the similarity of the two - the narrator and the girl?
2. How will you describe the experience of the narrator: interesting, dull or instructive? Describe a similar experience of your own.
  3. Describe the personality of the writer on the basis of the story.
  4. Was the girl a lover of natural scenes and situations? Describe the behaviour of the girl highlighting what strikes you as odd.
  5. Why were the girl's beautiful eyes of no use to her? Attempt a character sketch of the girl.
  6. What light does the story throw on human behaviour?

### **B. Let's Discuss**

- Discuss the following in groups or pairs
- a. Appearance is deceptive.

### **C. Let's Do**

- a. Do a project work on the problems and challenges faced by a physically challenged man.



## ISMAT CHUGHTAI : A LADY WITH A DIFFERENCE

M. Asaduddin

*ISMAT CHUGHTAI, Urdu's most courageous and controversial writer, had become a legend in her own lifetime as much for her unconventional writings as for her mercurial personality. Born at a time when the Indian society, particularly the Muslim part of it, was largely orthodox and tradition-bound, and women spent their whole life behind the purdah, Chughtai challenged the mores and values of her time and fiercely advocated selfhood and self-definition for women. With brutal frankness and devastating honesty she pointed her accusing finger at the superstitions, follies and foibles prevalent in the society, especially the injustices meted out to women. She had a special place among her illustrious contemporaries in the field of Urdu fiction - Rajinder Singh Bedi, Saadat Hasan Manto and Krishan Chander - and brought into its ambit the whole terrain of feminine sensibility with a sharp focus on female sexuality which was hitherto regarded as a taboo. Her writings have transformed the complexion of Urdu fiction in significant ways by bringing about a change in the attitudes and terms of reference in assessing literary merits of works in Urdu. Her contribution to the language - pert, racy, colloquial, idiomatic with a liberal sprinkling of expressions special to women with its raw and rough edges intact, as it was spoken by women of Agra, Aligarh, Rai Bareli and some parts of Rajasthan - is no less remarkable.*



## ISMAT CHUGHTAI : A LADY WITH A DIFFERENCE

Ismat Chughtai was born in the western Uttar Pradesh at a place called Badayun, associated with the memory of Gautama Buddha, on August 21, 1911. She was the ninth child of Mirza Qasim Baig Chughtai and

Nusrat Khannam. Her family name was Ismat Khanam Chughtai and she was called by her nickname, Chunni. Qasim Baig Chughtai was a Judicial Magistrate who served in different capacities at Agra, Bahraich, Jaunpur, Kanpur, Lucknow and later at different places in the princely state of Mewar like Sojat, Sambhar, Balotra, Jawra, and particularly, Jodhpur. He retired as Deputy Collector in 1924 and returned to his family home at Agra. He soon got fed up with the dirt and filth of Gali Panjshahi at Agra and moved to Aligarh. However, the Maharaja of Jodhpur called him back with honour to Jodhpur where he served again as the Judicial Magistrate. He died in 1937.

Being the ninth child of her parents and that, too, a girl, her birth into the world was not greeted with enthusiasm by her parents or other members of the family. Even her mother never let her feel wanted or cared for. Describing the occasion of her birth, she says: "My mother was dressing up to attend the marriage of her friend's daughter in the neighbourhood. The cleaning woman was sweeping the floor when I chose to arrive into the world, unannounced. When my brothers and sisters were born, the mem (the white nurse/midwife) used to come. But my delivery was managed by the sweepress. That is why my brothers and sisters teased me by calling me 'a sweepress's offspring'. Rather than suffering from any inferiority complex I also started to believe that I was not my parents' child but the sweepress's who fed me with milk." Burdened with so many children and other responsibilities, her mother had no time for her. Not to speak of cuddling, cajoling and pampering which every child is used to in an Indian household, even the necessary motherly duties were performed by the ayah when she was an infant and later, when she grew up, by her elder sister, Farhat Khanam alias Manju. In fact, Ismat Chughtai had begun to look upon Manju not as her elder sister but as her mother and gave her all respect and affection as long as she lived. As far as her mother was concerned, Ismat Chughtai's feelings about her were very complex. So ingrained was her sense of childhood deprivation that she later on commented – "Amma used to hate me,

perhaps." This cryptic sentence says a lot about her innermost feelings. A psychoanalyst would certainly trace the seeds of rebellion in Ismat Chughtai to her neglect and deprivation as a child.

Ismat Chughtai spent her childhood days playing football and *gilli danda*, (tipcat), riding bicycles, plucking guavas and hogging them, wandering about the neighbourhood and generally looking for some mischief or the other. When she saw her brothers riding horses, she insisted on doing the same and despite her mother's strong opposition, had her way. Day in and day out she was made aware of the difference between men and women and boys and girls. But she was not ready to accept her subjugated status as a woman lying down. She reminisces, with a chuckle – "realised that being a girl had its advantages. Abba's standing instruction was that girls should not be pulled by their locks or nose. If girls beat anyone, the person should lodge a complaint with the *sarkar* (her father). Well, there was just one girl – and that's me – against whom complaint was lodged every other day. However, my brothers' reputation in this regard was so low that I was hardly ever punished. On the contrary, they would be reprimanded."

When she was four years old, Ismat Chughtai was introduced to the *Baghadadi Qaeda* (Arabic First Reader to teach alphabet). Tutors would come home to teach children. In her short story, "Bachpan", she gives a graphic description of the way elementary education was imparted to her. Her early school education began at Agra where she used to go to the Municipal school along with other children in a palanquin, carried by two kahars (palanquin-bearers). From Agra the family moved to Bahraich and later when Ismat Chughtai was about nine years old, to Aligarh. Somehow she completed reading the Quran at the age of twelve. Rather than complimenting her on her achievement, the members of her family derided her for having accomplished something which Naiyer, her sister's daughter, had acquired much earlier in addition to other accomplishments that were considered necessary for competent house-keeping. Ismat Chughtai never showed any inclination towards these so-called accomplishments that were considered necessary for a woman to

make her life happy, particularly after marriage. When she was twelve, her mother one day gave her an old *gharara* (skirt) to practise sewing. She did not show the slightest interest. The same happened when she was asked to learn how to cook. Ismat flatly refused to learn culinary skills. The mother was horrified and began to have nightmares about what would happen to such a wayward girl after marriage. The matter was brought to the notice of Ismat's father. When he wanted to know why she did not want to learn 'womanly' skills and asked her what she would feel with her husband after marriage if she did not know how to cook, her answer was – "If he is poor, we'll make do with *khichdi*; if he is rich, we'll keep a cook. Her father was rendered speechless by this splendid display of common sense. It seems she was already on the way to acquire the essential traits of her character – fierce individuality and clear-mindedness about what she wanted and what she did not want.

When Ismat Chughtai was in the ninth class, marriage proposals began to arrive. During those days it was very common to get girls married at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Her parents approved the proposal from a boy who was a deputy collector. Preparations for the marriage began in right earnest. One day she noticed some unusual activities at home. After making discreet enquiries she came to know that the preparations related to her marriage. She wrote to her elder brother Azim Baig Chughtai requesting him to stop this marriage. He wrote back saying that the proposal, in fact, was sent by him, that the boy was suitable from all counts and that she could continue her study after marriage. Then she told her parents that she was not going to marry, at least not just yet. When all persuasions failed, she thought out a plan which was sure to succeed. She wrote to her cousin Jugnu (Athar Hussain, son of her elder maternal uncle, Zafar) a letter in which she made an impassioned plea to him to rescue her from the impending catastrophe. She asked him to write a letter to his father conveying his wish to marry her. Jugnu went along with her plan and conveyed 'his' wish to his father who pleaded with his sister (Ismat's mother) to break off the other engagement. Nusrat Khanam, who was deeply attached to



her brothers and was very fond of Jugnu, was only too happy to do that. By this extraordinary sleight of hand Ismat was successful in warding off an early marriage which, in all probability, would have effectively closed the doors for further development and literary creativity in her.'

Ismat Chughtai had studied Islam, Christianity and Hinduism at some depth, but she found what she termed as *mazhab-e-insaaniyat* (religion of humanity) to be the best. Hinduism attracted her; particularly, she was fascinated by the Hindu mythology and the image of Krishna, the dark god. Though she sometimes attended religious rituals of both the Sunni and Shia schools of Islam, they were more of social rather than religious occasions for her. She accepted the validity of all religions in the conduct of human life and man's social behaviour, but she did not seem to believe in their transcendental nature. Neither did she seem to believe in a life after death. A streak of agnosticism runs through her stray comments about religion. All this becomes clear in her answer to the question on the presence of religion in her works:

**J.P.** – There isn't too much of Islam in your stories...Are you a believer?

**I.C.** – Now don't get me into trouble. I can recite the Kalima beautifully – when necessary, for example, when I visit Pakistan!

I believe there is some power, but I'm not afraid of it. If I jump from my window with Allah's name on my lips, I know He won't save me. I don't pray, but I don't do anything bad either. I've never cheated anybody.

There's no harm in following any religion. I became a Hindu too. I fell in love with a Hindu boy; he took me to the temple, made me drink cow's piss. It was quite fragrant. ...I've been to temples – I love their *prasad*, their pooris.

In some sense she always remained a child – curious and precocious. Her love of mischief and child-like wonder never left her.



She was always game for novel experiences, meeting new people and seeing new places. She travelled to China, Soviet Russia, France, England, Finland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Pakistan and her excitement is evident in the travelogues that she wrote after her travels.

In her twilight days she had lost her memory and had become quite frail. However, neither age nor the vicissitudes of life could blunt her rapier-sharp wit or subdue her aggressiveness. Despite her failing health her confidence in herself and her innate stubbornness did not leave her. She could never accept that she was wrong or bring herself to accept defeat. Whenever she committed a faux pas and contradicted her own statements because of her failing memory and people pointed them out to her, she would shout them down and coolly disown her own earlier statements. Similarly, she used to shout at doctors who said that she had lost her memory. Eventually, the end came on October 24, 1991 when she was found dead in her bed in the morning. She was not buried in accordance with the Muslim funeral rites but quietly cremated, as she is said to have wished, in the electric crematorium.

## EXERCISES

### A. Let's Answer

1. How did Ismat describe the occasion of her birth?
2. How did Ismat Chughtai spend her childhood days?
3. How was elementary education imparted to her?
4. Which religion did she find the best?
5. 'In some sense she always remained a child.' Do you agree?
6. What light does the story throw on human behaviour?

### B. Let's Discuss

Discuss the following in groups or pairs.

- a. Gender bias must be discouraged.

### C. Let's Do

- a. Do a project work on the woman who left her imprint despite adverse social circumstance.

## THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST

Bill Bryson

Of all the things I am not very good at, living in the real world is perhaps the most outstanding. I am constantly filled with wonder at the number of things that other people do without any evident difficulty that are pretty much beyond me. I cannot tell you the number of times that I have gone looking for the lavatory in a cinema, for instance, and ended up standing in an alley on the wrong side of a self-locking door. My particular specialty now is returning to hotel desks two or three times a day and asking what my room number is. I am, in short, easily confused.

I was thinking about this the last time we went *en famille* on a big trip. It was at Easter, and we were flying to England for a week. When we arrived at Logan Airport in Boston and were checking in, I suddenly remembered that I had recently joined British Airways frequent flyer programme. I also remembered that I had put the card in the carry-on bag that was hanging around my neck. And here's where the trouble started.

The zip on the bag was jammed. So I pulled on it and yanked at it. With grunts and frowns and increasing consternation. I kept this up for some minutes but it wouldn't budge, so I pulled harder and harder, with more grunts. Well, you can guess what happened. Abruptly the zip gave way. The side of the bag flew open and everything within – newspaper cuttings and other loose papers, a 14 ounce tin of pipe tobacco, magazines, passport, English money, film – was extravagantly ejected over an area about the size of a tennis court.

I watched dumbstruck as a hundred carefully sorted documents came raining down in a fluttery cascade, coins bounced to a variety of



noisy oblivions and the now-lidless tin of tobacco rolled crazily across the concourse disgorging its contents as it went.

“My tobacco!” I cried in horror, thinking what I would have to pay for that much tobacco in England now that another Budget had come and gone, and then changed the cry to “My finger! My finger!” as I discovered that I had gashed my finger on the zip and was shedding blood in a lavish manner. (I am not very good around flowing blood generally, but when it’s my own – well, I think hysterics are fully justified.) Confused and unable to help, my hair went into panic mode.

It was at this point that my wife looked at me with an expression of wonder – not anger or exasperation, but just simple wonder – and said, “I can’t believe you do this for a living.”

But I’m afraid it’s so. I always have catastrophes when I travel. Once on an aeroplane, I leaned over to tie a shoelace just at the moment someone in the seat ahead of me threw his seat back into full recline, and found myself pinned helplessly in the crash position. It was only by clawing the leg of the man sitting next to me that I managed to get myself freed.

On another occasion, I knocked a soft drink onto the lap of a sweet little lady sitting beside me. The flight attendant came and cleaned her up, and brought me a replacement drink, and instantly I knocked it onto the woman again. To this day, I don’t know how I did it. I just remember reaching out for the new drink and watching helplessly as my arm, like some cheap prop in one of those 1950s horror movies with a name like *The Undead Limb*, violently swept the drink from its perch and onto her lap.

The lady looked at me with the stupefied expression you would expect to receive from someone whom you have repeatedly drenched, and uttered an oath that started with “Oh”, finished with “sake” and in between had some words that I have never heard uttered in public before, certainly not by a nun.

This, however, was not my worst experience on a plane flight. My worst experience was when I was writing important thoughts in a notebook ('buy socks', 'clutch drinks carefully', etc.) sucking thoughtfully on the end of my pen as you do, and fell into conversation with an attractive young lady in the next seat. I amused her for perhaps 20 minutes with a scattering of urbane *bons mots*, then retired to the lavatory where I discovered that the pen had leaked and that my mouth, chin, tongue, teeth and gums were now a striking, scrub-resistant navy blue, and would remain so for several days.

So you will understand, I trust, when I tell you how much I ache to be suave. I would love, just once in my life, to rise from a dinner table without looking as if I have just experienced an extremely localized seismic event, get in a car and close the door without leaving 14 inches of coat outside, wear light-coloured trousers without discovering at the end of the day that I have at various times sat on chewing gum, ice cream, cough syrup and motor oil. But it is not to be.

Now on planes when the food is delivered, my wife says: "Take the lids off the food for Daddy" or "put your hoods up, children. Daddy's about to cut his meat". Of course, this is only when I am flying with my family. When I am on my own, I don't eat, drink or lean over to tie my shoelaces and never put a pen anywhere near my mouth. I just sit very, very quietly, sometimes on my hands to keep them from flying out unexpectedly and causing liquid mischief. It's not much fun, but it does at least cut down on the laundry bills.

I never did get my frequent flyer miles, by the way. I never do. I couldn't find the card in time. This had become a real frustration for me. Everyone I know – everyone – is forever flying off to Bali first class with their air miles. I never get to collect any thing. I must fly 100,000 miles a year, yet I have accumulated only about 212 air miles divided between twenty-three airlines.

This is because either I forget to ask the air miles when I check in, or I remember to ask for them but the airline then manages not to record



them, or the check-in clerk informs me that I am not entitled to them. In January, on a flight to Australia – a flight for which I was going to get about a zillion air miles – the clerk shook her head when I presented my card and told me I was not entitled to any.

“Why?”

“The ticket is in the name of B. Bryson and the card is in the name of W. Bryson.”

I explained to her the close and venerable relationship between Bill and William, but she wouldn't have it.

So I didn't get my air miles, and I won't be flying to Bali first class just yet. Perhaps just as well, really. I could never go that long without eating.

## EXERCISES

### A. Let's Answer

1. Have you ever travelled by a train or a plane? Do you remember any interesting incident that occurred during your journey?
2. Why does the writer say that he is easily confused? Give evidences in support of your answer.
3. Describe the incident that exasperated the narrator at the Logan Airport in Boston.

### B. Let's Discuss

- a. Travel light is a golden rule to make your journeys pleasurable.

### C. Let's Do

- a. Do a project work on the modes of transportation.

## SAINT RAVIDAS

*Guru Ravidas is hailed as the liberator of the common people, representing the voice of revolt of the suppressed and non-privileged humanity. He was a cobbler, one among the untouchables. The family occupation was making leather items like bridles for the horses of the rich and the aristocrats. He was born in the village Mandoor-Garh, on the outskirts of Kashi (Banaras), the citadel of orthodoxy and obscurantism sometime between 1376 and 1377 AD. He was born on a Sunday (Ravivar) and hence his name Ravidas. He is also called Raidas. At that time, untouchability was practised with full rigour. When Ravidas began to worship God (Shaligram), the Pandits of Kashi rose in opposition. However, in the face of adverse circumstances, Ravidas, by dint of piety, virtue, spiritual attainments, exemplary conduct and character and force of personality, rose not only to be a great religious guru of the people, but also came to have among his disciples poetess Mirabai and other notable men and women. Rani Jhali took, 'deeksha' from him. To this day, a temple and a monument for Ravidas stand in the courtyard of Prayag Kumbh Mandir in the palace of Chittoor.*

## SAINT RAVIDAS

Caparisoned elephants, uniformed soldiers, members of the royal family, expensive presents and variety of fruits - all went in an impressive procession to Banaras from Chittoor. They were sent by Queen Jhali of Chittoor. They were to meet not a King or an emperor; nor a potentate or a prince, but a pauper who was the saint of saints, the very embodiment of virtue and piety. The procession wended its way to a small hut and stopped at its door. They went there to honour and revere the saint there. This small hut was the sacred abode of the godly Ravidas, the saint who preached and practised for over hundred years to reform society, to eradicate caste distinctions, ignorance and prejudices. This

was in the later half of the fourteenth and the early part of the fifteenth centuries in north India.

This was a period of darkness, foreign oppression, humiliation and devastation for India. There was a succession of invaders, the Ghaznis, Ghoris, Slave dynasty and the Khiljis. Local culture, religion and practices were sought to be destroyed. The native citizens had no sense of security and their morale was very low. During this period of gloom, there appeared on the national scene Swami Ramanand and his disciples like Ravidas and Kabir, Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus. They revived and revamped the spirits of the people, by their teachings, exhortations and struggles.

Ravidas's central teaching was that he who worships God becomes a man of God. High and low castes are meaningless and absurd. He brought self-respect and prestige to the humblest, lowliest and the lost - the untouchables and the weak. All are equal and there is only universal man enjoying the fruits of equality, fraternity and spiritual attainments.

He waged a relentless war on caste and casteism. He suffered but did not give up. Till his last days, Ravidas spread the message of equality of men and women and castigated the evils of untouchability. He strove for the uplift of the depressed classes and the backward sections of society through his sermons and preachings.

Ravidas's greatness lies in the fact that he was found worthy enough to have forty of his verses, included in **Guru Granth Sahib**, the sacred book of the Sikhs.

Even today, after a lapse of about 600 years, saint Ravidas is revered and worshipped, not only by his followers but also by people at large and occupies a prominent place in the religious hierarchy.

Guru Ravidas, his ideology and teachings have greater relevance today than ever before. Saint Ravidas's war on caste should be our inspiration. Ravidas was a great unifier. He stood for universal brotherhood.

Today money-power and muscle-power have the upper hand. Ravidas showed utter disregard for money. It is said that Ravidas knew the alchemy given to him by a devotee of his which could change any



metal into gold. Ravidas said that his alchemy was, 'Ram Nam' and the goodness of man high or low. He never touched it and it was returned to the devotee.

Whatever his disciples and devotees contributed, he spent on sadhus and temples, for the poor and the starving. He lived and died for mankind and it was his mission and it was his mission to make society free from casteism, orthodoxy and ignorance through godliness and passive assertions and preachings.

No wonder even today, Ravidas shines and is adored and worshiped by millions in the country even after over six centuries.

## EXERCISES

### A. Let's Answer

1. Describe in your words the procession to Banaras from Chitoor.
2. Why did the pandits of Kashi oppose Ravidas?
3. How did Ravidas become a great religious Guru? Who were his disciples?
4. What was the teaching of saint Ravidas about untouchables? Was he satisfied by their condition?
5. Mention the incident from the text which proves that Ravidas did not prefer money?
6. Describe the contributions of Saint Ravidas to the society.

### B. Let's Discuss

- a. Sincerity and commitment have their own rewards.
- b. Untouchability is a social curse.

### C. Let's Do

- a. Do a project work on the social condition in the medieval age.



## BHARATHIPURA

U. R. Anantha Murthy

*Prof. U R Anantha Murthy has been acclaimed as one of the most prolific writers and thinkers of the Indian subcontinent. His contribution has been historical in the field of creative writing, particularly novels and stories. His original works have been in Kannada but have been translated into English, Russian, French, Hungarian, Hindi, Bangala, and several other languages. The films Sansakar and Diksha have been based on two of his works Sanskar and Ghotasraj respectively. He has been visiting professor to Iowa University and Tufts University of America respectively in 1975 and 1978. He was vice- chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam and the Chairman of the Sahitya Akademi. He has been conferred India's most prestigious award in the field of literature, the Jnanpith Award.*

*The extract here is taken from U. R. Anantha Murthy's novel **Bharathipura**. Jagannath, the protagonist, returns from England to his ancestral village home in Bharathipura. It is a temple-centred village and the reigning deity is Lord Manjunatha. He wields power through a demon-spirit called Bhutharaya, or so many of the inhabitants believe. This belief has been systematically exploited by the ruling class in the village to maintain their feudal power over the village people. Jagannath returns to this place with the hope of bringing about a new awakening among the people. He realises that to awaken them is to destroy the myth of Lord Manjunatha. Therefore he should take the untouchables into the temple. But before that he should destroy the myth of his own family-god Lord Narasimha. He asks the pariahs to touch the image of this God. The following extract describes this highly tense situation.*

## BHARATHIPURA

From the portico he stepped down to the courtyard and stood there. He suppressed a desire to look back. An uneasy feeling came to him of being watched from behind, by his aunt, the priest, the cook, and the cook's children. He felt his aunt's look whipping his back. He could have got rid of this suffering by looking her in the face, simply shattering her entreaty. He was frightened. To defy her thus would be a violence too much for him. The hand which gripped the casket was damp. Perhaps this

*saligram* of Lord Narasimha had never crossed the threshold of the house before. It must have stunned his aunt's whole being to see this happening now. With all the force of life in her eyes she must be drawing him back in her prayer. He did not know why he had come to a standstill. He looked up and saw before him the pariahs, dressed in white long clothes, standing like orphans at the far end of the courtyard. Their vacant eyes just looked on. They did not know of the impending blast. They did not want to know.

Slowly he began to move towards them. The red mass of the sun was sitting on the shoulder of a distant hill. The weak yellow light of retreating evening fell on the haystack. The last bus from Shimoga appeared on the curved road under the hill, raising dust. The cattle were returning to their sheds, bells jingling on their necks. At this time of the day Aunt should have been waiting for them near the shed. Kaveri crossed the courtyard, carrying a headload of firewood, her steps brisk under the weight, and her sari tucked up. These pariah folk, dressed in white shirts and clothes, must have looked funny to her. She tittered.

Jagannath thought what an absurd situation this was. For his part this *saligram* was just a pebble. Still, what an intense drama around it! He was turning the whole courtyard into a magnetic field with the pariahs in front of him and Aunt behind. How removed was his person that had concluded, by pure logical thinking, that there never was a God!

The absurdity of his action flashed in his mind. It was he who had made a *saligram* of this stone by taking it out to the pariahs to touch it. He stopped. With great effort he looked round. Aunt and the entire household were standing there. At one corner of the veranda he saw the servants. All were watching him. Aunt's tongue must have dried up or she would have certainly called him back. She was standing there like a mother staring at the dead body of her son being taken away for cremation. None had ever dared to take this thousand-year-old *saligram* out of the house. Whatever she could be thinking of it had become part of

Jagannath's own mind. He felt the presence of her eyes within him and the black stone held tightly in his hand burned like cinder.

Was he doing this for the sake of the pariahs or for his own sake? Was it to discard Brahminism? Discarding everything, was he now going to tread what Adiga would call the path of an *avadhoot*? It bewildered him to realise how at this very moment all his Marx and Russell were going up from him in vapours.

He tried to clear up his thoughts. The pariahs, who had never hoped for anything, are standing before me like impersonal ghosts. I cannot stop here for ever in a state of palpitation. The moment my resolve weakens I will be swept over and put down by Aunt's eyes. But I am going forward with the *saligram* in my hand and at the same time backing out with misgivings. Why did this action get into my head at all? The pariahs should touch the family god before they touch the village god Manjunatha. Otherwise this resolve of mine will not be solid and real, the pariahs will not give up their past and accept a new life. If I am prepared for the violence necessary for this action, I will have learnt the first lesson of the violence of change. I should therefore go ahead, believing in my own thoughts. Otherwise Aunt will triumph. It was bitter but once again he looked round. There was a ghastly desolation about the house. It had rejected him, he felt, and had reduced him to a dry useless thing flung into the courtyard.

This moment of fear and anxiety must have perplexed the pariahs who had already been feeling guilty in their new clothes. If he did not go to them and offer them the stone in his hand they would be gone. He realised that he was in a situation where something had to be done urgently. He walked quickly towards them.

The important question is, he thought, why God has invaded me like this. What I wanted to show as stone has now become a *saligram*. Why is it so? Why are the bells ringing in me? At every step I have turned this stone into a *saligram*. Like the priest of some unique ritual act. All the time trying to shout out that this is not a *saligram* but a piece of hard

stone. The eyes of the pariahs are on me; and are vacant like the eyes of cattle grazing in the field. They are not aware of a past or of any future. But those eyes at my back are compassionate and they tug at me. Shall I dodge now or shall I turn over and come to fulfillment in the minds of the pariahs?

He went and stood near them. Seeing him so close they stepped back. Jagannath opened the lid of the casket. The entire action was nonsense. If a conch blew now and a pair of cymbals clanged, it would be a fair comment on it all. But the spell of giving to the pariahs the black naked stone in his palm overwhelmed him without his knowing it. The veins of his throat swelled. He said in a deep trembling note: 'Touch This.'

He looked around. The sun was setting. Aunt and the priest were at the door, terror-stricken. Janardhana Shetty could be seen in a corner of the courtyard. The Okkaliga workers, with their sickles at their side, had huddled together in another corner. Kaveri was leaning against the parapet, wiping her face. In front of him the pariahs stood gaping like idiots. His body shook and his hair stood on end. He said again, coaxing them: 'Touch this.'

Words stuck in his throat. This stone is nothing, but I have set my heart on it and I am reaching it for you: touch it; touch the vulnerable point of my mind; this is the time of evening prayer; touch; the *nandadeepa* is burning still. Those standing behind me are pulling me back by the many bonds of obligation. What are you waiting for? What have I brought? Perhaps it is like this: This has become a *saligram* because I have offered it as stone. If you touch it, then it would be a stone for them. Thus my importunity becomes a *saligram*. Because I have given it, because you have touched it, and because they have all witnessed this event, let this stone change into a *saligram*, in this darkening nightfall. And let this *saligram* change into a stone. You, Pilla, you are not afraid of a wild boar or a tiger; so, touch it. One step further and you are already inside the temple. Centuries will alter. Touch it now. Let you learn. Touch! How easy! Touch!



His hands were sweating profusely. The pariahs moved back. All had turned him down – these pariahs and those people behind him. The evening had turned him down. He knew that the pariahs were afraid. They had seen how they caught thieves at the temple, by taking round a charmed coconut and asking the suspects to touch it. Crimson *mantrakshata* on a salver and a peeled coconut on it with its tuft turned to the front, sprinkled with *kumkum*. The coconut would have the appearance of a human face. Everyone would have to touch it. But there would always be some person who gasped for breath when the salver came near him, his veins standing out. And he would fall unconscious. The pariahs had undergone all this. The oracle of Bhutharaya must have appeared to them now in this contingency, with a bunch of areca flowers in his hands, with *kumkum* on his body, quivering all over, and pronouncing their individual punishments.

Jagannath tried to soothe them. He said in his everyday tone of a teacher: 'This is mere stone. Touch it and you will see. If you don't, you will remain foolish forever.'

He did not know what had happened to them, but found the entire group recoiling suddenly. They winced under their wry faces, afraid to stand and afraid to run away. He had desired and languished for this auspicious moment – this moment of the pariahs touching the image of God. He spoke in a voice choking with great rage: 'Yes, touch it!'

He advanced towards them. They shrank back. Some monstrous cruelty overtook the man in him. The pariahs looked like disgusting creatures crawling upon their bellies.

He bit his underlip and said in a firm low voice: 'Pilla, touch it! Yes, touch it!!'

Pilla stood blinking. Jagannath felt spent and lost. Whatever he had been teaching them all these days had gone to waste. He rattled dreadfully: 'Touch, touch, you TOUCH IT!' It was like the sound of some infuriated animal and it came tearing through him. He was sheer violence itself; he was conscious of nothing else. The pariahs found him

more menacing than Bhutharaya. The air was rent with his screams: 'Touch! Touch! Touch!' The strain was too much for the pariahs. Mechanically they came forward, just touched what Jagannath was holding out to them, and immediately withdrew.

Exhausted by violence and distress Jagannath pitched aside the *saligram*. A heaving anguish had come to a grotesque end. Aunt could be human even when she treated the pariahs as untouchables. He had lost his humanity for a moment. The pariahs had seemed to be meaningless things to him. He hung his head. He did not know when the pariahs had gone. Darkness had fallen when he came to know that he was all by himself. Disgusted with his own person he began to walk about. He asked himself: when they touched it, we lost our humanity – they and me; didn't we? And we died. Where is the flaw of it all, in me or in society? There was no answer. After a long walk he came home, feeling dazed.

(Translated from the Kannada by K. V. Tirumalesh)

## EXERCISES

### A. Let's Answer

1. Who was the reigning deity of village Bharathipura?
2. Why did Jagannath want to take the untouchables into the temple of Bharathipura village?
3. Why were the pariahs afraid of touching the *saligram*?
4. Why was touching the stone so important?
5. What did Jagannath say to the pariahs to encourage them to touch the stone?
6. How did Jagannath encourage the pariahs to touch the stone?

**B. Let's Discuss**

- a. Discrimination on the basis of caste and creed should be discouraged.
- b. Age old practices do not go easily.

**C. Let's Do**

- a. Do a project work on any three eminent social/ religious reformers of India .

