

## **Unit - 1**

### **Inzy Lets Things Flow over Him**

#### **Inzy Lets Things Flow Over Him By Kadambari Murali (Text) –**

This is not just the story of a man who has risen to be one of Pakistan's icons. It is also a more human tale; of two friends and a friendship that has stood for nearly 20 years, despite the differences caused by distance, status and money. On Thursday evening, even as our hotel in Multan prepares for the arrival of the Indian team (the Pakistani team is not top priority), one man is trying to find a proper place for a bib framed photograph of a young, laughing Inzamam-ul-Haq. He is painstakingly going over a banner written in English, 'Welcoming Inzamam home.' 'Is this correct English?' he asks, 'More or less,' one smiles apologetically. "My friend is coming home," he smiles excitedly. "And I want it to be perfect." Meet Ghulam Mujtaba, just Mujtaba to most, almost a tradition in Multan himself and the Pakistan skipper's long-standing friend. 'people could never talk of one without mentioning the order,' says another man, watching Mujtaba's effort. 'Yes,' says Mujtaba. 'But that was a long time ago. Now he has gone far ahead, further than even he dreamed of going and just watch with pride.'

Inzamam met Mujtaba, through elder brother Intezaar. 'Intezaar brought him to my father's shop one day,' says Mujtaba. 'I was 16-17 and he was younger. We hit it off immediately and it's always been that way.' According to Mujtaba, they were a group of four. 'Inzamam has never been one for making many friends. Even as a kid he would either hang out at his only sister's place here or at my home. Night after night, after everyone had gone to sleep, Inzamam would make the omelettes, I would make the rotis and we would eat and eat and talk.' Mujtaba recalls how they would often not sleep at all, just wash up and go straight for the first namaaz of the day and be there even before Inzamam's father, Pir Intizam-ul-Haq, one of Multan's biggest spiritual leaders. 'He would always ask how we were there so early. We never told him the truth.' Inzamam, it appears, would spend most of the day at the old Multan stadium practicing with his bat. 'It was Imran Khan, on a visit here, who saw him and said he wanted him to come to Lahore. There was a lot of heartbreak but it was the best thing for him, so he went and joined Lahore Club.' He remembers the time Inzamam was picked for the 1992 World Cup and that incredible match-winning semi-final performance against New Zealand. Inzamam played that match coming straight off the drip—he had had some kind of food poisoning and it was decided he could play just hours before the game. And then the World Cup win. 'Multan came out to meet him in full strength at the airport,' says Mujtaba, 'I didn't go. He was a superstar and I wasn't sure if I would fit in with his new life now. I didn't want to impose.' when the motorcade carrying Inzamam was passing the shop, the young star got off and brought his friend to be with him the rest of the way. There are pictures of the two waving from the convoy. 'He's always been that kind of person', says the by now emotional Mujtaba. Fame hasn't changed him. He thinks a bit and then adds that only in the past few years has Inzamam begun asserting himself a bit more. 'Things people said during the match-fixing phase, other problems, added responsibility of the captaincy, they've all made him

react now and then. He is still laid back and has nothing bad to say about him-his tendency to just let things flow over him.’ Time has passed since those days of glory. These are heady days of a different type. On Friday morning, Inzamam comes down to breakfast. A little later, Mujtaba enters and the two embrace. Even as Inzamam leaves for nets with his team, Mujtaba prepares to take the Pakistan captain’s wife and children back home. They are obviously used to it. He introduces Inzamam’s beautiful wife and then refers to his son, attired in a mini-Pakistan uniform, with pride.’ Ehtesham wants to be like her father when he grows up. For me, there can be no better dream.’ And then he waves; he’s in a hurry. He runs barber’s shop in the hotel.

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

**1. What is the significance of the title “Inzy Lets Things Flow Over Him”?**

Answer - The title reveals the deep love and concern Mujtaba holds for his best friend Inzamam. The article on Inzamam’s friend actually stands to open up unknown facts about the personality of the celebrity cricketer to his fans and the public. The title reveals a very crucial element in the person of Inzamam —his tendency to let things and incidents happen without being over concerned about it. The author’s choice of these words of Mujtaba serves to ignite in the minds of the readers a curiosity about the personal life of the cricket player thus keeping the readers interested from the very beginning.

**2. What was the story behind Inzamam’s incredible performance at the 1992 World Cup?**

Answer - Mujtaba remembers that Inzamam was hospitalized due to food poisoning just before the match. It was decided that he could play at the match just hours before the match. So, Inzamam entered the field straight from the drip and his team won the World Cup. The incident proves the unusual perseverance and will power of Inzamam. His will to win in the match and his unrivalled spirit will continue to encourage sports men of coming generations.

**3. Why did Mujtaba not go to the airport to receive Inzamam after the historical win at the World Cup? What did Inzamam do?**

Answer : Mujtaba did not go to receive his friend because he felt that he did not want to impose himself upon the new life of fame and prosperity that his dear friend was enjoying. However, when the motorcade welcoming Inzamam was passing Mujtaba’s shop, the young man got off and took his friend to be with him for the rest of the way.

**4. What message does the story of the friendship of Inzamam and Mujtaba convey to the world?**

Answer : The story of the everlasting friendship of Inzamam, the star cricketer of Pakistan and Mujtaba , an ordinary barber shop owner conveys the message of love, humanity and the all transcending nature of friendship to the world. In spite of his celebrity status, Inzamam never gave up his bond with his childhood friend. Mujtaba, on his part, never shied off from the new status of his friend and stood by his side through all the rises and

falls that accompany a celebrity. This stands proof to the fact that humanity and love reigns over all the material concerns like money and fame.

**5. Inzamam's son wants to be a cricketer like his father. What do you think are the other trait that he might inherit from his father?**

Answer : The article states that Inzamam's son aspires to be a cricket star like his father. However, sports seem to be just one of the aspects that the young boy would inherit from his father. He is likely to follow his father of the far greater traits of his unparalleled personality. From the article, we can gather that Inzamam is a great human being who values the people around him disregarding their social and economic status. His strong bond with Mujtaba is ample evidence for that. Moreover, he is also a person 83 dedicated to his profession and leaves no stone unturned in perfecting it. Inzamam's strength of will and perseverance is also inspirational that if it is inherited by his son, the young boy is sure to scale heights in his own way.

## **Unit – 4**

### **Girls**

The day we left with ma for Naani's house, Babu broke a surahi. I don't know whether he did it on purpose or by accident, but anyway the floor was flooded with water. Ma held up her sari and called Saru's mother-who was trying to eavesdrop from the adjacent room-to mop up the water, because if someone were to slip and break their bones it would be yet another problem. To Ma, everything in life is a problem. As far as she is concerned whether we are at home or at school, ill or just playing around, we are a problem. While mopping the floor, Saru's mother looked up at Ma and asked, 'This time you'll be away for at least three months, won't you?' Ma put her things as if she were assessing their weight, squatted down and said, 'Yes, they won't allow me to come back sooner.' 85 She turned to me and ordered me to go out and play. I always seemed to turn up at the wrong time and at the wrong place. As I was leaving the room I managed to pick up a piece of the broken surahi which I enjoyed sucking, and I overheard Ma addressing either Saru's mother or the cobwebs hanging from the roof: 'I hope it's a boy this time. It will relieve me of the nuisance of going through another pregnancy.' I could just imagine Saru's mother, in her usual manner, shaking her and saying, 'Why not?...why not?' When we reached the station, I scrambled on to the train, fought my way through people and luggage and secured a place next to the window. Triumphantly I stuck my tongue out at everyone and went 'Eee. . .Eee'. But when I noticed Ma's gaze turning towards me, I immediately started chanting the alphabet, 'E for Emli, E for Eekh'. Ma was not actually looking at me though, because she was preoccupied with all her problems. She had to mind the luggage, the wobbling surahi, the three of us, and cope with the exhaustion of pregnancy as well. At one of the station we bought a lot samosas filled with chillies. Just when we were buying them, a woman was making her child pee through the next window. The sight made me feel quite nauseous and I couldn't eat my samosa, so I gave it to Ma instead. Meanwhile I crushed a piece of potato which was lying on the seat into the shape of an insect to frighten my younger sister .She screamed; Ma smacked me and I started to cry as well. My elder sister was

irritated and said, 'Oh what a nuisance you are! Despite her irritation, I Know that it is only my elder sister who really loves me, everyone else is horrible. Maama was waiting to receive us at the station.

On the way to Naani's I sat next to Maami and noticed the rubies in her earlobes bobbing up and down while she chewed paan. Every time, the driver pressed the jeep's horn, my sister and I would scream in unison, 'poo-poo'. The driver was amused at our screaming, and when we reached the house, he lifted me and my younger sister out of the jeep. He had a huge moustache, smelt of tea and bidis, and wore a uniform made of coarse wool which tickled me and made me feel sleepy. When the surahi was lefted out of the jeep it overturned, and once again there was water everywhere. This incident reminded me so much of Baabu that, absent-mindedly, I rod hard on my younger sister's sandal, nearly tripping hear up. 'You are the case of all my problems!' Ma hissed at me though tightly clenched teeth so that no one could hear. She then grabbed hold of my arm as if to prevent me from falling over but actually pressed it so hard that my shoulder hurt. I thought of Baabu because of whenever we come to Naani's house, he never accompanied us. An as soon as we arrived, Ma would be lost in the company of maasis, maamis ,Naani and old maidservants. If we tried going near her during the day, someone or other would say, 'Let the poor thing have some rest least why she is here.' Ma too would put on a pathetic act as if we always harassed at home. I felt disgusted at the thought of entering Naani's house, so I deliberately loitered behind near the bushes. A mongrel dog come near and sniffed at me.

Then I heard someone mentioning my name inside the house and saying, 'Now, where has she disappeared?'. I entered the house along with the dog and saw Naani sitting with Maama's son on her lap. As soon as she saw the dog, she shooed it away because to her all animals are as untouchables. The dog, used to being reprimanded, tucked its tail between its legs and went out. I was told to bend down and touch Naani's feet. Someone from the family said, 'Not like that...bend properly. You are born a girl and you will have to bend for the rest of your life, so you might as well learn.' Naani blessed waiving her hand over my bowed back and said, 'This girl hasn't grown taller. Who would believe she is eight years old?'. Even though I pinched Maama's son, he kept flowing me around like an idiot. He was very fair, chubby and supposed to be cute. He was also tall for his age, and thought only five years old could easily pass for seven. 'Will you tell me a story tonight?' he asked .I said no and pretended to read the newspaper. 'Oh what a nuisance this is,' Ma kept complaining. The old lady from the neighbourhood who had come to see Ma told Naani, 'This time Lali will definitely have a baby. Just look at her complexion- when she was expecting the girls it was pink, but now it has a tinge of yellow, I am sure will be a boy this time'. 'Who knows, perhaps even this time...' moaned Ma as she put on a pathetic expression and began paring her nails. 'Is there anyone to cook for your husband?' asked the old lady. Her question set me thinking about Baabu, how good he smelt and the softness of his lap. And how when we came here Ma did not allow us to lie in her lap for too long and complained, 'Ugh! Oh! My bones are aching, my sari is all crushed. Get up now .I have such a lot of work to do, and to talk it all there's this huge nuisance. Come on get up.' Naani folds her hands and prays: 'Oh goddess, protect my

honour. At least this time let her take a son back from her parents home'. At the end of the prayer she dries her tears with her pallav. From the corner of my eyes I could see that my sisters were fast asleep. We were in a big room divided into two by a wooden partition. Right above my bed hung a big wall clock which was ticking away. Just before it struck hour it made a hissing noise which was similar to my sister drawing in her breath just before howling. All the lights had been switched off and the room was flooded with moonlight. Tulsa dai was applying oil to the soles of Ma's feet and saying, 'If it's a baby this time, I will demand a sari with stainless steel zari. 'Even in the bright moonlight I could not see Ma's face, but only her huge stomach which looked like a drum. Ma's sari had slipped down and Tulsa dai while feeling her stomach touched a painful spot which made Ma moan just like a cow does when returning home from the fields. 'If I have a boy this time, then I will be relieved of this burden forever', she tells Tulsa dai, and then adds, You can go home now, your children must be waiting for you. Be sure you put the oil vessel under the bed, otherwise one of these kids will kick it over in the morning...' Ah, a bad omen. Whenever Ma left a sentence unfinished it seemed to loom in the air like the ticking of the clock. I wonder why grown-ups always complete their sentences when they are talking about pleasant things, but always leave them unfinished if it's something unpleasant. Like, 'Ah, a women's fate...', or 'Oh, three girls...' there's always a silence after these half-statements. There's a bright star in the sky. Is that the Druva star? Baabu used to say that if I worked hard I could become anything I wanted just ask Druva become a star. 'But I can't become a boy, can I?' I once asked obstinately. I was surprised at Baabu's reaction when he put on a serious look and said sternly, 'Do not argue with your elders now.' I find it difficult to understand them.

My elder sister says one should never trust grown-ups because if they want to know something they will prise it out of you by hook or by crook, but they themselves will never tell you a thing. It's true, nobody ever tells us anything. In this place, it's when we go to sleep that the world of the elders awakens, opening like a magic casket. I want to stay awake and listen; I don't know why I fall asleep half-way through. I wonder whose voice it is now; sounds as if someone is crying in suppressed tones. Is it Chhoti Maasi? 'I don't even get as much respect as a dog does in that house,' she tells Ma. I wonder where she is treated worse than a dog, and then I hear Ma telling her, 'All of us suffer like that, one just has to endure it. 'My eyes shut and I fall asleep. The next morning, when everyone is having breakfast I ask Ma what 'endure' means. I remind her by asking, what does Chhoti Maasi have endure? I get one like slap, then another, but before Ma strikes me again Maami saves me and says, 'Let it be. She's only a child, after all'. 'She is no child she is a bitch,' says Ma as her stomach wobbles in anger. 'She's always listening on the sly to elders talking. Heaven knows what will become of her.' When I go into the garden, my elder sister shakes the flowers she has gathered at me.' Oh... you! I have told you a hundred times not to question grown-ups. If you keep on like this, one day these people will beat you so hard you will die.' 'I will ask question. I will. I will,' I answer crying. 'Then go and die,' says my elder sister, and continues to thread a garland for Naani's Gopalji. Naani's stands by her and says loudly, 'you are my precious Lakshmi,' with the intention that I should hear. In the afternoons I tell the younger children horror stories of ghosts and demons who lived in the walnut tree. I tell them that if they should walk up

at twelve o' clock on a full-moon night they would see children being bathed in blood. They would also hear the ghosts speaking though their noses which at first is difficult to follow. The children follow me all over the house like mice following the Pied Piper. Bari Maami and Ma give us money to buy sweet-sour golis just to get rid of us in the afternoon. Their room has been darkened by sticking green paper on the windows, and it is full of women-Ma, Maami, Maasis and Naani. They eat all the time and have cushiony arms, fat half-naked legs and wrinkled stomachs. Then why do they keep telling us not to sit with our legs spread out? 'You all look like cows,' I tell the women, but no one seems to have heard me. Chhoti Maasi, who is lying on the floor with a pillow under her head takes a sour goli from us, starts sucking it and says, 'Jijaji is really the limit.' Suddenly laughter explodes in the room. Who? Why? How? I look around the room for an answer, but no one is bothered about us here, they are too lost in their own conversation. I leave the room and bang hard on the door from outside, wondering if Ma will call me a nuisance. No one comes out to reprimand me, though. 'Move aside', says Hari's mother who is crying a tray laden with glasses of tea in to the room. 'Move. This is not for you it's for the grownups. Move out of the way'. Hari's mother's nose is like a frog's and her loose like dead bats. 'Do move aside,' she says to me again. 'I won't,' I say, and I try to block her way. 'I'll move only if you say girls are nice.' 'All right, all right, I have said it, so now move out of the way,' says Hari's mother. 'No,' I persist, 'say it properly. ' 'Oh, Hari's Ma, what's happening?' asks Maasi irritably from the room. 'Are you going to bring the tea next year, or what?' Hari's mother knits her thick eyebrows together and says, 'This Lali's middle daughter won't let me ...', she starts laughing, and as she does so her frog-like nose bobs up and down. I can hear Ma naming me and saying, 'That girl must be harassing her. She was born only to plague my life.' Someone in the room advises her that she should not get angry in her condition. For a long time I sit outside the house watching the words flying and wishing that I had been born a bird. 'Do mother birds too think their girl birds are inferior?' I wonder. Then I hear a voice calling 'were has she gone?' 'and I know someone is searching for me. I hide behind the wall where no one can ever find me. I wish, I wish that somewhere, anywhere, I could find that magic betel nut which would make me invisible as soon as I put it in my mouth. What wonder full fun that would be! In the evening, when Naani finishes her story, she says 'now off you go to sleep, all of you. 'my younger sister has already fallen asleep and Hari's mother carries her away in to our room. I ask Naani if I can sleep next to her. Naani's body is soft and warm and her quilt smells of cardamom and cloves. Besides, Naani keeps a torch under her pillow. If you take it with you to the bathroom after the lights are off, you don't knock your toes against anything. But, Naani says, 'No, as it is this boy doesn't leave me. Where is the space on this bed for the two of you? Go and sleep next to your mother. I'll tell you another story tomorrow. All right? 'Naani's tone becomes sugary in the way of must grown-ups when they want to coax you in to doing something. In the other room, my elder sister asks with her back turned to me, 'Did she let you sleep with her?' Her voice seems to be trembling with anger. Ma is snoring away. The clock ticks on. How can you sleep? Tick.Tick.Khrr .Khrr. 89 'Where are you? Girls?' calls Naani with a tray of crimson power in her hands. In front of her there is a dish of halwa and plate filled with puris. She has prepared those as offering to the Devi on Ashtamy day. A mat has

been spread in front of her for us to sit on. 'Come on girls let me put the tikka on your foreheads.' She likes the camphor for aarti. 'Come now, let me do aarti to all of you.' My two sisters and Maama's beautiful daughters sit cross-legged in front of Naani. Naani puts a tikka on each forehead and then rings a bell. Exactly like the guard on the train. After the bell rings, she blows the conch. 'Poo-ooo.' I am suddenly transformed in to a railway engine and race around the ledge of the courtyard. Inside, the room is filled with smells of camphor, halwa, gee and flowers. I shout, 'Come on, pay your fares to go to Calcutta. Poo-ooo.' In the background hear Naani saying, 'Come on dear, let me put the tikka on you .You are my kanyakumari aren't you?' 'No,' I retort, 'I'm an engine.' Maama's son claps his hands with excitement and says, 'Oh, an engine, an engine.' Suddenly I see Ma waddling towards me with a clenched fist and my stomach grows tight with fear. Her face is filled with rage. 'I'll make an engine out of you this very minute.' The elderly neighbour intervenes, catches hold of Ma's hand and says, 'Have you gone mad, Laly?' 'She signals to me to obey, and adds, 'She is after all a child, a kanyakumari . Today is Ashtami, the devi's day; you mustn't hit a kanyakumari; it is a sin.' I jump down from the ledge with a thud and see Naani serving the other girls halwa-puri with a tightly clenched mouth. 'Go on. Take the Prasad from Naani. Why do you make your mother cry when she is in this condition?' Maasi asks me irritably. 'When you people don't love girls, why do you pretend to worship them?' My voice breaks in to a sob and I feel so furious with myself that I want to swallow the burning camphor to choke my treacherous throat. I want to ask 'Why' again but don't risk it because I am afraid I will start to cry. I don't want to cry in front of them. Hari's mother puts her hand up to her cheek and says in wonder, 'Mari-ma, just listen to her . What a temper for a girl to show!' Naani is distributing a rupee and quarter to each. She addresses the wall, 'You can buy twenty sour golis with this money' and holds out a twenty five paisa coin wrapped in a rupee note towards me. I notice the mark of the crimson powder on the tip of her thumb, like a bloodstain. I start moving back towards the wall and screaming 'I don't want all this halwa-puri ,tikka or money .I don't want to be a goddess.' I scream so loudly that the pigeons pecking scattered grain in the courtyard take off in a flurry, as if a bullet had been fired somewhere. (Translated from Hindi by Rama Baru)

**Answer the following in short paragraphs:**

**1. Why does Ma hope so desperately for a son?**

**Answer:** The narrator's mother, frequently called Ma in the story, is going through her fourth pregnancy. In spite of her weak physical condition, she is forced to have another child as all her three kids are girls. A family without a male child is considered unfortunate by the conservative sections of Indian society. A male child is thought to bring honour to the parents whereas, a girl would bring dishonor. Invariably, the woman who gives birth is blamed for having girls instead of boys. Moreover, Ma, being so weak, cannot afford to have another pregnancy if this new child is a girl too. This is why Ma hopes so desperately for a boy.

**2. What do you think of the character of Ma?**

**Answer:** Ma appears to be an irritable and quarrelsome woman at the first glance. However, on closely reading the story, one can find that the woman is in a desperate situation. She,

despite her weakness, will have to go on giving birth until she gets a boy. The whole family and the society has set their gaze upon the woman's destiny. She will not have a respectful life until she gets a boy. This pressure has made the woman so distraught that she cannot help being angry and irritated all the time. Moreover, the mother also reflects the wholeness of Indian society which considers the supremacy of the male gender final.

**3. Why is the main character so irritated? Why do you think she is unnamed?**

**Answer:** The main character in the story, an eight year old girl, is the second daughter of a family of three girls. She is a girl so full of energy that she cannot contain herself by sitting silently in a corner as girls are expected to. She is endowed with the capacity to think clearly and react boldly to unfair situations. This makes her a "nuisance" in her mother's eye. A girl is expected to be silent, obedient and unquestioning. She is irritated at the constant scolding meted upon her by her mother and relatives. She is 93 unnamed in the story because she represents all the girls in the society who are ill-treated in a similar manner. Moreover, it also conveys the fact that giving a name to a girl in the conservative Indian society is insignificant. Their identity is so valueless that their names do not matter at all.

**4. "All of us suffer like that, one just has to endure it."? Discuss.**

**Answer:** The given line occurs in the short story Girls by MrinalPande. The words are uttered by the narrator's mother to her cousin Chhoti. The words become a seminal statement in the story as it represents the plight and attitude of women in a patriarchal system. Chhoti and the mother are victims of the ill treatment of the system. The mother's words reflect the idea that womanhood is fated to lead a life of endurance and suffering.

**5. What and why does the narrator shout at the end of the story?**

**Answer:** The narrator shouts that she does not want to become a Goddess at the end of the story. The little girl who narrates the story is tired of and frustrated at the way in which girls are treated in the conventional Indian society. She is constantly rebuked by the family, especially her mother, just for being born a girl. She finds it disconcerting that in a world that hates girls, Goddesses are treated as powerful deities capable of protecting and destroying everything. The day of Astami is the only day when girls are given any place and are treated with importance as 'kanyakumari'. This makes the narrator angry and frustrated and she protests violently.

**6. "I don't want to be a Goddess." What does this exclamation from the young girl tell us about the women are treated in our society?**

**Answer :** Indian society is an essential patriarchal society—but boasts of considering woman as Goddess – but the birth of a girl is seen as misfortune—considered as servant at home – greatest bane is the system of dowry – woman has no identity of her own—known as someone's daughter, sister or wife – irony lies in seeing the discriminated woman as a Goddess – the cry of the young girl – "I don't want to be a Goddess" reflects the cry of womanhood asking to be considered human beings and let go of the Goddess status.

## **A Ten Day Fast**

### **A TEN DAY FAST - HarisankarParsai (Text)**

#### **January 10**

Today I told Bannu, “Look Bannu, the times are such that Parliament, laws, the constitution, judiciary—all have become useless. Big demands are getting met by threats of fasting and self-immolation. The democracy of twenty years has become so sick that the fates of fifty crore people are decided by the threat of one man going hungry or dying. I say the time is ripe for you too to sit on a fast for that woman.” Bannu became thoughtful. For years, he has been after Radhikababu’s wife, Savitri. He even received thrashing once for trying to persuade her to elope. He can’t get her to divorce her husband because Savitri hates Bannu. After some pondering he said, “But can one go on a fast for this?” I said, “Right now, one can fast for anything. Just recently Baba Sankidas got a law enacted by fasting that makes it mandatory for every man to keep his hair knotted without ever washing it. All heads are reeking of stench. Yours is a small demand—just a woman.” Surendra was there as well. He said, “Yaar, what are you saying! Fasting to snatch someone else’s wife? We should have some shame. People will laugh.” I said, “Arreyaar, big-time fasting saints didn’t feel any shame. We are, after all, ordinary folks. As far as laughing is concerned, people all over the world have laughed so hard over the cow-saving movement that their stomachs are hurting now. No one is in a position to laugh for another ten years. Anyone who does will die of stomach ache.” Bannu said, “Shall I find success?” I said, “That depends on how you make the issue. If it’s made well, you will get the woman. Come; let’s go to the ‘expert’ to seek guidance. Baba Sankidas is a specialist. His practice is running well. These days, four people are fasting under his guidance.” We went to Baba Sankidas. After listening to us he said, “All right. I can take up this issue. You just have to follow what I say. Can you threaten to immolate yourself?” Bannu trembled. Said, “I am scared.” “You don’t have to burn, dear. Just threaten to.” “Even the idea scares me.” Baba said, “Okay, then you go on a fast. We will make the ‘issue’.” Bannu shook again. “I won’t die, would I?” Baba said, “Smart players don’t die. They keep one eye on the medical report and the other on the mediator. You don’t worry. We will save you and also get you that woman.”

#### **January 11**

Today Bannu sat on a fast unto death. Incense and lamps are burning inside the tent. One party is singing a bhajan—‘May the lord grant good sense to all.’ The atmosphere has turned pious from the very first day. Baba Sankidas is an expert in this art. The statement he has got published and distributed on Bannu’s behalf is rather strong. In it, Bannu says, “My soul has awakened and proclaimed that it is incomplete. My other half lies in Savitri. Either conjoin both the soul parts and make them one or give me freedom from this body. I am fasting unto death for conjoining the two soul parts. My demand is that Savitri be made mine. If I don’t get her, I will free this soul part from my mortal body by fasting. I am fearless because I am on the side of truth. Victory to truth!”

Savitri came, full of rage. She asked Baba Sankidas, "This scoundrel is fasting for me, isn't he?" Baba said, "Dear lady, don't use abusive language. He is on a sacred fast. He might have been a scoundrel earlier. Not anymore. He is fasting." Savitri said, "But he should have at least asked me. I spit on him." Baba calmly said, "Lady, you are only the 'issue'. How can one ask the 'issue'?" The people who took part in the Cow-saving movement never asked the cow whether to have a movement or not to save it. Lady, you may go now. My advice is for you or your husband not to come here. In a day or two, public opinion will be formed, and the public won't tolerate any insults from you." She went away, mumbling. Bannu became sad. Baba assured him, "Don't worry. Victory will be yours. Truth always wins in the end."

### **January 13**

Bannu easily gives in to hunger. Today, on just the third day of the fast, he began groaning. Bannu asked, "Has Jayaprakash Narayan come yet?" I said, "He usually comes on the fifth or sixth day. That's his norm. He has been informed." He asks, "What did Vinoba say on this issue?" "Baba said, 'He has resolved the issue of means and ends, but his words can be twisted a bit to use them in our favour.'" Bannu closed his eyes. Said, "Bhaiya, please get Jayaprakashbabu quickly." Journalists also came today. They were wracking their brains. They began asking, "What is the purpose of the fast? Is it in the public's favour?" Baba said, "Purpose isn't the matter now. Right now, it is critical to save his life. Sitting on a fast is such a huge self-sacrifice that the purpose automatically becomes sacred." I said, "This will only serve the public. So many people want to grab the wives of other people, but don't know how to. If this fast is successful, it will guide the public."

### **January 14**

Bannu has become weaker. He is threatening to break his fast. This will publicly humiliate us. Baba Sankidas reasoned with him. Today, Baba executed another miracle. He has managed to get the views of a certain Swami Rasanand published in newspapers. Swamiji claimed that observing religious austerities has granted him the power to look into anyone's past and future. He has come to know that in his past life, Bannu was a saint called Vanmanus, and Savitri was his wife. He has assumed a human form after three thousand years. His relation with Savitri goes back to many eons. The fact that an ordinary man such as Radhika Prasad is keeping a saint's wife in his house, amounts to blasphemy. He appealed to all god-fearing people to oppose this profanity. This opinion has had a good effect. Some people were seen chanting slogans of "Victory to truth!" One crowd was sloganeering in front of Radhikababu's house... "Radhika Prasad is a sinner! Woe to the sinner! Victory to truth." Swamiji has organized prayers for saving Bannu's life across temples.

### **January 15**

At night stones were pelted at Radhikababu's house. Public opinion has been formed. Our agents have heard men and women and saying this... "Poor thing has been hungry for five days." "Hats off to such devotion." "But it didn't melt the heart of that hard woman." "Her husband is so

shameless too.” “I believe he was a saint in his past life.” “Didn’t you read Swami Rasanand’s opinion?” “It’s a sin to keep a saint’s wife in one’s home.” Today, eleven married women carried out Bannu’s aarti. Bannu was delighted. His heart leaps at the sight of married women. The newspapers are filled with the news of the fast. Today a crowd went to the Prime Minister’s house to demand his intervention and save Bannu’s life. The prime minister refused to meet the people. We will see how long he refuses to meet. Jayaprakash Narayan came in the evening. He was unhappy. Said, “How many lives must I save? Is this my job? Every day someone or the other sits on a fast and screams for their life to be saved. If he wants to save his life, why doesn’t he eat? Why do we need a mediator to save lives? The sacred weapon of fasting is being used to snatch someone else’s wife.” 99 We reasoned with him, “This issue is of a different nature. It was his soul’s cry.” He calmed down. Said, “If it is the soul’s cry, I will take it up.” I said, “Moreover, the feelings of scores of truth-loving people are associated with this.” Jayaprakashbabu agreed to mediate. He will first meet Savitri and her husband, then the prime minister. Bannu kept looking at Jayaprakashbabu pathetically. Later we told him, “You, idiot, don’t look so worn down. If they sense your weakness, any leader will pour sweet lime juice down your throat. Don’t you see how many politicians are moving about with sweet limes in their shoulder bags?” January 16 Jayaprakashbabu’s mission has failed. Nobody is willing to listen. Prime Minister said, “Our sympathies are with Bannu, but we can’t do anything. Let him break his fast, and then we can find a solution by engaging in peaceful talks.” We were frustrated. But Baba Sankidas wasn’t. He said, “At first, everyone rejects the demands. This is the norm. Let’s make the movement stronger. We have to convey through newspapers that a lot of “acetone” is showing up in Bannu’s urine. That his condition is serious. We must publish views that ask for saving his life at all costs. Is the government just going to sit and watch? It must urgently take steps to save Bannu’s precious life. Baba is an amazing man. He has so many tricks up his sleeve. He says, “The time has come to include the issue of caste in this movement. Bannu is a brahmin and Radhika Prasad akayasth. Provoke brahmins and kayasths alike. A Brahmin Association minister is going to contest the next elections. “Tell him this is his opportunity to get the collective votes of brahmins.” Today a proposal came from RadhikaBabu for Bannu to have a rakhi tied by Savitri. We turned it down.

## **January 17**

Today’s newspaper headlines— “Save Bannu’s Life!” “Bannu’s Condition Serious!” “Life-saving Prayers in Temples!” In one of the newspapers we paid advertisement rates to publish this— “Prayer of crores of truth-loving people—Save Bannu’s Life!Bannu’s death will have dire consequences!” The view of the minister from Brahmin Association was also published. He has made this a matter of brahmin pride and has threatened direct action. We have hired four goons for throwing stones at kayasth houses. After dealing with that, the same people will throw stones at brahmin houses. Bannu has paid them the advance. Baba feels that by tomorrow or day after curfew should be imposed. At least imposing Article 144 is definitely in order. This will strengthen our “case.” **January 18**

Last night, stones were thrown at brahmin and kayasth residences. This morning, a serious clash ensued between two separate Brahmin and Kayasth groups. Article 144 has been clamped in the city. The air is tense. Our representative group met the prime minister. He said, "This will have legal hurdles. We would need to modify the marriage act." We said, "So please modify it. Issue an ordinance. If Bannu dies, fire will erupt in the whole country." He said, "First you make him break the fast." We said, "The government must agree with his demand in principle and set up a committee that will show Bannu the way to acquire that woman." The government is monitoring the situation. Bannu must endure more pain. The situation hasn't changed. There's a "deadlock" in the talks. Minor conflicts are erupting. Last night we got stones pelted at the local police station. This had a good impact. Today, the "Save life" demand became more vociferous.

### **January 19**

Bannu has become very weak. He is scared he may not make it. He has been muttering that we trapped him into this. If perchance he publicly airs his opinion, we will be "exposed." Something must urgently be done. We have told him that if he now gives up his fast, the public will kill him. The representative group will go for another meeting. **January 20**

"Deadlock." Only one bus could be burnt. Bannu is still being difficult. We are continuing to say on his behalf, "He will die, but not bend!" The government looks worried. The Ascetics Association has given its support to the demand today. The Brahmin Society has given an ultimatum: Ten Brahmins will immolate themselves. Savitri tried to commit suicide, but was saved. There are long queues for Bannu's darshan. A senior UN official has been notified via telegram today. Prayer meetings took place in different locations. Dr. Lohia has said that as long as this government is in power, lawful demands will not be fulfilled. Bannu should abduct this government instead of Savitri. **January 21**

The government has accepted Bannu's demand in principle. A committee has been formed to resolve practical problems. Amid bhajan and prayers, Baba Sankidas fed fruit juice to Bannu. The leaders' sweet limes dried up in their shoulder bags. Baba said public sentiment must be respected in a democracy. The emotions of scores of people were linked to this issue. It is a good thing that the issue was peacefully resolved. Otherwise, a violent revolution would have flared up. The brahmin legislative candidate has struck a deal to have Bannu participate in his campaign. He has paid a fat amount. Bannu's price has gone up. To the men and women touching his feet Bannu said, "All happened by God's grace. I am only His medium." Slogans rent the air—Victory to Truth!

### **Answer the following in short paragraphs:**

#### **1. What made Bannu begin a ten day fast?**

Answer : Bannu had been stalking Savitri, who is the wife of Radhika Prasad for the last sixteen years. Yet, Savitri refused to succumb to his advances and this led Bannu to turn to his friends for

help. His friends, one of whom is the narrator, advise him to go on a ten day fast because, a fast is a sacrifice which will ignite the interest of the public. Once the issue is brought to public notice, then it will be easy for Bannu to get Savitri. That is why Bannu began a ten day fast.

**2. Comment on the element of satire seen throughout the story?**

Answer: The story, A Ten Day Fast, is a thoroughly satirical narrative which pokes fun at the ways in which all the noble systems of the country like religion, non-violent protest, the press etc are misused and misinterpreted to suit the purposes of unscrupulous people. The very cause for which the fast is undertaken itself invokes the dire sarcasm in the work. Fasting, which is actually a method of nonviolent protest for the sake of a just cause is used here for a very shameful purpose – that of marrying a woman against her wishes. When at the end, the crowd shouts 105 “Victory to Truth!” “Victory to Dharma!”, we find the whole concept of Dharma lost and distorted.

**3. Elaborate on the various measures taken by Baba Sankidas to help Bannu win?**

Answer : Baba Sankidas , as if he is an advocate, takes up Bannu’s case. He leaves no stone unturned in helping Bannu achieve his purpose. He makes a fool of a whole populace through false propaganda and spreading unhealthy sentiments. The innocent dialogues of politicians and other men of importance are twisted and used for their purpose. Caste, a powerful tool to arouse the sentiments of common people, is used to its full extent. He employs, local goons to attack the households of men from various castes thus fabricating a situation of riot. The cocked up story of Bannu and Savitri being husband and wife in the past births arouses the sentiments of people thus making them blindly support his cause. These are the various means undertaken by Baba Sankidas to help Bannu.

**4. Comment on the idea of ‘virtuous woman’ as seen in the short story?**

Answer - The story presents various instances wherein the age old beliefs of men are exploited to gain the wrong purposes. Here, Savitri, an ordinary woman, who lives happily with her family, is targeted by the nasty forces of society solely because she is lusted after by Bannu, a person with powerful political connections. Bannu’s friends actually redefines the idea of ‘virtuous woman’ and presents Savitri to be the opposite. Her refusal to leave her family for a man whom she hates makes her a non-virtuous woman on the basis of several illogical arguments like soul, past births and the like. Thus, the story presents that ideas are created for man’s convenience and can easily be changed for his convenience.

**5. Comment on the story as a biting satire on the value system existing in the world.**

Answer : The story The Ten Day Fast, though it directly depicts the political and ideological hypocrisy existing in India, actually mirrors the whole of the world which has its foundation based on such hypocritical ideas. Almost all ideas held in reverence by societies all over the world are actually created for the purpose of convenience and ease of people, especially the powerful

sections of the society. Here, for example, we find a lot of ideas and beliefs reconstructed to serve Bannu. The fact the very system of justice, which ought to protect the rights of the people, curtails Savitri's freedom to live with her own husband due to the complex twisting of the value systems by Bannu's friends. Thus, the story proves to be a biting satire on the value systems of the world.

## **Unit - 5** **Sisters**

### **SISTERS - Saleem Peeradina**

“One, not quite ten  
but ahead of the other, younger  
whose five plus will never catch up  
with the big one's lead  
no matter how good she acts.  
or how hard she cheats.....”  
“Like any disadvantaged species  
she has turned the handicap  
in her favour: she's bolder,  
sneakier, sweeter than honey,  
obeyer of commands, underminer of rules,  
producer of tears, yeller, complete”  
“Turnaround. The older one gets  
the tough end of it. Most times  
blames end up in her sullen face.  
Fighting back, she argues, attacks

me for talk her the way all parents”  
“At all times have tried explaining  
to the elder child. living up  
to her inheritance, she blazes back  
at moralizing. On bad days  
I shout her down, immediately  
regretting my words.”  
“But even as she retreats  
into simmering silence, she stands her ground  
knowing me to be unfair. Secretly,  
I rejoice at the lesson never intended  
but so well learnt: how to overcome  
fathers, real and imaginary.”

**Substance:** The poem is a delightful but serious confession of a parent who lays bare his anxieties, troubles and difficulties that he faces while dealing with his children. Here, we see the angle of a parent who has assessed his children in detail. He sees and understands everything – the age difference, the superiority of the elder one, the scheming younger one, the conventional parent who out of habit/ experience automatically puts blame on the elder one. The poem also deals with how parents learn, though unintentionally, previously unlearned lessons like the courage to defy unfair authority. The parent is also secretly happy at his elder daughter’s capacity to stand her ground in spite of being wrongly reprimanded by her father.

**Answer the following in a sentence or two.**

**1. From whose viewpoint is the poem written?**

Answer : The poem is written from the view point of a parent, most probably that of a father. The last line of the poem mentions “fathers” leading us to think that the narrator is a father.

**2. What is the ‘handicap’ that the younger child turns to her advantage?**

Answer : The younger child is disadvantaged in terms of years. She is just above five and cannot catch up with her elder sister who is nearing ten. She turns this to her advantage by sneaking, crying and yelling.

**3. What do you think is the ‘inheritance’ the older daughter lives up to?**

Answer : The tendency of the older daughter to retort angrily whenever she is wrongly reprimanded by her parent is seen here by the father as her 'inheritance'. He might be thinking of his own angry temperament as a child which he thinks his daughter has inherited.

**Answer the following in short paragraphs:**

**1. Comment on the character of the older daughter?**

**Answer:** In the poem Sisters, we find a father fondly thinking of his daughters. Among his daughters, the elder one is ten years of age. She, being the elder, is superior to the younger one in many matters. However, this puts her in a disadvantage as the younger one is given undue consideration by the parents. She is not a meek child who puts up with this injustice silently. She fights back strongly and vehemently. Even when she has to retreat taking the mistreatment, she makes sure to stand her ground never forgetting that her side was right. Thus, the elder girl, though short of temper, is a strong person able to defy unfair authority.

**2. How does the younger child take advantage of her age difference?**

**Answer:** The younger girl, being younger, finds it unable to match her sister's abilities in many ways. However, she is clever enough to turn her status as the younger one to her advantage. She cheats cleverly but acts as the sweet and good one. She presents herself to be the obeyer of rules but at the same time undermines them. She easily cries, yells and throws tantrums knowing full well that her parents would support her being the younger and thereby the 'weaker' of the two.

**3. Who are the 'imaginary' fathers mentioned in the poem?**

**Answer:** The narrator of the poem considers the figure of the father – himself in the case of his family – the symbol of authority and command. By 'imaginary fathers', he means all the institutions and systems of authority that rule over and subjugate the younger ones in many ways. The father here is secretly happy that his daughter is capable of defying authority and standing her ground.

## **Unit - 8** **Amalkanti**

### **AMALKANTI - Narendranath Chakrabarti (Text)**

Amalkanti is a friend of mine  
We were together at school  
He often came late to class  
And never knew his lessons.  
When asked to conjugate a verb,  
He looked out of the window

In such puzzlement  
That we all felt sorry for him.  
Some of us wanted to be teachers,  
Some doctors, some lawyers.  
Amalkanti didn't want to be any of these.  
He wanted to be sunlight  
The timid sunlight of late afternoon,  
When it stops raining  
And the crows call again,  
The sunlight that clings like a smile  
To the leaves of the jaam and the jaamrul.  
Some of us have become teachers,  
some doctors, some lawyers.  
Amalkanti couldn't become sunlight.  
He works in a poorly lit room  
for a printer.  
He drops in now and then to see me,  
Chats about this and that  
Over a cup of tea, then gets up to go.  
I see him off at the door.  
The one among us who's a teacher  
Could easily have become a doctor.  
If the one who'd wanted to be a doctor  
Had become a lawyer,  
it wouldn't have made much difference to him.  
All of us got more or less what we wanted,  
All except Amalkanti  
Who used to think so much about sunlight  
That he wanted to become sunlight.

**Substance:** The speaker of the poem is the poet, who is a friend and classmate of Amalkanti. The poem speaks about one's dream and what he becomes in future. The dream of Amalkanti was to become sunlight. Amalkanti in Bengla and Hindi means 'Pure Radiance'. He was not interested in his lessons and not ready to reach school earlier. Other students including the poet wanted to become teachers, doctors, lawyers and so on. All the other children including the poet achieved, more or less, whatever they wanted © Mukta Swadhyayapeetham, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi, 2019 120 to be in their future life as doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc. Amalkanti couldn't become sunlight. His dream remained unrealized. He worked in a poorly lit room for a printing job. The dreams of the other classmates changed in their future. Those who desired to become teacher turned into a doctor, a doctor into a lawyer and so on. But the dream of Amalkanti hasn't changed forever. He still urges to become sunlight. The poem ends in an irony that though he couldn't become sunlight, now what he's doing is spreading light just like sunlight. By printing books he imparts knowledge and lights up the minds of people.

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

**1. What is the meaning of the word Amalkanti? How does the name go hand in hand with his dream?**

**Answer:** The word Amalkanti in Bengla language means 'pure radiance'. His dream is to become sunlight. Thus the name itself becomes his dream and both emphasize on giving 'light'. When years passed, many of them had changed their dreams and became something else. But Amalkanti hasn't changed his dream. Though he hasn't become sunlight, he was spreading light through the books he was printing. One's name is one's own identity which cannot be altered as life goes on. It will not change even after one's death. Amalkanti's name becomes worthy and meaningful only because he had the dream which resembled his name.

**2. What sort of a poem is Amalkanti ? Philosophical / satirical?**

**Answer:** The main theme of the poem is 'dream'. To emphasize this aspect the poet focuses on the life of Amalkanti, who has got an uncommon dream. This poem can be considered as both philosophical and satirical. Many great philosophers have questioned the very existence of life as a dream or reality. So turning dreams into reality is another difficult question. Whatever the matter is the titular character was not ready to change his dream even though he couldn't save his monetary part. The poem mocks at human endeavours that aim only at this monetary benefit by compromising the beauty of the dream he had once. Thus we can also say this poem is a satire on human life in which people dream and act in different ways.

**3. Is this world a place to satisfy one's dream or not? Justify this view based on review of Amalkanti's life.**

**Answer:** Of course. It depends upon one's own determination and mental power. Though years had passed Amalkanti was not ready to give up his dream. Ironically now he has achieved it to some extent, through working for a printer. Amalkanti was not after money. He had held his dream so close to his heart. He may not be able to become a rich or a so called intellectual, but what he had dreamt when he was a child gave him all he wanted. He is contented with his life working for a printer. When we were children we all had the courage to announce what we wanted to become and to try hard for the dreams. But when we grow up we will mould our dreams into what the society or people around us requests or compels.