



SYLLABUS

B.Com Hons Ist Year

Subject – English

UNIT – I	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where the mind is without fear: Rabindranath Tagore 2. National Education: M. K. Gandhi 3. The Axe: R. K. Narayan 4. The Wonder that was India: A. L. Basham (an excerpt) 5. Preface to Mahabharata : C. Rajagopalachari
UNIT – II	Comprehension Skill: Unseen Passage followed by Multiple choice questions
UNIT – III	<p>Basic Language Skills: 1. Vocabulary Building: Suffix, Prefix, Synonyms, Antonyms, Homophones, Homonyms and One-Word Substitution.</p> <p>2. Basic Grammar: Noun, Pronoun, Adjective, Verb, Adverb, Prepositions, Articles, Time and Tense.</p>

**'Where the Mind is Without Fear' by Rabindranath Tagore****Text of the poem:**

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Glossary:-

1. Domestic- related to family
2. Fragments-pieces
3. Tireless- without getting tired
4. Striving-to exert much efforts
5. Dreary- dull
6. Dead habit- old customs
7. Thee- you



Analysis of the poetry:

“Where the Mind is Without Fear” is an emotional prayer by Rabindranath Tagore before almighty God. He is an intellectual who was also popularly known as ‘Gurudev’ & ‘Bard of Bengal’; he was not only a composer but a painter, a humanist, a philosopher, a novelist as well as an educator who wrote on different subjects. This poetry is included in ‘Gitanjali’ an anthology which was composed by him during pre-independence era of India. Initially Rabindranath Tagore authored this poem in Bengali in 1901 written for a collection of divine prayers titled ‘Naibedya’ later translating it in English in the year 1911 for ‘Gitanjali’. He won Nobel for ‘Gitanjali’ in the year 1913 as well as the reputation of being the first Non-European to be a Nobel laureate. He was knighted in the year 1915, but he renounced this title in 1919 as he was anguished and as a sign of his protest against the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre (Amritsar massacre) due to the He is the composer of ‘Jana Gana Mana’ & ‘Amar Shonar Bangla’ the national anthems of India and Bangladesh respectively.

The original poem bears the title ‘Prarthana’ i.e. prayer. The poem is a prayer to the universal father as well as the fellow Indians presenting his vision of an independent India. Patriotism is the core theme of this poem solely centered on the vision of independence. The nation was under the British Rule, the society was full of disharmony and social unjust. The people were eagerly waiting to get their freedom. This poem had given a lot of strength to the people who were struggling for India’s independence.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high

Where knowledge is free

The poet prays to the Almighty that his country should be free from any kind of external pressures and oppressive factors which would create fear. He believed that freedom from such repressive situations would generate a sense of respect in individuals which was crushed due to presence of these overwhelming situations. He wants that everyone in his country should be free to live a dignified life and hold their heads high with respect for themselves and for one another. He dreams of a nation where knowledge or education would be free and available for all. Education should not be restricted to the upper class only but everybody should be free to acquire knowledge without any caste or gender distinctions.



Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

By narrow domestic walls

Tagore envisions a world which is not disintegrated by biases based on caste, creed, color, religion, status or gender. He wants his people to reject any kinds of baseless superstitions and should not endorse any kinds of social evils. He lays emphasis on the rationality of mind because clear thinking would prevent people from becoming prey to such tribulations. He also stresses on the fact that all the external forces like prejudices and superstitions as well as internal forces like narrow-mindedness should not divide the people in groups and destroy their unity.

Where words come out from the depth of truth

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection

He wishes the people of his nation to be truthful; he is of the view that people should not distort the truth for their personal benefits. The words spoken should be full of sincerity and not mere empty words which come from the bottom of the heart and soul. The poet expresses his deep desire where people of his country strive towards perfection or development free from all the biases and superstitions without giving up or getting exhausted.

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit

The poet visualizes that his fellow countrymen should not lose their reasoning due to baseless superstitions and preconceived notions which is referred as dead habits as they hinder the unity of a nation and progress of an individual. He believes that these habits are like a lifeless barren region where no life can prevail. So he emphasizes on the fact that the every individual should possess a clear intellect which resembles to a clear stream free from any kinds of stagnation.

Where the mind is led forward by thee

Into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

The poet prays to the almighty to bestow his countrymen the purity of thoughts, actions and rational intellect. He wishes that God awakens the shackled mind of the people and lead them towards a heavenly country. He wants his natives not to be bound by any internal or external factors which pull them back from the path of progress. Tagore makes a plea before almighty 'Father', to awaken his country into such a heaven of freedom.



UNIT I Lesson-2

National Education: M. K. Gandhi**Text:****NEW EDUCATION**

New Education to be rooted in the Culture and Life of the People

National Education

The curriculum and pedagogic ideas which form the fabric of modern education were imported from Oxford and Cambridge, Edinburgh and London. But they are essentially foreign, and till they are repudiated, there never can be national education. For the moment, we are not going to discuss the problem whether it is possible for India to do without European education; (and in this connection let us say that we regard the English as a mere special phenomenon of the European system). If India decides in the light of the need there is of fighting Europe with her own weapons, Industrialism, Capitalism, Militarism, and all the rest, in favor of making counterfeit Europeans of her children, soldiers, inventors of explosives, prostitutors of Science, forgetters of God, she must go forward on her path stern and open eyed, whatever the disaster. But in that case, she should make up her mind to do without national education, for, national education will not secure those ends, will not make her sons and daughters fit for the fulfillment of those functions. The fact to be realized is that India by the very fact of her long established and elaborated civilization had once the advantage of an educational system of her own, the only thing entitled to be called 'national'. But it was fundamentally distinct from the Anglo-Indian type and from the pseudo-national type that is its descendant. The question then is this: The choice must be clearly and finally made between national and foreign education, the choice of type and archetype, of meaning and purpose, of end and means. It has so far not been made. We are almost certain that the necessity for choosing is hardly realized. As long as confusion on this matter exists, 'national' education cannot flourish. And that for a simple reason. The Government is already imparting one type of education in respect of which it is impossible for any purely non-official body to compete. Official organization is bigger, it has more money, it has more prizes to offer. We believe that this root paradox will last as long as there is no hard and clear thinking about fundamentals. If, as a result of careful decisions, we promise to the people that the education we offer will be truly Indian and not a mere inferior prototype of the education offered in the schools and colleges of Government, people are bound to listen to us. We believe that the folk who suffer from the effects of the existing arrangements, who deplore social disruption, who are stricken by the waste of youth, will be thankful to find an avenue of escape. Institutions that stand for the inevitable revolution for the restoration of national and social continuum will have in their hands the secret of the future. For that which should be remembered is this. The greatest visible evil of the present educational method, in itself evidence of deeper defects, is, that it has broken up the continuity of our existence. All sound education is meant to fit one generation to take up the burden of the previous and to keep up the life of the community without breach or disaster. The burden of social life is continuous, and if at any stage one generation gets completely out of touch with the efforts of its predecessors or in anywise gets ashamed of itself or its culture, it is lost. The force that maintains society together is a series of high loyalties, loyalty to faith, calling, parents, family, dharma. The ancient educational system in India certainly maintained the long tradition of pride and service, the place of every order within the body social and body politic. It is equally certain that modern, foreign, non-national education makes young people unfit for any useful function in life. The vast majority of people that sent their children to the English schools were agriculturists, men and women with a deep and abiding faith in God. There is no doubt that the young people when they came back knew not a thing about agriculture, were indeed deeply contemptuous of the calling of their fathers and professed to have outgrown all faith in God or in His fulfilling providence. The fact that the tragedy of this destructive breach was limited by the need of Government for only a specified number of clerks and deputies, should not really mask the reality of the transaction. 'Reforms' have succeeded 'Reforms' in the educational system, Commissions have considered the case of the Universities, primary instruction



has been sought to be made compulsory ; but there has never been the remotest perception of the fact that the whole thing is an evil because it was destroying the very foundations of all national life and growth. The system must be scrapped; enquiry must be made promptly as to what constituted the elements of education before Indian Universities were constituted, before Lord Macaulay wrote his fatal minutes. Promptness is essential, because the race of old teachers is nearly extinct and the secret of their methods may die with them. The resuscitation of those curricula may mean the disappearance of political history and geography; but the prospect does not disturb us in the slightest. We have been trying to get at the elements of the old curricula at least in one part of the country and we dare aver in all conscience that they strike us as infinitely more efficient and satisfactory than the latest thing come out of Europe. But we confess it is a layman's opinion. That is why we should like to have the matter investigated by experts. If it is done and its consequences faced, we are confident that the people of the land will have reason to be highly thankful.

Almost from the commencement, the text-books (today) deal, not with things the boys and the girls have always to deal with in their homes, but things to which they are perfect strangers. It is not through the text-books that a lad learns what is right and what is wrong in the home life. He is never taught to have any pride in his surroundings. The higher he goes, the farther he is removed from his home, so that at the end of his education he becomes estranged from his surroundings. He feels no poetry about the home life. The village scenes are all a sealed book to him. His own civilization is presented to him as imbecile, barbarous, superstitious and useless for all practical purposes. His education is calculated to wean him from his traditional culture. And if the mass of educated youths are not entirely denationalized, it is because the ancient culture is too deeply imbedded in them to be altogether uprooted even by an education adverse to its growth. If I had my way, I would certainly destroy the majority of the present textbooks and cause to be written text-books which have a bearing on and correspondence with the home life, so that a boy as he learns may react upon his immediate surroundings.

No Relation to Environment

Unfortunately the system of education has no connection with our surroundings which therefore remain practically untouched by the education received by a microscopic minority of boys and girls of the nation.

With the best motives in the world, the English tutors could not wholly understand the difference between English and Indian requirements. Our climate does not require the buildings which they need. Nor do our children brought up in predominantly rural environment need the type of education the English children brought up in surroundings predominantly urban need. When our children are admitted to schools, they need, not slate and pencil and books, but simple village tools which they can handle freely and remuneratively. This means a revolution in educational methods. But nothing short of a revolution can put education within reach of every child of school-going age. It is admitted that so-called knowledge of the three R's that is at present given in Government schools is of little use to the boys and girls in afterlife. Most of it is forgotten inside of one year, if only for want of use. It is not required in their village surroundings. But if a vocational training in keeping with their surroundings was given to the children, they would not only repay the expenses incurred in the schools but would turn that training to use in afterlife. I can imagine a school entirely self-supporting, if it became, say, a spinning and weaving institution with perhaps & cotton field attached to it. The scheme I am adumbrating does not exclude literary training. No course of primary instruction would be considered complete that did not include reading, writing and arithmetic. Only, reading and writing would come during the last year when really the boy or girl is readiest for learning the alphabet correctly. Handwriting is an art. Every letter must be correctly drawn, as an artist would draw his figures. This can only be done if the boys and girls are first taught elementary drawing. Thus side by side with vocational training which occupy most of the day at school, they would be receiving vocal instruction in elementary history, geography and arithmetic. They would learn manners, have objectlessons in practical sanitation and hygiene, all of which they would take their homes in which they would become silent revolutionists.



Glossary:-

Pedagogic – related to teaching

Repudiated – to reject

Capitalism – economic system based on the private ownership

Counterfeit – fake

Pseudo – artificial

Descendant – successor

Archetype – example

Paradox – a statement that contradicts itself

Deplore – express strong disapproval of something

Contemptuous – expressing deep hatred

Layman – a person without professional or specialized knowledge in a particular subject

Scrapped – discard

Promptness – doing something quickly

Imbecile – stupid

Wean – to detach from a source of dependence

Three R's – reading, writing and arithmetic

About the author:

Mahatma Gandhi is known as the 'Father of the Nation' because he laid the true foundation of independent India with his noble ideals and supreme sacrifice. He was fondly called 'Bapu'. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2nd October 1869 at Porbandar, a small town on the Western Coast of India, which was then a tiny state in Kathiawar. Mohandas went to England to study law and returned as a lawyer in 1890. He moved to South Africa in 1893 to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit. He lived for twenty-one years in South Africa. He started the Satyagraha movement in South Africa against the unjust treatment done to the Indians there by the British. In January 1914 Gandhi returned to India with only one ambition to serve his people and bring freedom in his country. After much wandering for a year, he finally settled down on the banks of the river Sabarmati on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, where he founded an Ashram in 1915. He named it Satyagraha Ashram. When the Rowlatt Act was passed that denied the civil liberties of the Indians, Gandhi finally got into active Indian politics. He became the forefront of the freedom struggle and within a few years he became the undisputed leader of the national movement for freedom. He became the President of Indian National Congress. Gandhi launched three mass movements, namely



Non-cooperation movement in 1920, Civil Disobedience movement in 1939 with his famous 'Dandi March' to break the salt law and Quit India movement in 1942. Those three movements shook the foundation of British Empire in India and brought millions of Indians together into the freedom struggle movement. Gandhi advocated non-violence and Satyagraha as his chief weapons to achieve freedom. Gandhi's guidance and influence also empowered and encouraged many women to be a part of the freedom movement. Finally our country attained freedom on 15th August 1947.

Summary:

Gandhiji in this essay 'National Education; presented his views on that kind of education which is most suitable for India. There have been various kinds of reaction to his views but he is firm in his opinion that the system of education prevailing in India is defective. It has been introduced by an unjust government. Thoroughly unrelated to Indian culture this kind of education is merely intellectual. It does not fulfill the needs of the heart. In other words, it does not inculcate the virtue of sympathy, fellow-feeling, kindness and compassion in the young pupils. It does not teach the virtue of physical culture.

Secondly the existing education is imparted through a foreign language and in the India context this is unreal. The text books prescribed for our students deal with matters unrelated to the home life and village life of the pupils. The contents of text books are unknown to them. Therefore these text books do not inspire the students to take pride in their surroundings. The higher the education the more separated are the students from their home life and environment. They become cut off from villagers where they belong.

Gandhiji continues that the present system of education teaches the learners that their civilization is stupid, savage, superstitious and practically useless. So the students are separated from their traditional culture. Indian children are so firmly set in their ancient culture that the existing defective system of education has not been able to separate them completely from it. If the author had his way he would destroy all the present text books and replace them with new ones related to the real life of children.

Text books in India instead of merely being related to studies should be relevant to the real life of the people as most of them practice agriculture as a life-long occupation. The existing system of education makes the students unfit for physical work. Indian students when grow



up have to earn their livelihood by manual labor. So they should be taught the great virtues of physical labor. It is sad that Indian students in school hate manual labor and consider it undignified to do it.

The vast majority of people in India are poor. Therefore Gandhiji recommends that education in India should be free and universal, but if universal education is introduced no government can finance it. Hence, our children must be made to finance their own education wholly or partly. They can do it by any kind of physical work, in general and spinning and weaving, in particular. Gandhiji's view is that cloth production by school students will be profitable and practicable. So it should be introduced in all schools throughout India. This will enable them to pay for their education and help them to adopt a suitable profession in their later life. This will certainly go a long way in making our school students self-reliant. Gandhiji pleads that contempt for manual labor must damage the interest of the nation. So all must try to appreciate and respect manual labor.

Gandhiji further turns to the education of the heart which is as important as the education of the mind. He says in this connection that books alone cannot take care of the education of the heart. The living touch of the teacher in this important matter is essential. Such persons are obviously incapable of imparting the education of the heart that can inspire the children to be kind, sympathetic, compassionate and patriotic. The medium of instruction in India is English which is a foreign language. This puts a lot of mental strain on the pupils and they do not feel interested to learn. Moreover, this makes them crammers and imitators. Taught in a foreign medium, they cannot pass on their knowledge to the family and the society.

What is most unfortunate is that education in an foreign medium has made our boys and girls foreigners in their own country. It has also prevented the development of Indian languages. In view of these problems, Gandhiji makes out a strong case in favor of Indian languages to be used as medium of instruction in our educational institutions. For this very reason text books should be prepared in India languages and introduced in Schools.

In conclusion, Gandhiji clarifies that he is not hostile to the learning of English that is very essential for carrying on International commerce and diplomacy. Those who possess language learning talents should read this language because it contains some of the richest treasures of human thought and culture. However one should love and appreciate one's own culture first and then turn to other cultures. Our culture is one of the richest in the entire



world and all should understand and appreciate its virtues. Gandhiji finally says that an academic study of our culture will never be useful unless it is practiced in our daily lives. But, he finally warns that no one should look down upon other cultures. On the contrary, respect for other cultures will benefit the growth and enrichment of our own culture.



UNIT I Lesson-3

Text:

An astrologer passing through the village foretold that Velan would live in a three-storeyed house surrounded by many acres of garden. At this everybody gathered round young Velan and made fun of him. For Koppal did not have a more ragged and godforsaken family than Velan's. His father had mortgaged every bit of property he had, and worked, with his whole family, on other people's lands in return for a few annas a week . . . A three-storeyed house for Velan indeed! . . . But the scoffers would have congratulated the astrologer if they had seen Velan about thirty or forty years later. He became the sole occupant of Kumar Baugh—that palatial house on the outskirts of Malgudi town.

When he was eighteen Velan left home. His father slapped his face one day for coming late with the midday-meal, and he did that in the presence of others in the field. Velan put down the basket, glared at his father and left the place. He just walked out of the village, and walked on and on till he came to the town. He starved for a couple of days, begged wherever he could and arrived in Malgudi, where after much knocking about, an old man took him on to assist him in laying out a garden. The garden existed only in the mind of the gardener. What they could see now was acre upon acre of weed-covered land. Velan's main business consisted in destroying all the vegetation he saw. Day after day he sat in the sun and tore up by hand the unwanted plants. And all the jungle gradually disappeared and the land stood as bare as a football field. Three sides of the land were marked off for an extensive garden, and on the rest was to be built a house. By the time the mangoes had sprouted they were laying the foundation of the house. About the time the margosa sapling had shot up a couple of yards, the walls were also coming up.

The flowers—hibiscus, chrysanthemum, jasmine, roses and canna—in the front park suddenly created a wonderland one early summer. Velan had to race with the bricklayers. He was now the chief gardener, the old man he had come to assist having suddenly fallen ill. Velan was proud of his position and responsibility. He keenly watched the progress of the bricklayers and whispered to the plants as he watered them, 'Now look sharp, young fellows. The building is going up and up every day. If it is ready and we aren't, we shall be the laughingstock of the town.' He heaped manure, aired the roots, trimmed the branches and watered the plants twice a day, and on the whole gave an impression of hustling nature; and



nature seemed to respond. For he did present a good-sized garden to his master and his family when they came to occupy the house.

The house proudly held up a dome. Balconies with intricately carved woodwork hung down from the sides of the house; smooth, rounded pillars, deep verandas, chequered marble floors and spacious halls, ranged one behind another, gave the house such an imposing appearance that Velan asked himself, 'Can any mortal live in this? I thought such mansions existed only in Swarga Loka.' When he saw the kitchen and the dining room he said, 'Why, our whole village could be accommodated in this eating place alone!' The house-builder's assistant told him, 'We have built bigger houses, things costing nearly two lakhs. What is this house? It has hardly cost your master a lakh of rupees. It is just a little more than an ordinary house, that is all . . .' After returning to his hut Velan sat a long time trying to grasp the vision, scope and calculations of the builders of the house, but he felt dizzy. He went to the margosa plant, gripped its stem with his fingers and said, 'Is this all, you scraggy one? What if you wave your head so high above mine? I can put my fingers around you and shake you up like this. Grow up, little one, grow up. Grow fat. Have a trunk which two pairs of arms can't hug, and go up and spread. Be fit to stand beside this palace; otherwise I will pull you out.'

When the margosa tree came up approximately to this vision, the house had acquired a mellowness in its appearance. Successive summers and monsoons had robbed the paints on the doors and windows and woodwork of their brightness and the walls of their original colour, and had put in their place tints and shades of their own choice. And though the house had lost its resplendence, it had now a more human look. Hundreds of parrots and mynas and unnamed birds lived in the branches of the margosa, and under its shade the master's great-grandchildren and the (younger) grandchildren played and quarreled. The master walked about leaning on a staff. The lady of the house, who had looked such a blooming creature on the inauguration day, was shrunken and grey and spent most of her time in an invalid's chair on the veranda, gazing at the garden with dull eyes. Velan himself was much changed. Now he had to depend more and more upon his assistants to keep the garden in shape. He had lost his parents, his wife and eight children out of fourteen. He had managed to reclaim his ancestral property, which was now being looked after by his sons-in-law and sons. He went to the village for Pongal, New Year's and Deepavali, and brought back with him one or the other of his grandchildren, of whom he was extremely fond.

Velan was perfectly contented and happy. He demanded nothing more of life. As far as he could see, the people in the big house too seemed to be equally at peace with life. One saw no



reason why these good things should not go on and on forever. But Death peeped around the corner. From the servants' quarters whispers reached the gardener in his hut that the master was very ill and lay in his room downstairs (the bedroom upstairs so laboriously planned had to be abandoned with advancing age). Doctors and visitors were constantly coming and going, and Velan had to be more than ever on guard against 'flower-pluckers'. One midnight he was awakened and told that the master was dead. 'What is to happen to the garden and to me? The sons are no good,' he thought at once.

And his fears proved to be not entirely groundless. The sons were no good, really. They stayed for a year more, quarreled among themselves and went away to live in another house. A year later some other family came in as tenants. The moment they saw Velan they said, 'Old gardener? Don't be up to any tricks. We know the sort you are. We will sack you if you don't behave yourself.' Velan found life intolerable. These people had no regard for a garden. They walked on flower beds, children climbed the fruit trees and plucked unripe fruits, and they dug pits on the garden paths. Velan had no courage to protest. They ordered him about, sent him on errands, made him wash the cow and lectured to him on how to grow a garden. He detested the whole business and often thought of throwing up his work and returning to his village. But the idea was unbearable: he couldn't live away from his plants. Fortune, however, soon favoured him. The tenants left. The house was locked up for a few years. Occasionally one of the sons of the late owner came round and inspected the garden. Gradually even this ceased. They left the keys of the house with Velan. Occasionally a prospective tenant came down, had the house opened and went away after remarking that it was in ruins—plaster was falling off in flakes, paint on doors and windows remained only in a few small patches and white ants were eating away all the cupboards and shelves . . . A year later another tenant came, and then another, and then a third. No one remained for more than a few months. And then the house acquired the reputation of being haunted.

Even the owners dropped the practice of coming and seeing the house. Velan was very nearly the master of the house now. The keys were with him. He was also growing old. Although he did his best, grass grew on the paths, weeds and creepers strangled the flowering plants in the front garden. The fruit trees yielded their load punctually. The owners leased out the whole of the fruit garden for three years.

Velan was too old. His hut was leaky and he had no energy to put up new thatch. So he shifted his residence to the front veranda of the house. It was a deep veranda running on three



sides, paved with chequered marble. The old man saw no reason why he should not live there. He had as good a right as the bats and the rats.

When the mood seized him (about once a year) he opened the house and had the floor swept and scrubbed. But gradually he gave up this practice. He was too old to bother about these things.

Years and years passed without any change. It came to be known as the 'Ghost House', and people avoided it. Velan found nothing to grumble about in this state of affairs. It suited him excellently. Once a quarter he sent his son to the old family in the town to fetch his wages. There was no reason why this should not have gone on indefinitely. But one day a car sounded its horn angrily at the gate. Velan hobbled up with the keys.

'Have you the keys? Open the gate,' commanded someone in the car.

'There is a small side-gate,' said Velan meekly.

'Open the big gate for the car!'

Velan had to fetch a spade and clear the vegetation which blocked the entrance. The gates opened on rusty hinges, creaking and groaning.

They threw open all the doors and windows, went through the house keenly examining every portion and remarked, 'Did you notice the crack on the dome? The walls too are cracked . . . There is no other way. If we pull down the old ramshackle carefully we may still be able to use some of the materials, though I am not at all certain that the wooden portions are not hollow inside . . . Heaven alone knows what madness is responsible for people building houses like this.'

They went round the garden and said, 'We have to clear every bit of this jungle. All this will have to go . . .' Some mighty person looked Velan up and down and said, 'You are the gardener, I suppose? We have not much use for a garden now. All the trees, except half a dozen on the very boundary of the property, will have to go. We can't afford to waste space. This flower garden . . . H'm, it is . . . old-fashioned and crude, and apart from that the front portion of the site is too valuable to be wasted . . .'

A week later one of the sons of his old master came and told Velan, 'You will have to go back to your village, old fellow. The house is sold to a company. They are not going to have a garden. They are cutting down even the fruit trees; they are offering compensation to the leaseholder; they are wiping out the garden and pulling down even the building. They are going to build small houses by the score without leaving space even for a blade of grass.'



There was much bustle and activity, much coming and going, and Velan retired to his old hut. When he felt tired he lay down and slept; at other times he went round the garden and stood gazing at his plants. He was given a fortnight's notice. Every moment of it seemed to him precious, and he would have stayed till the last second with his plants but for the sound of an axe which stirred him out of his afternoon nap two days after he was given notice. The dull noise of a blade meeting a tough surface reached his ears. He got up and rushed out. He saw four men hacking the massive trunk of the old margosa tree. He let out a scream: 'Stop that!' He took his staff and rushed at those who were hacking. They easily avoided the blow he aimed. 'What is the matter?' they asked.

Velan wept. 'This is my child. I planted it. I saw it grow. I loved it. Don't cut it down . . .'

'But it is the company's orders. What can we do? We shall be dismissed if we don't obey, and someone else will do it.'

Velan stood thinking for a while and said, 'Will you at least do me this good turn? Give me a little time. I will bundle up my clothes and go away. After I am gone do what you like.' They laid down their axes and waited.

Presently Velan came out of his hut with a bundle on his head. He looked at the tree-cutters and said, 'You are very kind to an old man. You are very kind to wait.' He looked at the margosa and wiped his eyes. 'Brothers, don't start cutting till I am really gone far, far away.'

The tree-cutters squatted on the ground and watched the old man go. Nearly half an hour later his voice came from a distance, half-indistinctly: 'Don't cut yet. I am still within hearing. Please wait till I am gone farther.'



About the author:

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanswami, who was known by the name R.K. Narayan, was born in Madras, India, on Oct. 10, 1906. He was reared by his grandmother; Narayan completed his education in 1930 and briefly worked as a teacher, an editorial assistant, and a newspaperman before deciding to devote himself to writing. His first novel, 'Swami and Friends' (1935), is an episodic narrative recounting the adventures of a group of schoolboys. That book and much of Narayan's later works are set in the fictitious South Indian town of Malgudi. Narayan's second novel, Bachelor of Arts (1939), marked the beginning of his reputation in England. His fourth novel, The English Teacher, published in 1945, was partly autobiographical, concerning a teacher's struggle to cope with the death of his wife. In 1953, Michigan State University published it under the title 'Grateful to Life and Death', along with his novel 'The Financial Expert' they were Narayan's first books published in the United States. Subsequent publications of his novels, especially 'Mr. Sampath', 'Waiting for the Mahatma', 'The Guide', 'The Man-eater of Malgudi' and 'The Vendor of Sweets', established Narayan's reputation in the West. Many critics consider 'The Guide' (1958) to be Narayan's masterpiece. 'The Guide' is written in a complex series of flashbacks, it concerns a tourist guide who seduces the wife of a client, prospers, and ends up in jail. The novel won India's highest literary honor 'Sahitya Akademi Award' in 1960 and it was adapted for the off-Broadway stage in 1968. At least two of Narayan's novels, 'Mr. Sampath' (1949) and 'The Guide' (1958), were adapted for the movies. Narayan usually wrote for an hour or two a day, composing fast, often writing as many as 2,000 words and seldom correcting or rewriting. Narayan typically portrays the peculiarities of human relationships and the ironies of Indian daily life, in which modern urban existence clashes with ancient tradition. His style is graceful, marked by friendly humor, elegance, and simplicity.

Summary:

Velan's father was a poor man and nobody could have thought that one day Velan would live in a three- storied building. But the prophesy by an astrologer came true and in his later life he became the sole occupant of Kumar Baugh, a palatial town on the outskirts of Malgudi town.

When Velan was eighteen he left home. His father slapped him one day for coming late with the midday meal. This enraged Velan so much that he decided to leave home. He walked out of the village and walked on till he came to the town. Here he starved for a couple of days. Then he finally



came to Malgudi. Here an old man took him as his assistant for laying a garden. Velan accepted the job and sat day after day in the sun to clear the land of the unwanted plants. Gradually the garden took shape. As the house came up, the garden also developed. By the time the margosa tree came up to the vision of Velan, the house had taken mellowness in its appearance. Its original brightness had disappeared.

Velan was contented and happy. In the meantime the old gardener who had originally employed him had died. Now he became the chief gardener. Velan married and had children. He lived in the servants' quarters. In the meantime the owner of the house became old. One day the master died. The sons of the old man were no good.

They stayed for a year more, quarreled among themselves, and went away to live in another house. The house was rented out. A year later another tenant came, and then another, and then another. No one remained for more than a few months. And then the house acquired the reputation of being haunted.

Gradually the owners of the house stopped coming to the house and see it. Velan became the sole occupant of the house. He was also growing old. Although he did his best, grass grew on paths, weeds and creepers also sprang up, the fruit garden was leased out by the owners for three years.

Years and years passed without any change. It came to be known as the 'Ghost House' and people avoided it. But Velan did not complain about anything. Once a quarter he sent his son to the old family in the town to fetch his wages. Velan wanted this state of affairs to go on indefinitely. But one day a car came up to the house. The doors and windows of the old house were thrown open. The people who came in the car belonged to a firm which wanted to purchase this house. They told Velan that they would cut the plants and naturally they would not require his services anymore.

There was much hustle and activity in and around the house. Soon cutter came to clean the surroundings. Velan was unhappy that they wanted to cut the margosa tree as well. Velan loved this tree like his own child. So he decided to leave the house. He requested the cutters to wait till he had gone out of the reach of the sound of their axes. He collected his belongs in a bundle and left the house. He requested them not cut the margosa tree till he was gone far away.

Critical Appreciation of the Axe:

In The Axe by R.K. Narayan we have the theme of independence, making an identity, pride, dedication, prosperity, loss, control, change and acceptance. Taken from his Malgudi Days collection, the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realizes that Narayan may be exploring the theme of independence. After Velan has been slapped by his father he abandons his father and sets out to find work for himself eventually becoming a gardener. This may be important as Velan is displaying an independent streak. He is showing his father that he can make it on his own. That he does not need to be guided by his father. The old man who employs Velan is also interesting as he



allows Velan to have complete control of the garden which would further suggest that Velan has a degree of independence in his life. Though he is answerable to the old man, the old man does not get in Velan's way. He leaves him to his own devices. It is also interesting that despite claiming his father's property on his father's death, Velan does not leave the garden preferring to stay in his hut by the garden. This may be important as it suggests that Velan is dedicated to the garden. Something that is also noticeable by the fact that Velan also talks to each plant and flower urging them on in growth. If anything Velan's world is dedicated or devoted to the garden.

It might also be a case that Narayan is comparing Velan's father to the old man who owns the garden. Both men treat Velan differently. Where Velan's father has treated Velan inappropriately the relationship between the old man who owns the garden and Velan is good. It is possible that Narayan is suggesting that should a person (the old man) treat another person (Velan) correctly than that person (Velan) will prosper which appears to be the case for Velan.

Since moving to his hut by the garden, Velan's life has prospered and he is happy. In many ways the growth of the garden and the blooming of the flowers match the prosperity and happiness in Velan's life. He has managed to get married and have children. Something that may not have been possible should he have stayed working with his father. Narayan might also be exploring the theme of loss. Despite having gotten married Velan has lost his wife and eight of his children all dying before Velan. However it is noticeable that despite this loss Velan has persevered. He has not been beaten by circumstances. He again has continued to prosper just as the garden has.

What is also interesting about Velan is that despite his age he never gives up. This along with the fact that he is answerable to a different master may be important as Narayan may be again highlighting how dedicated Velan is regardless of the circumstances he finds himself in. It is also obvious to the reader that Velan takes great pride in the work he has done in the garden. He has taken a patch of land and changed what was an eyesore into a thing of beauty. Despite his hard work, dedication and devotion, his work was not being appreciated by his new masters. They have no interest in the house or the garden. Despite this Velan still tries his best to keep the garden as tidy and well-preserved as possible. In reality the garden is Velan's whole world. He knows no other life. Though some critics might suggest Velan has lived a limited life due to his dedication to the garden. It is important to remember that the garden brings joy to Velan. He is at his happiest when he is in the garden. Velan has never strived for complexity in his life. He is a simple man who likes simple things.

The end of the story is also interesting as Narayan may be exploring the theme of control. When Velan hears the axe hitting against the margosa tree, he knows that his life is about to change. He is no longer in control of his environment for the first time since he was eighteen. This alone is something that would be difficult for someone to accept but what makes it worse in many ways is the fact that Velan had no opportunity to prepare himself for the events that were about to happen. Change is difficult for anybody but even more difficult for someone as old as Velan. Even though Velan accepts what is happening the reader



senses as though he is leaving the garden as a broken man. All the effort he has put in over the years will be in vain as the new owners plan on building houses in place of garden.