

An Alien Hand



Supplementary Reader in English
for Class VII



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

0754 – An Alien Hand

Textbook for Class VII

ISBN 81-7450-736-1

First Edition

April 2007 Chaitra 1929

Reprinted

March 2009, January 2010,
November 2010, January 2012,
December 2012, October 2013,
December 2014, December 2015,
March 2017, December 2017,
December 2018, August 2019,
January 2021, July 2021 and
November 2021

Revised Edition

November 2022 Kartika 1944

PD 410T BS

© National Council of Educational
Research and Training, 2007, 2022

₹ 40.00

Printed on 80 GSM paper with
NCERT watermark

Published at the Publication Division
by the Secretary, National Council of
Educational Research and Training,
Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi
110 016 and printed at Chandrakala
Universal Pvt. Ltd., H-16, UPSIDC,
Industrial Area, Newada, Samogar,
Naini, Allahabad-211010

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Foreword

THE National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy of Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this supplementary reader proves for making children's life at school a happy experience rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the





time available for teaching. The book attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in languages, Professor Namwar Singh, and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor R. Amritavalli for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this book; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, materials and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinements.

New Delhi
20 November 2006

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

RATIONALISATION OF CONTENT IN THE TEXTBOOKS

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to reduce content load on students. The National Education Policy 2020, also emphasises reducing the content load and providing opportunities for experiential learning with creative mindset. In this background, the NCERT has undertaken the exercise to rationalise the textbooks across all classes. Learning Outcomes already developed by the NCERT across classes have been taken into consideration in this exercise.

Contents of the textbooks have been rationalised in view of the following:

- Content based on genres of literature in the textbooks and supplementary readers at different stages of school education
- Content that is meant for achieving Learning Outcomes for developing language proficiency and is accessible at different stages
- For reducing the curriculum load and examination stress in view of the prevailing condition of the Pandemic
- Content, which is easily accessible to students without much interventions from teachers and can be learned by children through self-learning or peer-learning
- Content, which is irrelevant in the present context

This present edition, is a reformatted version after carrying out the changes given above.



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A Note for the Teacher

THE main objective of this supplementary reader is to promote among learners the habit of reading independently with interest, understanding and enjoyment. It seeks to enable them to read independently in the sense that they would not expect the book to be taken up page by page in the classroom. They would rather read it on their own and later share and confirm their responses and appreciation with the teacher and the peer group through discussions, questions and, wherever possible, even role-play.

The book contains ten pieces. Each piece has been divided into two or three manageable sections, each section briefly summarised in point form without revealing crucial turns and twists of the storyline, thus sustaining readers' curiosity and interest. While-reading 'Comprehension Check,' given at the end of sections, is a recall of what has been read and understood so far.

This format is being tried to make comprehension easier and concentration keener. Each piece is also followed by a set of questions as aids to understanding and, at many places, topics for discussion in groups. All questions should be attempted orally before well-formulated answers are put down on paper. Discussion on related topics should be encouraged so that learners get an opportunity to go beyond the book and feel inspired to reach hitherto undiscovered vistas of knowledge and pleasure.

The stories, amply illustrated, deal with themes of cooperation, compassion, respect and love for flora and fauna, sound decision-making, science fiction, peace and harmony. It is hoped that young readers will find the book enjoyable and rewarding, and will feel motivated to read extensively on their own to become proficient readers in the years to come.



THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a ¹**[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 ²[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.**

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

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Acknowledgements

THE National Council of Educational Research and Training is grateful to Professor M.L. Tickoo, formerly of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, and the Regional Language Centre, Singapore for going through the manuscript and making valuable suggestions. Special thanks are due to Professor R. Amritavalli for her overall monitoring and assistance as Chief Advisor.

For permission to reproduce copyright material in this book NCERT would like to thank the following: Gita Wolf and Anoushka Ravishankar for 'Children at work' from *Trash—On Ragpicker Children and Recycling*, Tara Publishing & Books for Change, Chennai, 1999; M.S. Bela Raja, *Editor*, for 'Treasure Within' from *Sparsh—A Newsletter from The Resource Centre, The valley School, Bengaluru, Vol : 003, July 2001*; Ruskin Bond for 'The Fight' from *Time Stops at Shamli and Other Stories*, Penguin India, 1989; and Jayant Narlikar for 'The Comet' from *Tales of the Future*, Witness Books, Delhi, 2005.

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Special thanks are also due to the Publication Department, NCERT, for its support. NCERT also acknowledges the contributions made by Parash Ram Kaushik, *Incharge*, Computer Resource Centre; Razi Ahmad and Inder Kumar, *DTP Operators*; and Mathew John, *Proof Reader*.



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CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Part IV A (Article 51 A)

Fundamental Duties

Fundamental Duties – It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;
- (k) who is a parent or guardian, to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.



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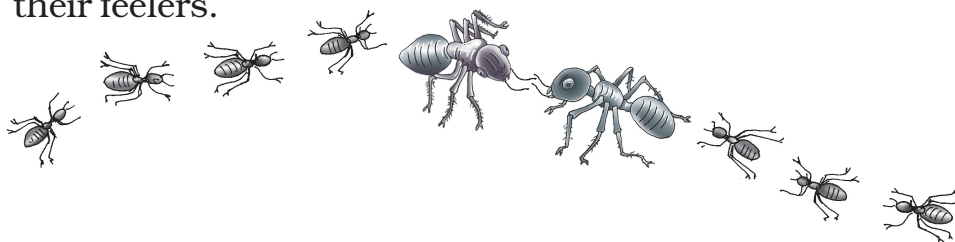
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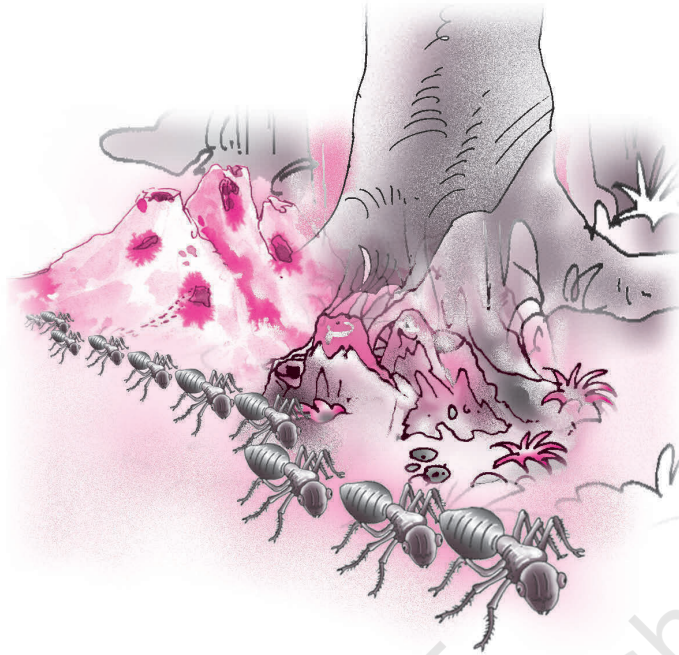
The Tiny Teacher

- ☆ Though so very small, the ant is unbelievably intelligent and hard-working.
- ☆ Among the various kinds, the commonest ant is black or red.
- ☆ Ants live in comfortable homes called ‘anthills’.

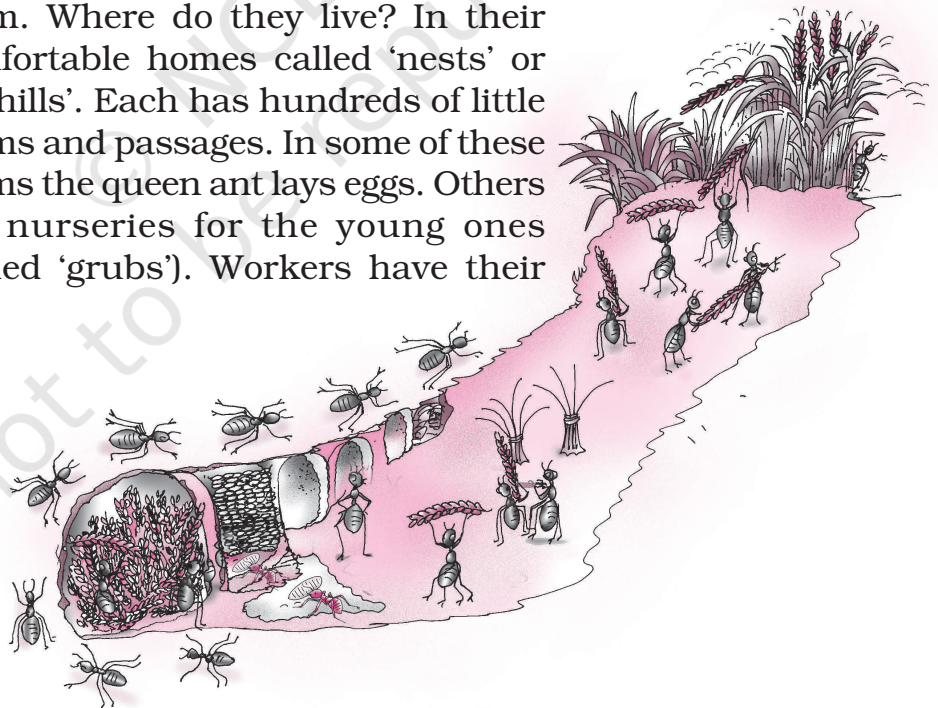
NAME the smallest insect you have seen, and the wisest. Is it the fly? No, it isn't. Is it the mosquito? No, not the mosquito. Then it must be the worm. No, none of these. It is the ant—the commonest, the smallest but the wisest insect. The story of an ant's life sounds almost untrue. But people have kept ants as pets, and have watched their daily behaviour closely. So we know a number of facts about this tiny, hard-working and intelligent creature.

An ant uses its feelers or antennae to ‘talk’ to other ants by passing messages through them. Watch a row of ants moving up or down the wall. Each ant greets all the others coming from the opposite direction by touching their feelers.





There are many kinds of ants. The commonest among them are the black or red ones. We have seen them since we were children, but haven't paid enough attention to them. Where do they live? In their comfortable homes called 'nests' or 'anthills'. Each has hundreds of little rooms and passages. In some of these rooms the queen ant lays eggs. Others are nurseries for the young ones (called 'grubs'). Workers have their



reserved quarters. They spend most of their time searching for food. Some rooms serve as storehouses for this food. Soldiers have separate barracks. No worker has ever tried to live in a soldier's house; no soldier has ever gone out searching for food. No worker or soldier or cleaner has ever harmed a grub. So you see, an ant's life is very peaceful. Each does its share of work intelligently and bravely, and never fights with other members of the group.

Comprehension Check

1. The story of an ant's life sounds *almost untrue*.

The italicised phrase means

- (i) highly exaggerated.
- (ii) too remarkable to be true.
- (iii) not based on facts.

2. Complete the following sentences.

(i) An ant is the smallest, _____

(ii) We know a number of facts about an ant's life because

3. In what ways is an ant's life peaceful?

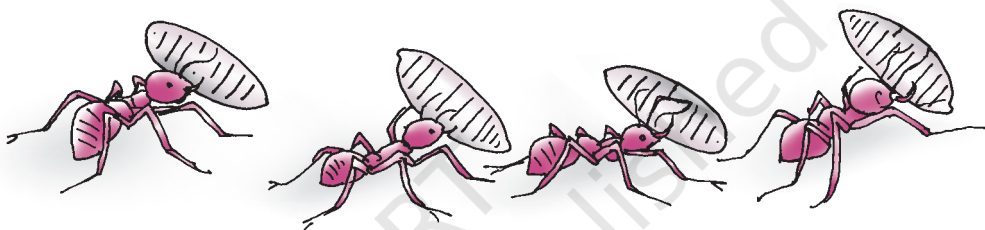
- ☆ The queen ant has a pair of wings, which she casts off before she begins to lay eggs.
- ☆ Eggs hatch and become grubs, grubs change into cocoons, and cocoons break to bring forth complete ants.
- ☆ The life of an ordinary ant in the anthill is a book which many of us seldom open.

The queen is the mother of the entire population of the colony. It lives for about fifteen years. It has a pair of wings,



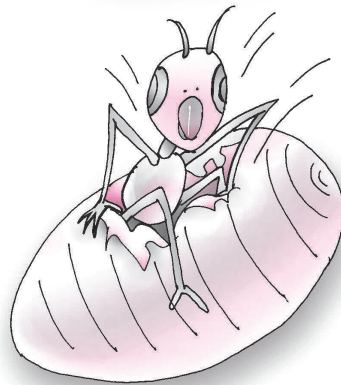
but bites them off after its 'wedding' flight. This flight takes place on a hot summer day. The queen leaves the nest and goes out to meet a male ant, or drone, high up in the air. On its return to earth, it gets rid of its wings and then does nothing but lay eggs.

Eggs hatch and grubs come out. Soldiers guard them. Workers feed and clean them, and also carry them about daily for airing, exercise and sunshine. Two or three weeks



later, grubs become cocoons and lie without food or activity for three weeks more. Then the cocoons break and perfect ants appear. Now it's time for teaching and training. New ants learn their duties from old ants as workers, soldiers, builders, cleaners, etc. After a few weeks' training, the small ants are ready to go out into the big world of work.

An anthill is a home not only for ants but also for some other creatures—beetles, lesser breeds of ants and the greenfly. Why do ants want these alien creatures to live in their nests? For several reasons: some give off smell pleasant to the ants' senses;



others give sweet juices; and some are just pets or playthings like cats and dogs to human beings. The greenfly is the ants' cow. The ants train it to give honeydew (like milk) with a touch of their antennae. They milk it just as we milk the cow.

Have humans learned as much as ants have? Perhaps they have, but they haven't put their learning to good use. They may still learn a few things from this tiny teacher—hard work, sense of duty and discipline, cleanliness, care for the young ones, and, above all, a firm loyalty to the land where they live.

Comprehension Check

1. How long does it take for a grub to become a complete ant?
2. Why do the worker ants carry the grubs about?
3. What jobs are new ants trained for?
4. Name some other creatures that live in anthills.
5. Mention three things we can learn from the 'tiny teacher'. Give reasons for choosing these items.

Exercises

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. (i) What problems are you likely to face if you keep ants as pets?
(ii) When a group of bees finds nectar, it informs other bees of its location, quantity, etc. through dancing. Can you guess what ants communicate to their fellow ants by touching one another's feelers?



The Tiny Teacher

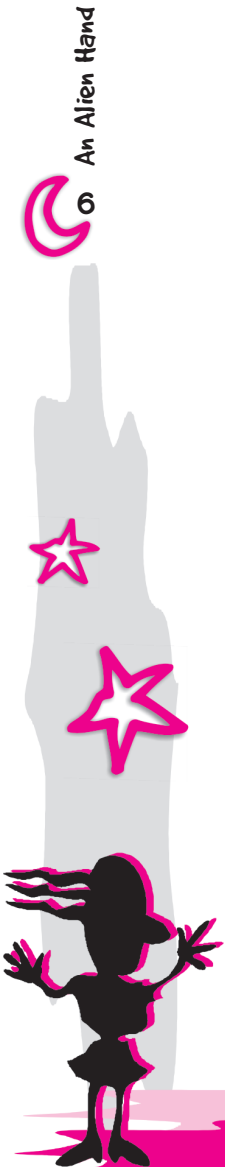
2. Complete the following poem with words from the box below. Then recite the poem.

Soldiers live in barracks
And birds in _____,
Much like a snake that rests
In a _____. No horse is able
To sleep except in a _____.
And a dog lives well,
Mind you, only in a _____.
To say 'hi' to an ant, if you will,
You may have to climb an _____.

hole kernel nests anthill stable

A Matter of Tongue

- In humans the tongue is the organ of taste. It also helps in chewing, swallowing and speaking.
- Some animals like the frog and the chameleon use the tongue to catch prey. The chameleon's tongue is so long that it keeps it folded in the mouth— but it can flick it in and out at lightning speed.
- The snake uses its tongue to smell. The reptile flickers its tongue in and out, each time carrying molecules from its surroundings to an organ (called 'Jacobson's organ') in the roof of its mouth.
- The blue whale has the largest tongue which can weigh as much as an elephant.





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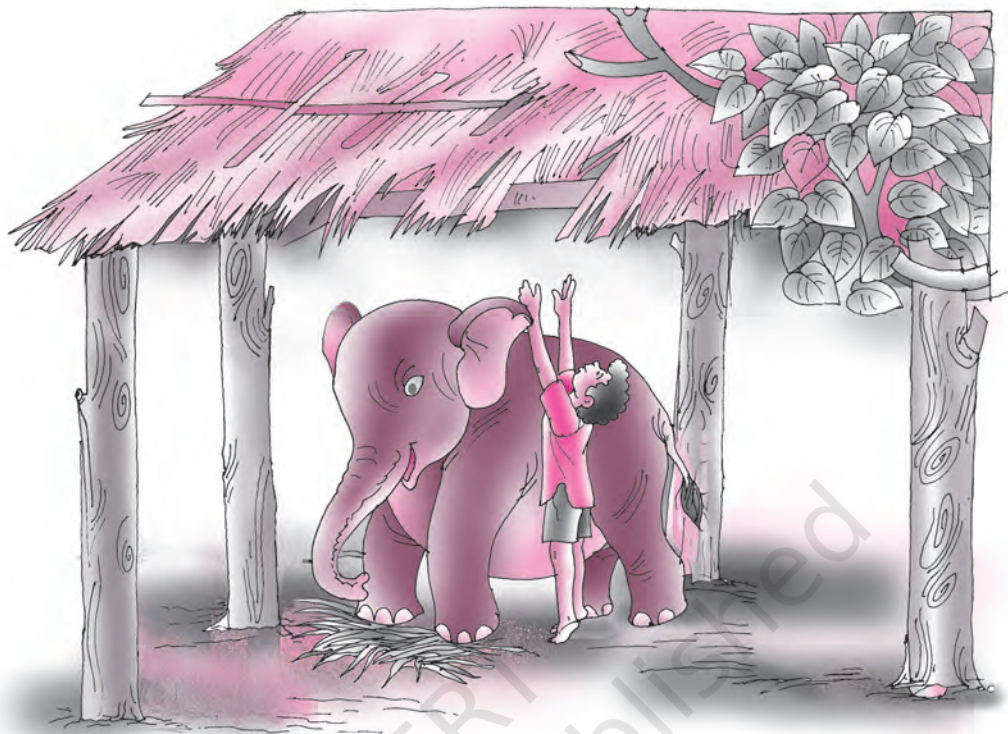
Bringing up Kari

- ☆ Kari, a five-month-old baby elephant, lives and grows up with his nine-year-old friend and keeper.
- ☆ Kari doesn't eat much—just about sixteen kilograms of delicious twigs a day.
- ☆ Playful and sensitive, Kari saves a boy from drowning.

KARI, the elephant, was five months old when he was given to me to take care of. I was nine years old and I could reach his back if I stood on tiptoe. He seemed to remain that high for nearly two years. We grew together; that is probably why I never found out just how tall he was. He lived in a pavilion, under a thatched roof which rested on thick tree stumps so that it could not fall in when Kari bumped against the poles as he moved about.

One of the first things Kari did was to save the life of a boy. Kari did not eat much but he nevertheless needed forty pounds of twigs a day to chew and play with. Every day I used to take him to the river in the morning for his bath. He would lie down on the sand bank while I rubbed him with the clean sand of the river for an hour. After that he would lie in the water for a long time. On coming out his skin would be shining like ebony, and he would squeal

squeal: cry/trumpet



with pleasure as I rubbed water down his back. Then I would take him by the ear, because that is the easiest way to lead an elephant, and leave him on the edge of the jungle while I went into the forest to get some luscious twigs for his dinner. One has to have a very sharp hatchet to cut down these twigs; it takes half an hour to sharpen the hatchet because if a twig is mutilated an elephant will not touch it.

It was not an easy job to get twigs and saplings for Kari. I had to climb all kinds of trees to get the most delicate and tender twigs. As he was very fond of the young branches of the banyan tree which grows like a cathedral of leaves and branches, I was gathering some, one spring day in March, when I suddenly heard Kari calling to me in the distance. As he was still very young, the call was more like that of a baby than an elephant. I thought somebody was hurting

luscious: tasty and sweet smelling **hatchet:** small axe **mutilated:** torn awkwardly/disfigured



him, so I came down from my tree and ran very fast to the edge of the forest where I had left him, but he was not there.

I looked all over, but I could not find him.

I went near the edge of the water, and I saw a black something struggling above its surface. Then it rose higher and it was the trunk of my elephant. I thought he was drowning. I was helpless because I could not jump into the water and save the four hundred pounds of him since he was much higher than I. But I saw his back rise above the water and the moment he caught my eye, he began to trumpet and struggle up to the shore. Then, still trumpeting, he pushed me into the water and, as I fell into the stream, I saw a boy lying flat on the bottom of the river. He had not altogether touched bottom but was somewhat afloat. I came to the surface of the water to take my breath and there Kari was standing, his feet planted in the sand bank and his trunk stretched out like a hand waiting for mine. I dived down again and pulled the body of the drowning boy to the surface but, not being a good swimmer, I could not swim ashore and the slow current was already dragging me down.

Seeing us drift by in the current, Kari, who was usually slow and ponderous, suddenly darted down like a hawk and came halfway into the water where I saw him stretch out his trunk again. I raised up my hand to catch it and it slipped. I found myself going under the water again, but



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Bringing up Kari



this time I found that the water was not very deep so I sank to the bottom of the river and doubled my feet under me and then suddenly kicked the river bed and so shot upwards like an arrow, in spite of the fact that I was holding the drowning boy with my hand. As my body rose above the water, I felt a lasso around my neck. This frightened me; I thought some water animal was going to swallow me. I heard Kari squealing, and I knew it was his trunk about my neck. He pulled us both ashore.

- ☆ Kari becomes fond of ripe bananas.
- ☆ He believes in self-help, much to the discomfort of his friend.
- ☆ With quiet dignity, Kari accepts the chiding he knows he deserves.

Kari was like a baby. He had to be trained to be good and if you did not tell him when he was naughty, he was up to more mischief than ever.

For instance, one day, somebody gave him some bananas to eat. Very soon he developed a great love for ripe bananas. We used to keep large plates of fruit on a table near a window in the dining-room. One day all the bananas on that table disappeared and my family blamed the servants for eating all the fruit in the house. A few days later the fruit disappeared again; this time the blame was put on me, and I knew I had not done it. It made me very angry with my parents and the servants, for I was sure they had taken all the fruit. The next time the fruit disappeared, I found a banana all smashed up in Kari's pavilion. This surprised me very much, for I had never seen fruit there and, as you know, he had always lived on twigs.

Next day, while I was sitting in the dining-room wondering whether I should take some fruit from the table

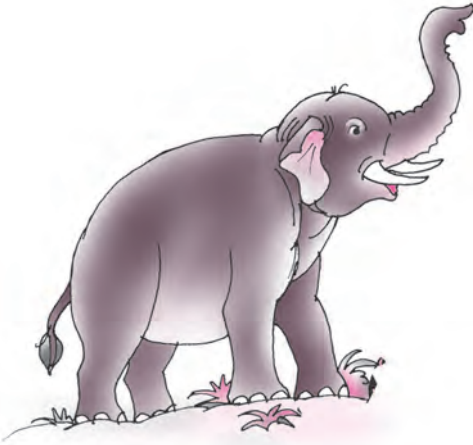
lasso: rope with a noose at the end





without my parents' permission, a long, black thing, very much like a snake, suddenly came through the window and disappeared with all the bananas. I was very much frightened because I had never seen snakes eat bananas and I thought it must be a terrible snake that would sneak in and take fruit. I crept out of the room and with great fear in my heart ran out of the house, feeling sure that the snake would come back into the house, eat all the fruit and kill all of us.

As I went out, I saw Kari's back disappearing in the direction of the pavilion and I was so frightened that I wanted his company to cheer me up. I ran after him into the pavilion and I found him there eating bananas. I stood still in astonishment; the bananas were lying strewn all around him. He stretched out his trunk and reached for one far away from where he was standing. That instant the



trunk looked like a black snake, and I realised that Kari was the thief. I went to him, pulled him out by the ear and joyously showed my parents that it was Kari and not I that had eaten all the fruit these many weeks. Then I scolded him, for elephants understand words as well as children, and I said to him, “Next time I see you stealing fruit, you will be whipped.” He knew that we were all angry with him, even the servants. His pride was so injured that he never stole another thing from the dining-room. And from then on, if anybody gave him any fruit, he always squealed as if to thank them.

An elephant is willing to be punished for having done wrong, but if you punish him without any reason, he will remember it and pay you back in your own coin.

- ☆ **Kari is a fast learner.**
- ☆ **He masters all signals and sounds he is taught.**
- ☆ **There is one lesson, though, that an elephant takes five years to learn. Kari is no exception.**

An elephant must be taught when to sit down, when to walk, when to go fast, and when to go slow. You teach him these things as you teach a child. If you say ‘Dhat’ and pull him by the ear, he will gradually learn to sit down. Similarly, if you say ‘Mali’ and pull his trunk forward, he will gradually learn that it is the signal to walk.

Kari learned ‘Mali’ after three lessons, but it took him three weeks to learn ‘Dhat’. He was no good at sitting down. And do you know why an elephant should be taught to sit down? Because he grows taller and taller than you who take care of him, so that when he is two or three years old,



you can only reach his back with a ladder. It is, therefore, better to teach him to sit down by saying 'Dhat' so that you can climb upon his back, for who would want to carry a ladder around all the time?

The most difficult thing to teach an elephant is the master call. He generally takes five years to learn it properly. The master call is a strange hissing, howling sound, as if a snake and a tiger were fighting each other, and you have to make that kind of noise in his ear. And do you know what you expect an elephant to do when you give him the master call? If you are lost in the jungle and there is no way out, and everything is black except the stars above, you dare not stay very long anywhere. The only thing to do then is to give the master call and at once the elephant pulls down the tree in front of him with his trunk. This frightens all the animals away. As the tree comes crashing down, monkeys wake from their sleep and run from branch to branch—



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Bringing up Kari

you can see them in the moonlight—and you can almost see the stags running in all directions below. You can hear the growl of the tiger in the distance. Even he is frightened. Then the elephant pulls down the next tree and the next, and the next. Soon you will find that he has made a road right through the jungle straight to your house.

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI
(from *Kari, the Elephant*)

Exercises

Answer the following questions.

1. The enclosure in which Kari lived had a thatched roof that lay on thick tree stumps. Examine the illustration of Kari's pavilion on page 8 and say why it was built that way.
2. Did Kari enjoy his morning bath in the river? Give a reason for your answer.
3. Finding good twigs for Kari took a long time. Why?
4. Why did Kari push his friend into the stream?
5. Kari was like a baby. What are the main points of comparison?
6. Kari helped himself to all the bananas in the house without anyone noticing it. How did he do it?
7. Kari learnt the commands to sit and to walk. What were the instructions for each command?
8. What is "the master call"? Why is it the most important signal for an elephant to learn?





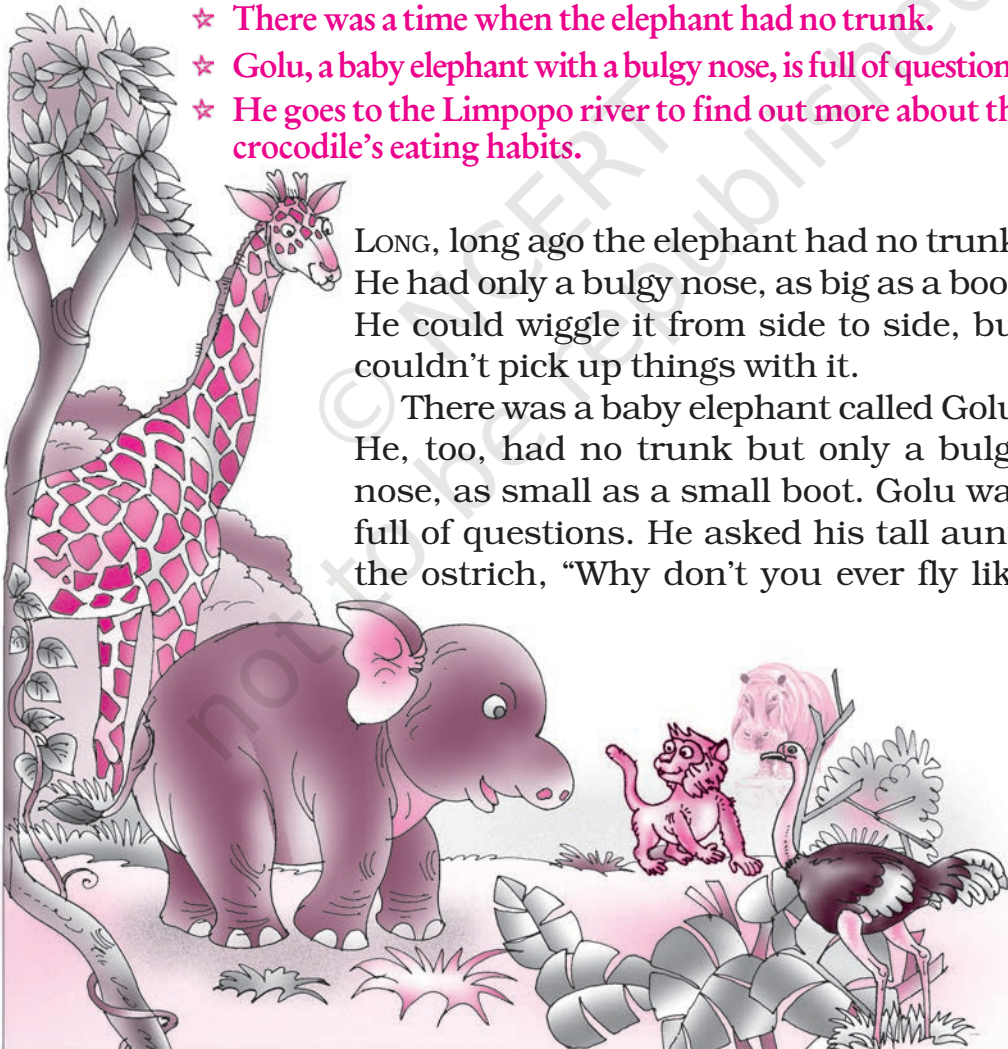
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3

Golu Grows a Nose

- ☆ There was a time when the elephant had no trunk.
- ☆ Golu, a baby elephant with a bulgy nose, is full of questions.
- ☆ He goes to the Limpopo river to find out more about the crocodile's eating habits.



LONG, long ago the elephant had no trunk. He had only a bulgy nose, as big as a boot. He could wiggle it from side to side, but couldn't pick up things with it.

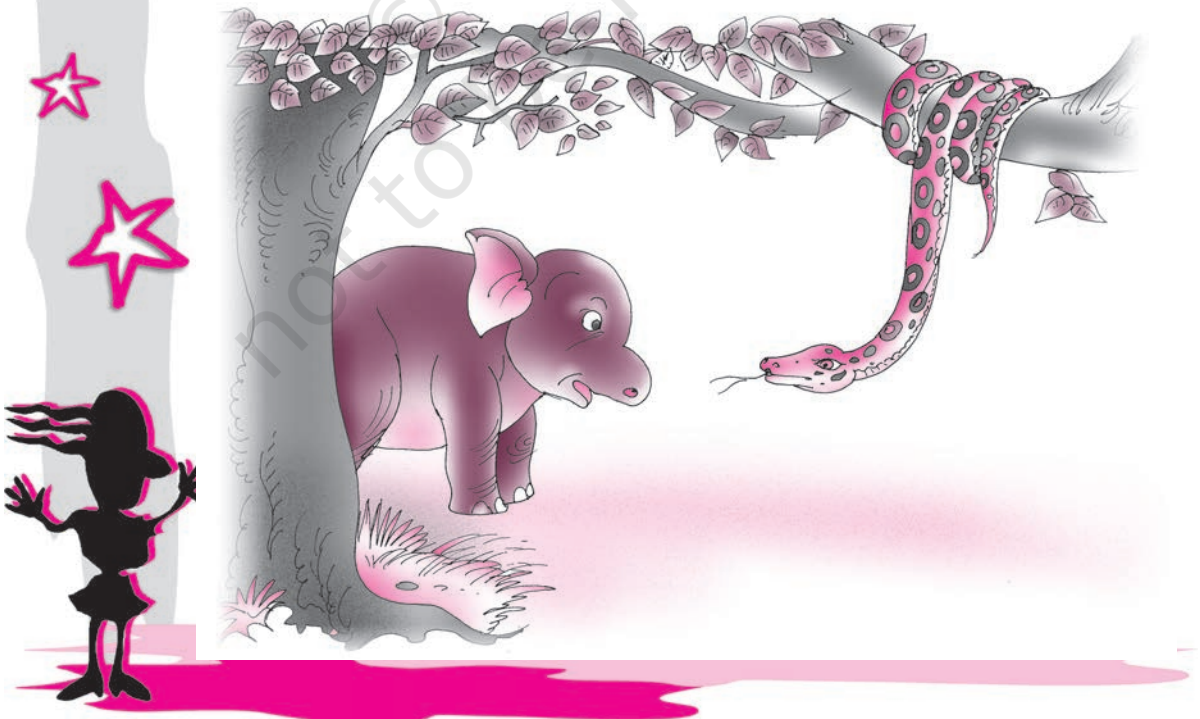
There was a baby elephant called Golu. He, too, had no trunk but only a bulgy nose, as small as a small boot. Golu was full of questions. He asked his tall aunt, the ostrich, "Why don't you ever fly like

other birds?" Then he asked his tall uncle, the giraffe, "What makes your skin so spotty?" He asked his huge uncle, the hippopotamus, "Why are your eyes always so red?" He asked his hairy uncle, the baboon, "Why do melons taste like melons?" The ostrich, the giraffe, the hippopotamus and the baboon had no answers to Golu's questions. "Golu is a naughty baby," they said. "He asks such difficult questions."

One day Golu met the mynah bird sitting in the middle of a bush, and he asked her, "What does the crocodile have for dinner?" The mynah said, "Go to the banks of the great, grassy Limpopo river and find out."

Golu went home. He took a hundred sugar canes, fifty dozen bananas and twenty-five melons. Then he said to his family, "Goodbye. I'm going to the great, grassy Limpopo river. I'll find out what the crocodile has for dinner." He had never seen a crocodile, and didn't know what one looked like.

He met a python and asked him, "Have you ever seen a crocodile? What does he look like? What does he have for dinner?"



The python uncoiled himself from the branch of a tree but said nothing. Golu politely helped him to coil around the branch again and said goodbye to him.

- ☆ Golu meets the crocodile face to face.
- ☆ He gets the python's help when he needs it most.
- ☆ Golu grows a long and useful nose.

Golu moved on, eating sugar canes, bananas and melons. After a few days he reached the very edge of the great, grassy Limpopo river. On the bank of the river he saw a log of wood.

It was really the crocodile who winked at him. "Excuse me," said Golu. "Have you ever seen a crocodile?"

The crocodile winked again and lifted half his tail out of the mud. "Come here, little one," said the crocodile. "Why do you ask such questions?"

"I want to know..."

"Come close, little one, for I am the crocodile," and he shed crocodile tears to show it was quite true.

Golu was afraid, but he sat down on the bank and said, "You are the very person I was looking for. Please tell me what you have for dinner."

"Come here, little one, and I'll whisper the answer to you," said the crocodile.

Golu put his head down close to the crocodile's snout and the crocodile caught him by the nose.

"I think," said the crocodile, "today a baby elephant will be my dinner."

"Let me go. You are hurting me, Mr Crocodile," screamed Golu.

The python, who had been quietly following Golu, came to the bank and said, "If you do not pull as hard as you can, the crocodile will drag you into the stream."



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Golu Grows a Nose

Golu sat back on his little haunches and pulled and pulled. The crocodile slipped into the water making it all creamy with great sweeps of his tail, and he also pulled and pulled.

Then the python coiled himself round Golu's stomach and said, "Let's pull harder." Golu dug in all his four legs in the mud and pulled. The nose kept on stretching. At each pull the nose grew longer and longer and it hurt Golu. The nose was now five feet long, but it was free at last.

Golu sat down, with his nose wrapped up in a big banana leaf and hung it in the great, grassy Limpopo river to cool.

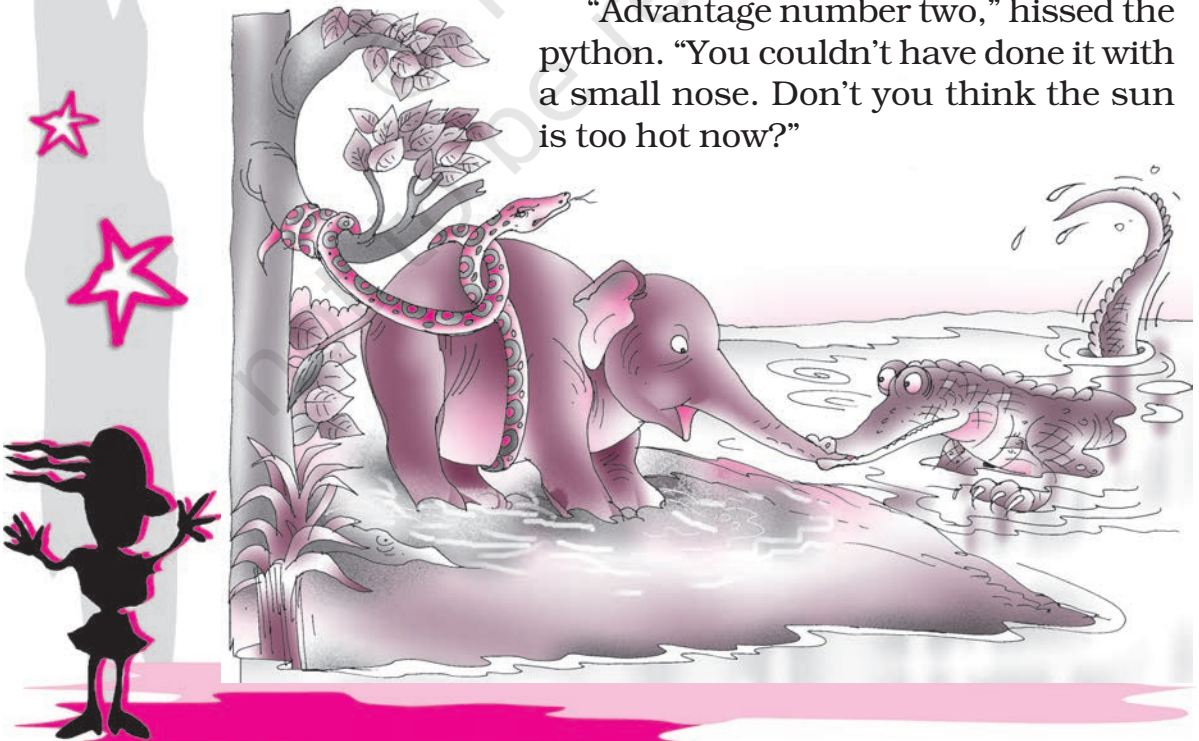
Golu sat there for two days waiting for his nose to cool and to shrink. It grew cool but it didn't shrink.

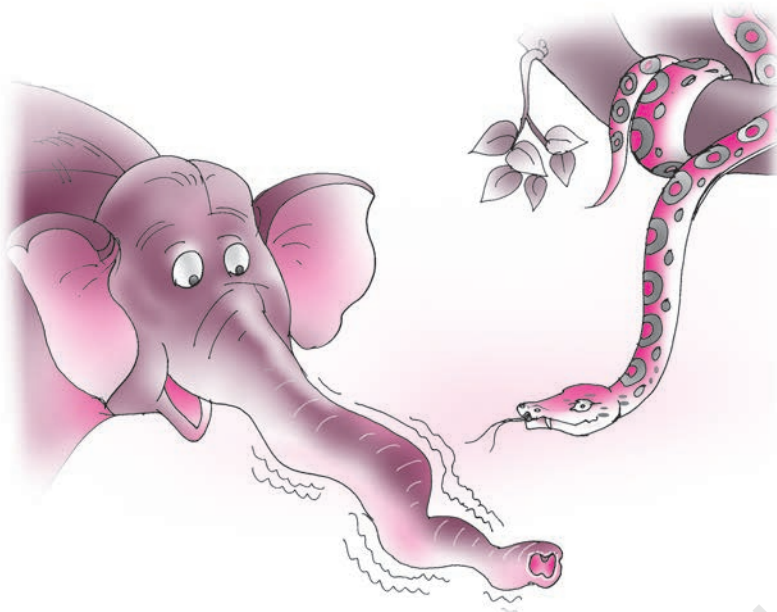
At the end of the second day, a fly came and stung Golu on the shoulder. Golu lifted his long nose (trunk) and with it hit the fly dead.

"Advantage number one," hissed the python. "You couldn't have done it with a small nose. Try and eat a little now."

Golu put out his trunk and plucked a large bundle of grass. He dusted it against his forelegs and stuffed it into his mouth.

"Advantage number two," hissed the python. "You couldn't have done it with a small nose. Don't you think the sun is too hot now?"





Golu scooped up some mud from the bank and slapped it on his head.

“Advantage number three,” hissed the python. “You couldn’t have done it with a small nose.”

“Thank you, Mr Python,” said Golu gratefully. “I’ll remember all this and now I’ll go back to my family.”

RUDYARD KIPLING
(simplified and abridged)

Exercises

Answer the following questions.

1. Whom does Golu ask, “Why don’t you ever fly like other birds?”
2. Which uncle of Golu had red eyes?
3. Golu’s relatives did not answer his questions because
 - (i) they were shy.
 - (ii) the questions were too difficult.
 - (iii) Golu was a naughty baby.

4. Who advised Golu to go to the Limpopo river?
5. Why did Golu go to the river?
6. The crocodile lay on the bank of the Limpopo river. Golu thought it was
 - (i) a living crocodile.
 - (ii) a dead crocodile.
 - (iii) a log of wood.
7. What did the crocodile do to show that it was a real crocodile?
8. "Come here, little one, and I'll whisper the answer to you." The crocodile said this because
 - (i) he couldn't stand up.
 - (ii) he wanted to eat Golu.
 - (iii) Golu was deaf.
9. Who helped Golu on the bank of the river?
10. Name two things the elephant can do with his trunk, and two he cannot.

Laughter at Sea

A passenger boat was moving slowly in a thick fog. On deck an old man, rather frightened, asked a sailor, "How far are we from land?"
"Half a mile," he answered.
"Where?" said the old man.
"Straight down," was the reply.





0754CH07

4



Chandni

- ☆ **Abbu Khan kept goats as pets.**
- ☆ **He loved his goats, but they left him one by one.**
- ☆ **He bought a young pretty goat and called her Chandni.**

ONCE upon a time there lived an old man in Almora. He was popularly known as Abbu Khan. He lived all alone except for a few goats which he always kept as pets. He gave his goats funny names such as Kalua, Moongia or Gujri. He would take them out for grazing during the day and talk to them as one talks to one's own children; at night he would bring them back to his little hut and put a string round the neck of each goat.

Poor Abbu Khan was a little unlucky in the matter of his goats. Very often at night one of the goats would pull and pull at the string till it broke loose, and then would disappear in the hills beyond. Goats in hilly regions hate being tied to trees or poles. They love their freedom. Abbu Khan's goats were of the best hill breed. They too loved their freedom. So whenever they got the chance, they would run away only to get killed by an old wolf who lived in the hills.

Whenever one of his goats disappeared, Abbu Khan was very sad. He did not understand why even the juiciest grass and grains that he gave them, and all the love that he



showered on them, would not stop these unfortunate goats from running straight into the jaws of death. Are these goats mad, he wondered! Or was it their love for freedom! But freedom meant struggle, hardship, even death. Abbu Khan couldn't solve the mystery.

One day, when all his goats had left him, Abbu Khan said to himself, "No more goats in my house ever again. I may yet live for a few more years but I'll live without goats." However, the poor old man was terribly lonely. He simply couldn't do without his pets. Very soon he bought a young goat. He thought, "A young goat will stay with me much longer. She will soon begin to love me as well as the food I give her every day. She will never want to go to the hills." And he laughed with joy.

The new goat was very pretty. She was white as snow, and had two little horns on her little head, and a pair of





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Chandni

gleaming red eyes. She had a friendly temperament, and would listen to Abbu Khan's tales with a lot of interest and affection. Abbu Khan called her Chandni, which means 'moonlight'. He loved Chandni and would narrate to her stories of all his friends who were dead and gone.

Several years passed; Chandni was still there. Abbu Khan believed that Chandni would never leave his compound for the free and fresh air of the hills beyond. Alas! he was mistaken again.

Comprehension Check

1. Why did Abbu Khan's goats want to run away? What happened to them in the hills?
2. Abbu Khan said, "No more goats in my house ever again." Then he changed his mind. Why?
3. Why did he buy a young goat?

- ☆ Like other goats, Chandni too missed the hills.
- ☆ She told Abbu Khan she must have her freedom.
- ☆ The story of the dangerous wolf in the forest did not discourage Chandni.

Every morning Chandni watched the hilltops bathed in the sunlight. “How beautiful those hills are!” she thought. “How refreshing the breeze that blows through them! And how lovely to run across those green fields!” She ran towards the hills but had to stop with a jerk—the rope round her neck wouldn’t let her go any further. How she hated that rope!

She stopped eating the green grass Abbu Khan brought for her; nor did she listen to his stories with interest and affection. She lost her appetite, grew very thin and stared moodily at the hilltops bathed in sunlight. Abbu Khan did not understand Chandni’s anguish. At last, she decided to speak to him frankly. “Dear Abbu Khan,” she said, “let me go to the hills, please. If I stay on in your compound, I’ll die.” Now Abbu Khan understood Chandni’s problem, but it made him very unhappy. The earthen pot which contained Chandni’s breakfast fell from his hands and broke into a thousand pieces.

“Why do you want to leave me, Chandni?” Abbu Khan asked.

“I want to go to the hills,” Chandni answered.

“Don’t you like the food here? I’ll give you tastier food and a much longer rope.”

“No, thank you. Let me go to the hills.”

“Do you realise the risk you are running, you obstinate creature? There is a dangerous wolf in the hills. He’ll eat you up.” Abbu Khan did his best to warn her.

Chandni answered, “God has given me a pair of horns. I’ll fight the wolf.”



“Fight the wolf, indeed! Have you forgotten the story of your sister Kalua who was the size of a big deer. She fought the wolf through the night but was killed in the morning.” Abbu Khan narrated Kalua’s story for the fiftieth time.





To all this Chandni had only one thing to say: “I want to go to the hills.”

Abbu Khan got very annoyed. He thundered, “You are not going anywhere. From today you’ll live in a small hut, and not move about freely in the compound. Ungrateful as you are, you must still be saved from the wolf.” He pushed her into a small hut and shut the door. But he forgot to close the small window at the back. The same night Chandni made that window her passage to freedom.



Comprehension Check

1. Why did Chandni hate the rope round her neck?
2. “Now Abbu Khan understood Chandni’s problem...” What was Chandni’s problem?
3. Abbu Khan pushed Chandni into a small hut. This shows that he
 - (i) was cruel.
 - (ii) loved her and wanted to save her life.
 - (iii) was selfish.

- ☆ Chandni went back to the hills.
- ☆ She knew the wolf was somewhere there.
- ☆ She was ready to put up a good fight.

Chandni reached the hills. It seemed to her that the old hills were standing in a row to welcome her. She felt like a child meeting her parents after years of separation. Wherever she went, the tall grass rose to embrace her, the flowers bloomed to amuse her and the wind sang an endless song of welcome. How different all this was from her past in the prison-house of Abbu Khan’s compound! It was the happiest day in Chandni’s life.

That day she played for hours on the grassy slopes of the hills. She met a herd of wild goats who asked her to join their group. But Chandni politely refused. She wanted to enjoy her new freedom all by herself.

The sun disappeared behind the hills, and soon darkness enveloped the grass, the flowers and the trees. The wind stopped blowing, and there was stillness all around except for a strange sound which was coming from the bushes. The sound was like a grunt. What was it? It wasn’t Abbu Khan’s voice calling her back to the compound; nor was it the voice of another goat. Then Chandni thought of the dangerous wolf who lived in the hills. She felt scared.





Should she go back to the safety of Abbu Khan's hut? "No," she said to herself, "death in an open field is far better than life in a small hut". The wolf had come out of the bushes, and was staring greedily at Chandni. His eyes were shining like burning coals in the darkness. He seemed in no hurry. He knew the new goat was his.

The wolf and the goat sized up each other. The wolf was big and ferocious whereas the goat, though healthy, was small. But small is not weak. Chandni stood firm on her legs, head slightly bent and horns jutting out. She was a picture of courage. She looked like a brave soldier ready to fight a treacherous enemy. "I must put up a good fight," Chandni thought; "success or failure is a matter of luck or chance."

The fight began. It went on through the night. The moon, which had been watching the fight, began to grow pale and



suddenly hid behind the clouds. The stars also began to disappear one by one. A faint light appeared in the east and the morning call for prayer came from a distant mosque.

The first rays of the sun saw Chandni lying on the ground. She was completely soaked in blood. The wolf, tired and sleepy, was getting ready to devour her.

An assembly of birds perched on top of a tree nearby was debating the result of the fight. “Who is the winner?” one of them asked. “The wolf, of course,” most of them said. A wise old bird declaimed with confidence, “Chandni is the winner.”

ZAKIR HUSAIN
(an adaptation)

Comprehension Check

1. Why did Chandni refuse to join the group of wild goats?
2. Chandni fought the wolf because she
 - (i) was stronger than the wolf.
 - (ii) hated the wolf.
 - (iii) had to retain her freedom at all costs.

Exercises

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. Why did the wise old bird say, “Chandni is the winner”?
2. “Death in an open field is better than life in a small hut,” Chandni said to herself. Was it the right decision? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Freedom is life. Discuss this with reference to ‘Chandni’ and ‘I Want Something in a Cage’.





0754CH08



- ☆ The lady in the manor-house had a bear as pet.
- ☆ It was a most friendly bear, who loved vegetables, apples and honey.
- ☆ He roamed freely during the day, but was put on the chain at night.

THERE WAS once a lady who lived in an old manor-house on the border of a big forest. This lady had a pet bear she was very fond of. It had been found in the forest, half dead of hunger, so small and helpless that it had to be brought up on the bottle by the lady and the old cook. This was several years ago and now it had grown up to a big bear, so big and strong that he could have slain a cow and carried it away between his two paws if he had wanted to. But he did not want to; he was a most amiable bear who did not dream of harming anybody, man or beast. He used to sit outside his kennel and look with his small intelligent eyes most amicably at the cattle grazing in the field near by. The three shaggy mountain ponies in the stable knew him well and did not mind in the least when he shuffled into the stable with his mistress. The children used to ride on his back and had more than once been found asleep in his kennel between his two paws. The three dogs loved to play all sorts of games with him, pull his ears and his stump of a tail



and tease him in every way, but he did not mind it in the least. He had never tasted meat; he ate the same food as the dogs and often out of the same plate—bread, porridge, potato, cabbage, turnip. He had a fine appetite, and his friend, the cook, saw to it that he got his fill. Bears are vegetarians if they have a chance, and fruit is what they like best. In the autumn he used to sit and look with wistful eyes at the ripening apples in the orchard, and in his young days he had been sometimes unable to resist the temptation to climb the tree and help himself to a handful of them. Bears look clumsy and slow in their movements, but try a bear with an apple tree and you will soon find out that he can easily beat any school boy at that game. Now he had learnt that it was against the law, but he kept his small eyes wide open for any apples that fell to the ground. There had also been some difficulties about the beehives; he had been punished for this by being put on the chain for two days with a bleeding nose and he had never done it again. Otherwise he was never put on the chain except for the

night and quite rightly so, for a bear, like a dog, is apt to get somewhat ill-tempered if kept on the chain, and no wonder.

- ☆ The lady visited her sister every Sunday, leaving the bear on the chain the whole afternoon.
- ☆ One Sunday, while walking through the dense forest, she found him following her.
- ☆ She was so angry with the disobedient bear that she hit him on the nose with her umbrella. But the bear was really friendly...

He was also put on the chain on Sundays when his mistress went to spend the afternoon with her married sister who lived in a solitary house on the other side of the mountain-lake, a good hour's walk through the dense forest. It was not supposed to be good for him to wander about in the forest with all its temptations; it was better to be on the safe side. He was also a bad sailor and had once taken such a fright at a sudden gust of wind that he had upset the boat and he and his mistress had to swim to the shore. Now he knew quite well what it meant when his mistress put him on the chain on Sundays, with a friendly tap on his head and the promise of an apple on her return if he had been good during her absence. He was sorry but resigned, like a good dog, when his mistress tells him he cannot come with her for a walk.

One Sunday when the lady had chained him up as usual and was about half-way through the forest, she suddenly thought she heard the cracking of a tree-branch on the winding footpath behind her. She looked back and was horrified to see the bear coming along full speed. Bears look as if they move along quite slowly but they shuffle along much faster than a trotting horse. In a minute he had joined her, panting and sniffing, to take up his usual



place, dog-fashion, at her heels. The lady was very angry, she was already late for lunch, there was no time to take him back home, she did not want him to come with her, and, besides, it was very naughty of him to have disobeyed her. She told him in her severest voice to go back at once, menacing him with her parasol. He stopped a moment and looked at her with his cunning eyes, but did not want to go back and kept on sniffing at her. When the lady saw that he had even lost his new collar, she got still more angry and hit him on the nose with her parasol so hard that it broke in two. He stopped again, shook his head and opened his big mouth several times as if he wanted to say something. Then he turned round and began to shuffle



parasol: umbrella



back the way he had come stopping now and then to look at the lady till at last she lost sight of him.

When the lady came home in the evening, the bear was sitting in his usual place outside his kennel looking very sorry for himself. The lady was still very angry. She went up to him and began to scold him most severely and said he would have to be chained for two more days. The old cook who loved the bear as if he had been her son rushed out from the kitchen very angry.

“What are you scolding him for, missus,” said the cook; “he has been as good as gold the whole day, bless him! He has been sitting here quite still on his haunches as meek as an angel, looking the whole time towards the gate for you to come back.”

AXEL MUNTHE



Exercises

Answer the following questions.

1. Where did the lady find the bear cub? How did she bring it up?
2. The bear grew up but “he was a most amiable bear”. Give three examples to prove this.
3. What did the bear eat? There were two things he was not allowed to do. What were they?
4. When was the bear tied up with a chain? Why?
5. What happened one Sunday when the lady was going to her sister’s house? What did the lady do? What was the bear’s reaction?
6. Why was the bear looking sorry for himself in the evening? Why did the cook get angry with her mistress?

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. Most people keep dogs and cats as pets. Can you think of some unusual pets that people keep?
2. The second bear did not attack the lady because he was afraid of her. Do you agree?

Whose Side?

Once during the American Civil War a woman said to Abraham Lincoln, “Oh, Mr President, I feel so sure God is on our side, don’t you?”

“Ma’ am,” said the President, “what should be of greater concern to us is whether we are on God’s side.”





0754CH09



6

A Tiger in the House

- ☆ Grandfather finds a tiny tiger-cub in the forest and brings him home.
- ☆ Grandmother calls him Timothy and brings him up like a human child.
- ☆ Timothy is playful and naughty. His companions are Toto, the monkey, a puppy and other members of the household.

TIMOTHY, the tiger-cub, was discovered by Grandfather in the Terai jungle near Dehra.

One day, when Grandfather was strolling down the forest path at some distance from the rest of the party, he discovered a little tiger about eighteen inches long, hiding among the intricate roots of a banyan tree. Grandfather picked him up, and brought him home. He had the distinction of being the only member of the party to have bagged any game, dead or alive.

At first the tiger-cub, who was named Timothy by Grandmother, was brought up entirely on milk given to him in a feeding-bottle by our cook, Mahmoud. But the milk proved too rich for him, and he was put on a diet of raw mutton and cod-liver oil, to be followed later by a more tempting diet of pigeons and rabbits.

Timothy was provided with two companions—Toto, the monkey, who was bold enough to pull the young tiger by the

tail, and then climb up the curtains if Timothy lost his temper; and a small mongrel puppy, found on the road by Grandfather.

At first Timothy appeared to be quite afraid of the puppy, and darted back with a spring if it came too near. He would make absurd dashes at it with his large forepaws, and then retreat to a ridiculously safe distance. Finally, he allowed the puppy to crawl on his back and rest there!

One of Timothy's favourite amusements was to stalk anyone who would play with him, and so, when I came to live with Grandfather, I became one of the tiger's favourites. With a crafty look in his glittering eyes, and his body crouching, he would creep closer and closer to me, suddenly making a dash for my feet, rolling over on his back and kicking with delight, and pretending to bite my ankles.

He was by this time the size of a full-grown retriever, and when I took him out for walks, people on the road would give us a wide berth. When he pulled hard on his chain, I had difficulty in keeping up with him. His favourite place in the house was the drawing-room, and he would make himself



darted: moved or rushed suddenly **retreat:** go back **stalk:** move stealthily towards **crafty:** cunning **retriever:** a breed of dog (trained to retrieve game in hunting) **give us a wide berth:** keep a safe distance from us



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A Tiger in the House

comfortable on the long sofa, reclining there with great dignity, and snarling at anybody who tried to get him off.

Timothy had clean habits, and would scrub his face with his paws exactly like a cat. He slept at night in the cook's quarters, and was always delighted at being let out by him in the morning.

Comprehension Check

1. "He had the distinction of being the only member of the party *to have bagged any game...*"

The phrase in italics means

- (i) Grandfather was the most distinguished member of the party.
- (ii) Grandfather was the only sportsman in the party.
- (iii) Grandfather was the only successful member of the hunting party.

Mark the right answer.

2. Complete the following sentences.

- (i) Toto climbed up the curtains when _____

- (ii) _____, I became one of the tiger's favourites.
- (iii) Timothy had clean habits, _____

☆ As Timothy grows up, he becomes less friendly and rather dangerous.

☆ Grandfather decides to transfer him to the zoo.

☆ Six months later, Grandfather pays Timothy a visit. Timothy is happy to see Grandfather. Or is he?

"One of these days," declared Grandmother in her prophetic manner, "we are going to find Timothy sitting on Mahmoud's bed, and no sign of the cook except his clothes and shoes!"



Of course, it never came to that, but when Timothy was about six months old a change came over him; he grew steadily less friendly. When out for a walk with me, he would try to steal away to stalk a cat or someone's pet dog. Sometimes at night we would hear frenzied cackling from the poultry house, and in the morning there would be feathers lying all over the verandah. Timothy had to be chained up more often. And finally, when he began to stalk Mahmoud about the house with what looked like villainous intent, Grandfather decided it was time to transfer him to a zoo.

Reserving a first class compartment for himself and Timothy—no one would share a compartment with them—Grandfather took him to Lucknow where the zoo authorities were only too glad to receive as a gift a well-fed and fairly civilised tiger.

About six months later, when my grandparents were visiting relatives in Lucknow, Grandfather took the opportunity of calling at the zoo to see how Timothy was getting on. I was not there to accompany him but I heard all about it when I returned to Dehra.

Arriving at the zoo, Grandfather made straight for the particular cage in which Timothy had been interned. The tiger was there, crouched in a corner, full-grown and with a magnificent striped coat.

“Hello Timothy!” said Grandfather and put his arm through the bars of the cage.

The tiger approached the bars, and allowed Grandfather to put both hands around his head. Grandfather stroked the tiger's forehead and tickled his ears, and, whenever he growled, smacked him across the mouth, which was his old way of keeping him quiet.



frenzied: loud and frantic **cackling:** noise (made by hens) **villainous intent:** wicked and dangerous plan or idea **interned:** kept **smacked:** hit lightly



He licked Grandfather's hands and only sprang away when a leopard in the next cage snarled at him. Grandfather 'shooed' the leopard away, and the tiger returned to lick his hands; but every now and then the leopard would rush at the bars, and he would slink back to his corner.

A number of people had gathered to watch the reunion when a keeper pushed his way through the crowd and asked Grandfather what he was doing.

"I'm talking to Timothy," said Grandfather. "Weren't you here when I gave him to the zoo six months ago?"

"I haven't been here very long," said the surprised keeper. "Please continue your conversation. But I have never been able to touch him myself, he is always very bad tempered."

"Why don't you put him somewhere else?" suggested Grandfather. "That leopard keeps frightening him. I'll go and see the Superintendent about it."

slink: move noiselessly



Grandfather went in search of the Superintendent of the zoo, but found that he had gone home early; and so, after wandering about the zoo for a little while, he returned to Timothy's cage to say good-bye. It was beginning to get dark.

He had been stroking and slapping Timothy for about five minutes when he found another keeper observing him with some alarm. Grandfather recognised him as the keeper who had been there when Timothy had first come to the zoo.

"You remember me," said Grandfather. "Now why don't you transfer Timothy to another cage, away from this stupid leopard?"

"But— sir —" stammered the keeper, "it is not your tiger."

"I know, I know," said Grandfather. "I realise he is no longer mine. But you might at least take a suggestion or two from me."

"I remember your tiger very well," said the keeper. "He died two months ago."

"Died!" exclaimed Grandfather.

"Yes sir, of pneumonia. This tiger was trapped in the hills only last month, and he is very dangerous!"

Grandfather could think of nothing to say. The tiger was still licking his arm, with increasing relish. Grandfather took what seemed to him an age to withdraw his hand from the cage.

With his face near the tiger's he mumbled, "Goodnight, Timothy," and giving the keeper a scornful look, walked briskly out of the zoo.

RUSKIN BOND
(slightly abridged)



Comprehension Check

- Grandmother's prophecy was that the tiger
 - would prefer Mahmoud's bed to sleep in.
 - and the cook would disappear together from the house.
 - would one day make a meal of Mahmoud.Mark the right answer.
- When Timothy was about six months old, *a change came over him*. The phrase in italics means that
 - Timothy had grown to his full size.
 - Timothy grew more friendly.
 - Timothy grew less friendly, in fact more dangerous
- Write 'True' or 'False' against each of the following statements.
 - Timothy and Grandfather went to Lucknow in a special compartment. _____
 - The compartment in which Grandfather and Timothy travelled had no other passenger. _____
 - Timothy and Grandfather travelled in a first class compartment. _____
 - All passengers in the compartment thought that Timothy was a well-fed and civilised tiger. _____
- Grandfather suggested that Timothy should be put in another cage. The reason was that
 - the tiger had become very bad tempered.
 - a leopard in the next cage would constantly rush at Timothy.
 - the cage was too small for a full grown tiger.
- The tiger was still licking his arm, *with increasing relish*. The phrase in italics suggests that Timothy
 - was good natured.
 - recognised an old friend.
 - smelt fresh food.



Exercises



Answer the following questions.

1. Where was the tiger cub hiding when Grandfather found him?
2. (i) What did Toto do to entertain Timothy?
(ii) What did he do when Timothy lost his temper?
3. "I became one of the tiger's favourites". Who is 'I' in the statement? Why did he think so?
4. Where was Timothy most comfortable during the day? Where was he during the night?
5. What was Grandmother's prophecy about the cook? Did it come true?
6. What made Grandfather decide to transfer Timothy to the zoo?
7. Why did Grandfather want Timothy to be put in another enclosure?
8. What shocked Grandfather in the end?

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. Shoot animals with a camera, not with a gun.
2. Keeping pets helps us become more loving and tolerant. It also helps us respect life in any form. Do you agree?
3. Have you heard of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)? What do they do?

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A Tiger in the House

The Competition

"Where's Bill today, Belinda?" asked the teacher.

"In bed, Miss," replied Belinda.

"Is he ill, then? What is the matter with him?" asked the teacher.

"We were having a competition," explained Belinda, "to see who could lean out of the window farthest—and Bill won."



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Before you read

Have you heard of the Viking Mission to Mars?

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Viking Mission to Mars was composed of two spacecraft, Viking 1 and Viking 2, each consisting of an orbiter and a lander. The primary objectives were to obtain images and samples of the Martian surface and soil and search for any possible signs of life. Viking 1 was launched on 20 August 1975 and arrived at Mars on 19 June 1976. Viking 2 was launched on 9 September 1975 and entered Mars' orbit on 7 August 1976.

Besides taking photographs and collecting other science data on the Martian surface, the two landers conducted three biology experiments to look for possible signs of life. As of now, there is no clear evidence of the presence of living microorganisms in the soil near the landing sites.

Now read the story.

- ☆ **Tilloo and his parents live beneath the surface of a planet under artificial conditions.**
- ☆ **Tilloo has heard and read about the sun and the stars. He has never seen them.**
- ☆ **Tilloo's father goes to work through a secret passage, and Tilloo wants to know all about it.**

“TILLOO! How often have you been told not to go that way?”

“But why does Daddy go there every day?”

“Because that’s his job, Tilloo!”

‘That way’ was an underground passage. Tilloo’s father went every day for work along that passage. And every day he came back from that direction. What lay at the end of that forbidden route? Not only Tilloo, but a great majority of the community would have liked to know. Tilloo’s father was one of the select few permitted to go that way. The above conversation invariably took place between Tilloo and his mother whenever he insisted on following his father.

Today, however, was different. Tilloo’s father was enjoying a siesta at home and Tilloo managed to get hold of his security card. Then, evading his watchful mother’s eye, Tilloo made his way to the forbidden passage.

A metal door barred his entry. But Tilloo had watched his father slip the magic card into a slot. He did the same... and the door opened noiselessly. A well-lit passage seemed to beckon him.

Snatching the card which had come out of another slot in the wall, Tilloo started his march along a gentle upward slope—for the passage led from the underground habitat to the surface of the planet. Tilloo looked forward to seeing the sun (if it was daytime) or the stars (if it was night) about which he had heard and read so much.

But alas, that wasn’t to be!

Tilloo had underestimated the security arrangements. Invisible mechanical devices had already detected and photographed the small intruder, sent his picture to the Central Bureau where it was thoroughly checked... And before he had advanced ten paces a strong hand fell heavily on his shoulder. Gently but firmly he was escorted by the

siesta: short rest or nap after lunch **habitat:** shelter or home **detected:** found out **escorted:** taken or led



security staff back home to an anxious and angry mother. While he was being scolded he received help from an unexpected quarter.

“Let me explain to him, darling!” said his father who had just got up. “If he is properly briefed, he will not do such a thing again.” He started to explain.

“Listen, Tilloo! I work on a surface where an ordinary person cannot survive because the air is too thin to breathe and where the temperature is so low that you would freeze to death.”

“But, Daddy, how do you manage to survive?”

“Because I go well-equipped, in a special suit with a reservoir of oxygen. I can keep warm and my boots are specially designed to make it easy for me to walk on the surface. What’s more, I’ve been trained to survive and work on the surface.

“There was a time when our forefathers lived on the surface quite naturally. Indeed they did so for millions of years. But times changed. The very sun, which had provided us with sustenance, turned hostile. It changed only slightly but the change was sufficient to upset the balance of nature on this planet.

“First the birds became extinct. The animals followed. The fish couldn’t bear it anymore either. We managed to survive only because of our superior technology, but we were forced to live underground under artificial conditions. Thanks to solar energy, we can generate sufficient power to make our life comfortable. But the machines which make this possible must always be in good working condition. Some of them are on the surface—I belong to the team whose responsibility it is to keep watch on them and to service them.”

briefed: told or informed



“Daddy, can I join the team when I grow up?”

“Of course, if you want to,” said his father.

“But for that you must be a good boy and do as your parents tell you.” His mother had, as usual, the last word.

Comprehension Check

1. How does Tilloo manage to find his way to the ‘forbidden passage’?
2. What did Tilloo hope to see once he emerged from his underground home?
3. Why did Tilloo’s father advise him not to try to reach the surface of the planet?
4. What changes had occurred, which forced people to live in underground homes?

- ☆ **The big TV screen in the Control Room shows an alien spacecraft.**
- ☆ **The question whether there is life on other planets exercises everybody’s mind.**
- ☆ **The President of the Central Committee is about to make an important statement.**

Next day when Tilloo’s father went to work, he found the Control Room full of excitement. People were crowded round the big TV screen. It showed a dot in an otherwise clear background.

“It isn’t a star—for it’s changing its position. Our computer has given a trajectory for this ‘thing’. It’s heading towards us.” The Supervisor of the last shift explained.

“A spacecraft?” Tilloo’s father asked. By now he was joined by his teammates on the new shift.

“So we think; but it needs watching.”



A spacecraft? Where from? The solar system wasn't known to have any life anywhere else except on their planet. Tilloo's father recalled the ancient days recorded in the archives at the Central Bureau when their ancestors had a well-developed space programme and had searched the solar system with manned and unmanned spacecraft and found that they were indeed 'alone'. Now, in the days of energy shortage and underground life, they had no space programme. They could only watch impotently from their vantage point. Who were these strangers?

The conference room in the Central Bureau was so quiet that an outsider would have thought it was empty. Far from it. It was full to capacity but the members of the Central Committee were unusually quiet. They knew that the President was going to make a momentous announcement.

"Colleagues! I will give you the report as I have it. While I speak there may be a change in the situation," the President paused to get his papers in order and then continued. "Two spacecraft are approaching us. One is in fact orbiting our planet while the other is still far away. We guess that they are coming from our neighbouring planet. How should we react? Number One, your views please."

Number One was in charge of defence. He was known for his courage and wisdom. "Sir, if we wish we can totally destroy these spacecraft with our missiles. But that won't make us any wiser. We do not have the capacity to render these craft unoperational in space; but should they land we can render them ineffective anytime we choose. Our reports say that they do not contain living beings, they only have instruments."

"Number Two, your opinion please," the President asked the scientist on the committee.

"I recommend non-interference and passive observation. Since we do not know the power of the senders of these



spacecraft, and we are still in the dark about their intentions, it is wise not to reveal our existence. If we destroy these spaceships or render them ineffective, we might reveal our existence.”

The President looked at Number Three, a social scientist. He rarely agreed with Number Two. But this was one of those rare occasions when he did.

“I agree with Number Two, sir. In fact I will go so far as to say that we should keep our surface activities to the minimum, thus creating the impression that there’s no life on this planet. Fortunately, our surface conditions do give that impression.”

Before the President could speak his personal telephone rang. He lifted the receiver and listened quietly for a minute.

“Colleagues!” he announced, “the first spacecraft has landed.”

Comprehension Check

1. Why was everyone in the Control Room greatly excited?
2. Was the spacecraft manned or unmanned? How do you know it?
3. What did Number One and Number Two suggest should be done about the alien spacecraft?

- ☆ **Tilloo accompanies his father to the Control Room.**
- ☆ **In his excitement, he presses the all-important red button on the panel, and the mechanical hand from the alien spacecraft stops working.**
- ☆ **The mechanical hand is activated again, but it finds no signs of life on that planet.**

It was a red letter day in Tilloo’s life—the day he was waiting for. For his father had at last taken him to the



Control Room. From here he could see the alien spacecraft on his TV screen.

“What a funny looking thing, Daddy! What does it contain?” Tilloo asked.

His father shook his head, “Can’t say for sure. We are only allowed to observe it from far. But we control all its parts and can exercise our power if it is up to any mischief.” He pointed to an impressive panel with several coloured buttons on it. Tilloo looked at them wistfully.

“Look, it’s up to something, Daddy,” Tilloo suddenly noted some movement in the spacecraft. Others in the Control Room saw it too. All eyes were now glued to the screen.

A mechanical hand was emerging from the spacecraft. It was approaching the surface of the planet. It bent and touched the soil. What was it up to? People crowded towards the screen for a closer look. The telescopic lens of the TV camera zoomed in to the tip of the mechanical hand.

Tilloo was staring at the control panel and its attractive buttons. An irresistible desire got hold of him to press the most prominent of all buttons, the red one. He moved...

There was a shrill whistle and Tilloo found himself the centre of attention. His father pulled him away roughly and restored the red button to neutral position. But the damage was done.

The mechanical hand from the spacecraft ceased to work.

At a press conference held by NASA, a scientist was briefing the world press:

... Everything has been going on smoothly with the Viking Mission. There is a small hitch. The mechanical hand which was to dig out the Martian soil for examination has developed a malfunction... We don’t know the cause but our technicians are confident they’ll sort it out...



And shortly afterwards there was another press release from NASA:

... The mechanical hand is working again, thanks to the efforts of our technicians. Soil samples are being collected and examined... Soon we will know the answer to the question whether there is life on Mars.

Life on Mars? Of all the planets in our solar system, Mars is nearest in location and physical conditions to our Earth. So the scientists behind the Viking Mission were hopeful of finding life on Mars. But they were in for a disappointment.

The Viking Mission found no signs of life on Mars.

JAYANT NARLIKAR

Comprehension Check

1. What do you think the mechanical hand was trying to do?
2. Tilloo pressed the red button and “the damage was done”. What was the damage?
3. Where had the spacecraft come from?
4. On which planet do Tilloo and his parents live?

Exercises

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. If you had to live in a home like Tilloo's, what parts of life would you find most difficult? What compensations might there be?
2. What, if anything, might drive mankind to make their homes underground?
3. Do you think there is life on other planets? Can you guess what kind of people there may be on them? In what ways are they likely to be different from us?



MARTIAN PROBES MAY HAVE KILLED MICROBES

Two NASA space probes that visited Mars 30 years ago may have stumbled upon alien microbes on the Red Planet and inadvertently killed them, a scientist has theorised in a paper.

The problem was the Viking space probes of 1976–77 were looking for the wrong kind of life and did not recognise it, the researcher said in a paper presented at a meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Seattle on Sunday.



This news report, based on a more expansive view of where life can take root, may have NASA looking for a different type of Martian life form when its next Mars spacecraft is launched later this year, one of the space agency's top scientists told reporters.

Last month, scientists excitedly reported that new photographs of Mars showed geologic changes that suggest water occasionally flows there — the most tantalising sign that Mars is hospitable to life.

(From a recent newspaper report)

