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CHEEMI : THE BRAVE GIRL

Cheemi was a poor orphan.¹ Nobody knew where she had come from yet everyone accepted the frail² little girl and named her Cheemi' the little sparrow. She fetched vegetables from the corner shop or looked after babies when their mothers went shopping. If the maid³ didn't turn up, Cheemi was there to help, cleaning vessels,⁴ sweeping the floor and so on.

Cheemi lived on leftovers⁵ women in the neighbourhood gave her. The girls of her age gave her their discarded clothes. Everybody liked Cheemi, except Parvati Kaki.⁶ She had a big house with a beautiful garden full of Jasmines and roses. But nobody was ever allowed in. The flowers were meant for puja.⁷

Parvati Kaki's house was almost like a mansion⁸ built in traditional style with big wooden carved doors, huge halls and chandeliers⁹. Surprisingly, the windows, especially of the rooms, were very small. They were decorated with beads and zari¹⁰ curtains¹¹ and hangings. It was said that Parvati Kaki's ancestors¹² were related to the great Peshwas¹³ who had ruled Maharashtra during the 18th and 19th centuries.

In the big house Parvati Kaki lived with her son Vinayak, his wife Gauri and her chubby¹³ little grandson, Chhotu. Chhotu was a great favourite with the girls. Gauri Bhabhi¹⁴, as Chhotu's mother was called, was a very nice, educated lady and didn't mind Chhotu being carried by others. Parvati Kaki, however, kept vigil¹⁵ like a watchdog and never

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1. orphan - / 'O;fn/(n)- a child whose parents are dead
 2. frail - / freIl/ (adj)- physically weak and thin.
 3. maid - /meId/(n)- a female Servant in a house
 4. vessels - / 'veslZ/(n)- utensils and cups and bowls etc.
 5. left-overs - / 'leftJUvJz/(n)- food that has not been eaten at the end of a meal
 6. Kaki - /Ka:ki:/(n)- aunt (Hindi word)
 7. puja - /pu:dZa:/(n)- worship (Hindi word)
 8. mansion - / 'm&nSn/(n)- a large impressive house.
 9. chandelier - /%S&ndJ' lIj(r) /objects for ceiling fitted with small pieces of glass for light decoration
 10. zari - / zVri/(n)- brocade (Hindi word) : (a cloth especially women from gold or silver silk thread.
 11. curtain - / 'k3;t'n/(n)- A piece of cloth that is hung to cover a window or door.
 12. ancestors - / ' &nsestJ(r) / - One's forefathers
 13. chubby - / 'tSVbi /- slightly fat in an attractive way
 14. Bhabhi - /bʰa: bʰI/- brother's wife (Hindi word)
 15. vigil - / 'vIdZIl/(n)- to be very closely watching somebody or something.

allowed Cheemi to touch Chhotu. Cheemi had to be satisfied with cooing¹ to Chhotu from a distance. How she wished she could play with him.

Every year when, during the monsoons, the river Mutha, near Pune, gets flooded, people gather to watch the flood waters. That year, when the level of the water rose, no one bothered. Suddenly, the news came that Panshet Dam had given way and the waters of Mutha river had entered the city. Children were asked to rush home from school. Shanwar Peth, where Cheemi and her friends lived, and other areas on the river banks were in danger² of being flooded.

At first the water was just knee-deep, but it rose fast. People living on the ground floors were shifted to places of safety. Those who lived in two or three storeyed³ flats climbed to the top. There was confusion⁴ everywhere.

Vinayak, Parvati Kaki's son, had gone to Mumbai on business. Parvati Kaki and Gauri Bhabhi were on the ground floor. When water entered their house, Parvati Kaki was in the puja room and Gauri Bhabhi in the kitchen. Within seconds the water rose. The police persuaded⁵ Parvati Kaki and Gauri Bhabhi to climb to the top floor. In the hurry and confusion, they forgot that Chhotu was sleeping on the first floor.

The staircases were flooded. It was impossible to get to the bedroom on the first floor. Though the door to the room was closed, it was not bolted. Any moment⁶ the water could rush in. The women were panicky.⁷ "Chhotu!" They wailed⁸ "What'll happen to our Chhotu!"

Suddenly the police discovered that one of the bedroom windows was open, but it was too small for an adult to crawl⁹ in. Only a child could. But no one was willing to let their children take the risk. Out of nowhere, Cheemi emerged¹⁰. "Let me help. I can easily crawl in and get Cheemi out," she offered.

There was no time to waste. The policemen lowered Cheemi to the window. "Jump," they told her. "We will drop you a rope ladder through the window."

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1. cooing - /ku; IN/(n)- imitating the sound of a dove
 2. danger /deIndZJ(r)/ risk or possibility of ill happening
 3. storeyed /stO;ri:d/(adj) a multi leveled building
 4. confusion /kJn' fju; Zn/(n) a state of uncertainly
 5. persuade /pJ' sweId/(v) to give good reasons for doing something
 6. moment /mJUmJnt/(n) a very short period of time
 7. panicky /p&nIki/(adj) anxious about something
 8. wail /weIl/(v) to make a long loud high cry
 9. crawl /krO;l/(v) to move forward on self hands and knees
 10. emerge /i'm3;dZ/ to come suddenly and unexpectedly from somewhere

Without a moment's hesitation¹ Cheemi jumped through the window. Chhotu was sleeping soundly. Picking him up, Cheemi put him on her back and tied him tight² to herself with a bedsheet.

Slowly she climbed up the ladder and peeped through the window. Carefully she undid the bedsheet and handed it, with the child to a policeman. Then she crawled out of the window.

Both Cheemi and Chhotu were taken to the second floor where Parvati Kaki, Gauri Bhabhi and others were watching. Chhotu, who was up by now, saw so many people around him and burst out crying.

Cheers³ greeted Cheemi.

Gauri Bhabhi hugged⁴ Cheemi while Parvati Kaki fondled⁵ her grandson. Cheemi did not know what the fuss⁶ was all about.

"Come here, Cheemi," Parvati Kaki called her. Cheemi hesitated. But Parvati Kaki almost dragged⁷ Cheemi to her and hugged her. "Daughter Cheemi," she said, "you have shown that it is courage and humanity⁸ that counts, not your caste or position."

After two days the flood water began to recede.⁹ As soon as life returned to normal in Pune, the police inspector of the locality met Cheemi and asked her what reward¹⁰ she would like to have for her bravery.

The entire¹¹ neighbourhood was there. To everyone's surprise, Cheemi said, "I have already got the reward - an opportunity to play with Chhotu." She paused¹² for a while and added, "I should like to go to school if you can help me." The Inspector was helpless. But Vinayak Bhai came forward and said, "We'll bear the expenses of Cheemi's schooling¹³. She can stay with us as long as she wants."

Cheemi was delighted. At last she had a place to stay and little Chhotu to play with.



1. hesitation /hezI'teISn/(n) the state of confusion on about something being right or wrong
2. tight /taIt/(adj) held or fixed in position firmly
3. cheer - /tSIJ(r)/(n) a shout of joy, support or praise
4. hug /hVg/(v) to embrace someone very closely
5. fondle /fondle/(v) to touch and move hand gently over someone
6. fuss /fVs/(v) unnecessary excitement or activity
7. drag /dr&g/(v) to pull somebody or something alongwith effort
8. humanity /hju;'m&nJti/(n) the state of being kind to people and animals
9. recede /rI'si;d/(v) to move gradually from somebody or some thing away from previous position
10. reward /rI'wO;d/(n) the thing that is given for one's good deeds or works
11. entire /In'taIJ(r)/(adj) whole or including everything
12. pause /pO;z/(v) to stop talking for a short time before continuing
13. schooling /sku:lIN/(n) the education that one receives at school

EXERCISES

Word Power

(1) Arrange the jumbled letters to make meaningful words :

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|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| (i) handro | (ii) lifra | (ii) odolf |
| (iv) bubyhc | (v) tandisce | (vi) torfacies. |

(2) Rewrite the following words using appropriate prefixes given below:

(dis , un- , in- , im-)

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|---------------|--------------|------------|
| (i) educated | (ii) correct | (ii) cover |
| (iv) possible | (v) position | |

(3) Some words have been given from the text as under arrange them in alphabetic order :

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|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| (i) fetch | (ii) vegetable | (ii) babies. |
| (iv) floor | (v) discarded | (vi) garden |
| (vii) style | (viii) wooder | (ix) centuries |
| (x) lady | (xi) safety | (xii) humanity |

(Look into the Dictionary and check your answer.)

How Much Have I Understood ?

(1) Answer the following questions in one or two sentences :

- (i) Why did people call Cheemi the little sparrow ?
- (ii) Who were said to be Parvati Kaki's ancestors ?
- (iii) Cheemi had to be satisfied with cooing to Chhotu at a distance. Why ?
- (iv) What was the incident that caused flood in Shanwar Peth where Cheemi lived ?
- (v) Vinayak, Parvati Kaki's son was not at home at the time of flood. Where was he ?

(2) Answer the following questions in three or four sentences :

- (i) What was the source of Cheemi's food and clothes ?

- (ii) What change took place in Parvati Kaki's attitude after Cheemi had brought Chhotu to safety ?
- (iii) What clues do you find in the lesson that show that the police were active in the flooded village. Describe in brief.
- (iv) What did the police inspector offer Cheemi when life became normal in Pune ?
- (v) "I have already got the reward," said Cheemi. What was the reward that she had got ?

(3) Who said these words to whom :

- (i) "Let me help. I can easily crawl in and get Chhotu out."
- (ii) "We'll drop you a rope ladder through the window."
- (iii) "Come here, Cheemi." ... "Daughter Chemi."
- (iv) "I should like to go to school if you can help me."
- (v) "We'll bear the expenses of Cheemi's schooling."

Language Practice :

Read the following sentences carefully taken from the text :

- (i) But nobody was ever allowed in.
- (ii) The flowers were meant for puja.
- (iii) Parvati Kaki's house was built in traditional style.

The above sentences are in passive construction. When our stress is on the predicate and not on the active (vague) subject, we use the passive construction to make speech more natural. We often prefer the passive when it is not so important as to who (agent) or what did the action.

For passive construction the essential elements are :

- (i) An appropriate form of the verb ' to be', and
- (ii) Past participle form of the "Main Verb"
- (iii) The correspondence between the object of an active verb and the subject of a passive verb.

Now change the following sentences into passive voice. The first one is done for you. In sentences (ii) and (v) 'by' and 'agent' need not be mentioned:

- (i) The servant will clean the floor. The floor will be cleaned (by the servant).
- (ii) I have finished my work.
- (iii) Mother is cooking lunch for us.
- (iv) Sarla called Arun in the Kitchen.
- (v) They are playing football all over the world.

Speaking Time

There is a conversation among some students named Mohan, Priya, Rahim, Seema and David. Of them, Priya, David and Seema are helping with some decoration work being done at school while the rest two are not. Find yourself in their place in turn and the practice conversation in elsewhere the class. The teacher may formulate the groups and ensure that every individual takes part in the conversation.

Mohan : Hello Priya. where have you been ?

Priya : The class was being decorated. Don't you see my dirty clothes ? I was lending a helping hand.

David : A peon was employed for it and he did the cleaning.

Mohan : What are you here for ?

Seema : For you both. Don't you remember the notice that was displayed yesterday?

Rahim : O God! I completely forgot it. The arrangement of seats was allotted to us.

Mohan : Let's hurry to the class.

Priya : Sure, Let' go to the class. The teacher is waiting for us. Let's see what is left for us to do.

Writing Time

1. Write a paragraph how Cheemi saved Chhotu.
2. Describe Cheemi in your own words.

Things to do :

- (i) Visit a river-side area and discuss with the peasants about the problems they face in the rainy season and prepare their list.
- (ii) Discuss among your friends the ways of helping flood victims of your area. Make a list of the things you would need.

