

## Unit - 7

### Hitting Dowry for A Six

- Kalpana Sharma

(Text)

So has young Nisha Sharma of Noida sparked off a new anti-dowry movement? One would like to think that this could happen. After all the anti-dowry campaign of the late 1970s was triggered off by one woman, Satyarani Chaddha, who decided to raise the banner against the custom when her own daughter was tortured and killed for not bringing a sufficient dowry. So an individual's actions can still have far-reaching repercussions. Any of us who thinks it is not worth doing something we believe in because we feel we are alone, should remember Nisha and Satyarani and many others like them.

Nisha has been widely feted and felicitated. Her courage has to be acknowledged. But the media spotlight on an individual, or several Nisha-like individuals, should not mask some of the harder questions that need to be asked. In Nisha's case, two issues stand out. One, parental support when she decided that the cash demand was too much. Two, that until that line had been crossed both she and her parents went along with unreasonable demands and even deception in terms of the groom's qualifications.

It is this latter issue that one must look at more closely. For what are "reasonable" demands? Why should there be any at all? Why "demands"? Can any of them be really "reasonable"? In which other culture are girls expected to carry to their marital home all the equipment for a house — washing machine, fridge, TV, furniture, cupboards, soft furnishings — as well as a car or scooter apart from loads of jewelry and clothes? In some customs, the bride is expected to carry with her not just her wedding trousseau but an odd number of saris, 21 or 31 or 41 complete with separate blouses and petticoats — and sometimes even matching *chappals*! How can even this be considered "reasonable"?

The only reason it is accepted is because of the belief that in her marital home, the girl should not be a "burden" on the husband's family. How on earth did such a concept come to be accepted? A "burden"? A woman who comes in virtually like an additional domestic help in the house, who is expected to serve not just the man she marries but his entire household of parents and any siblings? Why should she be expected to "pay" for this apparent privilege and that too in advance? There is something very sick, and very wrong, in this mentality. And that is what we must question.

I am not sure that in the midst of the celebrations and the media hype, these questions are being tackled. And if we don't come to grips with this central issue, the Nishas will be forgotten just as Satyarani's campaign was relegated to the history books. And dowry will continue in the present or other forms.

The other puzzle that the Nisha case has not solved is that of whether it is only education that makes a difference. In her case, she is a software student. Her education has clearly given her some sense of self-worth so that she knew when to yell "Stop". But since then, the media has highlighted several other cases of women who were not so qualified. Yet, they too took a stand — when parents were prepared to back them. On the other hand, surveys have revealed that even in Kerala, where women are educated and qualified and hold jobs, dowry demands continue to be made and to be met.

Nisha probably represents the glimmer of a trend that has already begun. Others have done it more quietly, perhaps. But the dramatic nature of Nisha's refusal to give in will give others, who are thinking of this, some courage.

Yet, a girl's ability to say "no" in our culture depends a great deal on the support she gets from her family. Parents have to decide that they will not marry their daughters if a dowry is demanded, directly or indirectly. If there is even a hint of this at any stage, they should have the courage to call off the arrangement. Unless enough parents do this, a change will not take place. Of course, we can hope for a day when boys grow up believing that it is a privilege if they get a bride and they should not ask her to pay for marriage. But such a day is some way off given the son-preference that continues to dominate our culture.

Also, despite growing literacy amongst women, the man's will about whether a woman will "work" outside the house or not after marriage continues to be the deciding factor. Even without surveys to confirm this, the tendency to ask girls with jobs and careers to set these aside for the sake of marriage to "a suitable boy" continues to prevail. One comes across apparently "modern", educated young men who will tell you that their future brides are professionals with jobs, "but she will not work after marriage". Why? Obviously, because even though being "modern" should mean having a mind-set that recognises the needs and rights of women, once she enters your home as a bride, these rights are subsumed under the ostensibly superior needs of the husband and his family. So women can "work" outside the house, if the husband needs the income, but otherwise they must be content to work inside the home — for that is considered their true role and destiny.

But to beat men at this dowry game, girls in India should remember that they have numbers on their side. There are more boys in this country than girls. So it is boys who should be running after girls if they want to get married, it is they who should in fact pay a price. Girls should have the confidence to play hard to get, to wait until they find a mate who matches their demands rather than giving in so easily. It is a combination of the determination of girls, supportive parents and a change in our perverted culture that will end this "evil", which is what it is. A law can only help to some extent. It cannot change mind-sets as has already been demonstrated.

So if girls can "Bend it like Beckham", why can they not hit dowry for a six?

## **Reading Comprehension**

'Hitting Dowry for a Six' is an article by Kalpana Sharma that strikes at the prevailing evil in the society- Dowry System. This article speaks about the dowry system and uses the incident of Nisha Sharma's case to highlight it. There are a lot of questions that the author asks and it is in the form of arguments. The author then takes Satyarani Chaddha's case to highlight the struggles made against this system. The attitude of the society is then revealed as there are few many reasons for giving dowry and they all think it as rightful. The reasonable demands made by the husband's family and the false belief of bride as a burden is also expressed later. She questions the beliefs and the logic behind these customs in this section. The author finds out that even education is not a perfect remedy to give up this system and she gives the example of Kerala, where even educated and qualified demand dowry. In the latter paragraphs the author gives few practical suggestions to eradicate dowry system such as the change in boy's thoughts, girl's ability to say 'no', parents' willingness to not to marry their daughters to those who ask for dowry and so on. The article then ends with the phrase 'bend it like Beckham' which means whatever the obstacle we face it is time to kick the evil out of sight.

## Exercise - I

Answer the following in two or three sentences each :-

1. **What made Satyarani Chaddha to trigger an anti- dowry campaign in late 1970s?**

**Answer :** Satyarani Chaddha initiated the anti- dowry movement in the late 1970 and raised the banner against the custom of dowry because her daughter was tortured and killed for not bringing a sufficient dowry.

2. **Which are the two issues that stand out in the case of Nisha Sharma?**

**Answer :** The two issues that stood out in Nisha Sharma's case are: (i) parental support when she decided that the cash demand was too much, (ii) Her parents went along with the unreasonable demands and even deception in terms of the groom's qualifications.

3. **What is the puzzle Nisha case hasn't solved?**

**Answer :** The puzzle that Nisha case hasn't solved is as whether education is the only remedy to create a difference in the custom of dowry.

4. **What is the 'reasonable demands' mentioned in the article?**

**Answer :** The reasonable demands mentioned in the article are bringing household equipment, vehicles, jewellery and clothes.

5. **What is the only reason that makes the parents to agree to the 'reasonable demands'?**

**Answer :** The only reason that the parents accepted the reasonable demands was because of the belief that in her marital home, their daughter should not be a burden.

6. **What does the phrase 'bend it like Beckham' mean?**

**Answer :** The phrase 'bend it like Beckham' means to kick the ball in a curve or bend shape even other players try to block it. Beckham is a Soccer player who kicks the ball in such a manner. Here, in this article the author inspires girls to kick the system of dowry from the society just like Beckham kicks the ball.

## Exercise - II

Answer the following in a paragraph each :-

1. **What are the suggestions made by Kalpana Sharma to eradicate the dowry system from the society?**

**Answer :** At first, Girls should have the ability to say 'no', as this should be attained from her family's support. Second, parents have to decide that they will not marry their daughters if a dowry is demanded directly or indirectly. Even if there is a hint of this at any stage they should have the courage to call off the wedding arrangements. Third, boys should believe that it is a privilege if they get a bride and they should not ask her to pay for marriage.

**2. Explain the ‘reasonable demands’ mention in the article.**

**Answer :** The reasonable demands mentioned in the article are bringing household equipment such as washing machine, fridge, TV, furniture, cupboards, soft furnishings as well as a car or scooter, loads of jewellery and clothes. In some other customs the bride is expected to carry with her not just her wedding trousseau but an odd number of saris, 21 or 31 or 41 with separate blouses and petticoats, sometimes even matching chappals.

**3. Significance of the title *Hitting Dowry For A Six*.**

**Answer :** *Hitting dowry for a six* is an article by Kalpana Sharma that discusses the issues of dowry system. The article evaluates the reasons that pressurize the society to make dowry system a custom. She takes many examples into account and states practical suggestions to overcome this problem. The article ends with the phrase ‘bend it like Beckham’ which refers to the complete eradication of this evil from the society. Beckham is a Soccer player and he kicks the ball in such a curve shape or as a bend that no one could be able to block his ball. Kalpana Sharma urges her lady readers to enable themselves to kick this issue by hitting it for a six.

## ***A Gandhian in Garhwal : Chandi Prasad Bhatt***

- Ramchandra Guha

In the first week of June 1982 I began a secular pilgrimage deep into the Alakananda valley. My destination was Gopeshwar, a town that clings to a hill somewhat short of Badrinath, and the living deity I wished to pay tribute to was Chandi Prasad Bhatt, founder of the Chipko movement.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1934, in a family of priests who tented the temple of Rudranath, which nestles in a forest at 13,000 feet. Rudranath, is part of the ‘ Panch Kedar’, the five Himalayan temples dedicated to Shiva, the most venerated of which is Kedarnath. As a boy, Chandi Prasad went up often to the family shrine, the journey also alerting him to local traditions of folk ecology. When he walked through the bugiyal – the alpine pasture- he had to take off his shoes so as not to harm flowers. In one four kilometer stretch above the Amrit Ganga, there was a ban on spitting, coughing and pissing: on anything at all that might cause pollution in the river below. There were taboos on plucking plants before that festival of Nandashtami, in September, after which the restraint was removed so that plucking of the now ripened flowers also released their seeds.

Once, on the walk to Rudranath, Chandi Prasad met a shepherd burning the flowers of the sacred and beautiful Brahmakamal. He asked why, it being the week of Nandhastami, and the shepherd answered that he wouldn’t have, normally, except his stomach ached horribly and the extract of the flower would cure him. But, the offender quickly added, he had broken off the plant with his mouth, like a sheep, so that the deity would think it was nature’s natural order rather than the hand of man at work.

While acquiring such informal education in ecology, Chandi Prasad studied in schools in Rudraprayag and Pauri, stopping short of talking a degree. To support his mother- his father had died when Chandi Prasad was a baby- he taught art to children for a year before joining the Garhwal Motor Owners Union (GMOU) as a booking clerk. With the GMOU he was posted up and down the Alakananda, in large villages tickets, he says, alerted him to the social diversity of India, for many of his customers were pilgrims from different parts of the country, practicing various trades and professions.

How did an obscure transport clerk become an influential social worker? In Bhatt’s telling, the transformation started with his attending a public meeting in Badrinath in 1956. The star speaker here was the great Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP, another speaker was the local Sarvodaya leader Man Singh Rawat. The young man was deeply impressed by both. Now, he would seek out news of JP OR Vinoba and their Sarvodaya movement. When the time came to take his annual holiday, he spent it with Man Singh Rawat in the interior villages of if this rich man (by local standards) can abjure his inheritance for Sarvodaya, thought Chandi Prasad, why not me?

Between 1956 and 1960 Chandi Prasad spent his leave learning about sarvodaya from Man Singh and his wife Sashi Behn, Who had been trained by the legendary Sarla Behn at the Laxmi Ashram in Kausani. There were educative treks with the Rawats and also one, in

1959, with Vinoba Bhave. China was now making menacing moves on the Indian Frontier. The other Asian giant's challenge, said JP, was not merely military, but also ideological. A call for more volunteers was answered by Bhatt, who, in 1960, made his jeevandaan to the Sarvodaya movement. It was a considerable sacrifice, for he was now married and had a child.

With a few friends, Bhatt first ran a labour co-operative that helped repair hoses and build roads, its members sharing the work and wages equally. Then, in 1964, was founded the Dashauli Gram Seva Sangh, which has justly been called the 'Mother organization of the Chipko movement.' that movement of course lay a decade in the future. Still it is worth nothing that the foundation of the DGSS was laid by a woman – Sucheta Kripalani, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh – while the land was donated by another woman Shyama Devi.

My account of Bhatt's early years and initiation into Sarvodaya comes from an extended interview he recently granted me: the first time, I believe, that this reticent and consistently self-effacing man has chosen to speak to an outsider about such thing. With the founding of the DGSS, however, we enter the domain of the public man, 'Bhatt' rather than 'Chandi Prasad.' The DGSS's emphasis on local employment generation through the promotion of weaving, bee-keeping, herb collection, cottage industries that would sustainably use forest produce. In 1968 JP and his wife Prabhavathi visited Gopeshwar: seeing the work of Bhatt and his fellows, they said they were reminded of the spirit of sacrificial heroism that had marked Gandhi's movement.

The activities of the DGSS occasionally brought it into conflict with the government. The clashes were usually minor and usually resolved, till, in 1973, the Forest Department refused to allot the DGSS a batch of horn beam trees from which to make agricultural implements. To their dismay, these same trees were then auctioned off to a sports goods company in distant Allahabad. The DGSS's feelings were echoed more strongly by the residence of Mandal, a village that lay adjacent to the disputed trees. At Bhatt's suggestion, the villagers threatened to hug the trees rather than allow the loggers in. As Chipko's first historian, Anupam Mishra, notes, the term originally used by Bhatt was the Garhwali 'angalwaltha', or embrace, a word more resonant of local feelings than the Hindi word 'Chipko', i.e., 'to stick'.

The protest at Mandal was followed by several such actions against commercial forestry in the villages of the Alakananda valley. One such Protest, at Reny in the spring of 1974, was the work wholly of women led by the remarkable Gaura Devi. Meanwhile, the other great Gandhian of Garhwal, Sunderlal Bahuguna, broke off a trek through Uttarakhand to be with and celebrate the protesters. What he saw was conveyed in articles he wrote in the respected nationalist weekly of Dehradun, Yugvani. Bahuguna hailed Chandi Prasad Bhatt as the 'chief organizer' (mukhya sanchalak) of the Chipko Andolan. This, he added, was not an economic movement that would subside once its demands were met: on the contrary, its main aim was the fostering of love towards trees in the hearts of humans. For Chipko, observed Bahuguna, safeguarding the hill forests, was but the first step towards transforming the relationship between humans and nature.

Chipko was born in the Alakananda valley; its midwives were Bhatt and his co-workers in the DGSS. Later, it moved eastwards to Kumaon, where protests against commercial forestry were coordinated by leftwing students of the Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini as well as westwards, to the Bhagirathi Valley, where the movement was led by Sunderlal Bahuguna and his associates.



Within its original home the movement had entered its second phase, that of reconstruction. Under Bhatt's leadership the DGSS organized dozens of tree-plantation and protection programmes, motivating women (especially) to re-vegetate the barren hill sides that surrounded them. Within a decade, this work had begun to show results. A study by S.N Prasad of the Indian institute of science showed that the survival rate of saplings in DGSS plantations was in excess of 70 per cent, whereas the figure for Forest Department plantations lay between 20 per cent and 50 per cent.

In the early 1980s the DGSS became the DGSM, with 'Mandal ' replacing 'Sangh' .By any name, it remains an exemplary organization. Its works has been lovingly described in a booklet written by the journalist Ramesh Pahari and published in 1997 by the Peoples Science Institute in Dehradun . Pahari, who has known Bhatt for three decades, writes of his 'simplicity and modesty but [also his] firmness of ideas and decisions'. He quotes a Dalit member of the DGSM committee, Murari Lal, to the effect that 'Bhattji has fought bigger battles for removal of social inequities, than for environmental protection'. It was in Murari Lal's village that the first tree plantation programme was organized. This one time construction worker has been an inseparable associate of Bhatt for thirty-five years. Their relationship is based on mutual respect, the only irritant being the Gandhian's objection to Murari Lal's love of tobacco.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt is a great pioneer environmentalist, an actor and thinker of remarkable range and achievement who, by virtue of his innate modesty and lack of fluent English, remain such less known and honoured than he should be. He has no trumpet, not any trumpeters. One really has to go to Garhwal to know the measure of his work, and that of his colleagues. To me, these words of Ramesh Pahari seem almost exactly right: 'a variety of issues being discussed all over the world today - the advancement of women and Dalit groups and their participation in decision-making, ecology, environment ,traditional rights of people, the indigenous knowledge of people , basing development processes on successful experiences and self-reliant economics have first been worked on by DGSM thirty odd years ago, and without any fanfare '.I think one can repeat that last clause: *without any fanfare* .

Those who know Chandi Prasad Bhatt and his work have long felt that - from the English language press at any rate \_he has never got his just deserts. The Chipko movement that he and his colleagues started was a definitive moment in the history of environmentalism. Before Chipko , it was thought that the poor to be green. After Chipko, indeed through Chipko, it was demonstrated that peasants and tribals had a greater strake in the in the responsible management of nature than did supposedly sophisticated city-dwellers. Then again, it was Bhatt who first taught Indian environmentalists that it was not enough just to protest against destruction, they must also set about the process of reconstruction. Seeking always to improve the lives of the poor, Bhatt has sought to humanize modern science rather than reject it, to democratize bureaucracy rather than demonize it.

I have memories of talking with Chandi Prasad Bhatt and of listening to him talk. But let me end with a memory of, as it were, simply passing him on the road .One evening in Delhi I was driving past a row of truly high-voltage institutions: the India International Centre ,the World Wildlife Fund ,the World Bank and the United National Development Programme. There, on this road, I passed two middle-aged men clad in khadi, talking. I turned into a side lane and watched them for a while. They were Bhatt and Anupam Mishra. The early chronicler of Chipko I mentioned, a man of integrity and achievement and the author of masterly surveys of water management in Rajasthan. They continued talking till a bus came along; they hopped into it, and were lost to me.

Then, and now, I speculated as to where the two men were coming from. From a meeting at the WWF perhaps? In that case, there should have been other peoples around. Or else, perhaps some of these other people had gone to the ICC for a drink, still others to the World Bank pool for a swim. Even had they the necessary memberships, I cannot imagine Chandi Prasad Bhatt or Anupam Mishra exercising either option. In them lives a spirit of quite service which ones existed freely in our politics and our activism, a spirit that has been excised from the one sphere, and is gravely threatened in the other.

## Reading Comprehension

The article begins with the author's secular expedition on June 1892 to see the Gandhian of Garhwal, the man who was behind India's great natural movement- Chandi Prasad Bhatt who was after the Chipko movement. He gives an account of the birth of Prasad as a member into a priest's family. Chandi Prasad is a man who attained formal as well as informal education in ecology and made it worthy through his deeds in life. The transformation of Prasad from a transport clerk to an influential social worker is clearly depicted in this write up.

The next part of it deals with the information the author gathered from Prasad through an interview with him. The activities of DGSS are explained deeply in the next part. The movements, struggles, campaigns, other minor activities and the personalities who are related to it are also added in this section. The writer is very proud of the admiring personality he was searching to meet and encourages his readers to consider him as a model, a lover of nature, a man who acts as a link between human beings and nature.

## Exercise - I

Answer the following in two or three sentences each :-

1. What is the specialty of Rudranath as mentioned by the author?

**Answer :** Rudranath is part of the 'Panch Kedar', the five Himalayan temples dedicated to Shiva. During his childhood days Bhatt went up often to the shrine, and the journey alerted him to the local traditions of folk ecology.

2. What was the shepherd doing with the *brahmakamal* flower?

**Answer :** The shepherd was burning the flowers of the sacred and beautiful flower brahmakamal when Bhatt met him and when he asked the shepherd why he had done so, the shepherd replied that his stomach ached horribly and the extract of the flower would cure him.

3. Who inspired Bhatt for his transformation from a transport clerk to an influential social worker?

**Answer :** The transformation started with his attending a public meeting in Badrinath in 1956. There the speakers that inspired Bhatt were Jayaprakash Narayan and the Sarvodaya leader Man Singh Rawat.

4. What is DGSS?

**Answer :** DGSS means Dashauli Gram Seva Sangh which was founded in 1964 and had justly been known as the 'mother organization of the Chipko movement'. The foundation stone of the DGSS was laid



by a woman named Sucheta Kripalini, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and the land was donated by another woman named Shyama Devi.

5. **What was the sacrificial heroism mentioned in the passage and whose comment was it?**

**Answer :** The activities of DGSS focused on local employment generation through the promotion of weaving, bee- keeping, herb collection and cottage industries. The man behind all these was Chandi Prasad Bhatt. His life and deeds is mentioned as sacrificial heroism compared to Gandhi's movement and it was mentioned by Jayaprakash Narayan and his wife Prabhavathi who visited Gopeshwar in 1968.

6. **What did the villagers do when the hornbeam trees were auctioned off to a sports goods company?**

**Answer :** Villagers threatened to hug the trees rather than allow the loggers in to cut the trees. It was all done by Bhatt's decision.

7. **What happened at Reni in 1974?**

**Answer :** A protest began against commercial forestry in the villages of the Alakananda Valley at Reni in the spring of 1974. This work wholly of woman was led by the remarkable Gaura Devi.

8. **Who is Murari Lal? How he is associated with Bhatt?**

**Answer :** Murari Lal is a Dalit member of DGSS committee. It was in Murari's village that the first tree plantation programme was organized. He was a one-time construction worker who had been an inseparable associate of Bhatt for thirty- five years.

## **Exercise - II**

**Answer the following in a paragraph :-**

1. **Who is Chandi Prasad Bhatt? How he became the Gandhian of Garhwal?**

**Answer :** The write-up depicts Chandi Prasad Bhatt as a great pioneering environmentalist, an actor and thinker of remarkable range and achievement who, by virtue of his innate modesty and lack of fluent English, remains much less known and honoured than he should be. He was an actual Gandhian and had proved his life to be worthy by fulfilling all the Gandhian values of truth and non- violence. His activities were all linked with the nature and left his whole life for preserving and protecting the green land around him. He led non-violence protests but was strong enough to prove to be great fighter of nature.

2. **Who are the inspiration and influence of Chandi Prasad Bhatt?**

**Answer :** There are a lot of persons that had influenced and inspired Bhatt. Jayaprakash Narayan and Man Singh Rawat who transformed the transport clerk Bhatt into an influential social worker. Sara Behn, the legendary figure who was the trainer at Laxmi Ashram is another major figure who had inspired him a lot. Sucheta Kripalini who laid the foundation stone of the DGSS and Shyama Devi the woman who donated the land for DGSS had also inspired his thoughts thereafter. Gaura Devi

is another major figure and a strong woman who protested against the commercial forestry in the spring of 1974 at Reni. The name that echoes after Bhatt as the 'Gandhian of Garhwal' is Sunderlal Bahuguna's. He stood along with Bhatt or had taken more forward steps often to create a link between human and nature. Chipko's first historian Anupam Mishra is another major figure who had assisted Bhatt in his effort to create a green world. Murari Lal is a Dalit who stood along with Bhatt as a one-time construction worker for the first tree plantation programme organized by DGSS in his village. There are many other minor figures, who became the part and parcel of Bhatt's exceptional life.

## ***Lost and Found: Benegal's Bose***

**Mihir Bose**

**(Text)**

Many years ago, just as Richard Attenborough was making his film, *Gandhi*, Satyajit Ray spoke at the National Film Theatre at London's South Bank. He was asked whether he had ever considered making a film about Gandhi. He neatly ducked the question: the impression created was that he did not want to handle such an explosive subject. It has always intrigued me that India's greatest film director did not want to make a film about India's greatest son. It suggested that Indian filmmakers, however eminent, felt such subjects were far too controversial to tackle. This is where Shyam Benegal breaks new ground and deserves to be congratulated by becoming the first Indian film director to have the courage to make a film about a major Indian political figure. Whatever else Benegal's *Bose* film achieves, it has made India's mainstream cinema part of a world culture where it is not forbidden to show political life on the big screen and Indians, like the rest of the world, can deal with their history through film. I am intrigued by the title of his film, *The Forgotten Hero*. When I wrote my biography of Subhas Bose in 1982, which has recently been updated with new material, I called him *The Lost Hero*, meaning that while Bose was important he was lost both to Indian nationalism and modern Indian life. I was keen to write a full biography of the man and get away from the endless debate about whether Bose had died in the air crash, a debate that continues to this day with the Justice Mukherjee Commission trudging on with its inquiry. Benegal neatly avoids the death controversy by not telling us how Bose died. His film deals with the last four years of his life. It begins with Bose resigning from the Congress presidency and ends with the plane taking off in August 1945. The contrast with *Gandhi* is evident. Attenborough dealt with Gandhi's life over a longer historical time frame — from his experiences in South Africa to his death in 1948. Benegal is presenting what he calls a fictional treatment of Bose. He has added his own gloss to the story. So not everything depicted in the film is historically true. This is hardly exceptional. Attenborough did that with *Gandhi* and any good film director would do the same. There is a lengthy description of the submarine trip Bose took in 1943, from Germany to Japan. Many of the incidents described did not take place such as Abid Hasan cooking khichri; but they help dramatise a difficult journey and provide some of the most riveting moments in the film. Hasan joking with the Germans about khichri is comic Hindi cinema at its best. I was less convinced by Benegal's mucking about with the way Bose and Hasan transferred from German to Japanese hands. Benegal shows the pair getting off the German submarine on to a small dingy and then rowing ashore. In real life, Bose actually boarded the Japanese submarine and in making this twist, Benegal, far from adding to the drama, unnecessarily introduces a touch of unreality the film could have done without. The filmmaker takes a great

deal of poetic licence with Bose's relationship with his Austrian secretary Emilie Schenkl — but that is perfectly justified. The film shows a marriage ceremony in Germany in Berlin sometime in 1941 with a German professor acting as the Brahmin priest, while the real Brahmin ACN Nambiar, who worked for Bose, looks on. No such ceremony took place. Bose and Emilie did not become man and wife in 1941, but in 1937. To be fair, Bose has left Benegal a wretched pack of cards as far as his marriage is concerned. Not to put too fine a point on it, Subhas Bose was deceitful about his marriage both with his family and the Indian nation. He kept quiet about this relationship for eight years although towards the end of his life he appears to have suffered agonies about what he had done. As has now emerged, he got married in December 1937 on a short visit to Europe. While the purpose of that visit was stated as seeking treatment before he took over the Congress presidency, it's clear he wanted to go to Europe to marry his secret love. When he returned to India from Europe in January 1938, he did not come clean. Instead, he lied. When asked about marriage he publicly stated, "I have no time to think about that," reinforcing his Indian image of being something of a celibate. Not only was there no marriage ceremony, there was no marriage certificate. But the fact remains that Subhas and Emilie were man and wife; there is overwhelming evidence to prove that including a letter he wrote to his brother Sarat and not least the existence of Anita, their daughter. To add masala, Benegal has made Emilie more glamorous than the Emilie in real life. In keeping with Hindi cinema's convention, Subhas is never seen kissing Emilie and there are no intimate scenes. If in the Indian context Benegal was brave in showing Bose's marriage to a White foreigner, I am sure a western film director would have been less inhibited in showing the western equivalent of Bose making love on the screen. I have an argument on the Bose-Hitler relationship. Benegal makes Bose more anti-Hitler than he was. True, in very difficult circumstances, in war-time Germany, Bose maintained his independence from the Nazis and was prepared to be critical of Hitler's policies. However, it is not quite true to say, as Benegal does, that when Bose met Hitler he lectured the German. He did not. Hitler kept Bose waiting for a long time, for more than a year, before he finally met him. At the start of that awful, fateful meeting, Bose praised Hitler as a great revolutionary and asked his advice on how to get independence for India. There is a full record of the Bose-Hitler meeting kept by Hitler's interpreter Schmidt, and it's clear that Benegal has taken major historical liberties to present Bose in a glorious light. Bose was not a Nazi stooge but neither did he battle Hitler in the way depicted in the film. Bose was farsighted in seeking foreign help to get rid of the British. All successful liberation movements (starting with George Washington's War of American Independence, 1783) have done that. Bose's tragedy was that the only conceivable foreign help on offer was either Hitler or Stalin, both monsters. Stalin did not even want to know about Bose; Hitler, rather the German Foreign Office staffed by anti-Hitler diplomats, did want to deal with him. As for assessing what Hitler stood for and the big menace Nazism posed to India, far bigger than British rule, it was Nehru who had a clearer concept, Bose didn't. The film does not go into all this and that is a pity. Benegal overdoes the battle scenes in Imphal and Burma and presents the INA in a more glorious light than justified by historical records. The INA's contribution to the battles was negligible and hardly heroic. Bose's INA were basically opposed by Indians fighting for the British. Almost 2.8 million Indians fought for the British during the Second World War, the largest volunteer army in the world, far more than those with Bose. Benegal does not dwell on this dimension; we are presented with a Bose versus British fight when in reality it was a Bose versus British plus Indian collaborators. Indeed, Bose's last jail spell in Kolkata was during the Muslim League-led ministry in Bengal that Bose was trying to bring down. Perhaps, that is a story for another film: how the majority of Indians collaborated with the British. The British could never have ruled India for a single day without Indian help and it was only after the INA trials, when the loyalty of the British

Indian Army became suspect, did the British realise they could not hold on to India. However, the film is beautifully done and the parts I liked best are the ones describing Bose's escape from his home in Kolkata via Afghanistan to Berlin. (Here, Benegal is a masterful filmmaker.) In real life, when Bose was told he had left British India and was now in free tribal land bordering Afghanistan, he jumped, stamped his feet on the ground and shouted, "Here I kick George VI, here I spit in the face of the Viceroy." In the film, Bose asks Bhagat Ram, his guide, for a coin with George VI's face. He then tosses the coin on the ground and kicks it and spits on it with Bhagat Ram joining in. Shyam Benegal makes this scene all the more dramatic. I wish the film had ended with the air crash that killed Bose. Benegal shows the plane taking off, then Emilie, while peeling a fruit in Vienna, hears the news through a BBC broadcast. The implication is clear but Benegal perhaps felt that showing the crash would have been a 'final Bose frontier' too difficult to cross. A pity because it might have helped end this silly controversy over his death and bring some sense to my fellow Bengalis who are agitating against the film. That a Bengal that produced a Subhas Bose should now produce such idiots who call themselves his followers and yet know nothing about his life and rail against Benegal's film, shows how far Bengal, once the leader of India, has degenerated. The Benegal film should do much to rehabilitate Subhas Bose, but his so-called followers' antics will only make you despair of modern Bengal and its fall from grace.

## Reading Comprehension

Mihir Bose's review on Shyam Benegal's movie *The Forgotten hero* is envisioned through his article *Lost and found: Benegal's Bose*. Mihir Bose begins this review by recounting an incident where Sathyajit Ray was asked if he ever considered making a film about Gandhi, and he had avoided that question. He added that this created the Indian film director's to avoid making films based on such historical and political figures and considered it as too controversial to tackle. Mihir Bose thus congratulates Shyam Benegal for becoming the first Indian film director to have courage to make a film about a major Indian political figure. Bose got puzzled with the title of the movie by Benegal- *The Forgotten Hero*. He took Attenborough's *Gandhi* into account and considers the subject matter of both the films. *Gandhi* portrays the whole life of our father of nation where as *The Forgotten Hero* depicts only the last four years in Subhas Chandra Bose's life. Avoiding many controversial matters from Subhash Chandra Bose Benegal had drawn a fictional figure by adding gloss to the story. Subhas Bose's death, his marriage ceremony, Bose- Hitler relationship everything has got a Benegal touch in it rather than mere facts. He appreciates Benegal for rehabilitating Subhas Bose and remarks that those who feel proud about being his followers doesn't really know about his life.

## Exercise - I

Answer the following in two or three sentences each :-

1. Who is the first Indian who had the courage to make a film about a major Indian political leader and who was that political leader?

**Answer :** Shyam Benegal is the first Indian who had the courage to make the film, *The Forgotten Hero*, about a major Indian political leader and that political leader was Subhas Chandra Bose.

2. What difference does Mihir Bose point out about the subject matter of *Gandhi* and *The Forgotten Hero*?

**Answer :** Attenborough's *Gandhi* portrays the whole life of Gandhi over a longer historical time frame, whereas, *The Forgotten Hero* by Shyam Benegal depicts only the last four years of Subhas Chandra Bose.

3. **What is the unrealistic matter concerned with Subhas Bose's marriage?**

**Answer :** The film shows Subhas Bose's marriage ceremony in Germany in Berlin in 1941, whereas in real life no such ceremony took place. But they became man and wife in 1937.

4. **Is Subhas Chandra Bose an anti- Hitler?**

**Answer :** Shyam Benegal had made Subhas Bose more anti- hitler than he really was in the film *The Forgotten Hero*. Although, Subhas Bose was critical about Nazism and Hitler's policies, Mihir Bose added that it was not him but Nehru who had a clearer concept about it.

## **Exercise - II**

**Answer the following questions in a paragraph each :-**

1. **Compare and contrast Attenborough's *Gandhi* and Shyam Benegal's *The Forgotten Hero*.**

**Answer :** Attenborough's *Gandhi* and Shyam Benegal's *The Forgotten Hero* are two films based on the life of two eminent Indian political figures associated with India's freedom struggle. Making a film taking such prominent personalities as the subject matter needs enough courage as there are possibilities for controversies. Mihir Bose had analysed how the life of both these heroes is portrayed in these movies. When Attenborough portrayed the whole life of Gandhiji beginning from his days in South Africa, Benegal had depicted only the last four years in Subhas Chandra Bose's life. Mihir Bose points out that, films of this category usually mix some unhistorical facts and it is hardly exceptional also. But considering *The Forgotten Hero*, most of its incidents are unrealistic and sometimes dramatic too.

2. **Certain incidents in the movie is said to be dramatic and was appreciated by Mihir Bose. Which are these incidents?**

**Answer :** *The Forgotten Hero* describes many incidents that seem unrealistic or perfectly fictionalised ones. The lengthy description of the submarine trip Bose took in 1943 from Germany to Japan is an example. Abid Hasan cooking *Khichri* gives a dramatic effect and made the part in which it was included more interesting. Subhas Bose who got escaped from home reaching the tribal land bordering Afghanistan had created the movie more heroic. There he jumped and stamped his feet on the ground, tossed the coin which has got the face of the Viceroy, George VI, kicked it and spat on it. The presentation of the marriage ceremony also makes the movie more unrealistic from his life but impressive as well as dramatic.

## **Exercise - III**

**Answer the following in about 400- 500 words each :-**

1. **Lost and Found: Benegal's *Bose* is a perfect review on Shyam Benegal's *The Forgotten Hero*. Substantiate.**



**Answer :** Benegal was the first Indian who had the courage to make a film on our forgotten hero Subhas Chandra Bose, or the only director who took a film on any of these political figures for the first time in India. The events in Subhas Bose's life and those depicted in the movie- The last four years- his death-marriage ceremony- anti- Hitler aspects- Battle scenes in Imphal and Burma- escape from his home to Afghanistan via Berlin- showing his grudge by kicking and spitting on the coin- Emilie hearing the news about Subhas Bose's death through BBC.

Most of the events in Subhas Bose's life are fictionalised or seasoned with the touch of a perfect film maker. Mihir Bose being the biographer of Subhas Chandra Bose could easily find out all the glossy elements added to create the complete fiction of his life. He appreciates the ability of Benegal for rehabilitating Subhas Bose or it would have created such controversy about the forgotten historical hero.

**2. What are the things to be noted while writing a film review?**

**Answer :** A good review must entertain as well as persuade a reader to watch it or not watch it. Here are few steps that help in writing a good movie review:

- (a) Create an opinion in a nutshell: One should be able to create an overall evaluation about the movie, i.e. whether it is good or bad, interesting or boring or outstanding and so on.
- (b) Be critical: A Movie is a joint effort by a wide range of people with different talents and abilities. It is a mixture of art and science using all sorts of technologies and so a strenuous effort that needs a better evaluation. Leave all sorts of prejudiced mind about an actor or director, biased ideas or concepts. One should be sentimental in judging it and be critical by pointing out the positive and negative aspects of it.
- (c) Strengthen your opinion by giving evidences from the movie: One should analyse its plot- a well-knit plot or loosely structured, major or minor characters- their proper utilization, about poor characterisation, acting and so on.
- (d) Analyse other aspects of the movie: Cinematography, dubbing, music, background score, costume and so on should be analysed in detail to make it more authentic and reliable.
- (e) Collect the facts related to the movie: About what genre it belongs- horror, suspense thriller, and family entertainment and so on. The details of the director, movie's title, actors and the like also should be collected, either after the movie or before watching it. If it has got any historical or mythical implications it is better to find it also. This will help in comparing or contrasting the fact with fiction.
- (f) Watch it once again: After analysing all other aspects it is better to watch it once again, just like proof reading a text before publishing it. It will help you to improve your evaluation either you could correct the mistakes made or could omit the unnecessary comments.



## *The Lost Word*

- Esther Morgan

She's lost a word  
and searches for it everywhere-  
behind the sofa, at the back  
of dusty cupboards and drawers.  
She picks through the rubbish sacks.  
Under the carpet she finds lots of others  
She'd forgotten she'd swept under there  
but not the one she's looking for.  
The trouble is it's small- only two letters  
though no less valuable for that.  
She stands racking her brains  
for the last time she used it  
but all that comes to mind  
are failed attempts  
when her mouth was full  
of someone else's tongue.

### **Reading Comprehension**

*The Lost Word* is a poem that puts forth the problem of forgetting. Here, the woman who was searching for the lost word couldn't find it out even when the poem ends. The poem begins with her searching for that lost word. She keeps on searching for it in the garbage, under the carpet, behind the sofa, at the back of the dusty cupboards and so on. Still she couldn't find it. The poem actually tries to portray the situation in which one forgets one's own mother tongue, as a result of using a foreign language for communication. Because of using this foreign language she couldn't recall even the two- letter word in her own language. The poem begins with the confusion and tension she has got while searching for the word. The poet explores the condition of choosing a right word to complete a sentence. The fact that the woman puts in so much effort in searching for the word reveals the importance of the word. She may use the word either to speak or to write. The poem ends with despair that she couldn't find the word.

## Exercise - I

Answer the following in two or three sentences each:-

1. What was the lady searching for?

**Answer:** The lady was searching for a lost word everywhere in her house.

2. List out the places she had searched for the word?

**Answer:** The woman searched for the word behind the sofa, at the back of the cupboard, under the carpet, etc.

3. Is she able to find out the word at the end?

**Answer:** The word she was searching for has got only two letters in it. At the end of the poem she couldn't find out the word. The poem ends with the failure of her search for the lost word.

## Exercise - II

Answer the following in a paragraph each :-

1. **Significance of the title- *The Lost Word***

**Answer :** The title of the poem is 'The Lost Word'. The lost word here implies the mother tongue. When one uses foreign language and culture she or he will forget that which stood close to her or him. Here also in the poem she couldn't even recall a two-letter word in her mother tongue due to the usage of other language.

2. **What is implied in the places she searches for the lost word?**

**Answer:** The places she searches for the lost word are those left unnoticed and related to our daily life. It implies those who leave all that is so close to them which needs more attention and ignores the very essential things related to one's own life unless we need it in certain situations.

# Lamb to the Slaughter

## (Text)

The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight—hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket. Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work. Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin—for this was her sixth month with child—had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger darker than before. When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

“Hullo darling,” she said.

“Hullo darling,” he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closet. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side. For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn’t want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel—almost as a sunbather feels the sun—that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved intent, far look in his eyes when they rested in her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whiskey had taken some of it away.

“Tired darling?”

“Yes,” he said. “I’m tired,” And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it left. She wasn’t really watching him, but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom of the empty glass when he lowered his arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another.

“I’ll get it!” she cried, jumping up.

“Sit down,” he said.

When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whiskey in it.

“Darling, shall I get your slippers?”

“No.”

She watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong.

“I think it’s a shame,” she said, “that when a policeman gets to be as senior as you, they keep him walking about on his feet all day long.”

He didn’t answer, so she bent her head again and went on with her sewing; but each time he lifted the drink to his lips, she heard the ice cubes clinking against the side of the glass.

“Darling,” she said. “Would you like me to get you some cheese? I haven’t made any supper because it’s Thursday.”

“No,” he said.

“If you’re too tired to eat out,” she went on, “it’s still not too late. There’s plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer, and you can have it right here and not even move out of the chair.”

Her eyes waited on him for an answer, a smile, a little nod, but he made no sign.

“Anyway,” she went on, “I’ll get you some cheese and crackers first.”

“I don’t want it,” he said.

She moved uneasily in her chair, the large eyes still watching his face. “But you must eat! I’ll fix it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like.”

She stood up and placed her sewing on the table by the lamp.

“Sit down,” he said. “Just for a minute, sit down.”

It wasn’t till then that she began to get frightened.

“Go on,” he said. “Sit down.”

She lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered eyes. He had finished the second drink and was staring down into the glass, frowning.

“Listen,” he said. “I’ve got something to tell you.”

“What is it, darling? What’s the matter?”

He had now become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.

“This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I’m afraid,” he said. “But I’ve thought about it a good deal and I’ve decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won’t blame me too much.”

And he told her. It didn’t take long, four or five minutes at most, and she sat very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

“So there it is,” he added. “And I know it’s kind of a bad time to be telling you, but there simply wasn’t any other way. Of course I’ll give you money and see you’re looked

after. But there needn't really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn't be very good for my job."

Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about her business and acted as though she hadn't been listening, then later, when she sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

"I'll get the supper," she managed to whisper, and this time he didn't stop her.

When she walked across the room she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything at all- except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now- down the steps to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again.

A leg of lamb.

All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone-end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living-room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

"For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning round. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out."

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of the shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands.

All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.

It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the child? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill then both-mother and child? Or did they wait until the tenth month? What did they do?

Mary Maloney didn't know. And she certainly wasn't prepared to take a chance.

She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned the oven on high, and shoved it inside. Then she washed her hands and ran upstairs to the bedroom. She sat down before the mirror, tidied her hair, touched up her lips and face. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar. She tried again.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, aloud.

The voice sounded peculiar too.

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street.

It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the grocery shop.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, smiling at the man behind the counter.

"Why, good evening, Mrs. Maloney. How're you?"

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

The man turned and reached up behind him on the shelf for the peas.

"Patrick's decided he's tired and doesn't want to eat out tonight," she told him. "We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he's caught me without any vegetables in the house."

"Then how about meat, Mrs. Maloney?"

"No, I've got meat, thanks. I got a nice leg of lamb from the freezer."

"Oh."

"I don't know much like cooking it frozen, Sam, but I'm taking a chance on it this time. You think it'll be all right?"

"Personally," the grocer said, "I don't believe it makes any difference. You want these Idaho potatoes?"

"Oh yes, that'll be fine. Two of those."

"Anything else?" The grocer cocked his head on one side, looking at her pleasantly. "How about afterwards? What you going to give him for afterwards?"

"Well-what would you suggest, Sam?"

The man glanced around his shop. "How about a nice big slice of cheesecake? I know he likes that."

"Perfect," she said. "He loves it."

And when it was all wrapped and she had paid, she put on her brightest smile and said, "Thank you, Sam. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Maloney. And thank you."

And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it as tasty as possible because the poor man was tired; and if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she'd become frantic with grief and horror. Mind you, she wasn't expecting to find anything. She was just going home with the vegetables. Mrs. Patrick Maloney going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook supper for her husband.

That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.

Therefore, when she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was humming a little tune to herself and smiling.

"Patrick!" she called. "How are you, darling?"



She put the parcel down on the table and went through into the living room; and when she saw him lying there on the floor with his legs doubled up and one arm twisted back underneath his body, it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary.

A few minutes later she got up and went to the phone. She knew the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him, "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!"

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Patrick Maloney."

"You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?"

"I think so," she sobbed. "He's lying on the floor and I think he's dead."

"Be right over," the man said.

The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policemen walked in. She knew them both—she knew nearly all the men at that precinct—and she fell right into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O'Malley, kneeling by the body.

"Is he dead?" she cried.

"I'm afraid he is. What happened?"

Briefly, she told her story about going out to the grocer and coming back to find him on the floor. While she was talking, crying and talking, Noonan discovered a small patch of congealed blood on the dead man's head. He showed it to O'Malley who got up at once and hurried to the phone.

Soon, other men began to come into the house. First a doctor, then two detectives, one of whom she knew by name. Later, a police photographer arrived and took pictures, and a man who knew about fingerprints. There was a great deal of whispering and muttering beside the corpse, and the detectives kept asking her a lot of questions. But they always treated her kindly. She told her story again, this time right from the beginning, when Patrick had come in, and she was sewing, and he was tired, so tired he hadn't wanted to go out for supper. She told how she'd put the meat in the oven—"it's there now, cooking"—and how she'd slopped out to the grocer for vegetables, and come back to find him lying on the floor.

"Which grocer?" one of the detectives asked.

She told him, and he turned and whispered something to the other detective who immediately went outside into the street.

In fifteen minutes he was back with a page of notes, and there was more whispering, and through her sobbing she heard a few of the whispered phrases—"...acted quite normal...very cheerful...wanted to give him a good supper...peas...cheesecake...impossible that she..."

After a while, the photographer and the doctor departed and two other men came in and took the corpse away on a stretcher. Then the fingerprint man went away. The two detectives remained, and so did the two policemen. They were exceptionally nice to her, and Jack Noonan asked if she wouldn't rather go somewhere else, to her sister's house perhaps, or to his own wife who would take care of her and put her up for the night.

No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment. Would they mind awfully of she stayed just where she was until she felt better. She didn't feel too good at the moment, she really didn't.

Then hadn't she better lie down on the bed? Jack Noonan asked.

No, she said. She'd like to stay right where she was, in this chair. A little later, perhaps, when she felt better, she would move.

So they left her there while they went about their business, searching the house. Occasionally one of the detectives asked her another question. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke at her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with him, but on the other hand he may have thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises.

"It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could've been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing—a very big spanner, for example, or a heavy metal vase.

They didn't have any heavy metal vases, she said.

"Or a big spanner?"

She didn't think they had a big spanner. But there might be some things like that in the garage.

The search went on. She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house. She could hear their footsteps on the gravel outside, and sometimes she saw a flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock on the mantle. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a trifle exasperated.

"Jack," she said, the next time Sergeant Noonan went by. "Would you mind giving me a drink?"

"Sure I'll give you a drink. You mean this whiskey?"

"Yes please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better."

He handed her the glass.

"Why don't you have one yourself," she said. "You must be awfully tired. Please do. You've been very good to me."

"Well," he answered. "It's not strictly allowed, but I might take just a drop to keep me going."

One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whiskey. They stood around rather awkwardly with the drinks in their hands, uncomfortable in her presence, trying to say consoling things to her. Sergeant Noonan wandered into the kitchen, came out quickly and said, "Look, Mrs. Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside."

"Oh dear me!" she cried. "So it is!"

"I better turn it off for you, hadn't I?"

"Will you do that, Jack. Thank you so much."

When the sergeant returned the second time, she looked at him with her large, dark tearful eyes. "Jack Noonan," she said.

"Yes?"

"Would you do me a small favour-you and these others?"

"We can try, Mrs. Maloney."

"Well," she said. "Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terrible hungry by now because it's long past your suppertime, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven. It'll be cooked just right by now."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Sergeant Noonan said.

"Please," she begged. "Please eat it. Personally I couldn't tough a thing, certainly not what's been in the house when he was here. But it's all right for you. It'd be a favour to me if you'd eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards."

There was a good deal of hesitating among the four policemen, but they were clearly hungry, and in the end they were persuaded to go into the kitchen and help themselves. The woman stayed where she was, listening to them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

"Have some more, Charlie?"

"No. Better not finish it."

"She wants us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favour."

"Okay then. Give me some more."

"That's the hell of a big club the gut must've used to hit poor Patrick," one of them was saying. "The doc says his skull was smashed all to pieces just like from a sledgehammer."

"That's why it ought to be easy to find."

"Exactly what I say."

"Whoever done it, they're not going to be carrying a thing like that around with them longer than they need."

One of them belched.

"Personally, I think it's right here on the premises."

"Probably right under our very noses. What you think, Jack?"

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

## Reading Comprehension

The story begins with Mary Maloney, the devoted wife and expectant mother, eagerly waiting for her husband to return from his office. Mr Patrick, her husband seems to be disturbed and drank more than usual. She tries to seek the reason why he is upset and serves him the drink and also asks him what he needs for the dinner. He replied that he is leaving her, although the reason is not clearly stated through Patrick's words. Mary Maloney felt numbness in her head for what he said but moved into the kitchen to make supper for him.

When Patrick followed her and asked her not to make dinner for him, in such a haste Mary Maloney without any pause swung the frozen lamb's leg which she took from the freezer for the dinner into the air and bashed it at the back of Patrick's head. All of a sudden he crashed into the carpet. He died.

She retrieved her senses and cries aloud for her impetuous act. Maloney thought about her baby inside and doesn't want it to suffer for the crime she did and so her next step was to create an alibi. She placed the leg of the lamb in a pan in the oven and then put some make-up and ran to Sam, the grocer in the street and acted as usual in a way that nothing has happened. She came back home, called the police and informed that her husband is dead. Patrick's colleagues, the police men rushed into the spot and questioned Maloney about what has happened. She replied in a way that it might be any intruder who killed her husband. Being pregnant she received help and consideration from her husband's police friends and compelled them to have the cooked lamb's leg as they were all tired of searching for the murderer and the weapon he might have used to kill Patrick. When one policeman says that the weapon, the prime evidence of the case is just under his nose while having a good piece of lamb in his mouth, Mary Maloney who was sitting in the room next to them listening to what they speak, started giggling.

## **Exercise - I**

**Answer the following in two or three sentences :-**

**1. How can we say that Mary Maloney was happy in the beginning of the story?**

**Answer :** Mary Maloney was really happy at the beginning of the story. She was sewing, having dreams about her baby inside and was waiting for her husband to return home as early as possible.

**2. What made Mary Maloney to kill her husband Patrick?**

**Answer :** Patrick who seemed to be disturbed at that particular night told her that he's going to leave Mary and the unborn child. The author does not clearly state the reason for his decision. Readers can assume that probably he is having an affair with another woman or doesn't like his husband anymore or something else.

**3. Do you think Mary loves her husband?**

**Answer :** Mary had great affection towards Patrick because even when he himself revealed about their future life she wanted him to have some food as he was tired. She doesn't want to act when she came back from the grocer, because the life with him made her to cry naturally when she found him dead.

**4. How did Mary destroy the weapon she used to kill Patrick?**

**Answer :** Mary used a frozen lamb's leg to kill Patrick which she took out from the freezer to make the dinner. She kept the lamb inside the oven as soon as she found him dead. When policemen came to find out the murderer, she made them eat the cooked lamb as they were all dearly hungry.

**5. What is irony? Pick out an instance from the story that becomes ironic.**

**Answer :** An irony is the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically used to create a humorous effect. When the policemen said that the weapon that was used to kill Patrick is right under their noses, Mary giggled because the weapon she used was the frozen leg of a lamb and it was literally under their noses as they were all eating it right then.

**6. How is it that the metaphor lamb is associated with the character Mary?**

**Answer :** Mary and lamb had a close bond with each other because there is a famous nursery rhyme called "Mary had a little lamb....". In the rhyme Mary loved her lamb a lot. In the story also lamb acts as a metaphor for the unborn child which made her to act so. Literally she used lamb or a frozen lamb's leg not as a symbol of love but to kill her husband.

## **Exercise - II**

**Answer the following questions in a paragraph each :-**

**1. What is the major theme of the story *Lamb to the Slaughter*?**

**Answer :** *Lamb to the slaughter* is a story with multiple themes in it. When the story begins the reader expects a story of a loving wife and husband. As the story progresses one gets shocked by the horrific act of Mary killing her husband which makes *Lamb to the slaughter* a revenge story. But when the story ends with Mary 'giggling' it reveals the elements of humour and irony in it. Everything that happens in one's life is unpredictable. Mary in her whole life would have never thought about killing her husband. It was a sudden, impulsive act which she regrets later but regains the strength only because she wants to protect the unborn child. All the elements are blended together to make this story an interesting and exciting one.

**2. What is the significance of Mary's conversation with Sam, the grocer?**

**Answer:** *Lamb to the Slaughter* portrays a crime- the death of Mr. Patrick, Mary Maloney's husband. The culprit of a crime is revealed only when there is enough proof. A case will take physical, tangible things as the first and foremost evidence. If it is not available then the next is circumstantial evidence. Mary succeeded in destroying the important evidence, the weapon used for killing her husband by cooking it in the oven. The next thing was to make her innocent. For that she put some makeup and ran to the grocer, Mr. Sam, and told him Patrick is waiting to have his dinner and she wants to make it. She had her casual conversation with him because she thought that policemen might ask unusual expressions and behaviour in her.

**3. What is the significance of Mary's pregnancy in the story *Lamb to the Slaughter*?**

**Answer :** Mary Maloney is described as an upcoming mother with a six months old baby inside when the story begins. She is a loving woman and devoted wife who eagerly waits for her husband and is ready to cook him what he wants. She got upset, became numb and killed her husband with her impetuous act. When she retrieved her senses the first thought that came to her mind was their unborn child. She doesn't want her child to be born inside the prison, never to be called as the daughter or son of a murderer. It's only when Mary thought about the future of her unborn child, she planned to create an alibi and destroyed the evidences. The pregnancy of Mary created such a twist in the story thereby making it end with humourous elements. If she was not pregnant she would have surrendered and the story would have become a complete tragedy.

**4. How does eating and drinking turn out to be the major aspects of *Lamb to the Slaughter*?**

**Answer :** Mary liked to be with Patrick even when he drank whisky every night, because she loves him so much and liked to be with him on that blissful moment together. On that particular night Patrick drank more than his usual quota. Mary repeatedly told Patrick that she would make supper for him even when he told her about his decision to leave. The food, the leg of the lamb which she was trying to cook for supper turned into the weapon that killed Patrick. When Mary compelled the policemen to eat the cooked lamb it showed her consideration towards them as well as her clever idea of destroying the evidence by the hands of the same persons who were in search of it. Food- thus becomes a major symbol in this story which portrays love, boredom, evil as well as all the major aspects in a human mind.

## **Exercise - IV**

**Attempt an essay of 200-300 words on the question given :-**

**1. Who is the real 'lamb' to the slaughter in the story *Lamb to the Slaughter*? Substantiate your views.**

**Answer :** The title implies more than one meaning to the story. There is more than one lamb in *Lamb to the slaughter* if read closely or between the lines. 'Lamb' is used as the metaphor by Roald Dahl as the innocent creature who sacrifices its life for others' sins in many religions. Patrick- actually got slaughtered- murdered-innocent-sacrificed his life- the lost lamb.

Mary-beginning of the story- innocent and devoted wife- seemed to be deserted-ignored by husband-decision made by him-trusted Patrick like a lamb-cries her heart out when he died-sincere and loving.

The unborn child-innocent like a lamb-became the major and immediate cause for Mary's act- sacrificed its happy and comfortable living with its parents- lost its father.



The literal lamb-the frozen piece of leg which became the weapon to kill Patrick-no lamb no murder-first and foremost or the only physical evidence- creates the major twist in the story-Mary's idea of making the evidence a grand supper for the detectives.

**2. Who is the real 'villain' of the story *Lamb to the slaughter*?**

**Answer :** A story will surely have a villain as well as a hero. One who leads the major instances of a story who has got goodness and purity in him or her will become the hero or heroine. A Character who is opposite to this trait is called a villain. The evil nature and the thought of destruction create one to be the villain of a story.

Mary Maloney-Devoted wife-urges her husband to come home earlier-looks after him-loves him a lot-acts as a slave by serving him everything-husband's decision of leaving her and the unborn child-turned to be a monster- violent act-murdered her husband-creates an alibi-acting at the grocer and the detectives-making them eat the evidence cleverly.

Patrick- seemed to be a monster at the beginning-decided to leave such a dedicated and loving wife and his own unborn child-selfish-sadistic attitude-ignoring one who loves him so deeply-turn to be an innocent lamb- killed by his wife with a bash at the back.

In certain situations circumstances make one villain or hero. In this story Mary is a lady with goodness in her but act as vice as a devil. She needs to protect their unborn child. (One can express their own views about this).

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# To Mother

S Usha

## Introduction

*To mother* is a poem by S Usha, a famous poet and writer. In this poem the poet portrays an alert mother who is always concerned and anxious about her daughter and tries to restrict her so that she fits in with the society. The daughter really wants to enjoy her freedom and is not ready to obey her mother. The poet herself is the speaker who takes the role of a daughter who pleads her mother to let her free. She asks her mother to allow her to enjoy her liberty by giving up all the traditional norms and rules. Usha portrays the rebellious nature of modern generation girls who try to violate all societal norms.

## TO MOTHER

- S. Usha

Mother, don't, please don't,  
don't cut off the sunlight  
with your sari spread across the sky  
blanching life's green leaves.  
Don't say: You're seventeen already,  
don't flash your sari in the street,  
don't make eyes at passers-by,  
don't be a tomboy riding the winds.  
Don't play that tune again  
that your mother,  
her mother and her mother  
had played on the snake-charmer's flute  
into the ears of nitwits like me.  
I'm just spreading my hood.  
I'll sink my fangs into someone  
and lose my venom.  
Let go, make way.  
Circumambulating the holy plant  
in the yard, making rangoli designs  
to see heaven, turning up dead  
without light and air,

for God's sake, I can't do it.  
Breaking out of the dam  
you've built, swelling  
in a thunderstorm,  
roaring through the land,  
let me live, very different  
from you, Mother.  
Let go, make way.

## Reading Comprehension

*To Mother* is a simple as well as serious poem by the famous writer S. Usha, in which the poet herself is the speaker. The poem puts forward the requests and warnings of a daughter who wishes to lead a life full of freedom and who wants to give up all the hoaric culture and societal clutches upon her. The picture of a rebellious daughter is portrayed in the poem along with the anxieties and worries of a loving mother. The poem seems to be a message to all the teenage girls who wish to have a life without fear. The poem also reflects their mothers who lead a life full of fear and anxieties about their daughters. The daughter in the poem reveals that she and her mother are of different nature and adds the fact that she is not ready to become a woman like her mother. The difference she noticed in her mother is that she was denied to 'live' a life of her own. Her mother was succumbed to the tradition around her and forgets to live a meaningful life. Her daughter, the poet urges to make a way for her to fly beyond the horizon.

## Exercise - I

Answer the following in one or two sentences :-

**1. What is the tone of the poem?**

**Answer :** The tone of the poem is serious. The poem is in the form of requests from a daughter to a mother.

**2. What does the line :**

“Mother, don't, please don't

Don't cut off the sunlight” suggests?

**Answer :** The poet, the daughter pleads her mother not to keep an axe on her liberty. She wants to enjoy freedom at its utmost and doesn't want her mother to be an obstacle in her way.

**3. What is the speaker's attitude towards tradition?**

**Answer :** The speaker, the poet wants to give up all the traditional norms and beliefs. She wants to live a life which has got full freedom not clutched by the shackles of customs and rituals.

**4. Do you agree with the points made by the daughter?**

**Answer :** The daughter as an individual had the right to lead a life of her own. But thinking from her mother's part, a mother will be always concerned about her children and eager to protect them.

**Exercise - II**

**Answer the following in a paragraph each :-**

**1. What was the warning given by the mother to her daughter?**

**Answer:** The mother in the poem keeps on warning her daughter. She resisted behaving like a child. She didn't want the daughter to show off at the strangers in the street, and don't want her to flirt with any persons and warned her not to become a tomboy.

**2. What are the traditional practices that are portrayed in the poem denied by the daughter?**

**Answer :** The speaker in the poem, the daughter denied living like a traditional housewife, who takes care of everyone in her home, and remains cut off from light and air. She also denied dancing to the snake charmer's tune played by her mother, walking around the holy plant, praying for the dead souls and following the customs and norms laid down by the society.

**3. Significance of the title *To Mother*.**

**Answer:** *To Mother* is a meaningful poem in which the poet and daughter requests her mother not to block her life who wishes to fly beyond the societal clutches. As the title says the poet's requests and warnings to her mother are expressed in the poem *To Mother*. Even though the title is as 'To Mother', the mother figure had already expressed her convictions about her daughter and what the poet says in the poem are all its replies.