

RHAPSODY

**English Text Book
(First Language & Alternative English)**

XI & XII

With Financial-Aid from the Government of West Bengal,
this book is to be distributed to students of XI
free of cost. This book is not for sale.



West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

First Edition : April, 2016

Second Edition : April, 2017

Published by :

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

Printed at

West Bengal Text Book Corporation Limited
(Government of West Bengal Enterprise)



THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND TO SECURE TO ALL ITS CITIZENS :**

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November 1949, do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

PREFACE

The Expert Committee on School Education in collaboration with the West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education has developed *Rhapsody* as English (First Language and Alternative English) textbook for classes XI and XII to be studied in all Government, Government sponsored, Government aided and Government affiliated schools of West Bengal.

The delight of meeting great minds, the discovery of new worlds, the excitement of facing different real-life situations and characters and the sensitising of the mind and the soul come to us through the experience of reading and responding to good literature. That is what the selections in *Rhapsody* aim to do.

In *Rhapsody*, learners are exposed to a wide range of literary English texts.

The texts are an interesting mix of classic and contemporary selections of prose and poetry. There is an assortment of Indian and global texts in a variety of genres so that students can enjoy the richness of literature in its various forms. A play has also been included in the syllabus for class XII. Serious thought has gone into ensuring that the choice of texts are sensitive, relevant and thought provoking so that students become more insightful and responsive in their reading of literature.

The Government has decided to distribute this book free of cost. We are grateful to Dr. Partha Chatterjee, the Minister In-Charge, Department of School and Higher Education, Government of West Bengal, for his initiative.

Suggestions, views and comments to improve the book are welcome.

April, 2017
Vidyasagar Bhavan

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President
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Higher Secondary Education

FOREWORD

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal Smt. Mamata Banerjee constituted 'The Expert Committee on School Education to review the pedagogical aspects of school curriculum, syllabus and textbooks in 2011.

The committee in collaboration with the West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education has developed *Rhapsody* as English (First Language and Alternative English) textbook for classes XI and XII to be studied in all Government, Government sponsored, Government aided and Government affiliated schools of West Bengal.

This collection is a rich composite of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama from the best known writers in the world, including India. The texts have been selected according to the age-appropriateness of learners. There is a paradigm shift in question format and marks distribution. These changes are showing positive results in students' acquisition of English as First Language and Alternative English. The Government has decided to distribute this book free of cost so that all students may easily benefit from it. We are grateful to Dr. Partha Chatterjee, the Minister In-Charge, Department of School and Higher Education, Government of West Bengal, for his initiative.

We express our gratitude to Prof. (Dr.) Mahua Das and Prof. (Dr.) Subroto Ghosh for their valuable suggestions. We are grateful to those who have directly or indirectly contributed to the development of this book.

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CLASS XI



ENGLISH A

Prose



One of these Days

Gabriel Garcis Márquez

Gabriel García Ma'rqez (1927-2014) is a Colombian novelist, short story writer and journalist. In both his longer and shorter fictions, Ma'rqez achieved the rare feat of appealing to the common readers as well as scholars and critics. He predominantly used the technique of 'magic realism' in both novel and short story. His celebrated works include *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), *Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), *The Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981). He was awarded in Nobel Prize for literature in 1982.

The short story 'One of These Days' reveals a temporary reversal of power hierarchy as a dentist finds himself in a superior position, while treating an infection in the mouth of the Mayor.

Monday dawned warm and rainless. Aurelio Escovar, a dentist without a degree, and a very early riser, opened his office at six. He took some false teech, still mounted in their plaster mold, out of the glass case and out on the table a fistful of instruments which he arranged in size order, as if they were on display. He wore a collarless striped shirt, closed at the neck with a golden stud, and pants held up by suspenders. He was crect and skinny, with a look that rarely corresponded to the situation, the way deaf people have of looking.

When he had things arranged on the table, he pulled the drill toward the dental chair and sat down to polish the false teeth. He seemed not to be thinking about what he was doing, but worked steadily, pumping the drill with his feet, even when he did not need it.

After eight he stopped for a while to look at the sky through the without, and he saw two pensive buzzards who were drying themselves in the sun on the ridgepole of the house next door. He went on working with the idea that before lunch it would rain again. The shrill voice of his eleven-year-old son interrupted his concentration.

buzzards : birds of the hawk family.

ridgepole : horizontal beam of a roof.

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“Papa.”

“What?”

“The Mayor wants to know if you’ll pull his rooth.”

“Tell him I’m not here.”

He was polishing a gold tooch. He held it at arm’s length, and examined it with his eyes half closed. His son shouted again from the little waiting room.

“He says you are, too, because he can hear you.”

The dentist kept examining the tooth. Only when he had put it on the table with the finished work did he say:

“So much the better.”

He operated the drill again. He took several pieces of a bridge out of a cardboard box where he kept the things he still had to do and began to polish the gold.

“Papa.”

“What?”

He still had not changed his expression.

“He says if you don’t take out his tooth, he’ll shoot you.”

Without hurring, with an extremely tranquil movement, he stopped pedalling the drill, pushed it away from the chair and pulled the lower drawer of the table all the way out. there was a revolver. “OK,” he said, “Tell him to come and shoot me.”

He rolled the chair over opposite the door, his hand resting on the edge of the drawer. The Mayor appeared at the door. He had shaved the left side of his face, but the other side, swollen and in pain, had a five-day-old beard. The dentist saw many nights of desperation in his dull eyes. He closed the drawer with his fingertips and said softly :

“Sit down.”

“Good morning,” said the Mayor,

“Morning,” said the dentist.

While the instruments were boiling, the Mayor leaned his skull on the headrest of the chair and felt better. His breath was icy. It was a poor office: an old wooden chair, the pedal drill, a glass case with ceramic bottles. Opposite the chair was a window with a shoulder-high cloth curtain. When he felt the dentist approach, the Mayor braced his heels and opened his mouth.

tranquil : calm movement

braced : made still

Aurelio Escovar turned his head toward the light. After inspecting the infected tooth, he closed the Mayor's jaw with a cautious pressure of his fingers.

"It has to be without anaesthesia," he said.

"Why?"

"Because you have an abscess."

The Mayor looked him in the eye. "All right," he said, and tried to smile. The dentist did not return the smile. He brought the basin of sterilised instruments to the worktable and took them out of the water with a pair of cold tweezers, still without hurrying. Then he pushed the spittoon with the tip of his shoe, and went to wash his hands in washbasin. He did all this without looking at the Mayor. But the Mayor did not take his eyes off him.

It was a lower wisdom tooth. The dentist spread his feet and grasped the tooth with the hot forceps. The Mayor sized the arms of the chair, braced his feet with all his strength and felt an icy void in his kidneys, but did not make a sound. The dentist moved only his wrist. Without rancour, rather with a bitter tenderness, he said:

"Now you'll pay for our twenty dead men."

The Mayor felt the crunch of bones in his jaw, and his eyes filled with tears. But he did not breathe until he felt the tooth come out. Then he saw it through his tears. It seemed so foreign to his pain that he failed to understand his torture of the five previous nights. Bent over the spittoon, sweating, panting, he unbuttoned his tunic and reached for the handkerchief in pants pocket. The dentist gave him a clean cloth.

"Dry your tears," he said.

The Mayor did. He was trembling. While the dentist washed his hands, he saw the crumbling ceiling and a dusty spider web with spider's eggs and dead insects. The dentist returned, drying his hands. "Go to bed," he said, "and gargle with salt water." The Mayor stood up, said goodbye with a casual military salute and walked toward the door, stretching his legs, without buttoning up his tunic.

"Send the bill," he said.

"To you or the town?"

The Mayor did not look at him. He closed the door and said through the screen:

"It's the same damn thing."

abscess : a swollen and infected area on the body

panting : breathing heavily

rancour : hatred and anger



The Sundarbans Inheritance

Bittu Sahgal

Bittu Sahgal (1947-) focusses upon two issues in his writings: biodiversity and climate change. Sahgal pioneered the environmental education programme for school children, ‘Kids for Tigers’. He is the founding editor of *Sanctuary Asia*, India’s leading wildlife and ecology magazine. His books on wildlife include *The Sundarbans Inheritance*, *The Corbett Inheritance* and *The Periyar Inheritance*.

This texts deal with the dangers that are being faced by tigers in the Sunderbans area. His writing shows his empathy towards tigers troubled by human intrusions into forests.

November 1966 : I stood on the wooden Kakdwip jetty in knee-deep, muddy-brown water, transfixed as snake after yellow-striped, grey-green snake brushed against my legs and swam purposefully past. I thought then that they might have been checkered keelbacks, but more likely they were migrating dog-faced watersnakes, or common smooth watersnakes. I was in a wild land, where the powerful Hoogly river empties into the Bay of Bengal and felt overwhelmed by the sheer vastness of all that lay before me. My love affair with the Sundarbans and begun.

I grew up in Calcutta (now Kolkata), and during those impressionable years, the Sunderbans was always a dark, mysterious, forbidding place ‘where tigers live’.

transfixed : unable to move in shock

keelbacks : non-poisonous snakes

overwhelmed : shocked

impressionable : formative

forbidding : frightening

As a child, the only tigers I had ever seen were the sorry specimens housed in the Alipur zoo and, not surprisingly, fear and curiosity tinged with unadulterated awe etched wild images of the Sunderbans in my mind. Back then, even the thought of visiting a forest where tigers lived outside cages would make my pulse race. I loved the Hoogly river and recall endless boat trips and visits to the famous botanical gardens located on the river bank. As soon as I was old enough to buy myself a motorcycle, I found myself on pilgrimage, driving south along the 50 km road from Kolkata, past Diamond Harbour, past Kulpi, to Kakdwip, just short of Sagar Island in the Sundarbans.

Though Kakdwip fishermen informed me that crocodiles and sharks were common, I never saw either one staring long and hard at the open water and mudbanks that lined the estuary. “And what about the *bagh* (tiger)?” I could never resist asking. And the answer would come, “*Mama* (uncle)? Not here. Long time ago, he used to live here. Now he can only be found further east, towards East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).”

But I was close enough to dream.

After several trips and the passage of many years, my fascination for the Sundarbans has grown even stronger. There is something inexplicably awe-inspiring about the deep swamps...like they exist in a time before the advent of man. And I, like a moth to a flame, have constantly returned.

The moment you enter the tidal world, three colours dominate—blue skies, green mangroves and brown mud. The ‘sameness’ of the mangrove-lined mudbanks and the comforting throb of boat engines have a lulling effect as minutes turn to hours, then days in the waterworld of the Sundarbans. Yet, surprises keep jumping out at you from muddy shores that literally crawl with life.

Those who have not experienced a mangrove swamp of this dimension will find it difficult to comprehend what the Sundarbans has in store for them. It is a half-way world between land and sea, which often offers refuge to both terrestrial and marine species, with the former largely occupying the upper canopy of shrubs and trees, while the latter live underneath amidst the roots and mud. Mangrove plants themselves are ultra-adapted

tinged : mixed in small amount

unadulterated : pure

awe : a feeling of surprise and fear

etched : marked deep

inexplicably : unexplained

advent : coming

lulling : calming

refuge : shelter

to cope with salinity. To extract pure water from brine, their cells exert a higher osmotic pressure than seawater. Some species have ‘learnt’ to shed leaves loaded with salt. Other mangrove species actually possess salt glands and ‘hairs’ that help excrete salt. It is possible to understand the varying levels of salt concentration in the Sunderbans swamps by mapping the distribution of the various mangrove species. In addition, all mangrove fruit and shoots float to facilitate seed dispersal across the oceans. It is all quite magnificent!

Living in an age when technology puts hard information at our fingertip with frightening ease, we are acutely aware that some of the wonderful myths and legends that abound about the Sundarbans are often just that, and not always founded on reality. We are also keenly aware that the ‘invincible’ Sundarbans has almost reached the ‘tipping point’ where further damage by humans could push the ecosystem into an ecological tail spin, from which the tiger and its co-inhabitants may never recover.

Roughly one million hectares of the world’s present 15 million hectares of mangroves exist as the Sundarbans, spread across both India and Bangladesh. This is the largest, most bio-diverse mangrove ecosystem in the world.

This tangle of plants, channels and islands has sheltered Kolkata and Khulna from the fury of cyclonic winds in the Bay of Bengal for eons, yet few people are even minimally aware of how this mantle of protection governs their lives. Millions who live in the protective shadow of the Sundarbans are even less aware that their fish markets—melting pots of Bengali culture and culinary pride—are direct beneficiaries of the Sunderbans inheritance. Whenever mangroves have been destroyed, anywhere in the world, the fish catch has fallen.

Human inspiration, cultures, religions and philosophies are imbued by the oral history of this little-studied, ethereal swamp that is home to tigers, turtles, sharks, dolphins and migratory waterfowl. A staggering diversity of life forms in the Sundarbans, some awaiting discovery by science, find themselves in a pincer grip between deforestation originating from the north and rising seas (thanks to global climate change) to the south.

This veritable poetry of evolution is under serious threat. But nature has the power to repair and renew all...if we allow it to.

ultra : greatly

brine : saline water

invincible : undefeatable

tipping point : changing point

tail spin : a bad situation that is out of control

tangle : knot

eons : ages

culinary : related to cooking

fallen : decreased

imbued : filled with

ethereal : unearthly

staggering : huge

grip : hold

veritable : respectable



Making Writing Simple

J B Priestley

John Boynton Priestley (1894-1984) is a noted novelist, dramatist and essayist. He began his literary career as a journalist-critic. His famous novels include *The Good Companions* (1929) and *Bright Day* (1946). His notable plays are *Dangerous Corner* (1932) and *They Came to a City* (1943). He was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction.

Priestley, in this essay, focusses upon the positive affect of writing in simple English. He shows how difficult ideas may be brought to the common readers by using plain English. In this way, a piece of writing can appeal both common and scholarly readers.

At the end of a long talk with a youngish critic, a sincere fellow whose personality (though not his values) I respect, he started at me and then said slowly: "I don't understand you. Your talk is so much more complicated—subtle than your writing. Your writing always seems to me too simple." And I replied: "But I've spent as a virtue." There was now revealed to us the gulf between his generation and mine. He and his lot, who matured in the early twenties, wanted literature to be difficult. They grew up in revolt against the Mass Communication antics of their age. They did not want to share anything with the crowd. Writing that was hard to understand was like a password to their secret society. A good writer to them was one who made his readers toil and sweat. They admired extreme cleverness and solemnity poets like political cardinals, critics who came to literature like specialists summoned to a consultation at a king's bedside. A genuine author, an artist, as distinct from hacks who tried to please the mob, began with some simple thoughts and impressions and then proceeded to complicate his account of them, if only to keep away the fools. Difficulty was demanded: hence the vogue of Donne and Hopkins. Literature

critic : a person who expresses views about the good and bad qualities of books, music, etc

subtle : fine

solemnity : seriousness

hacks : writers engaged in low quality work

esoteric : to be understood by specific group of people

had to respond to something twisted, tormented, esoteric, in their own secret natures. In all this there was no pose; and here their elders went wrong about them. They could be accused not unjustly of narrowness and arrogance, but not of insincerity. They were desperately sincere in believing that the true artist must hide from the crowd behind a thicket of briars. They grew up terrified of the crowd, who in this new Mass Age seemed to them to be threatening all decent values. But I was born in the nineteenth century and my most impressionable years were those just before 1914. Rightsly or wrongly, I am not afraid of the crowd. And art to me is not synonymous with introversion. (I regard this as the great critical fallacy of our time.) Because I am what is called now ‘an intellectual’—and I am just as much ‘an intellectual’ as these younger chaps—I do not feel that there is a glass wall between me and the people in the nearest factories, shops and pubs. I do not believe that my thoughts and feelings are quite different from theirs. I perfect therefore a wide channel of communication. Deliberately aim at simplicity and want to write something that at a pinch I could read aloud in a bar-parlour. (And the time came when I was heard and understood in a thousand bar-parlours.) I do not pretend to be subtle and profound, but when I am at work I try to appear simpler than I really am. Perhaps I make it too easy for the reader, do too much of the toiling and sweating myself. No doubt I am altogether too obvious for the cleverest fellow, who wants to beat their brains against something hard and knotty. But then I am not impressed by this view of literature as a cerebral activity. Some contemporary critics would be better occupied solving chess problems and breaking down ciphers. They are no customers of mine, and I do not display my goods to catch their eye. But any man who thinks the kind of simplicity I attempt is easy should try it for himself, if only in his next letter to *The Times*. I find it much easier now than I used to do, but that is because I have kept this aim in view throughout years of hard work. I do not claim to have achieved even now a prose that is like an easy persuasive voice, preferably my own at its best; but this is what I have been trying to do for years, quite deliberately, and it is this that puzzled my friend, the youngish critic, who cannot help wanting something quite different. And this habit of simplification has its own little triumphs. Thus, I asked to pay birthday tribute, on the air, C G Jung, for whose work and personality I have a massive admiration. To explain Jung in thirteen-and-a-half minutes so that the ordinary listener could understand what the fuss was about! My friends said it could not be done. The psychologists said it could not be done. But I can reasonably claim, backed by first-class evidence, that I did it. It was a tough little task but when I had come to the end of it, I found, like honey in the rock, a taste of delight.

briars : thorny bushes

introversion : being shy and isolated

fallacy : mistake

ciphers : a symbolic system of writing



Through the Tunnel

Doris Lessing

Doris May Lessing (1919-2013) is a Zimbabwean-British novelist, poet, playwright, biographer and short story writer. Her famous novels include *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *The Fifth Child* (1985), *Alfred and Emily* (2008). Lessing's fiction is intensely autobiographical that emerged out of experience in Africa. In 2007, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2007.

The short story, 'Through the Tunnel', shows of a boy's intense desire and struggles to fulfil his aim. The story tends to explore the psyche of youths when they are up against challenges and obstacles.

Going to the shore on the first morning of the holiday, the young English boy stopped at a turning of the path and looked down at a wild and rocky bay, and then over to the crowded beach he knew so well from other years. His mother walked on in front of him, carrying a bright-striped bag in one hand. Her other arm, swinging loose, was very white in the sun. The boy watched that white, naked arm and turned his eyes, which had a frown behind them, toward the bay and back again to his mother. When she felt he was not with her, she swung around. "Oh, there you are, Jerry!" she said. She looked impatient, then smiled. "Why, darling, would you rather not come with me? Would you rather..." She frowned, conscientiously worrying over what amusements he might secretly be longing for which she had been too busy or too careless to imagine. He was very familiar with that anxious, apologetic smile. Contrition sent him running after her. And yet, as he looked back over his shoulder at the wild bay; and all morning, as he played on the safe beach, he was thinking of it.

Next morning, when it was time for the routine of swimming and sunbathing, his mother said, "Are you tired of the usual beach, Jerry? Would you like to go somewhere else?"

conscientiously : doing things carefully

contrition : repentance

“Oh no!” he said quickly, smiling at her out of that unfailing impulse of contrition—a sort of chivalry. Yet, walking down the path with her, he blurted out, “It’d to go and have a look at those rocks down there.”

She gave the ieda her attention. It was a wild-looking place, and there was no one there, but she said, “Of course, Jerry. When you’ve had enough come to the big beach. Or just go straight back to the villa, if you like.” She walked away, that bare arm, now slightly reddened from yesterday’s sun, swinging. And he almost ran after her again, feeling it unbearable the that she should go by hereself, but he did not. She was thinking, ‘Of course he’s old enough to be safe without me. Have I been keeping him too close? He mustn’t feel he ought to be with me. I must be careful.’ He was an only child, eleven years old. She was a widow. She was determined to be neither possessive nor lacking in devotion. She went worrying off to her beach.

As for Jerry, once he saw that his mother had gained her beach, he began the steep descent to the bay. From where he was, high up among red-brown rocks, it was a scoop of moving bluish fringed with white. As he went lower, he saw that it spread among small promontories and inlets of rough, sharp rock and the crisping, lapping surface showed stains of purple and darker blue. Finally, as he ran sliding and scraping down the last few yards, he saw an edge of white surf and the shallow, luminous movement of water over white sand, and beyond that, a solid, heavy blue.

He ran straight into the water and began swimming. He was a good swimming. He went our fast over the gleaming sand, over a middle region where rocks lay like discoloured monsters under the surface, and then he was in the real sea—a warm sea where irregular cold currents from the deep water shocked his limbs.

When he was so far out that he could look back not only on the little bay but past the promontory that was between it and the big beach, he floated on the buoyant surface and looked for his mother. There she was, a speck of yellow under an umbrella that looked like a slice of orange peel. He swam back to shore, relieved at being sure she was there, but all at once very lonely.

On the edge of a small cape that marked the side of the bay away from the promontory was a loose scatter of rocks. Above them, some boys were stripping off their clothes. They came running, naked, down to the rocks. The English boy swam towards them, and kept his distance at a stone’s throw. They were of that coast, all of them burnedsmooth dark

possessive : demanding total attention

promontories : long narrow piece of land going out into the sea

inlets : narrow strips of water entering land

luminous : shining

buoyant : able to float

cape : piece of land surrounded by water on three sides

brown, and speaking a language he did not understand. To be with them, of them, was a craving that filled his whole body. He swam a little closer; they turned and watched him with narrowed, alert dark eyes. Then one smiled and waved. It was enough.

In a minute, he had swum in and was on the rocks beside them, smiling with a desperate, nervous supplication. They shouted cheerful greetings at him, and then, as he preserved his nervous, uncomprehending smile, they understood that he was a foreigner strayed from his own beach, and they proceeded to forget him. But he was happy. He was with them.

They began diving again and again from a high point into a well of blue sea between rough, pointed rocks. After they had dived and come up, they swam around, hauled themselves up and waited their turn to dive again. They were big boys—men to Jerry. He dived and they watched him, and when he swam around to take his place, they made way for him. He felt he was accepted and he dived again, carefully, proud of himself.

Soon the biggest of the boys poised himself, shot down into the water and did not come up. The others stood about, watching. Jerry, after waiting for the sleek brown head to appear, let out a yell of warning; they looked at him idly and turned their eyes back towards the water. After a long time, the boy came up on the other side of a big dark rock, letting the air out of his lungs in a spluttering gasp and a shout of triumph. Immediately, the rest of them dived in. One moment, the morning seemed full of chattering boys; the next, the air and the surface of the water were empty. But through the heavy blue, dark shapes could be seen moving and groping.

Jerry dived, shot past the school of underwater swimmers, saw a black wall of rock looming at him, touched it and bobbed up at once to the surface, where the wall was a low barrier he could see across. There was no one visible; under him, in the water, the dim shapes of the swimmers had—disappeared. Then one, and then another of the boys came up on the far side of the barrier of rock, and he understood that they had swum through some gap or hole in it. He plunged down again. He could see nothing through the stinging salt water but the blank rock. When he came up, the boys were all on the diving rock, preparing to attempt the feat again. And now, in a panic of failure, he yelled up, in English, “Look at me! Look!” and he began splashing and kicking in the water like a foolish dog.

They looked down gravely, frowning. He knew the frown. At moments of failure, when he clowned to claim his mother’s attention, it was with just this grave, embarrassed

supplication : prayer

poised : balanced

feat : achievement

bonjour : good morning or good day (French)

merci : thank you (French)

au revoir : goodbye or until we meet again (French)

monsieur : mister or sir (French)

waggled : moving up and down or from side to side

inspection that she rewarded him. Through his hot shame, feeling the pleading grin on his face like a scar that he could never remove, he looked up at the group of big brown boys on the rock and shouted, “Bonjour! Merci! Au revoir! Monsieur, monsieur!” while he hooked his fingers round his ears and waggled them.

Water surged into his mouth; he choked, sank, came up. The rock, lately weighed with boys, seemed to rear up out of the water as their weight was removed. They were flying down past him, now, into the water; the air was full of falling bodies. Then the rock was empty in the hot sunlight. He counted one, two, three...

At fifty, he was terrified. They must all be drowning beneath him, in the watery caves of the rock! At a hundred, he stared around him at the empty hillside, wondering if he should yell for help. He counted faster, faster, to hurry them up, to bring them to the surface quickly, to drown them quickly—anything rather than the terror of counting on and on into the blue emptiness of the morning. And then, at a hundred and sixty, the water beyond the rock was full of boys blowing like brown whales. They swam back to the shore without a look at him.

He climbed back to the diving rock and sat down, feeling the hot roughness of it under his things. The boys were gathering up their bits of clothing and running off along the shore to another promontory. They were leaving to get away from him. He cried openly, fists in his eyes. There was no one to see him, and he cried himself out.

It seemed to him that a long time had passed, and he swam out to where he could see his mother. Yes, she was still there, a yellow spot under an orange umbrella. He swam back to the big rock, climbed up and dived into the blue pool among the fanged and angry boulders. Down he went, until he touched the wall of rock again. But the salt was so painful in his eyes that he could not see.

He came to the surface, swam to shore and went back to the villa to wait for his mother. Soon she walked slowly up the path, swinging her striped bag, the flushed, naked arm dangling beside her. “I want some swimming goggles,” he panted, defiant and beseeching.

She gave him a patient, inquisitive look as she said casually, “Well, of course, darling.” “But now, now, now! I must have them this minute and no other time.” He nagged and pestered until she went with him to a shop. As soon as she had bought the goggles, he grabbed them from her hand as if she were going to claim them for herself, and was off, running down the steep path to the bay.

Jerry swam out to the big barrier rock, adjusted the goggles and dived. The impact of

fanged : sharp edged rocks.

beseeching : requesting

pestered : annoyed

the water broke the rubber-enclosed vacuum and the goggles came loose. He understood that he must swim down to the base of the rock from the surface of the water.

He fixed the goggles right and firm, filled his lungs and floated, face down, on the water.

Now he could see. It was as if he had eyes of a different kind—fish-eyes that showed everything clear and delicate and wavering in the bright water.

Under him, six or seven feet down, was a floor of perfectly clean, shining white sand, rippled firm and hard by the tides. Two greyish shapes steered there, like long, rounded pieces of wood or slate. They were fish. He was them nose towards each other, poised motionless, make a dart forward, swerve off and come around again. It was like a water dance. A few inches above them, the water sparkled as if sequins were dropping through it. Fish again—myriads of minute fish, the length of his fingernail, were drifting through the water, and in a moment he could feel the innumerable tiny touches of them against his limbs. It was like swimming in flaked silver. The great rock the big boys had swum through rose sheer out of the white sand, black, tufted lightly with greenish weed.

He could see no gap in it. He swam down to its base.

Again and again he rose, took a big chestful of air and went down. Again and again he groped over the surface of the rock, feeling it, almost hugging it in the desperate need to find the entrance. And then, once, while he was clinging to the back wall, his knees came up and he shot his feet out forward and they met no obstacle. He had found the hole.

He gained the surface, clambered about the stones that littered the barrier rock until he found a big one, and, with this in his arms, let himself down over the side of the rock.

He dropped, with the weight, straight to the sandy floor. Clinging tight to the anchor of stone, he on his side and looked in under the dark shelf at the place where his feet had gone. He could see the hole. It was an irregular, dark gap, but he could not see deep into it.

He let go of his anchor, clung with his hands to the edges of the hole and tried to push himself in.

He got his head in, found his shoulders jammed, moved them in sidewise, and was inside as far as his waist. He could see nothing ahead. Something soft and clammy touched his mouth, he saw a dark frond moving against the greyish rock and panic filled him. He thought of octopuses, of clinging weed. He pushed himself out backward and caught a glimpse, as he retreated, of a harmless tentacle of seaweed drifting in the mouth of the tunnel. But it was enough. He reached the sunlight, swam to shore and lay on the diving

sequins : small, shiny pieces of metal, used for decoration

myriads : thousands

frond : a long sharp-edged leaf

rock. He looked down into the blue well of water. He knew he must find his way through that cave, or hole, or tunnel, and out the other side.

First, he thought, he must learn to control his breathing. He let himself down into the water with another big stone in his arms, so that he could lie effortlessly on the bottom of the sea. He counted. One, two, three. He counted steadily. He could hear the movement of blood in his chest. Fifty-one, fifty-two...His chest was hurting. He let go of the rock and went up into the air. He saw that the sun was low. He rushed to the villa and found his mother at her supper. She said only, "Did you enjoy yourself?" and he said "Yes."

All night, the boy dreamed of the water-filled cave in the rock, and as soon as breakfast was over he went to the bay.

That night, his nose bled badly. For hours he had been underwater, learning to hold his breath, and now he felt weak and dizzy. His mother said, "I shouldn't overdo things, darling, if I were you."

That day and the next, Jerry exercised his lungs as if everything, the whole of his life, all that he would become, depended upon it. And again his nose bled at night, and his mother insisted on his coming with her the next day. It was a torment to him to waste a day of his careful self-training, but he stayed with her on that other beach, which now seemed a place for small children, a place where his mother might lie safe in the sun. It was not his beach. He did not ask for permission, on the following day, to go to his beach.

He went, before his mother could consider the complicated rights and wrongs of the matter. A day's rest, he discovered, had improved his count by ten. The big boys had made the passage while he counted a hundred and sixty. He had been counting fast, in his fright.

Probably now, if he tried, he could get through that long tunnel, but he was not going to try yet. A curious, most unchildlike persistence, a controlled impatience, made him wait. In the meantime, he lay underwater on the white sand, littered now by stones he had brought down from the upper air, and studied the entrance to the tunnel. He knew every jut and corner of it, as far as it was possible to see. It was as if he already felt its sharpness about his shoulders.

He sat by the clock in the villa, when his mother was not near, and checked his time. He was incredulous and then proud to find he could hold his breath without strain for two minutes. The words 'two minutes', authorised by in clock, brought the adventure that was so necessary to him close.

In another four days, his mother said casually one morning, they must go home. On the day before they left, he would do it. He would do it if it killed him, he said definitely to himself. But two days before they were to leave—a day of triumph when he increased his count by fifteen—his nose bled so badly that he turned dizzy and had to lie limply over the big rock like a bit of seaweed, watching the thick red blood flow on to the rock

and trickle slowly down to the sea. He was frightened. Supposing he turned dizzy in the tunnel?

Supposing he died there, trapped? Supposing—his head went around, in the hot sun, and he almost gave up. He thought he would return to the house and lie down, and next summer, perhaps, when he had another year's growth in him—then he would go through the hole.

But even after he had made the decision, or thought he had, he found himself sitting up on the rock and looking down into the water, and he knew that now, this moment when his nose had only just stopped bleeding, when his head was still sore and throbbing—this was the moment when he would try. If he did not do it now, he never would. He was trembling with fear that he would not go, and he was trembling with horror at that long, long tunnel under the rock, under the sea. Even in the open sunlight, the barrier rock seemed very wide and very heavy; tons of rock pressed down on where he would go. If he died there, he would lie until one day—perhaps not before next year—those big boys would swim into it and find it blocked.

He put on his goggles, fitted them tight, tested the vacuum. His hands were shaking. Then he closed the biggest stone he could carry and slipped over the edge of the rock until half of him was in the cool, enclosing water and half in the hot sun. He looked up once at the empty sky, filled his lungs once, twice and then sank fast to the bottom with the stone. He let it go and began to count. He took the edges of the hole in his hands and drew himself into it, wriggling his shoulders in sidewise as he remembered he must, kicking himself along with his feet.

Soon he was clear inside. He was in a small rock-bound hole filled with yellowish-grey water. The water was pushing him up against the roof. The roof was sharp and pained his back. He pulled himself along with his hands—fast, fast—and used his legs as levers. He knocked against something; a sharp pain dizzied him. Fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two... He was without light, and the water seemed to press upon him with the weight of rock. Seventy-one, seventy-two... There was no strain on his lungs. He felt like an inflated balloon, his lungs were so light and easy, but his head was pulsing.

He was being continually pressed against the sharp roof, which felt simy as well as sharp. Again he thought of octopuses, and wondered if the tunnel might be filled with weed that could tangle him. He gave himself a panicky, convulsive kick forward, ducked his head and swam. His feet and hands moved freely, as if in open water. The hold must have widened out. He thought he must be swimming fast, and he was frightened of banging his head if the tunnel narrowed.

A hundred, a hundred and one... The water yielded. Victory filled him. His lungs were beginning to hurt. A few more strokes and he would be out. He was counting wildly; he

throbbing : regular rhythmic beating

wriggling : twisting one's body

pulsing : beating with regular movements

convulsive : sudden action

said a hundred and fifteen, and then, a long time later, a hundred and fifteen again. The water was a clear jewel-green all around him. Then he saw, above his head, a crack running up through the rock. Sunlight was falling through it, showing the clean dark rock of the tunnel, a single mussel shell and darkness ahead.

He was at the end of what he could do. He looked up at the crack as if it were filled with air and not water, as if he could put his mouth to it to draw in air. A hundred and fifteen, he heard himself say inside his head—but he had said that long ago. He must go on into the blackness ahead, or he would drown. His head was swelling, his lungs cracking. A hundred and fifteen, a hundred and fifteen pounded through his head, and he feebly clutched at rocks in the dark, pulling himself forward, leaving the brief space of sunlit water behind.

He felt he was dying. He was no longer quite conscious. He struggled on in the darkness between lapses into unconsciousness. An immense, swelling pain filled his head, and then the darkness cracked with an explosion of green light. His hands, groping forward, met nothing, and his feet, kicking back, propelled him out into the open sea.

He drifted to the surface, his face turned up to the air. He was gasping like a fish. He felt he would sink now and drown; he could not swim the few feet back to the rock. Then he was clutching it and pulling himself up on it. He lay face down, gasping. He could see nothing but a red-veined, clotted dark. His eyes must have burst, he thought; they were full of blood. He tore off his goggles and a gout of blood went into the sea. His nose was bleeding, and the blood had filled the goggles.

He scooped up handfuls of water from the cool, salty sea, to splash on his face, and did not know whether it was blood or salt water he tasted. After a time, his heart quieted, his eyes cleared, and he sat up. He could see the local boys diving and playing half a mile away. He did not want them. He wanted nothing but to get back home and lie down.

In a short while, Jerry swam to shore and climbed slowly up the path to the villa. He flung himself on his bed and slept, waking at the sound of feet on the path outside. His mother was coming back. He rushed to the bathroom, thinking she must not see his face with bloodstains or tearstains on it. He came out of the bathroom and met her as she walked into the villa, smiling, her eyes lighting up. “Have a nice morning?” she asked, laying her head on his warm brown shoulder a moment.

“Oh, yes, thank you,” he said.

“You look a bit pale.” And then, sharp and anxious. “How did you bang your head?”

unconsciousness : unable to use senses

swelling : increasing

“Oh, just banged it,” he told her.

She looked at him closely. He was strained. His eyes were glazed-looking. She was worried. And then she said to herself, “Oh, don’t fuss! Nothing can happen. He can swim like a fish.”

They sat down to lunch together.

“Mummy,” he said, “I can stay under water for two minutes, three minutes, at least.” It came bursting out of him.

“Can you, darling?” she said. “Well, I shoudn’t overdo it. I don’t think you ought to swim any more today.”

She was ready for a battle of wills, but he gave in at once. It was no longer of the least importance to go to the bay.

Poetry



The Stolen Boat

William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is a noted English Romantic poet. Along with his poet friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge he wrote *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) that paved the way for the Romantic Movement in English Literature. His poems reflect his deep love for nature. His famous poetical works includes *The Prelude*, *The Solitary Reaper*, *The Daffodils*.

‘The Stolen Boat’, taken from Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, records his experience of a boat ride as a boy. The poem has a deep philosophical message.

One summer evening (surely I was led by her)

I went alone into a Shepherd’s Boat,

A Skiff that to a Willow tree was tied

Within a rocky Cave, its usual home.

‘Twas by the shores of Patterdale, a Vale

Wherein I was a Stranger, thither come

A School-boy Traveller, at the Holidays.

Forth rambled from the Village Inn alone

No sooner had I sight of this small Skiff,

Discover’d thus by unexpected chance,

skiff : small boat

vale : valley (poetic form)

thither : there (old usage)

rombled : walked for enjoyment

tether : tie to a post

26 | Rhapsody

Than I unloos'd her tether and embark'd.
The moon was up, the Lake was shining clear
Among the hoary mountains; from the Shore
I push'd, and struck the oars and struck again
In cadence, and my little Boat mov'd on
Even like a Man who walks with stately step
Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure; not without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my Boat move on,
Leaving behind her still on either side
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. A rocky Steep uprose
Above the Cavern of the Willow tree
And now, as suited one who proudly row'd
With his best skill, I fix'd a steady view
Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
The bound of the horizon, for behind
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin Pinnacle; lustily
I dipp'd my oars into the silent Lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my Boat
Went heaving through the water, like a Swan;
When from behind that craggy Steep, till then
The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,

embark'd : started

hoary : grey or white

cadence : rhythmic pattern of sounds or movements

cavern : large cave

pinnacle : a light boat

As if with voluntary power instinct,
 Uprear'd its head. I struck, and struck again
 And, growing still in stature, the huge Cliff
 Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
 With measur'd motion, like a living thing,
 Strode after me. With trembling hands I turn'd,
 And through the silent water stole my way
 Back to the Cavern of the Willow tree.
 There, in her mooring-place, I left my Bark,
 And, through the meadows homeward went, with grave
 And serious thoughts; and after I had seen
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
 Work'd with a dim and undetermin'd sense
 Of unknown modes of being; in my thoughts
 There was a darkness, call it solitude,
 Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes
 Of hourly objects, images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
 But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
 Like living men mov'd slowly through the mind
 By day and were the trouble of my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!
 That giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion! not in vain,
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn

mooring-place : anchoring place
dawn : early morning

28 | Rhapsody

Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human Soul,
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature, purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.



You Who Never Arrived

Rainer Maria Rilke

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) is one of the finest lyric poets in the German language. He expressed his ideas through intellectual symbols. His famous poetical works includes *Life and Songs* (1894), *Duino Elegies* (1922), *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1922). His most famous prose work is *Letters to a Young Poet* (1929).

This poem is about unreciprocated love of the speaker for his beloved. The poem has an undertone of sadness.

You who never arrived
in my arms, Beloved, who were lost
from the start,
I don't even know what songs
would please you. I have given up trying
to recognise you in the surging wave of
the next moment. All the immense
images in me—the far-off, deeply-felt
landscape, cities, towers and bridges, and
unsuspected turns in the path,
and those powerful lands that were once
pulsing with the life of the gods—
all rise within me to mean
you, who forever elude me.

unsuspected : undoubted
elude : escape

30 | Rhapsody

You, beloved, who are all
the gardens I have ever gazed at,
longing. An open window
in a country house—, and you almost
stepped out, pensive, to meet me.
Streets that I chanced upon,—
you had just walked down them and vanished.
And sometimes, in a shop, the mirrors
were still dizzy with your presence and,
startled, gave back my too-sudden image.
Who knows? Perhaps the same
bird echoed through both of us
yesterday, separate, in the evening...



Snake

D H Lawrence

David Herbert Richards Lawrence (1885-1930) is an English novelist, poet, playwright, essayist, critic and painter. His famous poetical works include *Anxiety*, *Irony* and *Sickness*. In 1909, Ford Max Ford published a number of Lawrence's poem in the 'English Review'.

The poet in 'Snake' notices a snake that has come to drink water. The poet builds upon the theme of social segmentation by skillful uses of symbols.

A snake come to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.
He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body, Silently.
Someone was before me at my water-trough,

water-trough : container to eat or drink from

carob-tree : flowering evergreen shrub

fissure : deep crack

slackness : looseness

32 | Rhapsody

And I, like a second comer, waiting.
He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.
The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.
And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.
But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my
 water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?
Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him? Was it perversity, that I longed
 to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.
And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!
And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid, But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.
He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,

mused : thought deeply

And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
 Seeming to lick his lips,
 And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
 And slowly turned his head,
 And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
 Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
 And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.
 And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
 And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,
 A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horried
 black hole,
 Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
 Overcame me now his back was turned.
 I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
 I picked up a clumsy log
 And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.
 I think it did not hit him,
 But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste.
 Writhed like lightning, and was gone
 Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
 At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.
 And immediately I regretted it.

writhed : twisted movement of the body

paltry : cheap

34] Rhapsody

I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.
And I thought of the albatross
And I wished he would come back, my snake.
For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.
And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

exile: banishment

expiate : to accept punishment



The Monkey and the Crocodile

Vikram Seth

Vikram Seth (1952-) is an Indian poet, novelist, biographer and memoirist. His notable works include *Mappings* (1980), *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1990) and *Beastly Tales* (1991). He prefers the ballad form in writing poetry.

Seth, in this poem, deals with the story about the crocodile and the monkey, and the former's wish to get the heart of the latter, to please his wife.

On the Ganga's greenest isle
Lived Kuroop the crocodile—
Greeny-brown with gentle grin,
Stubby legs and scaly skin,
He would view with tepid eyes
Prey below a certain size
But when a substantial dish
Dolphin, turtle, fatter fish
Swam across his field of view,
He would test the water too.

isle : island (poetic form)

stubby : short and fat

tepid : unenthusiastic

polliwog : tadpole

36 | Rhapsody

Out he'd glide, a floating log,
Silent as a polliwog
Nearer, nearer, till his prey
Swam a single length away;
Then he'd lunge with smiling head,
Grab, and snap, and rip it dead
Then (prime pleasure of his life)
Drag the carcass to his wife,
Lay it humbly at her feet,
Eat a bit and watch her eat.

All along the river-bank
Mango trees stood rank on rank,
And his monkey friend would throw
To him as he swam below
Mangoes gold and ripe and sweet
As a special summer treat.
“Crocodile, your wife, I know
Hungers after mangoes so
That she'd pine and weep and swoon,
Mango-less in burning June.”
Then Kuroop the crocodile,
Gazing upwards with a smile,
Thus addressed his monkey friend—
“Dearest monkey, in the end,
Not the fruit, but your sweet love,
Showered on us from above,

lunge : make a sudden powerful forward movement

Constant through the changing years,
Slakes her griefs and dries her tears.”

(This was only partly true.

She liked love, and mangoes too.)

One day, Mrs Crocodile,
Gorged on mangoes, with a smile
Sad, yet tender, turned and said—
“Scalykins, since we’ve been wed,
You’ve fulfilled my every wish
Dolphins, turtles, mangoes, fish
But I now desire to eat,
As an anniversary treat,
Something sweeter still than fruit,
Sugar-cane or sugar-root—
I must eat that monkey’s heart.”
“What?” Well, darling, for a start,
He has been so kind to me;
Think how sweet his heart must be.
Then, the mango pulp he’s eaten
Year on year must serve to sweeten
Further yet each pore and part,
Concentrating in his heart.”

“Darling, he’s my friend.” “I know;
And he trusts you. Therefore go
Go at once and fatch him here.

gorged : over-ate

38 | Rhapsody

Oh, my breath grows faint, I fear...”

“Let me fan you—it’s the heat”

“No—I long for something sweet.

Every fruit tastes bitter now.

I must eat his heart somehow.

Get him here, my love, or I,

Filled with bitterness, will die.”

When the monkey saw Kuroop

He let out a joyful whoop,

Jumped from branch to branch with pleasure,

Flinging down the golden treasure—

“Eat, my friend, and take your wife

Nectar from the tree of life

Mangoes ripe and mangoes rare,

Mangoes, mangoes everywhere.”

Then Kuroop the crocodile

Gazed up with a gentle smile—

“Monkey, you are far too kind,

But today, if you don’t mind,

Dine with both of us, and meet

Her whose life you’ve made so sweet.

When you meet her you will see

Why she means so much to me.

When she takes you by the paw

Something at your heart will gnaw.

When you gaze into her eyes

You will enter Paradise.
Let us show our gratitude—
Share our friendship and our food.”
“Dear Kuroop, dear crocodile,
You swim from isle to isle.
I can leap from limb to limb,
But, my friend, I cannot swim.
And your island’s away.
If I get a boat some day...”
“Nonsense; jump on my back.
You’re no heavier than my sack
Filled with mangoes to the crown.”
So the monkey clambered down,
Bearing mangoes, and delighted
With such warmth to be invited.
They were just halfway across
When the crocodile said—”Toss
All those mangoes in the water.”
“But these fruit are all I’ve brought her.”
“You yourself are gift enough,”
Said Kuroop in accents gruff.
“Ah, my wife’s not so voracious
And I’m certain that today
She won’t eat fruit. By the way,
Tell me what your breast contains.

voracious : eating large amounts of food

Mango nectar fills your veins.
 Does it also fill your heart?"
 Said the monkey with a start—
 "What a very curious question."
 "Well, she might get indigestion
 If it's too rich, I suspect."
 "What?" "Your heart." "My heart?" "Correct."
 "Now," Kuroop said with a frown,
 "Which would you prefer—to drown
 In the Ganga or to be
 Gutted by my wife and me?
 I will let you choose your end.
 After all, you are my friend."
 Then he slowly started sinking.
 "Wait," the monkey said, "I'm thinking.
 Death by drowning, death by slaughter
 Death by land or death by water
 I'd face either with a smile
 For your sake, O crocodile!
 But your wife's felicity
 That's what means the most to me.
 Noble lady! How she'll freeze,
 Dumb with sorrow, when she sees,
 Having prised my ribs apart,
 That my breast contains no heart.
 If you had not rushed me so,
 I'd have found the time to go
 To the hollow where I keep

gutted : destroyed

felicity : happiness

prised : forced to separate

Heart and liver when I sleep,
 Half my brain, a fingernail,
 Cufflinks, chutney and a spare tail.
 I had scarcely worken up
 When you asked me here to sup.
 Why did you not speak before?
 I'd have fetched them from the shore."

Now Kuroop the crocodile
 Lost, then quickly found, his smile.
 "How my sweetheart will upbraid me!
 Monkey, monkey you must aid me."
 "Well...", the monkey placed his paw
 Thoughtfully upon his jaw
 "Well, although the day is hot
 And I'd really rather not
 We could go back, fetch my heart,
 Check its sweetness and depart."

So the crocodile once more
 Swam the monkey back to shore,
 And, with tears of thankfulness
 Mingled with concern and stress,
 Worried what his wife would say
 With regard to his delay,
 Begged his friend— "Come back at once."

upbraid : angry

double-dunce : very foolish

42 | Rhapsody

“I’m not such a double-dunce,”
Yelled the monkey from on high;
“Tell your scaly wife to try
Eating her own heart
If she has one for a start.
Mine’s been beating in my breast
Night and day without rest.
Tell her that and as for you,
Here’s my parting gift.” He threw
Mangoes squishy, rotten, dead
Down upon the reptile’s head,
Who, with a regretful smile,
Sat and eyed him for a while.

Class XII

Prose



Michelangelo

Gulzar

Gulzar (1934 -) born as Sampooran Singh Kalra, is an eminent Indian short story writer, poet, lyricist and film director. In his short stories even the commonplace assumes a larger-than-life yet real identity of its own and something which is an extraordinary incident or an experience is narrated with a kind of unusual effortlessness that it appears like an everyday occurrence. His short stories are mostly written in Hindi. Gulzar's famous short story collections include *My Favourite Stories: Boskys Panchatantra* (2013), *Half a Rupee Stories* (2013). Besides winning the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration in 2012, Gulzar has won many national and international film awards including the Dada Saheb Phalke Award.

Originally written in Hindi, this story was translated into English by Alok Bhalla. The story focusses upon Michelangelo when he is searching to paint the scene of *The Last Supper* to complete painting the Sistine. The story has an ironical twist at the end.

Michelangelo had once again been away from Florence for five years. He was beginning to tire of Rome. He could not find a place for his painting in Rome. The faces there did not seem to have any character—they all looked alike. That is what he told Pope Julius II.

“What do you see in my face?” Julius asked.

“A burning candle.”

After a moment's pause, Julius smiled. He was used to Michel's caustic comments. “Yes, I understand what you mean. I am like any of those thousand candles which people light on the altar of the cathedral when they are in trouble.”

Michel remained silent.

“I am surprised that in this vast creation of God, where no face resembles another, you can’t find a face for your painting—can’t find a model. During the last four months, the face of Judas...”

Before he could finish his sentence, Michelangelo had walked out of St Peter’s.

Pope Julius was familiar with Angelo’s moods. That was Angelo’s fifth year in Rome. For five years, he had been painting scenes from the Old and New Testaments on the dome and the walls of the Sistine Chapel. And now that it was nearing completion, Julius did not want to spoil his relationship with Angelo. Julius remembered that when Michelangelo had carved an image of Jesus in wood for the Church of the Holy Spirit, his model had been a young man who had suddenly died in the monastery. Because of Angelo, they had to delay lifting his coffin for twelve hours.

Michelangelo was not like Bramante who created figures according to rules. That is why the shape and form of Bramante’s characters were always the same...they seemed to belong to the same family. He had dismissed Bramante and once again made peace with Angelo.

Five years ago, when Michelangelo returned to Rome, he used to lie under the dome St Peter’s for hours and mumble something to himself. Julius began to have doubts about his mental stability. Once, when Julius quietly walked up to him, he heard him reciting verses from the Bible.

“What are you doing?”

“O!” Michelangelo turned to look at the Pope with a start. “I am unifying the verses from the Bible.”

Julius understood him. He was looking for faces in the white-washed brick walls. Jesus’s face, Mary’s face, Judas’s face. The shapes of their bodies were visible, but their faces were hidden in the verses of the Bible.

Michelangelo had drawn many sketches of Gabriel’s face on paper. Julius had asked, “How did you draw Gabriel’s face? He doesn’t belong to this world.”

“I heard his voice. In the Old Testament.”

“Then you must have also heard the voice of God?” Julius had asked jokingly.

“I have heard His silence.”

That had convinced Julius that he had chosen the right artist. “He’s an eccentric,” he had told the Vatican Committee, “but only he can paint the Sistine Chapel.”

Michelangelo had chosen his mother as the model for Mary. He had done so on the day he had seen her carry two drums of water hung on a bamboo across her shoulder. Only a woman like her could have carried the weight of the son of God in her womb.

His mother had lit a fire and was heating water for his father's bath. He had closely watched her face glowing in the light of the fire—radiant, warm, brilliant like gold, and made lots of sketches of her face on paper.

That night, as she sat near the stove, he had asked her, “Why didn't you give birth to Jesus?”

“Because I met your father. Look at him lying there inebriated. Go and look after him.”

Angelo had immediately made a sketch of his stupefied father could see what he looked like when he was drunk. Beneath it he had written, “Father, if you hadn't been like this, Mother could have been Mary.”

His mother had liked the sketch very much, she had always kept it with her. “Why don't you carve in image of your father like this. He looks so innocent.”

He had always evaded her by saying, “I can't find that piece of marble in which I can see father's face.”

That had happened a long time ago. They used to live in Bologna in those days, the pub at the corner of the lane was her favourite haunt. It was also his father's favourite haunt. His father used to drink inside, while he used to take his bottle and sit outside. He used to frequently buy peanuts from a vendor who used to sit across from him. Everytime the vendor weighted peanuts, a few always rolled out of his basket and fell on the ground. Each time a small naked boy standing nearby would pick them up, put one nut in his mouth and the rest back in the basket, and then wait for the next customer. Michelangelo used to buy peanuts just to watch that performance. When he made the statue of the Madonna of Bruggis, he used the boy as the model for the naked baby Jesus.

Soon after, the Pope first asked Michelangelo to paint scenes from the Old and New Testaments on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo had gone to Rome to meet the Pope because every painter and sculptor in Italy was ready to sacrifice his body and soul to be awarded the commission. It would be enough to win him immortality. But for Michelangelo the mere promise of immortality was not enough, he had laid down some conditions for his mortal life here. He needed money to buy marble. Pope Julius had promised him some, but had later refused to pay him.

“Why do you love stone so much? Why don't you love colours?”

inebriated : intoxicated

stupefied : surprised

“Colours lose their distinctiveness when used with other colours. They change. Marble doesn’t change.”

Now he was as tired of colours as he was Rome.

He only had one panel of the Chapel left to paint—*The Last Supper*, but he drew a blank whenever he tried to imagine one face—the face of Judas the thirteenth disciple of Jesus, who had betrayed his saviour to the Romans for thirty pieces of silver. He had helped to crucify him.

Julius grew more and more impatient.

Michelangelo spent days and days making sketches. He searched through his old drawings and worked on them, but no face satisfied him.

And then suddenly, one day he found Judas in a small, dirty pub in Rome. His eyes had unnatural glitter, he was restless and he spat again and again. His body had already begun to sag with age. He spoke so fast that words seemed to fall out of his mouth like coins from a torn pocket. He had gone to Michelangelo to beg for a dinar, but had ended up sharing a bottle with him. When Michelangelo came out of the pub, he saw the man ask someone else for two dinars.

Michelangelo made a deal with the man and took him to the chapel. He told him what he wanted. He wanted him to model for Judas. That would make the man immortal. Michelangelo lifted up the drapes to show him the walls and the ceiling. The man looked at everything with awe. He asked for a large sum of money in exchange for his consent. Angelo agreed to pay him. Then the man asked for an advance which Michelangelo gave. The man came regularly for a few days. Angelo used to call him to the Chapel for sittings. One day, as the man was looking through some old sketches, he asked Michelangelo about the sketches of the child he had made in Bologna.

“I used to live in Bologna years ago. I used this face to paint Jesus as a child.”

“Do you remember his name?”

“Yes...Marsoleni.”

That man smiled. He rolled up his sleeve and showed him a name tattooed on his arm: Marsoleni.

“I am the same Jesus, whom you are now painting as Judas.”



Debut on Stage

Charlie Chaplin

Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) is an iconic figure era in the silent film era. He is an actor, director, composer and writer. Chaplin's famous film include The Kid, The Great Dictator, Modern Times. He wrote My Autobiography (1964).) He championed the causes of democracy and human values. He received Knighthood in 1975.

This autobiographical extract reveals Chaplin's first experience on the stage as a child. The author gives the readers a glimpse of his life in the text.

I was born on 16 April 1889, at eight o'clock at night, in East Lane, Walworth. Soon after, we moved to West Square, St George's Road, Lambeth. According to Mother my world was a happy one. Our circumstances were moderately comfortable; we lived in three tastefully furnished rooms. One of my early recollections was that each night before Mother went to the theatre, Sydney and I were lovingly tucked up in a comfortable bed and left in the care of the housemind. In my world of three and a half years, all things were possible; if Sydney, who was four years older than, I could perform legerdemain and swallow a coin and make it come out through the back of his head, I could do the same so I swallowed a halfpenny and Mother was obliged to send for a doctor.

Every night, after she came home from the theatre, it was her custom to leave delicacies on the table for Sydney and me to find in the morning—a slice of Neapolitan cake or candies—with the understanding that we were not to make a noise in the morning, as she usually slept late.

Mother was a soubrette on the variety stage, a mignonnette in her late twenties, with fair complexion, violet-blue eyes and long light-brown hair that she could sit upon. Sydney and

legerdemain : cheating

soubrette : female comedy character

mignonnette : small and delicate

I adored our mother. Though she was not an exceptional beauty, we thought her divine-looking. Those who knew her told me in later years that she was dainty and attractive and had compelling charm. She took pride in dressing us for Dunday excursions, Sydney in an Eton suit with long trousers and me in a blue velvet one with blue gloves to match. Such occasions were orgies of smugness, as we ambled along the Kennington Road.

London was sedate in those days. The tempo was sedate; even the horse-drawn tram-cars along Westminster Bridge Road went at a sedate pace and turned sedately on a revolving table at the terminal near the bridge. In Mother's prosperous days we also lived in Westminster Bridge Road. Its atmosphere was gay and friendly with attractive shops, restaurants and music halls. The fruit-shop on the corner facing the Bridge was a galaxy of colour, with its neatly arranged pyramids of oranges, apples, pears and bannas outside, in contrast to the solemn grey Houses of Parliament directly across the river.

This was the London of my childhood, of my moods and awakenings: memories of Lambeth in the spring; of trivial incidents and things; of riding with Mother on top of a horse-bus trying to touch passing lilac-trees—of the many coloured bus tickets, orange, blue, pink and green, that bestrewed the pavement where the trams and buses stopped—of rubicund flower-girls at the corner of Westminster Bridge, making gay boutonnieres, their adroit fingers manipulating tinsel and quivering fern—of the humid odour of freshly watered roses that affected me with a vague sadness—of melancholy Sundays and pale-faced parents and their children escorting toy windmills and coloured balloons over Westminster Bridge; and the maternal penny steamers that softly lowered their funnels as they glided under it. From such trivia I believe my soul was born.

Then objects in our sitting-room that affected my senses: Mother's life-size painting of Nell Gwyn, which I disliked; the long-necked decanters on our sideboard, which depressed me, and the small round music-box with its enamelled surface depicting angels on clouds,

orgies : many actions

ambled : walked slowly

sedate : calm

bestrewed : scattered

rubicund : red colour

boutonnieres : flower garland worn by men

adroit : skillful

decanters : containers

inordinate : unusual

which both pleased and baffed me. But my sixpenny toy chair bought from the gypsies I loved, because it gave me an inordinate sense of possession.

Memories of epic moments: a visit to the Royal Aquarium, viewing its side-shows with Mother, watching ‘She’, the live head of a lady smiling in flames, the sixpenny lucky dip, Mother lifting me up to a large sawdust barrel to pick a surprise packet which contained a candy whistle which would not blow and a toy ruby brooch. Then a visit to the Canterbury Music Hall, sitting in a red plush seat watching my father perform...

Now it is night and I am wrapped in a travelling rug on top of a four-in-hand coach, driving with Mother and her theatrical friends, cosseted in their gaiety and laughter as our trumpeter with clarion braggadocio, heralds us along the Kennington Road to the rhythmic jingle of harness and the bear of horses’ hoofs.

I was hardly aware of a father, and do not remember him having lived with us. He too was a vaudevillian, a quiet, brooding man with dark eyes. Mother said he looked like Napoleon. He had a light baritone voice and was considered a very fine artist. Even in those days he earned the considerable sum of forty pounds a week. The trouble was that he drank too much, which Mother said was the cause of their separation.

It was difficult for vaudevillians not to drink in those days, for alcohol was sold in all theatres, and after a performer’s act he was expected to go to the theatre bar and drink with the customers. Some theatres made more profit from the bar than from the box office, and a number of stars were paid large salaries not alone for their talent, but because they spent most of their money at the theatre bar. Thus, many an artist was ruined by drink—my father was one of them. He died of alcoholic excess at the age of thirty-seven.

Mother was the eldest of two daughters. Her father, Charles Hill, an Irish cobbler, came from County Cork, Ireland. He had rosy apple cheeks, a shock of white hair and a beard like Carlyle in Whistler’s portrait. He was doubled over with rheumatic gout due, he said, to sleeping in damp fields hiding from the police during the nationalist uprisings. He eventually settled in London, establishing himself in a boot-repairing business in East Lane, Walworth.

Grandma was half gypsy. This fact was the skeleton in our family cupboard. Nevertheless, Grandma bragged that her family always ground-rent. Her maiden name was Smith. I remember her as a bright little old lady who always greeted me effusively

cosseted : cared

baritone : low pitch voice

rheumatic gout : a disease that causes painful swelling in the joints

effusively : emotionally

with baby talk. She died before I was six. She was separated from Grandpa, for what reason neither grandparent would tell. But according to Aunt Kete there was a domestic triangle in which Grandpa surprised Grandma with a love.

To gauge the morals of our family by commonplace standards would be as erroneous as putting a thermometer in boiling water. With such genetic attributes, two pretty cobbler's daughters quickly left home and gravitated to the stage.

Aunt Kate, Mother's younger sister, was also a sobruette; but we knew little about her, for she wove in and out of our lives sporadically. She was pretty and temperamental and never got along very well with Mother. Her occasional visits usually ended abruptly with acrimony at something Mother had said or done.

Mother did not stay long in Africa, but returned to England and married my father. I had no knowledge of what ended the African episode, but in our extreme poverty I would reproach her for giving up such wonderful life. She would laugh and say that she was too young to be cautious or wise.

What degree of feeling she had for my father I never knew, but whenever she spoke of him it was without bitterness, which makes me suspect she was too objective to have been deeply in love. Sometimes she would give a sympathetic account of him, and at other times talk of his drunkenness and violence. In later years, whenever angry with me she would ruefully say: "You'll finish up in the gutter like your father."

Mother had been having trouble with her voice. It was never strong, and the slightest cold brought on laryngitis which lasted for weeks; but she was obliged to keep working, so that her voice grew progressively worse. She could not rely on it. In the middle of singing it would crack or suddenly disappear into a whisper, and the audience would laugh and start booing. The worry of it impaired her health and made her a nervous wreck. As a consequence, her theatrical engagements fell off until they were practically nil.

It is owing to her vocal condition that at the age of five I made my first appearance on the stage. Mother usually brought me to the theatre at night in preference to leaving me alone in rented rooms. She was playing the Canteen at Aldershot at the time, a grubby, mean theatre catering mostly to soldiers. They were a rowdy lot and wanted little excuse

gauge : measure

erroneous : incorrect

sporadically : occasionally

acrimony : bitter feelings

reproach : criticise

laryngitis : infection of throat

falsetto : unusually high pitched voice

to deride and ridicule. To performers, Aldershot was a week of terror.

I remember standing in the wings when Mother's voice cracked and went into a shisper. The audience began to laugh and sing falsetto and to make catcalls. It was all vague and I did not quite understand what was going on. But the noise increased until Mother was obliged to walk off the stage. When she came into the wings she was very upset and argued with the stage manager who, having seen me perform before Mother's friends, said something about letting me go on in her place.

And in the turmoil I remember him leading me by the hand and, after a few explanatory words to the audience, leaving me on the stage alone. And before a glare of footlights and faces in smoke, I started to sing, accompanied by the orchestra, which fiddled about until it found my key. It was a well-known song called *Jack Jones* that went as follows:

Jack Jones well and known to everybody
 Round about the market, don't yer see,
 I've no fault to find with Jack at all,
 Not when'e's as'e used to be.
 But since'e's had the bullion left him
 'E has altered for the worst,
 For to see the way he treats all his old pals
 Fills me with nothing but disgust.
 Each Sunday morning he reads the *Telegraph*,
 Once he was contented with the *Star*,
 Since Jack Jones has come into a little bit of cash,
 Well,'e don't know where'e are.

Half-way through, a shower of money poured on to the stage. Immediately I stopped and announced that I would pick up the money first and sing afterwards. This caused much laughter. The stage manger came on with a handkerchief and helped me to gather it up. I thought he was going to keep it. This thought was conveyed to the audience and increased their laughter, especially when he walked off with it with me anxiously following him. Not until he handed it to Mother did I return and continue to sing. I was quite at home. I talked to the audience, danced, and did several imitations including one of Mother singing her Irish march song that went as follows:

turmoil : confusion
bullion : gold or silver
beguile : deceive

Riley, Riley, that's the boy to beguile ye,
 Riley, Riley, that's the boy for me.
 In all the Army great and small,
 There's none so trim and neat
 As the boble Sergeant Riley
 Of the gallant Eighty-eight.

And in repeating the chorus, in all innocence I imitated Mother's voice cracking and was surprised at the impact it had on the audience. There was laughter and cheers, then more money-throwing; and when Mother came on the stage to carry me off, her presence evoked tremendous applause. That night was my first appearance on the stage and Mother's last.

When the fates deal in human destiny, they heed neither pity nor justice. Thus they dealt with Mother. She never regained her voice. As autumn turns to winter, so our circumstances turned from bad to worse. Although Mother was careful and had saved a little money, that very soon vanished, as did her jewellery and other small possessions which she pawned in order to live, hoping all the while that her voice would return.

Meanwhile from three comfortable rooms we moved into two, then into one, our belongings dwindling and the neighbourhoods into which we moved growing progressively drabber.

She turned to religion, in the hope, I suppose, that it would restore her voice. She regularly attended Christ Church in the Westminster Bridge Road, and every Sunday I was made to sit through Bach's organ music and to listen with aching impatience to the Reverend F B Meyer's fervent and dramatic voice echoing down the nave like shuffling feet. His orations must have been appealing, for occasionally I would catch Mother quietly wiping away a tear, which slightly embarrassed me.

Well do I remember Holy Communion on one hot summer's day, and the cool silver cup containing delicious grape-juice that passed along the congregation—and Mother's gentle restraining hand when I drank too much of it. And how relieved I was when the Reverend closed the Bible, for it meant that the sermon would soon end and they would start prayers and the final hymn.

dwindling : decreasing

drabber : dull

fervent : intense

congregation : gathering



War

Luigi Pirandello

Luigi Pirandello (1867 - 1936) is an Italian, short story writer, dramatist and novelist. His famous works include *The Late Mattia Pascal* (1904) *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) and *Henry IV* (1922). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1934.

This short story shows the terrible impact of war on the personal lives of common people. The story is written against the background of the First World War.

The passengers who had left Rome by the night express had had to stop until drawn at the small station of Fabriano in order to continue their journey by the small old-fashioned local joining the main line with Sulmona.

At dawn, in a stuffy and smoky second-class carriage in which five people had already spent the night, a bulky woman in deep mourning was hosted in—almost like a shapeless bundle. Behind her—puffing and moaning, followed her husband—a tiny man; thin and weakly, his face death-white, his eyes small and bright, and looking shy and uneasy.

Having at last taken a seat he politely thanked the passengers who had helped his wife and who had made room for her; then he turned round to the woman trying to pull down the collar of her coat and politely inquired:

“Are you all right, dear?”

The wife, instead of answering, pulled up her collar again to her eyes, so as to hide her face.

“Nasty world,” muttered the husband with a sad smile.

And he felt it his duty to explain to his travelling companions that the poor woman was to be pitied for she was taking away from her only son, a boy of twenty to whom both had devoted their entire life, even breaking up their home at Sulmona to follow him to Rome, where he had to go as a student, then allowing him to volunteer for war with an assurance, however, that at least six months he would not be sent to the front and now, all of a sudden, receiving a wire saying that he was due to leave in three days’ time and asking them to go and see him off.

The woman under the big coat twisting and wriggling, at times growling like a wild animal, feeling certain that all those explanations would not have aroused even a shadow of sympathy from those people who—most likely—were in the same plight as herself. One of them, who had been listening with particular attention, said:

“You should thank God that your son is only leaving now for the front. Mine has been sent there the first day of the war. He has already come back twice wounded and been sent back again to the front.”

“What about me? I have two sons and three nephews at the front,” said another passenger.

“Maybe, but in our case it is our *only* son,” ventured the husband.

“What difference can it make? You may spoil your only son by excessive attentions, but you cannot love him more than you would all your other children if you had any. Parental love is not like bread that can be broken to pieces and split amongst the children in equal shares. A father gives *all* his love to each one of his children without discrimination, whether it be one or ten, and if I am suffering now for my two sons, I am not suffering half for each of them but double...”

“True...true...” sighed the embarrassed husband, “but suppose (of course we all hope it will never be your case) a father has two sons at the front and he loses one of them, there is still one left to console him...while...”

“Yes,” answered the other, getting cross, “a son left to console him but also a son left for whom he must survive, while in the case of the father of an only son if the son dies the father can die too and put an end to his distress. Which of the two positions is worse? Don’t you see how my case would be worse than yours?”

“Nonsense,” interrupted another traveller, a fat, red-faced man with bloodshot eyes of the palest gray.

He was panting. From his bulging eyes seemed to spurt inner violence of an uncontrolled vitality which his weakened body could hardly contain.

“Nonsense,” he repeated trying to cover his mouth with his hand so as to hide the two missing front teeth. “Nonsense. Do we give life to our own children for our own benefit?”

The other travellers stared at him in distress. The one who had had his son at the front since the first day of the war sighed: “You are right. Our children do not belong to us, they belong to the country...”

“Bosh,” retorted the fat traveller. “Do we think of the country when we give life to our children? Our sons are born because...well, because they must be born and when they come to life they take out own life with them. This is the truth. We belong to them, but they never belong to us. And when they reach twenty they are exactly what we were at their age. We too had a father and mother, but there were so many other things as well... girls, cigarettes, illusions, new ties...and the country, of course, whose call we would have answered—when we were twenty—even if father and mother had said no. Now, at our age, the love of our country is still great, of course, but stronger than it is the love of our children. Is there any one of us here who would have answered—when we were twenty—even if father and mother had said no. Now, at our age, the love of our country is still great, of course, but stronger than it is the love of our children. Is there any one of us here who wouldn’t gladly take his son’s place at the front if he could?”

There was a silence all round, everybody nodding as to approve.

“Why then,” continued the fat man, “should we consider the feelings of our children when they are twenty? Isn’t it natural that at their age they should consider the love for their country (I am speaking of decent boys, of course) even greater than the love for us? Isn’t it natural that it should be so, as after all they must look upon us as upon old boys who cannot move any more and must sit at home? If country is a natural necessity like bread of which each of us must eat in order not to die of hunger, somebody must go to defend it. And our sons go, when they are twenty, and they don’t want tears, because if they die, they die inflamed and happy (I am speaking, of course, of decent boys). Now, if one dies young and happy, without having the ugly sides of life, the boredom of it, the pettiness, the bitterness of disillusion...what more can we ask for him? Everyone should stop crying; everyone should laugh, as I do...or at least thank God—as I do—because my son, before dying, sent me a message saying that he was dying satisfied at having ended his life in the best way he could have wished. That is why, as you see, I do not even were mourning...”

He shook his light fawn coat as to show it; his livid lip over his missing teeth was trembling, his eyes were watery and motionless, and soon after he ended with a shrill laugh which might well have been a sob.

“Quite so...quite so...” agreed the others.

inflamed : swollen

fawn : light yellowish-brown in colour

livid : pale

The woman who, bundled in a corner under her coat, had been sitting and listening had—for the last three months—tried to find in the words of her husband and her friends something to console her in her deep sorrow, something that might show her how a mother should resign herself to send her son not even to death, but to probable danger of life. Yet not a word had she found amongst the many that had been said...and her grief had been greater in seeing that nobody—as she thought—could share her feelings.

But now the words of the traveller amazed and almost stunned her. She suddenly realised that it was not the others, who were wrong and could not understand her, but herself who could not rise up to the same height of those fathers and mothers willing to resign themselves, without crying, not only to the departure of their sons, but even to their death.

She lifted her head, she bent over from her corner trying to listen with great attention to the details which the fat man was giving to his companions about the way his son had fallen as a hero, for his king and his country, happy and without regrets. It seemed to her that she had stumbled into a world she had never dreamt of, a world so far unknown to her, and she was so pleased to hear everyone joining in congratulating that brave father who could so stoically speak of his child's death.

Then suddenly, just as if she had heard nothing of what had been said and almost as if waking up from a dream, she turned to the old man, asking him:

“Then...is your son really dead?”

Everyone stared at her. The old man, too, turned to look at her, fixing his great, bulging, horribly watery light grey eyes, deep in her face. For some time he tried to answer, but words failed him. He looked and looked at her, almost as if only then—at that silly, incongruous question—he had suddenly realised at last that his son was really dead—gone for ever—for ever. His face contracted, became horribly distorted, then he snatched in haste a handkerchief from his pocket and, to the amazement of everyone, broke into harrowing, heart-breaking, uncontrollable sobs.

stoically : someone who suffers pain without complaining

incongruous : unmatching

contracted : became smaller



A Chameleon

Anton Chekhov

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860 – 1904) is recognized as a master of the modern short story and a leading playwright of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In his stories and plays, Chekhov revealed a profound understanding of human nature and the ways in which ordinary events can carry deeper meaning. His notable short stories are *The Steppe* and *The Bet*. His plays, *Ivanov* (1887) and *The Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) were highly acclaimed. He was awarded the Pushkin Prize in 1888.

This story revolves around the themes of human injustice and hypocrisy. The author gives a graphic description of human feelings and qualities in the story.

The police superintendent Otchumyelov is walking across the market square wearing a new overcoat and carrying a parcel under his arm. A red-haired policeman strides after him with a sieve full of confiscated gooseberries in his hands. There is silence all around. Not a soul in the square...The open doors of the shops and taverns look out upon God's world disconsolately, like hungry mouths; there is not even a beggar near them.

“So you bite, you damned brute?” Otchumyelov hears suddenly. “Lads, don't let him go! Biting is prohibited nowadays! Hold him! ah...ah!”

There is the sound of a dog yelping. Otchumyelov looks in the direction of the sound and sees a dog, hopping on three legs and looking about her, run out of Pitchugin's tim-

sieve : a round wire tool with a lot of small holes

ber-yard. A man in a starched cotton shirt, with his waistcoat unbuttoned, is chasing her. He runs after her, and throwing his body forward falls down and seizes the dog by her hind legs. Once more there is a yelping and a shout of “Don’t let go!” Sleepy countenances are protruded from the shops, and soon a crowd, which seems to have sprung out of the earth, is gathered round the timber-yard.

“It looks like a row, your honour...” says the policeman.

Otchumyelov makes a half turn to the left and strides towards the crowd.

He sees the aforementioned man in the unbuttoned waistcoat standing close by the gate of the timber-yard, holding his right hand in the air and displaying a bleeding finger to the crowd. On his half-drunken face there is plainly written: “I’ll pay you out, you rogue!” and indeed the very finger has the look of a flag of victory. In this man Otchumyelov recognises Hryukin, the goldsmith. The culprit who has caused the sensation, a white borzoy puppy with a sharp muzzle and a yellow patch on her back, is sitting on the ground with her fore-paws outstretched in the middle of the crowd, trembling all over. There is an expression of misery and terror in her tearful eyes.

“What’s it all about?” Otchumyelov inquires, pushing his way through the crowd. “What are you here for? Why are you waving your finger...? Who was it shouted?”

“I was walking along here, not interfering with anyone, your honour,” Hryukin begins, coughing into his fist. “I was talking about firewood to Mitry Mitritch, when this low brute for no rhyme or reason bit my finger... You must excuse me, I am a working man... Mine is fine work. I must have damages, for I shan’t be able to use this finger for a week, may be... It’s not even the law, your honour, that one should put up with it from a beast... If everyone is going to be bitter, life won’t be worth living...”

“H’m. Very good,” says Otchumyelov sternly, coughing and raising his eyebrows. “Very good. Whose dog is it? I won’t let this pass! I’ll teach them to let their dogs run all over the place! It’s time these gentry were looked after, if they won’t obey the regulations! When he’s fined, the blackguard, I’ll teach him what it means to keep dogs and such stray cattle! I’ll give him a lesson!... Yeldyrin,” cries the superintendent, addressing the policeman, “find out whose dog this is and draw up a report! And the dog must be strangled. Without delay! It’s sure to be mad... Whose dog is it, I ask?”

“I fancy it’s General Zhigalov’s,” says someone in the crowd.

“General Zhigalov’s, h’m... Help me off with my coat, Yeldyrin... it’s frightfully hot!

barzoy : a breed of house dog

muzzle : the nose and mouth of an animal

gentry : gentleman class

It must be a sign of rain...There's one thing I can't make out, how it came to bite you?" Otchumyelov turns to Hryukin. "Surely it couldn't reach your finger. It's little dog and you are a great hulking fellow! You must have scratched your finger with a nail, and then idea struck you to get damages for it. We all know...your sort! I know you devils!"

"He put a cigarette in her face, your honour, for a joke, and she had the sense to snap at him...He is a nonsensical fellow, your honour!"

"That's a lie, Squinteye! You didn't see, so why tell lies about it? His honour is a wise gentleman, and will see who is telling lies and who is telling the truth, as in God's sight... And if I am lying let the court decide. It's written in the law...We are all equal nowadays. My own brother is in the gendarmes...let me tell you..."

"Don't argue!"

"No, that's not the General's dog," says the policeman, with profound conviction, "the General hasn't got one like that. His are mostly setters."

"Do you know that for a fact?"

"Yes, your honour."

"I know it, too. The General has valuable dogs, throughbred, and this is goodness knows what! No coat, no shape...A low creature. And to keep a dog like that!...where's the sense of it. If a dog like that were to turn up in Petersburg or Moscow, do you know what would happen? They would not worry about the law, they would strangle it in a twinkling! You've been injured, Hryukin, and we can't let the matter drop...We must give them a lesson! It is high time...!"

"Yet may be it is the General's," says the policeman, thinking aloud. "It's not written on its face...I saw one like it the other day in his yard."

"It is the General's, that's certain!" says a voice in the crowd.

"He'm, help me on with my overcoat, Yeldyrin, my lad...the wind's getting up... I am cold...You take it to the General's and inquire there. Say I found it and sent it. And tell them not to let it out into the street... It may be a valuable dog and if every swine goes sticking acigar in its mouth, it will soon be ruined. A dog isa delicate animal...And you put your hand down, you blockhead. It's no use your displaying your fool of a finger. It's your own fault..."

hulking : awkwardly big

gendarmes : officials of the French police force

setters : hunting dogs

blockhead : fool

“Here comes the General’s cook, ask him...Hi, Prohor! Come here, my dear man! Look at this dog...Is it one of yours?”

“What an idea! We have never had one like that!”

There’s no need to waste time asking,” says Otchumyelov. “It’s a stray dog! There’s no need to waste time talking about it...Since he says it’s a stray dog, a stray dog it is...It must be destroyed, that’s all about it.”

“It is not our dog,” Prohor goes on. “It belongs to the General’s brother, who arrived the other day. Our master does not care for hounds. But his honour is fond of them...”

“You don’t say his Excellency’s brother is here? Vladimir Ivanitch?” inquires Otchumyelov, and his whole face beams with an ecstatic smile. “Well, I never! And I didn’t know! Has he come on a visit?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I never...He couldn’t stay away from his brother...And there I didn’t know! So this is his honour’s dog? Delighted to hear it...Take it. It’s not a bad pup...A lively creature...Snapped at this fellow’s finger! Ha-ha-ha...Come, why are you shivering? Rrr...Rrr...The rogue’s angry...a nice little pup.”

Prohor calls the dog and walks away from the timber-yard with her. The crowd laughs at Hryukin.

“I’ll make you smart yet!” Otchumyelov threatens him and wrapping himself in his greatcoat, goes on his way across the square.

Poetry



Sonnet CXVI : Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) is a famous English poet and playwright. Besides writing 37 plays, he wrote 154 sonnets and a couple of long poems. His sonnets are broadly divided into three groups: the first 126 sonnets are addressed to the 'Fair Friend', sonnet nos. 127 to 152 are addressed to a 'Dark Lady' and the last two are called the Cupid sonnets. Shakespeare brought forth a new form of writing sonnets. The 14 lines in his sonnets are divided into three quatrains (stanzas of four lines) followed by a concluding couplet.

In this sonnet, Shakespeare details the characteristics of constant love. The poet uses the word love in the sense of friendship.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

impediments : barriers

68 | Rhapsody

It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

sickle : a tool with a blade in the shape of a hook
writ : wrote (old usage)



Gitanjali (Song Offerings) : 63

Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is a Bengali poet, philosopher, artist, playwright, composer and novelist. India's first Nobel laureate, Tagore won the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. He composed the text of both India's and Bangladesh's respective national anthems. Tagore travelled widely and was friends with many notable 20th century figures such as William Butler Yeats, H.G. Wells, Ezra Pound, and Albert Einstein. Some of his notable works are *Gitanjali* (1913), *The Home and the World* (1915), *Stray Birds* (1916). His body of literature is deeply sympathetic for the poor and upholds universal humanistic values.

The poem is an acceptance of the power that god has in making the poet comfortable among human beings. The poet requests the universal power not to leave him alone.

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not.

Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own.

Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger.

I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my unaccustomed shelter;

I forget that there abides the old in the new and that there also thou abidest.

Through birth and death, in this world or in others,

Wherever thou leadest me

thou : you (old usage)

hast : has (old usage)

abides : stays

70] Rhapsody

it is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life
who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.
When one knows thee,
then alien there is none, then no door is shut.
Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose
the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many.

leadest : leads (old usage)

linkest : links (old usage)

thee : you (old usage)



Dulce et Decorum Est

Wilfred Owens

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), who wrote some of the best British poetry on World War I, composed nearly all of his poems in slightly over a year, from August 1917 to September 1918. In November 1918 he was killed in action at the age of twenty-five, one week before the Armistice. His poetry reflects the suffering of soldiers, the underprivileged and the dispossessed. He mourns the sheer waste of life that war brings in its trail. His poems reflect his humanitarian propensities. His works manifested some stylistic qualities that were rooted in his keen ear for sound and his instinct for the modulating of rhythm. Most of his poems were published posthumously. His famous works include *Strange Meeting*, *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, and *Futility*. He was awarded the Military Cross for bravery at Amiens.

In this poem, Owen brings out the horrors of war and its terrible effects on human lives.

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

dulce et decorum est : Latin saying meaning

flares : rockets

hoots : noise made by shells

72 | Rhapsody

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sock of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori.

flound'ring : struggling to move

guttering : choking sounds

obscene : extremely unpleasant

ardent : keen

pro patria mori : to die for one's fatherland (country)



Tonight I Can Write

Pablo Neruda

Pablo Neruda (1904 –1973) is a Chilean poet-diplomat. Pablo Neruda led a life charged with poetic and political activity. In 1923 he sold all of his possessions to finance the publication of his first book, *Crepusculario* (“Twilight”). His *Veintepoemas de amor y unacanciondesesperada* (“Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair”), published in 1924, made him a celebrity. In 1926, he published the collection *Tentativa del hombre infinito* (*The Attempt of the Infinite Man*) and the novel *El habitante y su esperanza* (*The Inhabitant and His Hope*). He wrote in a variety of styles, including surrealist poems, historical epics, overtly political manifestos, a prose autobiography, and passionate love poems. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.

Originally written in Spanish, this poem was translated by W. S. Merwin. The poem has a tone of melancholy and pain as it mourns the loss of his beloved.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, ‘The night is starry and the stars are blue and shiver in the distance.’
The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms.
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.

How could one not have loved her great still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more immense without her.

74] Rhapsody

And the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture.

What does it matter that my love could not keep her.

The night is starry and she is not with me.

This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.

My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

My sight tries to find her as though to bring her closer.

My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.

The same night whitening the same trees.

We, of that time, are no longer the same.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.

My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing.

Another's. She will be another's. As she was before my kisses.

Her voice, her bright body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but may be I love her.

Love is so short, forgetting is so long.

Because through nights like this one I held her in my arms

my soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer

and these the last verses that I write for her.

Play



Cathleen ni Houlihan

W B Yeats

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) is a famous Irish poet and playwright. He played an instrumental role in the Irish Literary Revival. Along with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn and others, he established the Irish Theatre. His notable plays include *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) and *Deirdre* (1907). His works are steeped in the spirit of nationalism and the use of Irish mythologies. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923.

It is a one-act play that Yeats wrote in collaboration with Lady Gregory in 1902. The play shows the violent spirit of Irish nationalism at work.

CHARACTERS

Peter Gillane

Michael Gillane Peter's son, who is about to be married

Patrick Gillane a boy of twelve and Michael's brother

Bridget Gillane Peter's wife

Delia Cahel the young lady who is engaged to Michael

The Poor Old Woman

Neighbours

Scene : Interior of a cottage close to Killala, in 1798. Bridget is standing at a table undoing a parcel. Peter is sitting at one side of the fire, Patrick at the other.

Peter : What is that sound I hear?

Patrick : I don't hear anything. *[He listens.]* I hear it now. It's like cheering. *[He goes to the window and looks out.]* I don't see anybody.

Peter : It might be a hurling match.

Patrick : There's no hurling today. It must be down in the town the cheering is.

Bridget : I suppose the boys must be having some sport of their own. Come over here, Peter, and look at Michael's wedding-clothes.

Peter : *[shifts his chair to the table]* Those are grand clothes, indeed.

Bridget : You hand't clothes like that when you married me, and no coat to put on of a Sunday any more than any other day.

Peter : That is true, indeed. We never thought a son of our own would be wearing a suit of that sort for his wedding, or have so good a place to bring a wife to.

Patrick : *[who is still at the window]* There's an old woman coming down the road. I don't know, is it here she's coming?

Bridget : It will be a neighbour coming to hear about Michael's wedding. Can you see who it is?

Patrick : I think it is a stranger, but she's not coming to the house. She's turned into the gap that goes down where Murteen and his sons are shearing sheep. *[He turns towards Bridget.]* Do you remember what Winny of the Cross Roads was saying the other night about the strange woman that goes through the country whatever time there's war or trouble coming?

Bridget : Don't be bothering us about Winny's talk, but go and open the door for your brother. I hear him coming up the path.

Peter : I hope he has brought Delia's fortune with him safe, for fear her people might go back on the bargain and I after making it. Trouble enough I had making it.

[Patrick opens the door and Michael comes in.]

Bridget : What kept you, Michael? We were looking out for you this long time.

Michael : I went round by the priest's house to bid him be ready to marry us tomorrow.

Bridget : Did he say anything?

Michael : He said it was very nice match, and that he was never better pleased to marry any two in his parish than myself and Delia Chahel.

Peter : Have you got the fortune, Michael?

Michael : Here it is.

[He puts bag on table and goes over and leans against the chimney-jamb. Bridget, who has been all this time examining the clothes, pulling the seams and trying the lining of the packets, etc, puts the clothes on the dresser.]

Peter : *[getting up and taking the bag in his hand and turning out the money]* Yes, I made the bargain well for you, Michael. Old John Cahel would sooner have kept a share of this awhile longer. “Let me keep the half of it till the first boy is born,” says he. “You will not,” says I. “Whether there is or is not a boy, the whole hundred pounds must be in Michael’s hands before he brings your daughter in the house.” The wife spoke to him then, and he gave in at the end.

Brieget : You seem well pleased to be handling the money, Peter.

Peter : Indeed, I wish I had had the luck to get a hundred pounds, or twenty pounds itself, with the wife I married.

Bridget : Well, if I didn’t bring much didn’t get much. What had you the day I married you but a flock of hens and you feeding them, and a few lambs and you driving them to the market at Ballina? *[She is vexed and bangs a jug on the dresser.]* If I brought no fortune, I worked it out in my bones, laying down the baby, Michael that is standing there now, on a stook of straw, while I dug the potatoes, and never asking big dresses or anything but to be working.

Peter : That is true, indeed. *[He pats her arm.]*

Bridget : Leave me alone now till I ready the house for the woman that is to come into it.

Peter : You are the best woman in Ireland, but money is good, too. *[He begins handling the money again and sits down.]* I never thought to see so much money within my four walls. We can do great things now we have it. We can take the ten acres of land we have a chance of since Jamsie Dempsey died, and stock it. We will go to the fair of Ballina to buy the stock. Did Delia ask any of the money for her own use, Michael?

Michael : She did not, indeed. She did not seem to take much notice of it, or to look at it at all.

Bridget : That’s no wonder. Why would she look at it when she had yourself to look at, a fine, strong young man? It is proud she must be to get you, a good steady boy that will make use of the money, and not be running through it or spending it on drink like another.

Peter : It’s likely Michael himself was not thinking much of the fortune either, but of what sort the girl was to look at.

stook of straw : heap of straw

Michael : *[coming ovr towards the table]* Well, you would like a nice comely girl to be beside you, and to go walking with you. The fortune only lasts for a while, but the woman will be there always.

[Cheers.]

Patrick : *[turning round from the window]* They are cheering again down in the town. Mab be they are landing horses from Enniscrone. They do be cheering when the horses take the water well.

Michael : There are no horses in it. Where would they be going and no fair at hand? Go down to the town, Patrick, and see what is going on.

Patrick : *[opens the door to go out, but stops for a moment on the threshold]* Will Delia remember, do you think, to bring the greyhound pup she promised me when she would be coming to the house?

Mochael : She will surely.

[Patrick goes out, leaving the door open.]

peter : It will be Patrick's turn next to be looking for a fortune, but he won't find it so easy to get it and he with no place of his own.

Bridget : I do be thinking sometimes, now things are going so well with us, and the Cahels such a good back to us in the district, and Delia's own uncle a priest, we might be put in the way of making Patrick a priest some day, and he so good at his books.

Peter : Time enough, time enough; you have always your head full of plans, Bridget.

Bridget : We will be well able to give him learning, and not to send him trampling the country like a poor scholar that lives on charity.

[Cheers.]

Michael : They're not done cheering yet.

[He goes over to the door and stands there for a moment, putting up his band to shade his eyes.]

Bridget : Do you see anything?

Michael : I see an old woman coming up the path.

Bridget : Who is it, I wonder. It must be the strange woman Patrick saw a while ago.

Michael : I don't think it's one of the neighbours anyway, but she has her cloak over her face.

Bridget : It might be some poor woman heard we were making ready for the wedding and came to look for her share.

Peter : I may as well put the money out of sight. There is no use leaving it out for every stranger to look at.

[He goes over to a large box in the corner, opens it, and puts the bag in and fumbles at the lock.]

Michael : There she is, father! *[An Old Woman passes the window slowly; she looks at Michael as she passes.]* I'd sooner a stranger not to come to the house the night before my wedding.

Bridget : Open the door, Michael; don't keep the poor woman waiting.

[The Old Woman conies in. Michael stands aside to make way for her.]

Old Woman : God save all here!

Peter : dod save you kindly!

Old Woman : You have good shelter here.

Peter : You are welcome to whatever shelter we have.

Bridget : Sit down there by the fire and welcome.

Old Woman : *[warming her hands]* There is a hard wind outside.

[Michael watches her curiously from the door, Peter comes over to the table.]

Peter : I lave you travelled far today?

Old Woman : I have travelled far, very far; there are few have travelled so far as myself, and there's many a one that doesn't make me welcome. There was one that had strong sons I thought were friends of mine, but they were shearing their sheep, and they wouldn't listen to me.

Peter : It's a pity indeed for any person *to* have no place of their own.

Old Woman : That's true for yovi indeed, and it's long I'm on the roads since I first went wandering.

Bridget : It is a wonder you are not worn out with so much wandering.

Old Woman : Sometimes my feet are tried and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart. When the people see me quiet, they think old age has come on me and that all the stir has gone out of me. But when the trouble is on me I must be talking to my friends.

Bridget : What was it put you wandering?

Old Woman : Too many strangers in the house.

Bridget : Indeed you look as if you'd had your share of trouble.

Old Woman: I have had trouble indeed.

Bridget : What was it put the trouble on you?

Old Woman : My land that was taken from me.

Peter : Was it much land they took from you?

Old Woman : My four beautiful green fields.

Peter : *[aside to Bridget]* Do you think could she be the widow Casey that wiii put out of her holding at Kilglass awhile ago?

Bridget : She is not. I saw the widow Casey one time at the market in Ballina, a stout fresh woman.

Peter : *[to Old Woman]* Did you hear a noise of cheering, and you coming tin the hill?

Old Woman : I thought I heard the noise I used to hear when my friends come to visit me. *[She begins singing half to herself.]*

I will go cry with the woman,
For yellow-haired Donough is dead,
With a hempen rope for a neckcloth,
And a white cloth on his head,—

Michael : *[coming from the door]* What is that you are singing, ma'am?

Old Woman : Singing I am about a man I knew one time, yellow-hail Donough, that was hanged in Galway. *[She goes on singing, much louder.]*

I am come to cry with you, woman,
My hair is unwound and unbound;
I remember him ploughing his field,
Turning up the red side of the ground,

stir : movement

hempen rope : rope made out of a plant called hemp

mortared stone : stone held together by a mixture of cement or lome or both with sand and water

And building his barn on the hill
 With the good mortared stone;
 O! we'd have pulled down the gallows
 Had it happened in Enniscrone!

Michael : What was it brought him to his death?

Old Woman : He died for love of me: many a man has died for love of me.

Peter : *[aside to Bridget]* Her trouble has put her wits astray.

Michael: Is it long since that song was made? Is it long since he got his death?

Old Woman : Not long, not long. But there were others that died for love of me a long time ago.

Michael : Were they neighbours of your own, ma'am?

Old Woman : Come here beside me and I'll tell you about them. *[Michael sits down beside her at the hearth.]* There was a red man of the O'Donnells from the north... and there was one Brian that lost his life at Clontarf by the sea, and there were a great many in the west, some that died hundreds of years ago and there are some that will die tomorrow.

Michael : Is it in the west that men will die tomorrow?

Old Woman : Come nearer, nearer to me.

Bridget : Is she right, do you think? Or is she a woman from beyond the the world?

Piter : She doesn't know well what she's talking about, with the want and the trouble she has gone through.

Bridget : The poor thing, we should treat her well.

Peter : Give her a drink of milk and a bit of the oaten cake.

Bridget : Maybe we should give her something along with that, to bring her on her way. A few pence or a shilling itself, and we with so much money in the house.

Peter : Indeed I'd not begrudge it to her if we had it to spare, but if we go running through what we have, we'll soon have to break the hundred pounds and would be a pity.

Bridget : Shame on you, Peter. Give her the shilling and your blessing with it, or our own luck will go from us.

gallows : a structure used for hanging

begrudge : unhappy

[Peter goes to the box and takes out a shilling.]

Bridget : *[to the Old Woman]* Will you have a drink of milk?

Old Woman : It is not food or drink that I want.

Peter : *[offering the shilling]* Here is something for you.

Old Woman : That is not what I want. It is not silver I want.

Peter : What is it you would be asking for?

Old Woman : If anyone would give me help he must give me himself, he must give me all.

[Peter goes over to the table, staring at the shilling in his hand in a bewildered way, and stands whispering to Bridget.]

Michael : Have you no one to care you in your age, ma'am?

Old Woman : I have not. With all the lovers that brought me their love, I never set out the bed for any.

Michael : Are you lonely going the roads, ma'am?

Old Woman : I have my thoughts and I have my hopes.

Michael : What hopes have you to hold to?

Old Woman : The hope of getting my beautiful fields back again; the hope putting the strangers out of my house.

Michael : What way will you do that, ma'am?

Old Woman : I have good friends that will help me. They are gathering to help me now. I am not afraid. If they are put down today, they will get the upper hand tomorrow. *[She gets up.]* I must be going to meet my friends. They are coming to help me, and I must be there to welcome them. I must call the neighbors together to welcome them.

Michael : I will go with you.

Bridget : It is not her friends you have to go and welcome, Michael; it is the girl Coining into the house you have to welcome. You have plenty to do, it is food and drink you have to bring to the house. The woman that is coming home is not coming with empty hands; you would not have an empty house before her. *[To the Old Woman.]* Maybe you don't know, ma'am, that my son is going to be married tomorrow.

Old Woman : It is not a man going to his marriage that I look to for help.

Peter : *[to Bridget]* Who is she, do you think, at all?

Bridget : You did not tell us your name yet, ma'am.

Old Woman : Some call me the Poor Old Woman, and there are some that call Hie Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

Peter : I think I knew someone of that name once. Who was it, I wonder? It Jlltist have been someone I knew when I was a boy. No, no, I remember, I heard it in a song.

Old Woman : *[who is standing in the doorway]* They are wondering that there were songs made for me; there have been many songs made for me. I heard one on the wind this morning. *[Shesings.]*

Do not make a great keening
 When the graves have been dug tomorrow.
 Do not call the white-scarfed riders
 To the burying that shall be tomorrow.
 Do not spread food to call strangers
 To the wakes that shall be tomorrow;
 Do not give money for prayers
 For the dead that shall die tomorrow...
 They will have no need of prayers,
 They will have no need of prayers.

Michael : I do not know what that song means, but tell me something I can do for you.

Peter : Come over to me, Michael.

Michael : Hush, father, listen to her.

Old Woman : It is a hard service they take that help me. Many red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to w.iff hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born, and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that had red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake; and for all that, they will think they are well paid.

[She goes out; her voice is heard outside singing.]

They shall be remembered for ever,
 They shall be alive for ever,

keening : a loud crying in grief

They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.\

Bridget : *[to Peter]* Look at him, Peter; he has the look of a man llin h the touch.
[Raising her voice.] hook here, Michael, at the wedding-clothes. Such grand clothes as these are. You have a right to fit them on now; it would be a pity tomorrow if they did not fit. The boys would be laughing at you. Take them, Michael, and go into the room and fit them on. *[She puts them on his arm.]*

Michael: What wedding are you talking of? What clothes will I be wearing tomorrow?

Bridget: These are the clothes you are going to wear when you marry Delia Cahel tomorrow.

Michael: I had forgotten that.

[He looks at the clothes and turns towards the inner room, but stops at the sound of cheering outside.]

Peter: There is the shouting come to our own door. What is it has happened?

[Patrick and Delia come in.]

Patrick: There are ships in the Bay; the French are landing at Killala!

[Peter takes his pipe from his mouth and his hat off, and stands up. The clothes slip from Michael's arm.]

Delia: Michael! *[He takes no notice.]* Michael! *[He turns towards her.]* Why do you look at me like a stranger?

[She drops his arm. Bridget goes over towards her.]

Patrick : The boys are all hurrying down the hillsides to join the French.

Delia : Michael won't be going to join the French.

Bridget : *[To Peter]* Tell him not to go, Peter.

Peter : It's no use. He doesn't hear a word we're saying.

Bridget : Try and coax him over to the fire.

Delia : Michael! Michael! You won't leave me! You won't join the French, and I; to be married!

[She puts her arms about him; he turns towards her as if about to yield. Old Woman's voice outside]

They shall be speaking for ever,

[Michael breaks away from Delia and goes out.]

Peter : *[to Patrick, laying a hand on his arm]* Did you see an old woman going down the path?

Patrick : I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.

Alternative English

CLASS XI

Prose



Home to Heaven

Pearl S Buck

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck (1892 -1973) is a noted American short story and novelist. By the time of her death in 1973, Pearl published over seventy books: novels, collections of stories, biography and autobiography, poetry, drama, children's literature, and translations from the Chinese. Her famous works include *East Wind, West Wind* (1930), *The Good Earth* (1931) and *This Proud Heart* (1938). A philanthropist at heart, her works reveal her love for humanity and her sadness for the suffering humanity. In 1942, Pearl founded the East and West Association, dedicated to cultural exchange and understanding between Asia and the West. She established Welcome House, the first international, inter-racial adoption agency. She received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938.

In this short story the author shows the need to go back to one's roots. The characters find challenges to hold back to their own culture under the onslaught of a modern life.

Young David Lin stood in a doorway in the corner of the large parlour and watched the eight or ten couples of his friends gravely dancing. The music of an industrious brass band blared forth from behind a clump of palms planted in pots. He knew, of course, it was a very rich and expensive room, since it belonged to Mr Fang, who was one of the leading bankers in the city of Shanghai. Mr Fang would not tolerate anything that was not in his and expensive. The walls therefore were hung with modern oil paintings, and also in Chinese and exquisite old scrolls, for, Mr Fang always said, his father's was a thing that was expanding into great thick wrinkles of laughter, "I have best of everything, new and old. There is room for it all in my house."

Mr Fang sat now watching the young people dance, and beside him sat two pretty girls. One of these was his daughter, Phyllis, and the other was his latest concubine, a young

wrinkles : folded skin

actress. They were about the same age, but they were very different. Phyllis, David had decided earlier in the evening, was the prettiest girl in the room. He did not understand how anyone so fat and ugly as Mr Fang, could have this slender bamboo of a girl for a daughter. For she did look like a bamboo. She was pale and a little tall, almost as tall as himself, and she wore a soft green long robe, and her face was not painted, so that it was the colour of new ivory. And her hair was not like these other women's hair. It was not flipped or frizzed or curled or any of those things. It was long and straight and very black and drawn back from her face into a firm knot on her neck. She sat placidly watching her guests, an expression of tranquil pleasure about her pretty lips. As for the concubine, she looked like an actress. She made great eyes and moved her body about and her hair flared out from her too pink and rounded face. David, staring briefly at her, hated her instantly. She would chatter—she would chatter in some barbarous mixture of English and Chinese.

He had for some ten minutes been planning to go and ask Phyllis to dance with him, but he had been held back by this actress. Suppose, he said to himself, that this actress put out her hand—she was forever putting out her hand to all young men who approached her—and before he knew it he would have to dance with her; he would not, he said to himself, dance with any more frizzy-haired women, no, nor women with painted, powdered faces. Their hair tickled his neck and their faces ruined his foreign coat. He glanced down at his shoulder and brushed it off with the palm of his hand. There was a patch of powder upon it. That was because Doris Li's face had lain there earlier in the evening. He hated Doris Li—a silly creature who pretended she had forgotten how to speak her own tongue because she had been in Paris so long.

With Phyllis he had never danced, because this was the first time he had seen her. She worked somewhere in a school, not in this city, and she was home for the spring holiday. Mr Fang had said, introducing her, "This is my one industrious child. The others are content to do nothing." "You must be proud of her," David had murmured, not looking at her face. He was very tired of girls' faces.

But Mr Fang only laughed loudly. "She doesn't make enough money for me to be proud of her," he said cheerfully. "She does it to amuse herself."

Then he did look at her—a girl who "worked to amuse herself! He had never seen such a thing. For the first time in months he was interested even for a moment in a girl. With something more than his usual fixed smile he said, "May I have a dance?" But she had already promised every dance. For a moment he was sorry. Then he said to himself it did not matter. After all, she was only old Fung's daughter and another girl. He danced desultorily through the afternoon with several girls. He could scarcely remember them now. They all left powder on his coat, though, he remembered gloomily.

frizzed : curled

placidly : calmly

desultorily : without enthusiasm

Then old Fang had decided they would not stop at the end of the program. He loved dancing, bounding about the room like a huge balloon in his floating silk robes, his round face glittering with smiles, and his laughter roaring out when he stepped on someone's foot as he passed. Now he shouted at the musicians, peering at them through the palms, "Play three more numbers and you shall give a double tip!" so saying, he seized his concubine and they were off. Against his protruding bulges she leaned herself gaily, her eyes roving away from him and about the room.

It was David's chance. Hastily, for he saw converging upon Phyllis three dapper, beautifully dressed young men, he hastened himself and appeared before her. "May I—" "May I—" "May I—". Their voices were like the rounds he used to have to sing in the American school where he was educated. He stood back stiffly—let her choose. She chose very easily, rising and moving toward him. "You were first?" she said in a pleasant little voice. "Yes," he said, and they moved out into the room.

In the noise of the music it was impossible to talk. That was like old Fang, too, to go and hire a double brass band for a tea. The room shook in the noise. He held her to him in the approved modern fashion, breast to breast, thigh to thigh. Her cheek was against his shoulder. He danced well and he knew it, but then, he found, so did she. She gave and swayed so easily to his body that he grew suspicious and looked down at her. Was she being perhaps a little too easily yielding? He was tired of girls who yielded too easily. But her small pale face was quite cold, and her eyes, when he turned them up to his prettily were passionless. She smiled and said something, but he could not hear her voice. He raised his eyebrows and she laughed, and they did not try again. At the end of the dance the young men were waiting for her solidly, so he let her go with no more than his usual carefully effusive thanks. "You dance swell, Miss Fang. Gee, it's good to get a good partner!"

"Thank you, Mr Lin. You dance swell, too," she answered easily.

He did not dance again, although there were girls without partners. Doris-Li was one of these, and she came laughing and laughing past him. But he did not want to tie his shoestring. He was not going to dance again. He pondered on Phyllis a moment, although he had now for a long time not thought about any girls at all. He thought in fact about nothing except his work, which he liked very much. It was that of a manager in his father's printing house. He thought all the time about how to improve the printing of their books. He used to think about girls a great deal, but that was before he tired of them. They so much alike. Every girl in Shanghai, he had long ago decided, was like every other. He listened cynically when his friends grew excited over a new beauty. There was not such a thing.

dapper : small, with a neat appearance

ostentatiously : showily

pondered : thought

cynically : disbelieving

The tea ended and people began to go away, gay couples hand in hand go'iny, off together to some other amusement. The band was silent, and instead the air was filled with a clatter of thanks and farewells. Chinese and English mingled in word and sentence. It was very smart to speak so, just as it was smart to take foreign first names. He could speak the jargon, too, when he must. He had, in fact, many ways of speaking. He could speak American college boy or Oxford English or the precise old Chinese his father still demanded of him, or tin jargon of English and Chinese his friends now practised. It all depended on where he was.

But he secretly liked the Chinese best, although he made fun of it to his own friends. They all said over and over "There are so many modern things we cannot say in Chinese. How, for instance, do you say—" He always agreed, and they had fun trying to twist the old staid words to say even such things as 'Hot mamma,' 'You're my baby,' 'I am nuts about you.' But afterwards he felt uncomfortable, as though he had always taught a child to say innocently an obscene thing. For the old words would not say these things. Twisted thus, they made no sense, saying nothing at all, remaining serenely themselves and refusing to be perverted.

He joined the ebbing crowd at the door. Phyllis stood there, smiling, answering gaily, putting out her hand freely to her guests. He looked at her and said to himself gloomily that he was probably wrong in thinking she was different from any of the others. Just now she seemed like any of the others—like any girl. Probably she powdered too. He looked down at his shoulder involuntarily. But no, it was quite clean. He made up his mind instantly.

"May I stay a little while and talk?" he asked.

She hesitated. "I am going to the Casino with friends," she said.

"May I come with you?" he asked at once.

"I suppose, you may," she answered.

A servant was there "with her coat, and he took it and put it about her shoulders. Suddenly he saw the small fine hairs upon her nape, black against the ivory pale jlliooth skin. He felt a strange shock of pleasure in him.

That was the beginning, but the end was almost instantly there. For before the" night was over he was wildly in love with her, though the accumulated hurt he had for all girls was worse than ever. He loathed every girl he saw at the Casino that night. They

jargon : technical words or expressions

staid : old-fashioned

obscene : offensive

serenely : calmly

perverted : immoral

ebbing : decreasing

loathed : hated

were the worst of their kind, he thought, his heart full behind his smiling face. He danced with them when he could not get Phyllis, practising all the little attentions of smart behaviour while he hated her. When he took a hand, he hated it for its prettiness and its scarlet nails. It made him curious to know what Phyllis's hands were like. He must look the first moment he could. In the little alcove where he sat out a dance with another girl he kissed her coldly, when she leaned toward him for his kiss. It was nothing to kiss a girl, nothing to him. He rubbed his lips secretly while he was pretending to wipe his face with his handkerchief. He hated her—Phyllis's lips—he began wondering about her lips.

There it was. Once he began this sort of wonder he could not stop it, and day after day of spring sunshine hurried him. Besides, she would be going away again. He had to hurry. He begged a holiday from his father and beset her daily, using all his technique. After all, he told himself, she was a modern girl, and luckily she liked all this stuff. He sent her flowers and candy, and found copies of his favourite printed books and had them under his arm when he appeared before her, so that he never went without gifts.

But of course all these gifts—they must have meaning. He watched her to see they meant anything. "Like candy, kid?" he inquired of her carelessly, presenting her with a five-pound box of foreign chocolates. Did her face fall a little? But her voice came with careful enthusiasm. "Oh swell, Dave," she replied. They spoke English almost entirely, and since they had both gone to an American university they spoke what they had learned there. "Sure you like it?" he pressed her. "Crazy about it," she replied. He stared at her. She talked as they all did, but somehow it never seemed her language. She opened the box and exclaimed cheerfully, "Oh, aren't they lovely—oh, how nice." Then she put it down on the table.

Yes, he used his technique, all the modern technique they used on each other. He took her everywhere, to dance, to the theatre, and she went willingly. In the taxicab he reached for her hand and held it, and once he seized her by the shoulders and would have kissed her, but unexpectedly she bent her head quickly and his lips touched her cheek and not her lips. He had planned the kiss with some enthusiasm, too—more enthusiasm than he had felt in things for a long time. But, foiled, he had no enthusiasm at all. Her cheek was quite cold. She did not take her hand away from his, but it lay there passively, and he wished it would not be rude to put it down.

Yet he loved her more all the time. Because he could not seem to get at her he loved her. She did not repulse him, she never repulsed him. She took her part in all his plans, she refused him nothing. If he took her arm, she leaned against him a little—she had no old-fashioned ways. But so she was. She did all these things as though it were a pattern she had been taught to do. It was a technique with her. It was a technique of love for

beset : troubled

foiled : stopped

repulse : here, refuse to accept somebody as friend

them both. He wanted her to know he loved her, and he had no way to tell her except this modern way. "I'm crazy about you, kid," he said. "Sure, I'm crazy about you, too," she answered politely, and his heart chilled in him.

And all the time the days were passing, the days of the short month he had, and he could not break away this barrier of modern technique. Once at the door after a late dance he leaned to her, "Kiss me good night, Phyllis?"

"Yes," she answered readily, and touched his cheek easily with her calm lips.

It was all nothing. They were growing not nearer, but further apart. Words and touch only were pushing them apart. He did not know what to do, so he kept on doing what they were doing.

Then suddenly the day before she went away they discovered each other. They were dancing together at the Casino again, close, welded together, win together, when suddenly she stopped and [Hilled away from him ,ind looked at him.

"Do you truly like this?" she asked him. He was startled. Her voice was changed, softer, deeper. She was speaking in Chinese, in their own tongue! Why had they never spoken in Chinese? There had been some nonsense of different dialects. She was not native to Shanghai—her family had come from the north—English was smarter, and so they pretended it was easier. But it was Hot. He understood her perfectly in Chinese. He looked back at her intensely. The tawdry dancing hall faded from around them. "I do not like it," he replied. I cannot tell you how greatly I do not like it."

"Then let us go away," she said simply.

She was quite different from anything he had known of her before. In the tur she sat with such reserve and dignity that he did not want to take her hand. At this moment he was nearer to her when he did not take her hand. At her ilnor he hesitated. But she said, "Will you come in? I think there is speech we wish to have together."

"I have many things to say," he answered.

It seemed indeed that they had never talked at all. All the foolish foreign words they had interchanged had said nothing. Now crowding to his tongue were Oilier words, their own words. Everything remained yet to be said. She sat down mi the satin-covered couch, and he sat on a chair near her. She looked at him, and then she looked around the room. "I dislike all of this," she said, sweeping lwr hand through the air. "You do not know me at all. You do not even know my true name. I am not what I have seemed to you. Now that I am about to go way I want you to know that I am very old-fashioned. I have been

all this MM tut h doing things with you which I hate. It is better for you to know. I do not like to dance. I dislike foreign sweets. I do not like to kiss people. It makes me feel ill to kiss anyone or to feel anyone's lips upon my face or hand—even JIMIIN I do not like."

"Wait," he interrupted. "I see now I have felt what you were all along. I see why we were never near to each other. Why did you come with me to dances, and why did you let me kiss you? If you had said you did not like it I would not have done so." She dropped her head and I looked at her hands tightly clasped in her lap. It answered, shyly, "I thought you liked these foreign ways and I wanted to be what you liked. I thought if I refused you might not—come again." Her voice very small indeed when she finished.

"What is your true name?" he demanded of her.

"It is Ming Shing—Shining Heart," she replied.

"Mine is Yung An—Brave Peace," he said.

They were silent a moment.

Then he went on. He leaned forward in his chair. "You mean—you do truly that you like our own ways best?"

"Much, much best," she faltered.

"You would not like a house like this?" he questioned her sternly. "No," she faltered.

"Nor dancing nor motoring nor any of these things the women do all day?"

"No."

"We need never waste our time so anymore," he said, after a moment.

"Never anymore," she answered.

He waited another moment. "I also do not like to kiss," he announced.

"Then let us not kiss each other anymore," she said.

"We will speak our own language and I will take off these foreign garments and put on my robes again and we will live in old comfortable ways and I will smoke a water pipe."

"I will never wear leather shoes again," she said. "And I will never eat butter again, which I hate, nor any foreign foods, and our table will always be set with bowls and chopsticks, and I shall have a house with courts and no stairs, .uul want many children."

He saw it all as she spoke, their house, their home, everything their themselves as they really "wanted to be. He began to pour out his words," Will you then marry me? Shall we—"Then he stopped. "Miss Fang, my father will write your father a letter. It will come soon—at once—"he was already halfway to the door. Now he was at the door, and he looked back at her. She rose and bowed, and stood looking at him, too, waked, and warm as a rose. He saw her for the first time. This was how she truly was, this lovely, natural

creature of his own kind. They would raise lotus flowers in the pool in the court, and they would have a little bamboo grove and read poetry there in the summer—old foun Inverses. He had always wanted to have time for it.

“Are you going, Mr Lin?” she asked in the old formula of farewell.

The words came so sweetly from her tongue that his feet had carried him back a step before he knew it. Then he caught himself. “No more foreign ways,” he said firmly. He went out into the hall, and then he put his head in to look at u i once more. She was sitting quietly upon the couch, her little hands folded, her little feet placed neatly together, exactly as his own old mother might have sat as a girl. She was looking ahead of her, seeing, he knew, the house, the court, the many children, the safe old ways of living. She was there waiting, so pretty, so pretty— “At least not yet,” he amended, hurrying.



Kabuliwallah

Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is a Bengali poet, philosopher, artist, playwright, short story writer, composer and novelist. India's first Nobel laureate, Tagore won the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. He composed the text of both India's and Bangladesh's respective national anthems. Tagore travelled widely and was friends with many notable 20th century figures such as William Butler Yeats, H.G. Wells, Ezra Pound, and Albert Einstein. Some of his notable works are Gitanjali (1913), The Home and the World (1915), Stray Birds (1916). His body of literature is deeply sympathetic for the poor and upholds universal humanistic values.

This short story presents the idea that a father's love for his daughter goes beyond geographical spaces. The author's portrayal of human feelings shows the stroke of a genius.

My five-year-old daughter Mini cannot live without chattering. I really believe that in all her life she has not wasted a minute in silence. Her mother is often vexed at this, and would stop her prattle, but I would not. To see Mini quiet is unnatural, and I cannot bear it long. And so my own talk with her is always lively.

One morning, for instance, when I was in the midst of the seventeenth chapter of my new novel, my little Mini stole into the room, and putting her hand into mine, said: "Father! Ramdayal the doorkeeper calls a crow a krow! He doesn't know anything, does he?"

Before I could explain to her the differences of language in this world, she was embarked on the full tide of another subject. "What do you think, father? Bhola says there

vexed : troubled

prattle : talk about unimportant things

is an elephant in the clouds, blowing water out of his trunk, and that is why it rains!”

And then, darting off anew, while I sat still making ready some reply to this last saying, “Father, what relation is Mother to you?”

“My dear little sister in the law!” I murmured involuntarily to myself, but with a grave face contrived to answer: “Go and play with Bhola, Mini! I am busy!”

The window of my room overlooks the road. The child had seated herself at my feet near my table, and was playing softly, drumming on her knees. I was iirtid at work on my seventeenth chapter, where Protap Singh, the hero, had just caught Kanchanlata, the heroine, in his arms, and was about to escape with her by the third story window of the castle, when all of a sudden Mini left her play, and ran to the window, crying, “A Kabuliwallah! A Kabuliwallah!” Sure enough lit I he street below was a Kabuliwallah, passing slowly along. He wore the loose Hilled clothing of his people, with a tall turban; there was a bag on his back and he carried boxes of grapes in his hand.

I cannot tell what were my daughter’s feelings at the sight of this man, but she began to call him loudly. “Ah!” I thought, “he will come in, and my seventeenth chapter will never be finished!” At which exact moment the Kabuliwallah turned and looked up at the child. When she saw this, overcome by terror, she fled to llrr mother’s protection, and disappeared. She had a blind belief that inside the bag, which the big man carried, there were perhaps two or three other children like herself. The pedlar meanwhile entered my doorway and greeted me with a smiling face.

So precarious was the position of my hero and my heroine, that my first Impulse was to stop and buy something, since the man had been called. I made some small purchases, and a conversation began about Abdurrahman, the Russians, the English and the Frontier Policy.

As he was about to leave, he asked: “And where is the little girl, sir?”

And I, thinking that Mini must get rid of her false fear, had her brought out.

She stood by my chair, and looked at the Kabuliwallah and his bag. He offered hrr nuts and raisins, but she would not be tempted, and only clung the closer to me, with all her doubts increased.

This was their first meeting.

One morning, however, not many days later, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Kabuliwal-

contrived : false

pedlar : hawker

precarious : dangerous

lah at her feet. In all her life, it appeared, my small daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father. And already the coner of her little sari was stuffed with almonds and raisins, the gift of her visitor, “Why did you give her those?” I said, and taking out an eight-anna bit, I handed it to him. The man accepted the money without demur, and slipped it into his pocket.

Alas, on my return an hour later, I found the unfortunate coin had made twice its own worth of trouble! For the Kabuliwallah had given it to Mini, and her mother catching sight of the bright round object, had pounced on the child with: “Where did you get that eight-anna bit?”

“The Kabuliwallah gave it to me,” said Mini cheerfully.

“The Kabuliwallah gave it to you!” cried her mother much shocked. “(Mini! How could you take it from him?”

I, entering at the moment, saved her from impending disaster, and procured to make my own inquiries.

It was not the first or second time, I found, that the two had met. ‘In Kabuliwallah had overcome the child’s first terror by a judicious bribery of nuts and almonds, and the two were now great friends.

They had many quaint jokes, which afforded them much amusement. Seated in front of him, looking down on his gigantic frame in all her tiny dignity, Mini would ripple her face with laughter and begin: “O Kabuliwallah, Kabuliwallah, what have you got in your bag?”

And he would reply, in the nasal accents of the mountaineer: “An elephant!” Not much cause for merriment, perhaps; but how they both enjoyed the witticism! And for me, this child’s talk with a grown-up man had always been something strangely fascinating.

Then the Kabuliwallah, not to be behindhand, would take his turn: “Well, little one, and when are you going to the father-in-law’s house?”

Now most small Bengali maidens have heard long ago about the father-in-law’s house; but we, being a little new-fangled, had kept those things from our child, and Mini at this question must have been a trifle bewildered. But she would not know it, and with ready tact replied: “Are you going there?”

Amongst men of the Kabuliwallah’s class, however, it is well known that the Words

demur : protest

judicious : careful

quaint : unusually attractive

new-fangled : recently introduced into fashion

euphemism : an indirect expression used to refer to something unpleasant, to make it seem more acceptable than it really is

father-in-law's house have a double meaning. It is a euphemism for jail, the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves. In this sense would the sturdy pedlar take my daughter's question. "Ah," he would say, shaking his fist at an invisible policeman, "I will thrash my father-in-law!" Hearing this, Mini picturing the poor discomfited relative, Mini would go off into peals of laughter, in which her formidable friend would join.

'These were autumn mornings, the very time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it, and at the sight of a foreigner in the streets, I would fall to weaving a network of dreams—the mountains, the glens and the forests of his distant home, with his cottage in its setting, and the free and independent life of far-away wilds.

Perhaps the scenes of travel conjure themselves up before me, and pass and it passes in my imagination all the more vividly, because I lead such a vegetable existence, that a call to travel would fall upon me like a thunderbolt.

In the presence of this Kabuliwallah, I was immediately transported to the foot of arid mountain peaks, with narrow little defiles twisting in and out among their towering heights. I could see the string of camels bearing the heavy handiwork, and the company of turbaned merchants, carrying some of their queer old firearms and some of their spears, journeying downward towards the plains. I could see—but at some such point Mini's mother would intervene, imploring me to "beware of that man".

Mini's mother is unfortunately a very timid lady. Whenever she hears a noise in the street, or sees people coming towards the house, she always jumps to the conclusion that they are either thieves, or drunkards, or snakes, or tigers, malaria or cockroaches, or caterpillars, or an English sailor. Even after all these years of experience, she is not able to overcome her terror. So she was full of doubts about the Kabuliwallah and used to beg me to keep a watchful eye. I tried to laugh her fear gently away, but then she would turn round on me seriously and ask me solemn questions.

Were children never kidnapped?

Was it, then, not true that there was slavery in Kabul?

Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to carry off a tiny child?

I urged that, though not impossible, it was highly improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. As it was indefinite, however, it did not seem right to forbid the

discomfited : confused

formidable : strong

glens : valleys

defiles : narrow passes

man entry into the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked.

Once a year in the middle of January Rahmat, the Kabuliwallah, was in tin-habit of returning to his country, and as the time approached he would be very busy, going from house to house collecting his debts. This year, however, he could always find time to come and see Mini. It would have seemed to an outsidei that there was some conspiracy between the two, for when he could not conic in the morning, he would appear in the evening.

Even to me it was a little startling now and then, in the corner of a dark room, suddenly to surprise this tall, loose-garmented, much bebagged man; but when Mini would run in smiling, with her, "O! Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" and tin-two friends, so far apart in age, would subside into their old laughter and then old jokes, I felt reassured.

One morning, a few days before he had made up his mind to go, I was correcting my proof sheets in my study. It was chilly weather. Through the window the rays of the sun touched my feet, and the slight warmth was veiv welcome. It was almost eight o'clock and the early pedestrians were returning home, with their heads covered. All at once, I heard an uproar in the street, and, looking out, saw Rahmat being led away bound between two policemen, and behind them a crowd of curious boys. There were blood-stains on the clothe-. of the Kabuliwallah, and one of the policemen carried a knife.

Hurrying out, I stopped them and enquired what it all meant. Partly I nun one, partly from another, I gathered that a certain neighbour had owed tin pedlar something for a Rampuri shawl, but had falsely denied having boudit it, and that in the course of the quarrel, Rahmat had struck him. Now in tin-heat of his excitement, the prisoner began calling his enemy all sorts of nami-u, when suddenly in a verandah of my house appeared my little Mini, with her usual exclamation: "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" Rahmatit laughed and said: "Just where I am going, little one!" Then seeing that the reply did not amuse the child, he held up his fettered hands and said, "I would have thrashed that old father-in-law, but my hands are bound!"

On a charge of murderous assault, Rahmat was sentenced to some years imprisonment.

Time passed away, and he was not remembered. The accustomed work in the accustomed place was ours, and the thought of the once-free mountaineer spending his years in prison seldom or never occurred to us. Even my light-hearted Mini, I am ashamed to say, forgot her old friend. New companions tilled her life. As she grew older, she spent more of her tiine with girls. So much time indeed did she spend with them that she came no more, as she used to do, to her father's room. I was scarcely on speaking terms with her.

Years had passed away. It was once more autumn and we had made arrangements for our Mini's marriage. It was to take place during the Puja I lolidays. With Durga returning

to Kailash, the light of our home also was to depart to her husband's house, and leave her father's in the shadow.

The morning was bright. After the rains, there was a sense of ablution in the air and the sun-rays looked like pure gold. So bright were they that they gave a beautiful radiance even to the sordid brick walls of our Calcutta lanes. Since early dawn today the wedding-pipes had been sounding, and at each beat my own heart throbbed. The wail of the tune, Bhairavi, seemed to intensify my pain till the approaching separation. My Mini was to be married tonight.

From early morning, noise and bustle had pervaded the house. In the courtyard the canopy had to be slung on its bamboo poles; the chandeliers with their tinkling sound must be hung in each room and verandah. There was no riot of hurry and excitement. I was sitting in my study, looking through the lilies, when some one entered, saluting respectfully, and stood before me. It was Rahmat the Kabuliwallah. At first I did not recognise him. He had no bag, nor the long hair, nor the same vigour that he used to have. But he smiled, and I knew him again.

"When did you come, Rahmat?" I asked him.

"Last evening," he said, "I was released from jail."

The words struck harsh upon my ears. I had never before talked with one who had wounded his fellow, and my heart shrank within itself, when I realised this, I felt that the day would have been better omened had he not turned up.

"There are ceremonies going on," I said, "and I am busy. Could you perhaps come another day?"

At once he turned to go; but as he reached the door he hesitated, and said: "May I not see the little one, sir, for a moment?" It was his belief that Mini was still the same. He had pictured her running to him as she used to, calling "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" He had imagined too that they would laugh and talk together, just as of old. In fact, in memory of former days he had brought, carefully wrapped up in paper, a few almonds and raisins and grapes, obtained somehow from a countryman, for his own little fund was dispersed.

I said again: "There is a ceremony in the house, and you will not be able to see any one today."

The man's face fell. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, said "Good morning," and went out. I felt a little sorry, and would have called him back, but I found he was

ablution : a sense of having washed

sordid : dirty

wistfully : longingly

returning of his own accord. He came close up to me holding out his offerings and said: “I brought these few things, sir, for the little one. Will you give them to her?”

I took them and was going to pay him, but he caught my hand and said: “You are very kind, sir! Keep me in your recollection. Do not offer me money!—You have a little girl, I too have one like her in my own home. I think of her, and bring fruits to your child, not to make a profit for myself.”

Saying this, he put his hand inside his big loose robe and brought out a small and dirty piece of paper. With great care he unfolded this and smoothed it out with both hands on my table. It bore the impression of a little hand. Not a photograph. Not a drawing. The impression of an ink-smeared hand laid flat on the paper. This touch of his own little daughter had been always on his heart as he had come year after year to Calcutta, to sell his wares in the streets.

Tears came to my eyes. I forgot that he was a poor Kabuli fruit-seller, while I was—but no, what was I more than he? He also was a father. That impression of the hand of his little Parbati in her distant mountain home reminded me of my own little Mini.

I sent for Mini immediately from the inner apartment. Many *diflu ulin* were raised, but I would not listen. Clad in the red silk of her wedding day, with the sandal paste on her forehead and adorned as a young bride, Mini came, and stood bashfully before me.

The Kabuliwallah looked a little staggered at the apparition. He could not revive their old friendship. At last he smiled and said: “Little one, are you going to your father-in-law’s house?”

But Mini now understood the meaning of the word ‘father-in-law,’ and she could not reply to him as of old. She flushed up at the question and stood before him with her bride-like face turned down.

I remembered the day when the Kabuliwallah and my Mini had first met, and I felt sad. When she had gone, Rahmat heaved a deep sigh and sat down on the floor. The idea had suddenly come to him that his daughter too must have grown in this long time, and that he would have to make friends with her anew. Assuredly he would not find her, as he used to know her. And besides, what might not have happened to her in these eight years?

The marriage pipes sounded, and the mild autumn sun streamed round us. But Rahmat sat in the little Calcutta lane, and saw before him the barren mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a bank note, and gave it to him, saying: “Go back to your own daughter,

own accord : own will

bashfully : shyly

staggered : shocked

apparition : an image that is unexpected

flushed up : became red in the face

Rahmat, in your own country, and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child!”

Having made this present, I had to curtail some of the festivities. I could not have the electric lights I had intended, nor the military band, and the ladies of the house were despondent at it. But to me the wedding feast was all the brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father met again with his only child.



The Man with the Scar

William Somerset Maugham

William Somerset Maugham (1874 -1965) is a British short story writer, novelist and playwright. Maugham was the master of the short, concise novel and he could convey relationships, greed and ambition with a startling reality. The remote locations of the quietly magnificent yet decaying British Empire offered him beautiful cavasses on which to write his stories and plays. Maugham's English is clear and lucid and this makes his books easy to come to terms with. His works are often full of the basest, and yet more interesting, of the human vices but can still evoke the day to day feelings and emotions that allow us to understand and identify with his characters. A complex and interesting character His notable works include *Lisa of Lambeth* (1897), *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and *East of Suez* (1922).

This story holds its interest for the sudden and unexpected turn at the end. The story begins rather seriously as the narrator and his companion start the conversation.

It was on account of the scar that I first noticed him, for it ran, broad and red, in a great crescent from his temple to his chin. It must have been due to a formidable wound and I wondered whether this had been caused by a sabre or by a fragment of shell. It was unexpected on that round, fat and good-humoured face. He had small and undistinguished features, and his expression was artless. His face went oddly with his corpulent body. He was a powerful man of more than common height. I never saw him in anything but a very shabby grey suit, a khaki shirt and a battered sombrero. He was far from clean. He used to conn-into the Palace Hotel at Guatemala City every day at cocktail time and strolliit¹, leisurely round the bar offered lottery tickets for sale. If this was ihc way he made his living it must have been a poor one, for I never saw anyone buy, but now and then I saw him offered a drink. He never refused it. He threaded his way among the tables with a sort of rolling walk as though he were accustomed to traverse long distances on foot, paused

sabre : sword with a curved blade

artless : simple

corpulent : fat

sombrero : Mexican hat for men

at each table, with a little smile mentioned the numbers he had for sale and then, when no notice was taken of him, with the same smile passed on. I think he was for the most part a trifle the worse for liquor.

I was standing at the bar one evening, my foot on the rail, with an acquaintance—they make a very good dry martini at the Palace Hotel in Guatemala City—when the man with the scar came up. I shook my head as for the twentieth time since my arrival he held out for inspection his lottery tickets. But my companion nodded affably.

“Que tal, general? How is life?”

“Not so bad. Business is none too good, but it might be worse.”

“What will you have, general?”

“A brandy.”

He tossed it down and put the glass back on the bar. He nodded to my acquaintance.

“Gracias. Hasta Luego.”

Then he turned away and offered tickets to the men who were standing next , to us.

“Who is your friend?” I asked. “That’s a terrific scar on his face.”

“It doesn’t add to his beauty, does it? He’s an exile from Nicaragua. He’s a ruffian of course and a bandit, but not a bad fellow. I give him a few pesos now and then. He was a revolutionary general and if his ammunition hadn’t given out he’d have upset the government and be minister of war now instead of selling lottery tickets in Guatemala. They captured him, along with his staff, such as it was, and tried him by court-martial. Such things are rather summary in those countries, you know, and he was sentenced to be shot at dawn. I guess he knew what was coming to him when he was caught. He spent the night in gaol and he and the others, there were five of them altogether, passed the time playing poker. They used matches for chips. He told me he’d never had such a run of bad luck in his life.

When day broke and the soldiers came into the cell to fetch them for execution he had lost more matches than a reasonable man could use in a lifetime.

They were led into the patio of the gaol and placed against a wall, the five of them

traverse : cross

affably : friendly manner

pesos : unit of money

court-martial : a type of military punishment court that deals with members of the armed forces who break military law; a trial at such a court

gaol : jail

side by side, with the firing party facing them. There was a pause and our friend asked the officer in charge of them what the devil they were keeping him waiting for. The officer said that the general commanding the government troops wished to attend the execution and they awaited his arrival.

‘Then I have time to smoke another cigarette,’ said our friend. ‘He was always unpunctual.’

But he had barely lit it when the general—it was San Ignacio, by the way: I don’t know whether you ever met him—followed by his ADC came into the patio. The usual formalities were performed and San Ignacio asked the condemned men whether there was anything they wished before the execution took place. Four of the five shook their heads, but our friend spoke.

‘Yes, I should like to say goodbye to my wife.’

‘Bueno,’ said the general, ‘I have no objection to that. Where is she?’

‘She is waiting at the prison door.’

‘Then it will not cause a delay of more than five minutes.’

‘Hardly that, Senor General.’

‘Have him placed on one side.’

Two soldiers advanced and between them the condemned rebel walked to the spot indicated. The officer in command of the firing squad on a nod from the general gave an order, there was a ragged report, and the four men fell. They fell strangely, not together, but one after the other, with movements that were almost grotesque, as though they were puppets in a toy theatre. The officer we 111 up to them and into one who was still alive emptied two chambers of his revolver. Our friend finished his cigarette and threw away the stub.

There was a little stir at the gateway. A woman came into the patio, with quick steps, and then, her hand on her heart, stopped suddenly. She gave a cry and with outstretched arms ran forward.

‘Caramba,’ said the general.

She was in black, with a veil over her hair, and her face was dead white. She was hardly more than a girl, a slim creature, with little regular features and enormous eyes. But they were distraught with anguish. Her loveliness was such that as she ran, her mouth slightly open and the agony of her face beautiful, a gasp of surprise was wrung from those indifferent soldiers who looked at her.

report : sounds

grotesque : extremely unpleasant

The rebel advanced a step or two to meet her. She flung herself into his arms and with a hoarse cry of passion: ‘alma de mi corazon, soul of my heart’, he pressed his lips to hers. And at the same moment he drew a knife from his ragged shirt—I haven’t a notion how he had managed to retain possession of it—and stabbed her in the neck. The blood spurted from the cut vein and dyed his shirt. Then he flung his arms round her and once more pressed his lips to hers.

It happened so quickly that many didn’t know what had occurred, but from the others burst a cry of horror; they sprang forward and seized him. They loosened his grasp and the girl would have fallen if the ADC hadn’t caught her. She was unconscious. They laid her on the ground and with dismay on their faces stood round watching her. The rebel knew where he was striking and it was impossible to staunch the blood. In a moment the ADC who had been kneeling by her side rose.

‘She’s dead,’ he whispered.

The rebel crossed himself.

‘Why did you do it?’ asked the general.

‘I loved her.’

A sort of sigh passed through those men crowded together and they looked with strange faces at the murderer. The general stared at him for a while in dilcnce.

‘It was a noble gesture,’ he said at last. ‘I cannot execute this man. Take my car and have him led to the frontier. Senor, I offer you the homage which is due horn one brave man to another.’

A murmur of approbation broke from those who listened. The ADC tapped llie rebel on the shoulder, and between the two soldiers without a word he marched to the waiting car.”

My friend stopped and for a time I was silent. I must explain that he was a Guaate-maltecan and spoke to me in Spanish. I have translated what he told me as well as I could, but I have made no attempts to tone down his rather high-flown language. To tell the truth I think it suits the story.

“But how did he gel the scar?” I iinki’il at length.

“Oh, that was due to a bottle that burst when he was opening it. A bottle ol ginger ale.”

“I never liked it,” said I.

approbation : approval



I Became an Author

W B Yeats

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) is a famous Irish poet and playwright. He played an instrumental role in the Irish Literary Revival. Along with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn and others, he established the Irish Theatre. His notable plays include *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) and *Deirdre* (1907). His works are steeped in the spirit of nationalism and the use of Irish mythologies. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923.

In this essay the author reveals how he took to writing, and shows how he remained at the bottom of the class.

How did I begin to write? I have nothing to say that may help young writers, except that I hope they will not begin as I did. I spent longer than most schoolboys preparing the next day's work, and yet learnt nothing, and would always have been at the bottom of my class but for one or two subjects that I hardly had to learn at all. My father would say: "You cannot fix your mind on anything that does not interest you, and it is to study what does not that you are sent to school." I did not suffer from the 'poetic temperament', but from some psychological weakness. Greater poets than I have been great scholars. Even today I struggle against a lack of confidence, when among average men, come down that daily humiliation, and because I do not know what they know. I can toil through a little French poetry, but nothing remains of the Greek, Latin and German I tried to learn. I have only one memory of my schooldays that gives me comfort; that in both my English and Irish school I was near the bottom of the class, my friends were at the top of then, as now, I hated to look when I would find out if some man can be trusted, I asked if he associated with his betters. In the Irish school my chief friend was Charles Johnson, son of the Orange leader. He beat all Ireland in the Intermediate examinations, and when I met him in America years afterwards he said: "There is nothing I cannot learn and nothing I

want to learn.” Some instinct drew us together, it was to him I used to read my poems. They were all plays—except one long poem in Spenserian stanzas, which some woman of whom I remember nothing, not even if she was pretty, borrowed and lost out of her carriage when shopping. I recall three plays, not of any merit, one vaguely Elizabethan, its scene a German forest, one an imitation of Shelley, its scene a crater in the moon, one of somebody’s translations from the Sanscrit, its scene an Indian temple. Charles Johnson admired parts of these poems so much that I doubt if he ever thought I had fulfilled their promise. A fragment, or perhaps all that was written, of the Indian play, I put near the opening of my *Collected Poems* because when I put it there he was still living, and it is still there because I have forgotten to take it out. I have sometimes wondered if I did not write poetry to find a cure for my own ailment, as constipated cats do when they eat valerian. But that will not do, because my interest in proud, confident people began before I had been much humiliated. Some people say I have an affected manner, and if that is true, as it may well be, it is because my fahhn took me when I was ten or eleven to Irving’s famous ‘Hamlet’. Years afterward: I walked the Dublin streets when nobody was looking, or nobody that I knew, with that strut Gordon Craig has compared to a movement in a dance, and mat lithe characters I created speak with his brooding broken wildness. Two month’, ago, describing the Second Coming, I wrote this couplet:

What brushes fly and gnat aside? Irving and hi plume of pride.

Nobody should think a young poet pathetic and weak, or that he has .1 lonely struggle. I think some old and famous men may think that they had in their schooldays their most satisfying fame; certainly I had about me a little group whose admiration for work that had no merit justified my immense self-confidence.

When eighteen or nineteen I wrote a pastoral play under the influence of Keats and Shelley, modified by that of Jonson’s ‘Sad Shepherd’, and one my friends showed it to some Trinity undergraduates who were publishing the Dublin University Review, an ambitious political and literary periodical that lasted for a few months—I cannot remember who, except that it was not Charles Johnston, who had passed for the Indian Civil Service, gone to India, and would stay there till he tired of it. I was at the Arts Schools because painting was the family trade, and because I did not think I could pass the matriculation examination for Trinity. The undergraduates liked the poem and invited me to read it to a man four or five years older than the rest of us, Bury, in later years a classical historian and editor of Gibbon. I was excited, not merely because he would decide the acceptance

valerian : a drug to make people or animals feel calmer

affected : unnatural

strut : walking proudly

pastoral play : a drama showing country life of the village

or rejection of my play, but because he was a schoolmaster and I had never met a schoolmaster in private life. Once when I was at Edward Dowden's the head of my old school was announced, but I turned so pale or so red that Dowden brought me into another room. Perhaps I could get Bury to explain why I had been told to learn so many things that I had not been able to fix my attention upon anything.

I thought a man brought his convictions into everything he did; I had said to the photographer when he was arranging his piece of iron shape like a horse-shoe to keep my head in position: "Because you have only white and black paper instead of light and shadow you cannot represent Nature. An artist can because he employs a kind of symbolism." To my surprise, instead of showing indignation at my attack upon his trade, he replied: "A photograph is mechanical. Even today I have the same habit of thought, but only when thinking of pre-eminent men. A few days ago I read of some University meeting where, where nobody said: "Nobody today believes in a personal devil," Lord Acton said:"] do"; and I knew that because the Cambridge Universal History, which he had planned, contains nothing about a personal devil's influence upon events, Lord Acton was a picturesque liar. For some reason which I cannot recollect I was left alone with Bury and said, after a great effort to overcome my shyness: "I know you will defend the ordinary system of education by saying that it strengthens the will, but I am convinced that it only seems to do so because it weakens the impulses." He smiled and looked embarrassed, but said nothing.

My pastoral play *The Island of Statues* appeared in the review. I have not looked at it for many years, but nothing I did at that time had merit. Two lyrics from it are at the beginning of my *Collected Poems*, not because I liked them but because when I put them there friends that had been still living. Immediately after its publication, or just before, I fell under the influence of two men who were to influence deeply the Irish intellectual movement—old John O'Leary the Fenian leader, in whose library I found the poets of Young Ireland; and Standish O'Grady, who had rewritten in vigorous romantic English certain ancient Irish heroic legends. Because of the talk of these men, and the books the one and the other wrote, I turned my back on foreign themes, decided that the race was more important than the individual, and began my 'Wanderings of Oisín; it was published with many shorter poems by subscription, John O'Leary finding almost all the subscribers. Henceforth I was one of the rising poets. I lived in London and had many friends, and when I could not earn the twenty shilling a week which in those days bought bed and

indignation : anger

pre-eminent : important

impulses : sudden strong wishes

sluggish : slow

board for man or boy, I could stay with my family or a Sligo relative. In this I was more fortunate than Isadora Duncan who was to write of her first London years: "I had renown and the favour of princes and not enough to eat." As a professional writer I was clumsy, stir: and sluggish; when I reviewed a book I had to write my own heated thought-because I did not know how to get thoughts out of my subject; when I wrote .. poem half a dozen lines sometimes took as many days because I was determinec to put the natural words in the natural order, my imagination still full of poetic diction. It was the old difficulty of my school work over again, except that I hac now plenty of time.

Poetry



Bright Star

John Keats

John Keats (1795-1821) is an English Romantic poet. His poetry abounds in sensuous imagery. Besides his Letters, Keats wrote short and long poems and an unfinished epic *Hyperion*. Some of his notable works include *Ode to Autumn*, *Lamia* and *Why did I Laugh Tonight?* He had a strong propensity for classical mythology and legend.

In this poem the speaker wishes for a constant love through striking imagery. The poem has a sensuous appeal.

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,

Eremite : saint
stedfast : unchanging.

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To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,

Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,

And so live ever—or else swoon to death.



A Dog has Died

Pablo Neruda

Pablo Neruda (1904 –1973) is a Chilean poet-diplomat. Pablo Neruda led a life charged with poetic and political activity. In 1923 he sold all of his possessions to finance the publication of his first book, *Crepusculario* (“Twilight”). His *Veintepoemas de amor y unacanciondesesperada* (“Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair”), published in 1924, made him a celebrity. In 1926, he published the collection *Tentativa del hombre infinito* (*The Attempt of the Infinite Man*) and the novel *El habitante y su esperanza* (*The Inhabitant and His Hope*). He wrote in a variety of styles, including surrealist poems, historical epics, overtly political manifestos, a prose autobiography, and passionate love poems. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.

Originally written in Spanish, this poem was translated by Alfred Yankauer. In the poem, the poet is apparently devoid of emotions and sentiments after his dog died. However, as the poet unfolds the speaker’s grief for the dead dog becomes evident.

|My dog has died.

I buried him in the garden
next to a rusted old machine.

Some day I’ll join him right there,
but now he’s gone with his shaggy coat,
his bad manners and his cold nose,
and I, the materialist, who never believed
in any promised heaven in the sky
for any human being,
I believe in a heaven for all dogdom

shaggy : long untidy hair

where my dog waits for my arrival
waving his fan-like tail in friendship.

Ai, I'll not speak of sadness here on earth,
of having lost a companion
who was never servile.

His friendship for me, like that of a porcupine
withholding its authority,
was the friendship of a star, aloof,
with no more intimacy than was called for,
with no exaggerations:

he never climbed all over my clothes
filling me full of his hair or his mange,
he never rubbed up against my knee
like other dogs obsessed with sex.

No, my dog used to gaze at me,
paying me the attention I need,
the attention required
to make a vain person like me understand
that, being a dog, he was wasting time,
but, with those eyes so much purer than mine,
he'd keep on gazing at me
with a look that reserved for me alone
all his sweet and shaggy life,
always near me, never troubling me,
and asking nothing.

Ai, how many times have I envied his tail
as we wiilkcd together on the shores of the sea
in the lonely winter of Isla Negra

servile : slave like

mange : a skin disease of animals

where the wintering birds filled the sky
and my hairy dog was jumping about
full of the voltage of the sea's movement:
my wandering dog, sniffing away
with his golden tail held high,
face to face with the ocean's spray.

Joyful, joyful, joyful,
as only dogs know how to be happy
with only the autonomy
of their shameless spirit.

There are no good-byes for my dog who has died,
and we don't now and never did lie to each other.
So now he's gone and I buried him,
and that's all there is to it.



The Coromandel Fishers

Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) is a noted poet and patriot of India. Her poems explore various aspects of India – mountains, rivers and temples. Common Indian people like charmers, beggars, fishermen, widows, bangle sellers, milkmaids move across the canvas of her poet. Her famous works include *Palanquin Bearers*, *Indian Weavers* and *Autumn Song*. She writes in a manner that is easy to understand, and her poems show the influence of British Romantic and Victorian poets.

This poem depicts the Indian fisherfolk as they go on the high seas to catch fishes. The poem reflects the pride of the poet for the people of the community.

Rise, brothers, rise; the wakening skies pray to the morning light,
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night.
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore and set our catamarans free,
To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the kings of the sea!

No longer delay, let us hasten away in the Mark of the sea gull's call,
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves air our comrades all.

catamarans : fast sailing boats
comrades : friends

What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of the sea-god drives?
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our lives.

Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade, and the scent of the mango grove,
And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon with the sound of the voices we love;
But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and the dance of the wild foam's glee;
Row, brothers, row to the edge of the verge, where the low sky mates with the sea.

cocoanut : the poet spells the word 'coconut' in this way



Everyone Sang

Siegfried Sassoon

Siegfried Loraine Sassoon (1886-1967) is an English poet and soldier. He took part in the First World War. Avoiding the sentimentality and jingoism of many war poets, Sassoon wrote about the brutality and horror of war. His poetry is barbed with irony, and are harshly realistic. *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* has some of Sassoon's best war poems.

In this poem the poet describes the feelings of joy and sorrow as the war comes to an end. The soldiers are happy because the war has ended, but also sad that they have lost their friends in the war.

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on—on—and out of sight.
Everyone's voice was suddenly lilted;
And beauty came like the sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away...O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.

winging : flying

CLASS XII

Prose



Sparrows

K A Abbas

Khwaja Ahmad Abbas (1914-1987), is an Indian, short story writer, novelist, screenwriter and a journalist. His column 'Last Page' is regarded as one of the longest running columns in the history of Indian journalism. He wrote over 73 books in English, Hindi and Urdu. His famous works include *Inquilab* (1958), *The Black Sun and Other Story* (1963) and *The Walls of Glass* (1977). His stories often revolve around the downtrodden section of the society. He received the Urdu Academy Delhi Special Award in 1984.

This short story shows the transformation of a hard-hearted man to a sensitive and lonely individual. Initially notorious for his bad temper and cruelty, he becomes a man craving for love at the end of the story.

The sun was setting behind the mango grove which fringed the western extremity of the village when Rahim Khan returned from the fields. Broad and strong despite his fifty odd years, with the plough on his shoulders, and living his two oxen, he walked through the main street of the village with a haughty and unfriendly air. As he approached the chaupal where a dozen or so peasants were collected for their evening smoke, the hilarious tones of gossip died down to cautious whispers. It was only when he had vanished round the corner and the heavy tread of his footsteps was heard no more that Kallu, passing the

fringed : bordered

haughty : rude

chaupal : a community building in the rural areas

communal hookah to another, remarked, “There goes the hard-hearted devil!” To which Nanha, the fat sweet-seller added: “He is getting worse and worse every day. Only yesterday he beat poor Ramoo’s child for throwing a pebble at his oxen.”

Ramnath, the officious zaildar, volunteered further details of Rahim Khan’s recent cruelties. “And the other day he very nearly killed my mare for straying into his field.”

The zaildar, of course, thought it quite irrelevant to mention that the straying of his mare had been specially planned by his mischievous sons. The old grey-haired patel was, as always, the last to open his toothless mouth. And as usual, his words were prefaced by a pious invocation to the Almighty. “Hari Ram!” he muttered, “I have never seen such a cruel man. He has compassion neither for a child nor for a helpless animal. No wonder his own sons have run away from home.”

The subject of their conversation, meanwhile, had reached his hut which, almost symbolically, stood gaunt and aloof, at a distance from the neighbouring cluster of houses. Leaning the plough up against the low wall of his house, he proceeded to tie the oxen to a pair of big wooden stakes embedded in the ground just in front of the doorway.

“Bhai Rahim Khan!” an obsequious voice said behind him as he was about to enter the house.

“What is it?” he gruffly queried, turning round to address the old woman who had come out of the house nearest his own. As she hesitated to speak he fired a volley of questions: “What is it? I won’t eat you. Why don’t you speak, woman? Has your son been arrested again for revenue arrears or has your daughter-in-law delivered another baby?”

As she stopped for breath, the woman summoned up all her courage to utter two words, “Your wife...” “...has run away”. He completed the sentence with a grin which broadened with the realisation that he had guessed right.

“No, no,” the woman hastily explained with an apologetic look, as if she herself were responsible for his wife’s absence. “She has only gone to her brotlici at Nurpur and will be back in a few days.”

zaildar : administrative officer during the period of British rule in India

patel : the surname given to landlords

gaunt : unpleasant

obsequious : slave like

volley : series

seething : filled with anger

“Bah!” he flung back at her, opening the door. He knew that his wife would never come back.

Seething with inward wrath he entered the dark hut and sat down on the charpoy. A cat mewed in a corner. Finding no one else on whom to vent his anger he flung it out, slamming the door with violence.

There was no one to give him water to wash his dust-laden feet and hands, no one to give him supper, no one whom he could curse and beat. Rahim Khan felt uncomfortable and unhappy. He had always been angry with his wife when she was there, but her absence angered him still more.

“So she’s gone,” he mused, lying down on the cot, having decided to go to sleep without his food. During the thirty years of their married life he had always felt that she would leave him one day and, at one time, he had even hoped she would. Six years ago, his eldest son Bundu had run away from home because of a more than usual severe beating. Three years later, the younger one, Nuru joined his brother. Since that day, Rahim Khan had felt sure his wife too would run away to her brother’s house. But now that she had gone, he felt unhappy—not sorry, no, for he had never loved his wife—but only uncomfortable, as if a necessary piece of furniture had been removed. With her gone, on whom could he shower the outpourings of an embittered heart?

For thirty years his wife had been both the symbol and the target of all his grievances against his family, against society, against life.

As a youth there had been none in the village to beat him in feats of athletic skill—in wrestling, in kabadi, in diving from the canal bridge. He had loved a girl, and wanted to join a touring circus which happened to pass through the village. In the circus, he had felt, lay the key to his ambitions—a career after his own heart—travel—fame. And in Radha, the daughter of Ram Charan, the village banya, he thought he had found this soul-mate. He had first noticed her watching him at a wrestling match and it had been the greatest moment in this life when, standing up after vanquishing his adversary, he had found Kiulhu looking at him with the light of love in her eyes. After that there had been a few brief and furtive meetings when the unlettered but romantic youth had declared his love in

wrath : anger

banya : a term used to mean merchant

vanquishing : defeating

adversary : opponent

furtive : secret

unlettered : ignorant

infamous : notorious

passionate though halting words. But his parents had killed both ambitions. Circus work was too lowly and immoral for a respectable peasant. Anyway, his father, grandfather and all his ancestors had tilled the land, so he too had to do it. As for marrying Radha, a Hindu, a Kafir, the very idea was infamous and irreligious.

For some time, Rahim Khan, “with youthful resentment, toyed with the idea of open rebellion. But the tradition of centuries of serfdom ran in his blood and, however indignant he might have felt at his father’s severity, he could not summon enough courage to defy paternal authority and social traditions. After a few days, the circus left the village without Rahim Khan and the furtive-romance with Radha too came to an abrupt end. Rahim Khan’s father slyly suggested to Ram Charan that his daughter was now fifteen and ought to have been married long ago, not failing to hint at the disastrous consequences of late-marriages. Within a few weeks Radha was married to Ram Lai, a middle-aged, pot-bellied banya of the neighbouring village. With a few sad tears shed in the solitude of the night in memory of her hopeless romance with Rahim Khan, she quickly reconciled to her fate and proceeded forthwith to be mother of half-a-dozen children.

Rahim Khan also married. He had, of course, no choice in the matter. His parents selected the girl, fixed the date, ordered some gaudy clothes for him and some silver ornaments for his bride, sat him on a horse, and to the beat of a brass band, took him to the girl’s house where the Nikah was duly preformed. To the Kazi’s formal questions Rahim Khan mechanically nodded his head. Any other course was impossible. Nobody, of course, cared to ask the shy little girl who sat huddled in a dark room, only dimly conscious of the fate to which sin-had been condemned. After the ceremony, Rahim Khan’s father, in a mood of self-congratulation, boasted to his wife: “See how meekly he obeyed me. You always feared he might refuse to fall in with our arrangements. I know these youngsters. They are apt to be restless if their marriage is delayed. That is why our fathers believed in marrying away their children early. Now he will be all right!”

At that very moment, standing on the threshold of the room where his wife awaited him much as a sheep awaits the butcher, Rahim Khan made a terrible resolve to avenge

resentment : anger

reconciled : accepted an unpleasant situation

gaudy : showy

meekly : gently

threshold : corridor

himself on his parents, his family, on society. He held them all responsible for the frustration of this life's dreams. And in his confused, illogical mind he regarded his bride as a symbol of this persecution to which he had been subjected. On her he would wreak his vengeance. Iron entered his hitherto kindly soul as he rudely pushed open the door.

That was thirty years ago, Rahim Khan reflected as he lay there on his cot in the dark hut.

And had not he had his revenge? For thirty years he had ill-treated his wife, his children and his bullocks, quarrelled with everyone in the village and made himself the most hated person in the community. The thought of being so universally detested gave him grim satisfaction.

No one in the village, of course, understood or tried to understand the reasons for this strange transformation of the cheerful and kind young man into the beast that he had become. At first, their attitude towards him was one of astonished hostility, but later it changed to indifference mingled with fear. Of understanding and sympathy he received none. Shunned by everyone, with a bitterness ever gnawing at his heart, Rahim Khan sought consolation in the unquestioned authority over his wife which society allowed him.

For thirty years his wife had submitted to his persecution with the slave-like docility that is the badge of her tribe. Lately, indeed, she had become so used to corporal chastisement that it seemed unnatural if a whole week passed without beating. To Rahim Khan, beating his wife had become a part of his very existence. As sleep gathered round him, his last thought was whether he would be able to endure a life without having an opportunity of indulging in what had now become his second nature. It was perhaps the only moment when Rahim Khan had a feeling, not exactly of affection for his wife, but of loneliness without her. Never before had he realised how much the woman he hated was a part of his life.

When he awoke it was already late forenoon and he started the day by cursing his wife, for it was she who used to wake early every morning. But he was in no great hurry today. Lazily he got up and, after his ablutions, milked the goats for his breakfast which consisted of the remains of the previous day's chapattis soaked in fresh milk. Then he sat down for a smoke, with his beloved hookah beside him. Now the hut was warm and alight with the rays of the sun streaming in through the open window. In a corner they revealed some cobwebs and, having already decided to absent himself from his fields, he thought

avenge : to take revenge

gnawing : biting

docility : meekness

corporal : physical

chastisement : punishment

desist : stop

he would tidy his hut. Tying some tags to the end of a long pole, he was about to remove the cobwebs when he saw a nest in the thatched roof. Two sparrows were fluttering in and out, twittering constantly.

His first impulse was to wreck the nest with one stroke of his pole, but something within him made him desist. Throwing down the pole, he brought a stool and climbed up on it to get a better view of the sparrows' home. Two little featherless mites of red-flesh, baby sparrows hardly a day old, lay inside, while their parents hovered round Rahim Khan's face, screaming threateningly. He barely had a glimpse of the inside of the nest when the mother sparrow attacked him. Next day he resumed his daily work. Still no one talked to him in the village. From morning till late in the afternoon he would toil in the field, ploughing the furrow and watering the crops, but he returned home before sunset. Then he would lie on his cot, smoking his hookah and watching with lively interest the antics of the sparrow family. The two little ones had now grown into fine young birds, and he called them Nuru and Bundu after his lost sons whom he had not seen for several years. The four sparrows were his only friends in the world. His neighbours were still frightened of him and regarded his recent peaceful behaviour with suspicion. They were genuinely astonished that for some time no one had seen him beating his bullocks. Nanhoo and Chiddoo themselves were very happy and grateful, and their bruised bodies had almost healed.

One monsoon evening, when the sky was overcast with threatening clouds, Rahim Khan returned from the fields a little earlier than usual. He found a group of children playing on the road. They ran away as they saw him, and even left their shoes behind in their haste. In vain did Rahim Khan shout, "Why are you running away? I am not going to beat you." Meanwhile, it had started drizzling and he hurried homewards to tie up the bullocks before a big downpour came.

Entering his hut, Rahim Khan lighted the earthenware oil lamp and plain! some crumbs of bread for the sparrows before he prepared his own dinner. "O Nuru! O Bundu!" he shouted, but the sparrows did not come out. Anxious to find out what had happened to his friend, he peered into the nest and found the quartet scared and sitting huddled up within their feathers. At the very spot where the nest lay, the roof was leaking. Rahim Khan took a ladder and went out in the pouring rain to repair the damage. By the time the job was satisfactorily done he was thoroughly drenched. As he sat on the cot, Rahim Khan sneezed, but he did not heed the warning and went to sleep. Next morning he awoke with a high fever.

quartet : group of four

brooding : sad

When the villagers did not see him going to the fields for several days they grew anxious and some of them came to see what the matter was. Through a crack in the door they saw him lying on the cot talking, so they thought, to himself. “O Bundu, O Nuru, who will feed you when I am gone?”

The peasants shook their heads sympathetically. “Poor fellow,” they said, “he has gone mad. We will send for his wife to look after him.”

Next morning when Rahim Khan’s wife, anxious and weeping, came with her sons, a group of neighbours collected in sympathy. The door was locked from the inside, and in spite of loud knocking no one opened it. When they broke their way in they found the large and gaunt frame of Rahim lying in the brooding silence of the room, broken only by the fluttering of four sparrows.



The Disk

Jorge Luis Borges

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) is a noted Argentinean short story writer, poet and essayist. His work has contributed to philosophical literature and fantasy genre. His famous works include *Ficciones* (1944) and *The Aleph* (1949). His works have been translated into different languages. He was awarded the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement.

Originally written in Spanish, this story was translated into English by Paul Blackburn. This is a story of greed and a consequent sense of loss. The story is set against a background of a deep wood in old England. This background helps the author to weave elements of fantasy in this story.

I am a woodcutter. My name does not matter. The hut where I was born and where I shall probably soon die stands at the edge of the forest.

It is said of the forest that it stretches as far as the sea, which rings the whole earth and on which wooden huts like mine wend their way. Never having seen this sea, I do not know. Nor have I ever seen the other side of the forest. When we were boys my elder brother made me vow that between us we would chop down the entire woods until not a single tree was left. My brother died, and what I seek now and what I shall go on seeking—is something else. To the west runs a stream that I know how to fish with my hands. In the forest there are wolves, but wolves do not scare me, and my axe has never been unique to me.

Of my years I have never kept count. I know they are many. My eyes no see. In the village, where I venture no more, since I would lose my way, I am : as a miser. But how much treasure can a mere woodcutter have laid up?

wend : go
laboured : tired

To keep snow out, I shut tight the door of my house with a stone. One evening long ago, I heard laboured footsteps approach, and then a knock. I opened, and a dt ranger came in. He was old and tall, and he was wrapped in a threadbare blanket. A scar marked his face. His years seemed to have given him more authority than frailty, but I noticed that he was unable to get about without the help of a staff. We exchanged a few words that I no longer remember. At the end, he said, “I am homeless and sleep wherever I can. I have travelled the length and breadth of this land of the Saxons.”

These words testified to his years. My father had always spoken of the Saxon lund, which nowadays people call England.

I had bread and fish. We did not speak a word during the meal. Rain began to fall. With a few skins I made him a pallet on the earth floor, where my brother had died. When night fell, we went to sleep.

Day was dawning when we left the hut. The rain had stopped and the ground was covered with new-fallen snow. My companion’s staff slipped from his hand and he ordered me to pick it up.

“Why must I obey you?” I asked him.

“Because I am a king,” he answered.

I thought him mad. Picking up the staff, I handed it to him. He spoke with a different voice.

“I am king of the Secgens,” he said. “Often in hardpitched battle I carried my people to victory, but at the fateful hour I lost my kingdom. My name is Isern mul I am of the race of Odin.”

“I do not worship Odin,” I said. “I worship Christ.”

He went on as if he had not heard me. “I travel the paths of exile, but I am still king, for I have the disk. Do you want to see it?”

He opened the palm of his bony hand. There was nothing in it. Only then did I recall that he had always kept the hand closed.

Staring hard at me, he said, “You may touch it.”

pallet : a cloth bag filled with straw

Odin : a major god in Norse mythology

misgiving : doubt

With a certain misgiving, I touched my fingertips to his palm. I felt something cold, and saw a glitter. The hand closed abruptly. I said nothing. The man went on patiently, as if speaking to a child.

“It is Odin’s disk,” he said, “It has only one side. In all the world tl nothing else with only one side. As long as the disk remains mine, I sli; king.”

“Is it golden?” I said.

“I don’t know. It is Odin’s disk and it has only one side.”

Then and there I was overcome with greed to own the disk. If it were mine I could trade it for an ingot of gold and I would be a king. I said to the vagabond, whom to this day I go on hating, “In my hut I have buried a box of coins.’I In i are of gold and they shine like an axe. If you give me Odin’s disk, I’ll tnulc wn the box.”

He said stubbornly, “I don’t want to.”

“Then,” I said, “you may continue on your path.”

He turned his back to me. One blow with the axe at the back of his na k more than enough to bring him down, but as he fell his hand opened, and in tin air I saw the glitter. I took care to mark the spot with my axe, and dragon I ilu dead man to the stream which was running high. There I threw him in.

Coming back to my hut, I searched for the disk. I did not find it. That was years ago, and I am searching still.

ingot : a solid piece of metal, usually shaped like a brick



The Mark of Vishnu

Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh (1915-2014) has won fame as a journalist as well as a fiction writer. *With Malice towards One and All* was a very popular weekly newspaper column penned by him. His famous fictional works include *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *Black Jasmine* (1971) and *The Sunset Club* (2010). His writings are often larded with wit and barbed with satire. He received the Padma Vibhushan award in 2007.

This story criticizes superstitious beliefs and shows the tragic effects that actions based on superstitions may have on people. The author uses irony to ridicule superstitious beliefs.

“This is for the Kala Nag,” said Gunga Ram, pouring the milk into the L saucer. “Every night I leave it outside the hole near the wall and it’s gone M tin- morning.”

“Perhaps it is the cat,” we youngsters suggested.

“Cat!” said Gunga Ram with contempt. “No cat goes near that hole. Kala Nag llic. As long as I give him milk, he will not bite anyone in this house. You can all go about with bare feet and play where you like.”

We were not having any patronage from Gunga Ram.

“You’re a stupid old Brahmin,”! said. “Don’t you know snakes don’t drink milk? At least one couldn’t drink a saiucrful every day.’l he teacher told us that a snake eats only once in several days. We saw a grass snake vvhirli had just swallowed a frog. It stuck like a blob in its throat and look several day. to dissolve and go down its tail. We’ve got

dozens of them in the lab in methylated spirit. Why, last month the teacher bought one from a snake-charmer which could run both ways. It had another head with a pair of eyes at the tail. You should have seen the fun when it was put in the jar.

There wasn't an empty one in the lab. So the teacher put it in one which had a Russel's viper. He caught its two ends with a pair of forceps, dropped it in the jar, and quickly put the lid on. There was an absolute storm as it went round and round in the glass tearing the decayed viper into shreds."

Gunga Ram shut his eyes in pious horror.

"You will pay for it one day. Yes, you will."

It was no use arguing with Gunga Ram. He, like all good Hindus, believed in the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—the creator, preserver and destroyer. Of these, he was most devoted to Vishnu. Every morning he smeared his forehead with a V mark in sandalwood paste to honour the deity. Although a Brahmin, he was illiterate and full of superstition. To him, all life was sacred, even if it was of a serpent or scorpion or centipede. Whenever he saw one he quickly shoved it away lest we kill it. He picked up wasps we battered with our badminton rackets and tended their damaged wings. Sometimes he got stung. It never seemed to shake his faith. The more dangerous the animal, the more devoted Gunga Ram was to its existence. Hence the regard for snakes; above all, the cobra, who was the Kala Nag.

"We will kill your Kala Nag if we see him."

"I won't let you. It's laid a hundred eggs and if you kill it all the eggs will become cobras and the house will be full of them. Then what will you do?"

"We'll catch them alive and send them to Bombay. They milk them for anti-snake-bite serum. They pay two rupees for a live cobra. That makes two hundred rupees straightaway"

"Your doctors must have udders. I never saw a snake have any. But don't you dare touch this one. It is a phannyar—it is hooded. I've seen it. It's three hand', long. As for its hood!"

Gunga Ram opened the palms of his hands and his head swayed from side to side. "You should see it basking on the lawn in the sunlight."

"That just proves what a liar you are. The phannyar is the male, so it couldn't have laid the hundred eggs. You must have laid the eggs yourself."

viper : snake

basking : enjoying the heat

belittling : seeming unimportant

The party burst into peals of laughter.

“Must be Gunga Ram’s eggs. We’ll soon have a hundred Gunga Rams.”

Gunga Ram was squashed. It was the lot of a servant to be constantly squashed. But having the children of the household make fun of him was too much even for Gunga Ram. They were constantly belittling him with their new-fangled ideas. They never read their scriptures. Nor even what the Mahatma said about nonviolence.

It was just shotguns to kill birds and the jars of methylated spirit to drown snakes. Gunga Ram would stick to his faith in the sanctity of life. He would feed and protect snakes, because snakes were the most vile of God’s creatures on earth. If you could love them, instead of killing them, you proved your point. What the point was which Gunga Ram wanted to prove was not clear. He just proved it by leaving the saucerful of milk by the snake hole every night and finding it gone in the mornings.

One day we saw Kala Nag. The monsoons had burst with all their fury and it had rained in the night. The earth which had lain parched and dry under the withering heat of the summer sun was teeming with life. In little pools frogs croaked. The muddy ground was littered with crawling worms, centipedes and velvety ladybirds. Grass had begun to show and the banana leaves glistened bright and glossy green. The rain had flooded Kala Nag’s hole. He sat in an open patch on the lawn. His shiny black hood glistened in the sunlight. He was big—almost six feet in length, and rounded and fleshy, as my wrist.

“Looks like a King Cobra. Let’s get him.”

Kala Nag did not have much of a chance. The ground was slippery and all the holes and gutters were full of water. Gunga Ram was not at home to help.

Armed with long bamboo sticks, we surrounded Kala Nag before he even scented danger. When he saw us his eyes turned a fiery red, and he hissed and spat on all sides. Then like lightning Kala Nag made for the banana grove.

The ground was too muddy and he slithered. He had hardly gone five yards when a stick caught him in the middle and broke his back. A volley of blows reduced him to a squishy-squashy pulp of black and white jelly, spattered with blood and mud. His head was still undamaged.

“Don’t damage the hood,” veiled one of us. “We’ll take Kala Nag to school.”

So we slid a bamboo stick under the cobra’s belly and lifted him on the end of the pole. We put him in a large biscuit tin and tied it up with string. We hid the tin under a bed.

At night I hung around Gunga Ram waiting for him to get his saucer of milk. “Aren’t you going to take any milk for the Kala Nag tonight?”

“Yes”, answered Gunga Ram irritably. “You go to bed.”

He did not want any more argument on the subject.

“He won’t need the milk anymore,”

Gunga Ram paused.

“Why?”

“Oh, nothing. There are so many frogs about. They must taste better than your milk. You never put any sugar in it anyway.”

The next morning Gunga Ram brought back the saucer with the milk still in it. He looked sullen and suspicious.

“I told you snakes like frogs better than milk.”

Whilst we changed and had breakfast, Gunga Ram hung around us. The school bus came and we clambered into it with the tin. As the bus started we held out the tin to Gunga Ram.

“Here’s your Kala Nag. Safe in this box, We are going to put him in spirit,” We left him standing speechless, staring at the departing bus.

There was great excitement in the school. We were a set of four brothers, known for our toughness. We had proved it again,

“A King Cobra.”

“Six feet long.”

“Phannyar.”

The tin was presented to the science teacher. It was on the teacher’s table, and we waited for him to open it and admire our kill. The teacher pretended to be indifferent and set us some problems to work on. With studied matter-of-factness he fetched his forceps

sullen : bad-tempered

clambered : climbed

indifferent : neglectful

Krait : a type of poisonous snake

taut : tight

petrified : motionless with fear

hysterically : uncontrolled emotion

and ajar with a banded Krait curled in muddy methylated spirit. He began to hum and untie the cord around the box.

As soon as the cord was loosened the lid flew into the air, just missing the teacher's nose. There Was Kala Nag. His eyes burnt like embers and his hood was taut and undamaged. With a loud hiss he went for the teacher's face. The teacher pushed himself back on the chair and toppled over. He fell on the floor and stared at the cobra, petrified with fear. The boys stood up on their desks and yelled hysterically.

Kala Nag surveyed the scene with his bloodshot eyes. His forked tongue darted in and out excitedly. He spat furiously and then made a bid for freedom. He fell out of the tin onto the floor with a loud plop. His back was broken in several places and he dragged himself painfully to the door. When he got to the threshold he drew himself up once again with his hood outspread to face mother danger.

Outside the classroom stood Gunga Ram with a saucer and a jug of milk. As soon as he saw Kala Nag come up he went down on his knees. He poured the milk into the saucer and placed it near the threshold. With hands folded in prayer he bowed his head to the ground craving forgiveness. In desperate fury, the cobra hissed and spat and bit Gunga Ram all over the head—then with great effort dragged himself into a gutter and wriggled out of view.

Gunga Ram collapsed with hands covering his face. He groaned in agony. The poison blinded him instantly. Within a few minutes he turned pale and blue and froth appeared in his mouth.

On his forehead were little drops of blood. These the teacher wiped with his handkerchief. Underneath was the V mark where the Kala Nag had dug his fangs.



Science and Religion

Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) is a famous German scientist and philosopher. He published more than three hundred scientific papers alongwith over one hundred and fifty non-scientific works. Einstein transcends the objective, non-committal vision of science and lends a subjective and philanthropic quality to science. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in the year 1921.

In this essay, Einstein probes into the mutual relationship between science and religion, and attempts to show the manner in which science and religion influence each other.

I

During the last century, and part of the one before, it was widely held th;ii there was an unreconcilable conflict between knowledge and belief. The opinion prevailed among advanced minds that it was time that belief should be replaced increasingly by knowledge; belief that did not itself rest on knowledge was superstition, and as such had to be opposed. According to this conception, the sole function of education was to open the way to thinking and knowing, and the school, as the outstanding organ for the people's education, must serve that end exclusively.

One will probably find but rarely, if at all, the rationalistic standpoint expressed in such crass form; for any sensible man would see at once how one-sided is such a statement of the position. But it is just as well to state a thesis starkly and nakedly, if one wants to

unreconcilable : that cannot be matched

rationalistic : based on reason

crass : without sympathy

starkly : plainly

clear up one's mind as to its nature.

It is true that convictions can best be supported with experience and clear thinking. On this point one must agree unreservedly with the extreme rationalist. The weak point of his conception is, however, this, that those convictions which are necessary and determinant for our conduct and judgements cannot be found solely along this solid scientific way.

For the scientific method can teach us nothing else beyond how facts are related to, and conditioned by, each other. The aspiration toward such objective knowledge belongs to the highest of which man is capable, and you will certainly not suspect me of wishing to belittle the achievements and the heroic efforts of man in this sphere. Yet it is equally clear that knowledge of what is, does not open the door directly to what should be.

One can have the clearest and most complete knowledge of what is, and yet not be able to deduct from that what should be the goal of our human aspirations. Objective knowledge provides us with powerful instruments for the achievements of certain ends, but the ultimate goal itself and the longing to reach it must come from another source. And it is hardly necessary to argue for the view that our existence and our activity acquire meaning only by the setting up of such a goal and of corresponding values.

The knowledge of truth as such is wonderful, but it is so little capable of being as a guide that it cannot prove even the justification and the value of the aspiration toward that very knowledge of truth. Here we face, therefore, the limits of the purely rational conception of our existence.

But it must not be assumed that intelligent thinking can play no part in the formation of the goal and of ethical judgements. When someone realises that for the achievement of an end certain means would be useful, the means itself becomes thereby an end. Intelligence makes clear to us the interrelation of means and ends. But mere thinking cannot give us a sense of the ultimate and fundamental ends.

To make clear these fundamental ends and valuations, and to set them fast in the emotional life of the individual, seems to me precisely the most important function which religion has to perform in the social life of man. And if one asks whence derives the authority of such fundamental ends, since they cannot be stated and justified merely by reason, one can only answer: they exist in a healthy society as powerful traditions, which act upon the conduct and aspirations and judgements of the individuals; they are

convictions : beliefs

unreservedly : without doubts

determinant : deciding

whence : where (old usage)

there, that is, as something living, without its being necessary to find justification for their existence. They come into being not through demonstration but through revelation, through the medium of powerful personalities. One must not attempt to justify them, but rather to sense their nature simply and clearly.

The highest principles for our aspirations and judgements are given to us in the Jewish-Christian religious tradition. It is a very high goal which, with our weak powers, we can reach only very inadequately, but which gives a sun-foundation to our aspirations and valuations. If one were to take that goal out of its religious form and look merely at its purely human side, one might state it perhaps thus: free and responsible development of the individual, so that he may place his powers freely and gladly in the service of all mankind.

There is no room in this for the divinisation of a nation, of a class, let alone of an individual. Are we not all children of one father, as it is said in religious language? Indeed, even the divinisation of humanity, as an abstract totality, would not be in the spirit of that ideal. It is only to the individual that a soul is given. And the high destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule, or to impose himself in any other way.

If one looks at the substance rather than at the form, then one can take these words as expressing also the fundamental democratic position. The true democrat can worship his nation as little as can the man who is religious, in our sense of the term.

What, then, in all this, is the function of education and of the school? They should help the young person to grow up in such a spirit that these fundamental principles should be to him as the air which he breathes. Teaching alone cannot do that.

If one holds these high principles clearly before one's eyes, and compare, them with the life and spirit of our times, then it appears glaringly that civilised mankind finds itself at present in grave danger. In the totalitarian states it is the rulers themselves who strive actually to destroy that spirit of humanity. In less threatened parts it is nationalism and intolerance, as well as the oppression of the individuals by economic means, which threaten to choke these most precious traditions.

A realisation of how great is the danger is spreading, however, among thinking people, and there is much search for means with which to meet the danger—means in the field of national and international politics, of legislation, or organisation in general.

Such efforts are, no doubt, greatly needed. Yet the ancients knew something which we seem to have forgotten. All means prove but a blunt instrument, if they have not behind

abstract : not having physical reality

totalitarian : a country or system of government in which there is only one political party

them a living spirit. But if the longing for the achievement of the goal is powerfully alive within us, then we shall not lack the strength to find the means for reaching the goal and for translating it into deeds.

II

It would not be difficult to come to an agreement as to what we understand by science. Science is the century-old endeavour to bring together by means of systematic thought the perceptible phenomena of this world into as thoroughgoing an association as possible. To put it boldly, it is the attempt at the posterior reconstruction of existence by the process of conceptualisation. But when asking myself what religion is I cannot think of the answer so easily. And even after finding an answer which may satisfy me at this particular moment, I still remain convinced that I can never under any circumstances bring together, even to a slight extent, the thoughts of all those who have given this question serious consideration.

At first, then, instead of asking what religion is I should prefer to ask what characterises the aspirations of a person who gives me the impression of being religious: a person who is religiously enlightened appears to me to be one who has, to the best of his ability, liberated himself from the fetters of his selfish desires and is preoccupied with thoughts, feelings and aspirations to which he clings because of their superpersonal value. It seems to me that what is important is the force of this superpersonal content and the depth of the conviction I concerning its overpowering meaningfulness, regardless of whether any attempt is made to unite this content with a Divine Being, for otherwise it would not be possible to count Buddha and Spinoza as religious personalities. Accordingly, a religious person is devout in the sense that he has no doubt of the significance and loftiness of those superpersonal objects and goals which neither require nor are capable of rational foundation. They exist with the same necessity and matter of factness as he himself. In this sense religion is the age-old endeavour of mankind to become clearly and completely conscious of these values and goals and constantly to strengthen and extend their effect. If one conceives of religion and science according to these definitions then a conflict between them appears impossible. For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be, and outside of its domain value judgements of all kinds remain necessary. Religion, on

endeavour : attempt

perceptible : feel with one's senses

fetters : chains

preoccupied : busy

devout : holy

domain : area

misapprehension : awrong idea

the other hand, deals only with evaluations of human thought and action: it cannot justifiably speak of facts and relationships between facts. According to this interpretation the well-known conflicts between religion and science in the past must all be ascribed to a misapprehension of the situation which has been described.

For example, a conflict arises when a religious community insists on the absolute truthfulness of all statements recorded in the Bible. This means an intervention on the part of religion into the sphere of science; this is where the struggle of the Church against the doctrines of Galileo and Darwin belongs. On the other hand, representatives of science have often made an attempt to arrive at fundamental judgements with respect to values and ends on the basis of scientific method, and in this way have set themselves in opposition to religion. These conflicts have all sprung from fatal errors.

Now, even though the realms of religion and science in themselves are clearly marked off from each other, nevertheless there exist between the two strong reciprocal relationships and dependencies. Though religion maybe that which determines the goal, it has, nevertheless, learned from science, in the broadest sense, what means will contribute to the attainment of the goals it has set up. But science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration toward truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs the faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation maybe expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.

Though I have asserted above that in truth a legitimate conflict between religion and science cannot exist, I must nevertheless qualify this assertion once again on an essential point, with reference to the actual content of historical religions. This qualification has to do with the concept of god. During the youthful period of mankind's spiritual evolution human fantasy created gods in man's own image, who, by the operations of their will were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world. Man sought to alter the disposition of these gods in his own favour by means of magic and prayer. The idea of god in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of that old concept of the gods. Its anthropomorphic character is shown, for instance, by the fact that men appeal to the Divine Being in prayers and plead for the fulfillment of their wishes.

legitimate : lawful

disposition : character

sublimation : the act of purifying

anthropomorphic : treating gods, animals or objects with human qualities

Nobody, certainly, will deny that the idea of the existence of an omnipotent, just, and omnibeneficent personal god is able to accord man solace, help and guidance; also, by virtue of its simplicity it is accessible to the most undeveloped mind. But, on the other hand, there are decisive weaknesses attached to this idea in itself, which have been painfully felt since the beginning of history. That is, if this being is omnipotent, then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought and every human feeling and aspiration is also. His work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an Almighty Being? In giving out punishment and reward He would to a certain extent be passing judgment on Himself. How can this be combined with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to Him?

The main source of the present-day conflicts between the spheres of religion and of science lies in this concept of a personal god. It is the aim of science to establish general rules which determine the reciprocal connection of objects and events in time and space. For these rules, or laws of nature, absolutely general validity is required—not proven. It is mainly a program, and faith in the possibility of its accomplishment in principle is only founded on partial successes. But hardly anyone could be found who would deny these partial successes and ascribe them to human self-deception. The fact that on the basis of such laws we are able to predict the temporal behaviour of phenomena in certain domains with great precision and certainty is deeply embedded in the consciousness of the modern man, even though he may have grasped very little of the contents of those laws. He need only consider that planetary courses within the solar system may be calculated in advance with great exactitude on the basis of a limited number of simple laws. In a similar way, though not with the same precision, it is possible to calculate in advance the mode of operation of an electric motor, a transmission system, or of a wireless apparatus, even when dealing with a novel development.

To be sure, when the number of factors coming into play in a phenomenological complex is too large, scientific method in most cases fails us. One need only think of the weather, in which case prediction even for a few days ahead is impossible. Nevertheless,

omnipotent : all powerful

omnibeneficent : always showing kindness

solace : comfort

righteousness : morally right

temporal : temporary

precision : accuracy

phenomenological : dealing with what one sees, hears, feels

confronted : faced with

causal : connected with the relationship between incident and reason

no one doubts that we are confronted with a causal connection whose causal components are in the main known to us. Occurrences in this domain are beyond the reach of exact prediction because of the variety of factors in operation, not because of any lack of order in nature.

We have penetrated far less deeply into the regularities obtaining within the realm of living things, but deeply enough nevertheless to sense at least the rule of fixed necessity. One need only think of the systematic order in heredity, and in the effect of poisons, as for instance alcohol, on the behaviour of organic beings. What is still lacking here is a grasp of connections of profound generality, but not a knowledge of order in itself.

The more a man is imbued with the ordered regularity of all events the firmer becomes his conviction that there is no room left by the side of this ordered regularity for causes of a different nature. For him neither the rule of human nor the rule of divine will exist as an independent cause of natural events. To be sure, the doctrine of a personal god interfering with natural events could never be refuted, in the real sense, by science, for this doctrine can always take refuge in those domains in which scientific knowledge has not yet been able to set foot.

But I am persuaded that such behaviour on the part of the representatives of religion would not only be unworthy but also fatal. For a doctrine which is able to maintain itself not in clear light but only in the dark, will of necessity lose its effect on mankind, with incalculable harm to human progress. In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal god, that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests. In their labours they will have to avail themselves of those forces which are capable of cultivating the Good, the True, and the Beautiful in humanity itself. This is, to be sure, a more difficult but an incomparably more worthy task. (This thought is convincingly presented in Herbert Samuel's book, *Belief and Action*.) After religious teachers accomplish the refining process indicated, they will surely recognise with joy that true religion has been ennobled and made more profound by scientific knowledge.

If it is one of the goals of religion to liberate mankind as far as possible from the bondage of egocentric cravings, desires and fears, scientific reasoning can aid religion in yet another sense. Although it is true that it is the goal of science to discover rules which

refuted : proved wrong

ethical : connected with beliefs about what is right and wrong

stature : the importance and respect that a person has

egocentric : thinking only about oneself

reverence : respect

emancipation : freedom

incarnate : representing a particular quality in a physical or human form

permit the association and foretelling of facts, this is not its only aim. It also seeks to reduce the connections discovered to the smallest possible number of mutually independent conceptual elements. It is in this striving after the rational unification of the manifold that it encounters its greatest successes, even though it is precisely this attempt which causes it to run the greatest risk of falling a prey to illusions. But whoever has undergone the intense experience of successful advances made in this domain is moved by profound reverence for the rationality made manifest in existence. By way of the understanding he achieves a far-reaching emancipation from the shackles of personal hopes and desires, and thereby attains that humble attitude of mind toward the grandeur of reason incarnate in existence, and which, in its profoundest depths, is inaccessible to man. This attitude, however, appears to me to be religious, in the highest sense of the word. And so it seems to me that science not only purifies the religious impulse of the dross of its anthropomorphism, but also contributes to a religious spiritualisation of our understanding of life.

The further the spiritual evolution of mankind advances, the more certain it seems to me that the path to genuine religiosity does not lie through the fear of life and the fear of death and blind faith, but through striving after rational knowledge. In this sense I believe that the priest must become a teacher if he wishes to do justice to his lofty educational mission.

Poetry



A Bird Came Down the Walk

Emily Dickinson

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson (1830-1886) is one of the most famous American poets. Her poems are preoccupied with themes of death and immortality. Her notable works include *Because I could not Stop for Death* and *Hope is a thing with Feather*. Her poems are written in a unique style comprising of short lines, and the use of slant rhyme, unconventional capitalisation and punctuation.

This poem shows Dickinson's power of minute observation as she reveals the beauty of nature. Common elements of nature appear uncommonly beautiful by the artistry of Dickinson's poetic language.

A bird came down the walk:

He did not know I saw;

He bit an angle-worm in halves

And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew

From a convenient grass,

And then hopped sidewise to the wall

To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad,—
They looked like frightened beads, I thought
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

stirred : moved

plashless : without disturbance



Break, Break, Break

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) is a famous English poet. In his poetry, he reflected the conflicts between science and religion, doubt and faith that marked the age. His famous works include *In Memoriam*, *Ulysses* and *Tithonus*. He is noted for lyricism in short poems like *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Tears*, *Idle Tears* and *Crossing the Bar*. He is the organ voice of Victorian England and became the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom during much of Queen Victoria's reign.

This poem is an elegy mourning the death of the poet's friend Arthur Hallam. In the poem, the sea is used to represent something greater and beyond the cycle of life and death.

Break, break, break,

On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!

And I would that my tongue could utter

The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,

That he shouts with his sister at play!

O, well for the sailor lad,

That he sings in his boat on the bay!

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And the stately ships go on

To their haven under the hill;

But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,

And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break

At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!

But the tender grace of a day that is dead

Will never come back to me.



The World is too Much With Us

William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is a noted English Romantic poet. Along with his poet friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge he wrote *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) that paved the way for the Romantic Movement in English Literature. His poems reflect his deep love for nature. His famous poetical works includes *The Prelude*, *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*.

In this sonnet, Wordsworth shows how materialism distances human beings from Nature that result in the loss of harmony between Man and Nature.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;

bosom : chest

pagan : non-Christian

suckled : nourished

creed : a set of religious beliefs

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For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea, Have
glimpses that would make me less forlorn; Have
sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

lea : meadow

forlorn : lonely

Proteus : a Greek god of the sea

Triton : a fish-tailed Greek sea-god

wreathed : decorated



Lotus

Toru Dutt

Toru Dutt (1856-1877) is an Indian poet who wrote in English and French. Her poems reveal the influence of British Romantic and Victorian poet. Besides original writing, she has many translations. *Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) is a volume of French poems that she had translated into English. Her poems are often nostalgic and reflect the use of Indian, Greek and Roman mythologies. Her famous works include *Sita* and *Our Casuarina Tree*.

In this sonnet, Toru Dutt praises the lotus flower. The poem has many references to Greek and Roman mythological gods.

Love came to Flora asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power
Had sung their claims. “The rose can never tower
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien”—

Flora : goddess of flowers and the season of spring in Roman mythology

bards : poets

mien : appearance of the face

“But is the lily lovelier?” Thus between
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche’s bower.
“Give me a flower delicious as the rose
And stately as the lily in her pride”—
“But of what colour?”—”Rose-red,” Love first chose,
Then prayed,—”No, lily-white,—or, both provide;”
And Flora gave the lotus, “rose-red” dyed,
And “lily-white,”—the queenliest flower that blows.

flower-factions : groups among

strife : struggle

Psyche : a goddess in Greek and Roman mythology

bower : shelter

stately : majestic

Play



The Rising of the Moon

Lady Gregory

Isabella Augusta, Lady Gregory (1852-1932) is an Irish playwright and poet. She is remembered for her work behind the Irish Literary Revival. She collaborated in establishing the Irish Literary Theatre and the Abbey Theatre. Her famous plays include *Spreading the News* (1904), *The Golden Apple* (1916) and *The Dragon* (1920).

This play is written against the background of Ireland's struggle for freedom. The play shows how patriotic feelings united Irish people to fight for their independence.

PERSONS

Sergeant

Policeman X

Policeman B

A Ragged Man

Scene: *Side of a quay in a seaport town. Some posts and chains. A large barrel. Enter three policemen. Moonlight.*

[Sergeant, who is older than the others, crosses the stage to right and looks down steps. The others put down a pot and unroll a bundle of placards.]

quay : a platform in a harbour

placards : large written or printed notices

Policeman B: I think this would be a good place to put up a notice. [*Hepoints to barrel.*]

Policman X: Better ask him. [*Calls to Sergeant.*] Will this be a good place for a placard?
[*No answer.*]

Policeman B: Will we put up a notice here on the barrel?

[*No answer.*]

Sergeant: There's a flight of steps here that leads to the water. This is a place that should be minded well. If he got down here, his friends might have a boat to meet him; they might send it in here from outside.

Policeman B: Would the barrel be a good place to put a notice up? **Sergeant:** It might; you can put it there. [*They paste the notice up.*]

Sergeant: [*reading it*] Dark hair, dark eyes, smooth face, height five feet five— there's not much to take hold of in that. It's a pity I had no chance of seeing him before he broke out of gaol. They say he's a wonder, that it's he makes all the plans for the whole organisation. There isn't another man in Ireland would have broken gaol the way he did. He must have some friends among the gaolers.

Policeman B: A hundred pounds is little enough for the Government to offer for him. You may be sure any man in the force that takes him will get promotion.

Sergeant: I'll mind this place myself. I wouldn't wonder at all if he came this way. He might come slipping along there [*points to side of quay*], and his friends might be waiting for him there [*points down steps*], and once he got away it's little chance we'd have of finding him; it's maybe under a load of kelp he'd be in a fishing boat, and not one to help a married man that wants it to the reward.

Policeman X: And if we get him itself, nothing but abuse on our heads for ii from the people, and maybe from our own relations.

Sergeant: Well, we have to do our duty in the force. Haven't we the whole country depending on us to keep law and order? It's those that are down would be up and those that are up would be down, if it wasn't for us. Well, hurry on, you have plenty of other places to placard yet, and come back here then to me You can take the lantern. Don't be too long now. It's very lonesome here with nothing but the moon.

gaol : jail

gaolers : jailers

kelp : type of brown seaweed

assize : meeting of a court

Policeman B: It's a pity we can't stop with you. The Government should have brought more police into the town, with him in gaol, and at assize time too. Well, good luck to your watch.

[They go out.]

Sergeant: *[walks up and down once or twice and looks at placard]* A hundred pounds and promotion sure. There must be a great deal of spending in a hundred pounds. It's a pity some honest man not to be better of that.

[A ragged man appears at left and tries to slip past. Sergeant suddenly turns.]

Sergeant: Where are you going?

Man: I'm a poor ballad-singer, your honour. I thought to sell some of these *[holds out bundle of ballads]* to the sailors. *[He goes on.]*

Sergeant: Stop! Didn't I tell you to stop? You can't go on there.

Man: Oh, very well. It's a hard thing to be poor. All the world's against the poor!

Sergeant: Who are you?

Man: You'd be as wise as myself if I told you, but I don't mind. I'm one Jimmy Walsh, a ballad-singer.

Sergeant: Jimmy Walsh? I don't know that name.

Man: Ah, sure, they know it well enough in Ennis. Were you ever in Ennis, sergeant?

Sergeant: What brought you here?

Man: Sure, it's to the assizes I came, thinking I might a few shillings here or there. It's in the one train with the judges I lame.

Sergeant: Well, if you came so far, you may as well go farther, for you'll walk out of this.

Man: I will, I will; I'll just go on where I was going. *[Goes toward steps.]*

Sergeant: Come back from those steps; no one has leave to pass down them tonight.

Man: I'll just sit on (he lop ol'ilu- steps till I see some sailor buy a ballad off me that would give me my supper. They do be late going back to the ship. It's often I saw them in Cork carried down the quay in a hand-cart.

Sergeant: Move on, I tell you. I won't have any one lingering about the quay tonight.

ballad : a poem that is like a story

lingering : delaying

Man: Well, I'll go. It's the poor have the hard life! Maybe yourself might like one, sergeant. Here's a good sheet now. *[Turns one over.]* 'Content and a pipe'—that's not much. "The Peeler and the goat"—you wouldn't like that. 'Johnny Hart'—that's a lovely song.

Sergeant: Move on.

Man: Ah, wait till you hear it. *[Sings.]*

There was a rich farmer's daughter lived near the town of Ross;
She courted a Highland soldier, his name was Johnny Hart
Says the mother to her daughter, "I'll go distracted mad
If you marry that Highland soldier dressed up in Highland plaid."

Sergeant: Stop that noise.

[Man wraps up his ballads and shuffles towards the steps.] Sergeant: Where are you going?

Man: Sure you told me to be going, and I am going.

Sergeant: Don't be a fool. I didn't tell you to go that way; I told you to go bad'; to the town.

Man: Back to the town, is it?

Sergeant: *[taking him by the shoulder and shoving him before him]* Here, I'll show you the way. Be off with you. What are you stopping for?

Man: *[who has been keeping his eye on the notice, points to it]* I think I know wliai you're waiting for, sergeant.

Sergeant: What's that to you?

Man: And I know well the man you're waiting for—T know him well- -I'll Ingoing. *[He shuffles on.]*

Sergeant: You know him? Come back here. What sort is he?

Man: Come back is it, sergeant? Do you want to have me killed?

Sergeant: Why do you say that?

Man: Never mind. I'm going. I wouldn't be in your shoes if the reward was ten times as much.

[Goes on offstage to left.] Not if it was ten times as much.

plaid : type of thick cloth

shoving : pushing

Sergeant: *[rushing after him]* Come back here, come back. *[Drags him back.]* What sort is he? Where did you see him?

Man: I saw him in my own place, in the County Clare. I tell you you wouldn't like to be looking

at him. You'd be afraid to be in the one place with him. There isn't a weapon he doesn't know

the use of, and as to strength, his muscles are as hard as that board. *[Slaps barrel]*

Sergeant: Is he as bad as that? **Man:** He is then. **Sergeant:** Do you tell me so?

Man: There was a poor man in our place, a sergeant from Ballyvaughan.—It was with a lump of stone he did it.

Sergeant: I never heard of that.

Man: And you wouldn't, sergeant. It's not everything that happens gets into the papers. And there was a policeman in plain clothes, too...It is in Limerick he was...It was after the time of the attack on the police barrack in Kilmallock... Moonlight...justlike this... waterside...Nothing was known lot irilam.

Sergeant: Do you say so? It's a terrible country to belong to.

Man: That's so, indeed! You might hr standing their, looking out that way, thinking you saw him

coming up this side of the quay *[points]*, and he might be coming up this other side *[points]*, and he'd be on you before you knew where you were.

Sergeant: It's a whole troop of police they ought to put here to stop a man like that.

Man: But if you'd like me to stop with you, I could be looking down this side. I could be sitting up here on this barrel.

Sergeant: And you know him well, too?

Man: I'd know him a mile off, sergeant.

Sergeant: But you wouldn't want to share the reward?

Man: Is it a poor man like me, that has to be going the roads and singing in fairs, to have the name on him that he took a reward? But you don't want me. I'll be safer in the town.

Sergeant: Well, you can stop.

barrack : a large building or group of buildings for the police or army

Man: *[getting up on barrel]* All right, sergeant, I wonder now, you're tired out, sergeant, walking up and down the way you are.

Sergeant: If I'm tired I'm used to it.

Man: You might have hard work before you tonight yet. Take it easy while you can. There's plenty of room up here on the barrel, and you see farther when you're higher up.

Sergeant: Maybe so. *[Gets up beside him on barrel, facing right.]*

[They sit back to back, looking different ways.] You made me feel a bit queer with the way you talked.

Man: Give me a match, sergeant *[He gives it and Man lights pipe.]*; take a draw yourself? It'll quiet you. Wait now till I give you a light, but you needn't turn round. Don't take your eye off the quay for the life of you.

Sergeant: Never fear, I won't. *[Lights pipe.] [They both smoke.]*

Indeed it's a hard thing to be in the force, out at night and no thanks for it, for all the danger we're in. And it's little we get but abuse from the people, and no choice but to obey our orders, and never asked when a man is sent into danger, if you are a married man with a family.

Man: *[sings]*

As through the hills I walked to view the hills and shamrock plain, I stood awhile where nature

smiles to view the rocks and streams, On a matron fair I fixed my eyes beneath a fertile vale, And she sang her song it was on the wrong of poor old Granuaile.

Sergeant: Stop that; that's no song to be singing in these times.

Man: Ah, sergeant, I was only singing to keep my heart up. It sinks when I think of him. To think of us two sitting here, and he creeping up the quay, maybe, to get to us.

Sergeant: Are you keeping a good lookout?

Man: I am; and for no reward too. Amn't I the fool man? But when I saw a man in trouble, I never could help trying to get him out of it. What's that? Did something hit me? *[Rubs his heart]*

Sergeant: *[patting him on the shoulder]* You will get your reward in heaven. Man: I know that, I know that, sergeant, but life is precious. Sergeant: Well, you can sing if it gives you more courage.

shamrock : a small plant

matron : a woman

vale : a valley (old usage)

Man: *[sings]*

Her head was bare, her hands and feet with iron bands were bound,
 Her pensive strain and plaintive wail mingles with the evening gale
 And the song she sang with mournful air, I am old Granuaile.
 Her lips so sweet that monarchs kissed...

Sergeant: That's not it.. ."Her gown she wore was stained with gore."...That's it—you missed that.

Man: You're right, sergeant, so it is, I missed it. *[Repeatsline.]* "But to think of";i man like you knowing a song like that.

Man: Now, I daresay, sergeant, in your youth, you used to be sitting up on a wall, the way you are sitting up on this barrel now, and the other lads beside you, you singing 'Granuaile'?...

Sergeant: I did then.

Man: And the 'Shan Van Vocht'?...

Sergeant: I did then.

Man: And the 'Green on the Cape'?

Sergeant: That was one of them.

Man: And maybe the man you are watching for tonight used to be sitting on the wall, when he was young, and singing those same songs.. .It's a queer world...

Sergeant: Whisht!... .I think I see something coming.. .It's only a dog.

Man: And isn't it a queer world?...Maybe it's one of the boys you used to be singing with that time you will be arresting today or tomorrow, and sending into the dock...

Sergeant: That's true indeed.

Man: And maybe one night, after you had been singing, if the other boys had told you some plan they had, some plan to free the country, you might have joined with them.. .and maybe it is you might be in trouble now.

Sergeant: Well, who knows but I might? I had a great spirit in those days.

pensive : sad
gale : strong wind
gore : blood

Man: It's a queer world, sergeant, and it's little any mother knows when she sees her child creeping on the floor what might happen to it before it has gone-through its life, or who will be who in the end.

Sergeant: That's a queer thought now, and a true thought. Wait now till I think it out. If it wasn't for the sense I have, and for my wife and family, and for me joining the force the time I did, it might be myself now would be after breaking gaol and hiding in the dark, and it might be him that's hiding in the dark and that got out of gaol would be sitting up here where I am on this barrel.. .And it might be myself would be creeping up trying to make my escape from himself, and it might be himself would be keeping the law, and myself would be breaking it, and myself would be trying to put a bullet in his head or to take up a lump oi stone the way you said he did.. .no, that myself did.. .Oh! [*Gasps. After a pause.*] What's that? [*Grasps man's arm.*]

Man: [*jumps off barrel and listens, looking out over water*] It's nothing, sergeant.

Sergeant: I thought it might be a boat. I had a notion there might be friends of his coming about the quays with a boat.

Man: Sergeant, I am thinking it was with the people you were, and not with the law you were, when you were a young man.

Sergeant: Well, if I was foolish then, that time's gone.

Man: Maybe, sergeant, it comes into your head sometimes, in spite of youi belt and your tunic, that it might have been as well for you to have followed Granuaile.

Sergeant: It's no business of yours what I think.

Sergeant: [*gets off barrel*] Don't talk to me like that. I have my duties and I know them.

Man: [*sings*]

O, then, tell me, Shawn O'Farrell,
Where the gathering is to be.
In the old spot by the river
Right well known to you and me!

Sergeant: Stop that! Stop that, I tell you!

Man: [*sings louder*]

One word more, for signal token,
Whistle up the marching tune,
With your pike upon your shoulder,
At the Rising of the Moon.

pike : a weapon with a sharp blade on a long wooden handle

Sergeant: If you don't stop that, I'll arrest you.

[A whistle from below answers, repeating the air.]

Sergeant: That's a signal. *[Stands between him and steps.]* You must not pass this way... Step farther back... Who are you? You are no ballad-singer.

Man: You needn't ask who I am—that placard will tell you. *[Points to placard.]*

Sergeant: You are the man I am looking for.

Man: *[takes off hat and wig]*

[Sergeant seizes them.]

I am. There's a hundred pounds on my head. There is a friend of mine below in a boat. He knows a safe place to bring me to.

Sergeant: *[looking still at hat and wig]* It's a pity! It's a pity. You deceived me. You deceived me well.

Man: I am a friend of Granuaile is a hundred pounds on my head.

Sergeant: It's a pity, it's a pity!

Man: Will you let me pass, or must I make you let me?

Sergeant: I am in the force. I will not let you pass.

Man: I thought to do it with my tongue. *[Puts hand in breast.]* What is that?

Voice of Policeman X: *[outside]* Here, this is where we left him.

Sergeant: It's my comrades coming.

Man: You won't betray me... the friend of Granuaile. *[Slips behind barrel.]*

Voice of **Policeman B:** That was the last of the placards.

Policeman X: *[as they come in]* If he makes his escape it won't be unknown he'll make it. *[Sergeant puts hat and wig behind his back.]*

Policeman B: Did any one come this way?

Sergeant: *[after a pause]* No one.

Policeman B: No one at all?

Sergeant: No one at all.

Policeman B: We had no orders to go back to the station; we can stop along with you.

Sergeant: I don't want you. There is nothing for you to do here.

Policeman B: You bade us to come back here and keep watch with you.

Sergeant: I'd sooner be alone. Would any man come this way and you making all that talk? It is better the place to be quiet.

Policeman B: Well, we'll leave you the lantern anyhow.

It lands it to him.]

Sergeant: I don't want it. Bring it with you.

Policeman B: You might want it. There are clouds coming up and you have the darkness of the night before you yet. I'll leave it over here on the barrel. *[Goes to barrel.]*

Sergeant: Bring it with you I tell you. No more talk.

Policeman B: Well, I thought it might be a comfort to you. I often think when I have it in my hand and can be flashing it about into every dark corner *[doing so]* that it's the same as being beside the fire at home, and the bits of bogwood blazing up now and again. *[Flashes it about, now on the barrel, now on Sergeant]*

Sergeant: *[furious]* Be off the two of you, yourselves and your lantern! *[They go out. Man comes from behind barrel. He and Sergeant stand looking at one another.]*

Sergeant: What are you waiting for?

Man: For my hat, of course, and my wig. You wouldn't wish me to get my death of cold? *[Sergeant gives them.]*

Man: *[going towards steps]* Well, goodnight, comrade, and thank you. You did me a good turn tonight, and I'm obliged to you. Maybe I'll be able to do as much for you when the small rise up and the big fall down.. .when we all change places at the rising *[waves his hand and disappears]* of the moon.

Sergeant: *[turning his back to audience and reading placard]* A hundred pounds reward! A hundred pounds! *[Turns towards audience.]* I wonder, now, am I as great a fool as I think I am?

bade : ordered

bogwood : wood trees

ENGLISH A SYLLABUS

CLASS XI-XII

Prose - XI & XII

1.	One of these Days	Gabriel Garcia Marquez
2.	The Sunderbans Inheritance	Bittu Sehgal
3.	Making Writing Simple	J B Priestley
4.	Through the Tunnel	Doris Lessing
5.	Michael Angelo	Gulzar
6.	Debut on Stage	Charles Chaplin
7.	War	Luigi Pirandello
8.	A Chameleon	Anton Chekov
9.	A Face on the Wall	E V Lucas
10.	Open Window	Saki
11.	A Bouquet of Love	Ruskin Bond
12.	The Crippling Mask	Julius Fast
13.	The Pass and the Home Girl	Ronald Williams
14.	Those Songs	Satyajit Roy
15.	Science and Society	Albert Einstein
16.	My Washerwoman	T S Arthur
17.	No 1 Ladies Detective	Alexander McCall
18.	Agency Chap 1	Smith
19.	A Letter to Theo (excerpt)	Vincent Van Gogh
20.	The False Gems	Guy de Maupassant
21.	A Devoted Son	Anita Desai

Poetry-XI & XII

1.	Stolen Boat	William Wordsworth
2.	You who never arrived	Rainer Maria Rilke
3.	Banalata Sen	Jibananda Das
4.	The Monkey and the Crocodile	Vikram Seth
5.	On Killing a Tree	Gieve Patel

178] Rhapsody

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|-----|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| 6. | Asleep in the Valley | Arthur Rimbaud |
| 7. | Shall Compare Thee | William Shakespeare |
| 8. | The poetry of Earth | John Keats |
| 9. | Woman | Nikki Giovanni |
| 10. | Snake | D H Lawrence |
| 11. | Professor | Nissim Ezekiel |
| 12. | Mother at Sixty | Kamala Das |
| 13. | death be not Proud | John Donne |
| 14. | When on the bed the moonlight | Alfred Tennyson |
| 15. | Wanderer (translation) | A C Bradley |
| 16. | Coins | Richard Newman |
| 17. | Marina | T S Eliot |
| 18. | A Martian sends a postcard home | Craig Raine |
| 19. | Ars Poetica | Mac Leish |
| 20. | The Imaginary Iceberg | Elizabeth Bishop |

Play

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| 1. | Cathleen ni Houlihan | W B Yeats |
| 2. | The Post Office | Rabindranath Tagore |

ALTERNATIVE ENGLISH SYLLABUS

CLASS XI-XII

Prose - XI & XII

1. Home to Heaven	Pearl S Buck
2. Kabuliwallah	Rabindranath Tagore
3. The Man with a Scar	Maugham
4. I became an Author	W B Yeats
5. Sparrows	K Abbas
6. The Disk	Jorge Luis Borges
7. Mask of Vishnu	Khushwant Singh
8. Science and Religion	Albert Einstein
9. The Road to Happiness	Bertrand Russell
10. Silver Lining	Chaman Nahal
11. Prize Poem	P G Wodehouse
12. In an Antique Land	Amitav Ghosh
13. The Image	R K Narayan
14. Deep	J G Ballard

Poetry-XI & XII

1. Bright Star	John Keats
2. A Dog has Died	Pablo Neruda
3. Coromandel Fishers	Sarojini Naidu
4. Everyone Sang	Seigfried Sassoon
5. A bird came down the walk	Emily Dickinson
6. Break, Break, Break	Alfred Tennyson
7. The World is Too Much with us	William Wordsworth
8. Lotus	Toru Dutt
9. Annabel Lee	Edgar Allan Poe
10. Hot noon in Malabar	Kamala Das
11. College of Echoes	Isabella Gardner
12. Virtue	George Herbert
13. God's Grandeur	W H Hopkins

180] Rhapsody

14. My Last Duchess

Robert Browning

15. To Celia

Ben Jonson

Play

1. The Rising of the Moon

Lady Gregory

2. The Bishop's Candlesticks

Norman Mc Kinnel