



Grade IX

Lesson 4. In the Kingdom of Fools

- A.K. Ramanujan

Supplementary Reader

Soul of the Chapter

It is the story of a kingdom where the king and his minister both were idiots. They had ordered that the night be treated as day and all the people should work only after dark. They should go to bed as soon as the sun came up. The king's orders were followed by the people for fear of death. This delighted the king and his minister.

Once a guru and his disciple came to that city. Soon they realised that they were in the kingdom of fools. The guru was wise. He advised his disciple that they should leave that place at once as it was not safe to stay there. But the disciple was a food freak. He found the city very cheap. He decided to stay there. He ate to his fill and soon grew fat.

Meanwhile, there was a unique trial in the court of the king. A thief had broken into a rich merchant's house. As he was coming out of the hole, the old wall fell on him and he died on the spot. His brother blamed the rich merchant for the death of his brother. He appealed to the king. The accused was summoned. The merchant pleaded that he was innocent. He blamed the bricklayer who had built a weak wall. The bricklayer was summoned. He held the dancing girl responsible for distracting him. She was also summoned. She blamed the goldsmith who did not make her ornaments in time. The goldsmith admitted that he could not make her jewellery in time. But he pleaded that a rich merchant had pressed him to make ornaments early for a family wedding. The rich merchant was the father of the present owner of the house who was accused by the thief's brother.

Now the king ruled that the rich merchant was the real culprit. The merchant pleaded that it was his father who had ordered for the jewellery. The king consulted his minister and ruled that he had inherited all the wealth as well as sins of his dead father. So he was the real culprit. Now the rich merchant was ordered to be executed. A new stake was built. But the merchant was too thin to fit the stake. The king ordered to find a person who was fat enough to fit the stake. The disciple who had grown fat, was found fit for the stake. He was brought to





the place of execution. He remembered his guru who appeared at once. He whispered something to him.

Now they started fighting. Each wanted to be executed first. The king asked why they were fighting. The guru explained to him that whoever died on the stake first, would be reborn as the king of that country. Whoever died next would be reborn as the minister. He told the king that the stake was not an ordinary stake. It was the stake of God.

The king consulted his minister and they decided to take their place. They wanted to be reborn as the king and the minister. They went secretly to the prison and released the guru and his disciple. The king and his minister were executed the next morning. Now the people requested the guru and his disciple to be their new king and minister. They agreed and changed all the old laws.

NCERT Questions

Think About It

1. What are the two strange things the guru and his disciple find in the Kingdom of Fools?

Everything is upside down in the kingdom of fools. The guru and his disciple find that people sleep in daytime and work at night. Everything, whether rice or banana, costs the same. Any disobedience is punished.

2. Why does the disciple decide to stay in the Kingdom of Fools? It is a good idea?

The disciple is a food freak. He is tempted by the cheap food available in the kingdom of fools. So he decides to stay in the kingdom. No, it is not a good idea. The behaviour of fools is always unpredictable. One can be in danger anytime.

3. Name all the people who are tried in the king's court and give the reasons for their trial.

A thief dies when a merchant's wall collapses. Four people were tried in the king's court. The first person was the owner of the house. He was tried for building a weak wall. The second person was the bricklayer. He was tried for not doing his work properly. The third one a dancing girl, was tried for distracting the mason at work. And the last one was the goldsmith who was accused of making the dancing girl walk up and down by delaying his work on her jewellery.





4. Who is the real culprit according to the king? Why does he escape punishment?

The rich merchant is finally blamed for the crime. The king rules that the sins come in inheritance. Therefore, the merchant is held guilty of his father's crime. However, the merchant escapes punishment because he is too thin to fit the stake prepared by the king.

5. What are the Guru's words of wisdom? When does he escape punishment?

The guru knew that behaviour of fools is unpredictable. They could be in danger anytime. He decided to leave the kingdom at once. But the disciple did not realise the danger. He realised his mistake when the king ordered his execution without any reason.

6. How does the guru manage to save his disciple's life?

The king ordered the execution of the rich merchant who was held guilty of murdering a thief. A new stake was made but the merchant was too thin to be executed. So he decided to find out some fat man to be executed. His guru made a plan. They started fighting as to who should be executed first. He told the king that the stake was the stake of the God of justice. Whoever died first would be reborn as the king and whoever went next would be the future minister of his country. The king and the minister got executed willingly. Thus, the guru helped his disciple save his life.

Solved Question Bank

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What was the routine of the people in the kingdom of fools?

In the kingdom of fools, the people used to work at night and sleep during the sunlight. There the day was considered to be the night and the night was considered to be the day. This routine was followed not only by human beings but animals too.

2. What advice did the guru give to his disciple?

The guru advised his disciple to leave the kingdom of fools as soon as possible. He said that one could never anticipate the next move of the fools. The guru was a wise man. He was right in his predictions.

3. Why did the disciple become fat?

The disciple was a food freak. He found the food very cheap in the kingdom. He ate his fill every day and grew fat like a street side bull. The cost of everything was only one duddu. He could buy anything for one rupee.





4. How did the thief die?

The thief died while carrying out his loot from the house of a merchant. The wall of the old house collapsed on him and killed him on the spot. It was an accident but his brother complained to the king against the owner of the house for making a weak wall.

5. What was the trial about?

The trial was about the death of a thief who died while coming out of a house. The wall of the house was very old and collapsed on him. The king wanted to fix the responsibility on a person responsible for his death.

6. Why did the king want to punish the merchant?

The king wanted to punish the rich merchant because the wall of his house had fallen on the thief. The king blamed him for building a weak wall.

7. How did the merchant defend himself?

The merchant defended himself by submitting that he had not built the wall. The mason built the bad wall which fell on the thief who died there and then. She was held responsible for the death of the thief.

8. What was the dancing girl blamed for?

The dancing girl was blamed for distracting the mason who built the wall. The mason built the bad wall which fell on the thief who died there and then. She was held responsible for the death of the thief.

9. How did the dancing girl defend herself?

The dancing girl defended herself by saying that a goldsmith made her walk up and down by delaying work on her jewellery. She told the king that the goldsmith made many excuses. Her movement might have distracted the bricklayer. So it was not her fault.

10. Why was the merchant not executed he was finally found guilty?

The merchant was finally found guilty of killing the thief. He was ordered to be executed. But he was too thin to fit the newly made stake. So the king ordered to find someone who could fit the stake.

11. What did the guru tell the king about the stake?

The guru told the king that the stake was the stake of God of justice. Whoever died first would be reborn as the king of that country. And whoever died next, would be the minister.





12. How did the guru and his disciple become the king and the minister of the kingdom of fools?

After the death of the king and his minister, the people found guru and his disciple. They were impressed with their intellectual capacity and wisdom. They made them king and minister respectively.

13. According to you, who was a fool in the kingdom, the king or the public. Why?

In my opinion, both the king and the public were fools in the kingdom. When the king and his minister decided to change the system, the public should have opposed and changed them. But the public also acted foolishly.

14. "The disciple did not obey his guru." Do you think his obedience would have saved him from trouble?

The disciple did not obey his guru. He was in trouble. If he had followed his guru and left the kingdom he would not have been in trouble. He was greedy and decided to remain in the kingdom because everything was so cheap there. He used to eat to his fill and became fat.

Long Answer Questions

1. What did the guru and the disciple find in the city of fools? Would you advise anybody to live in such a place?

When the guru and his disciple arrived in the city, they found it beautiful. It was broad daylight. Everyone was asleep. Even the animals, like cows, were asleep. They wandered around the town and found it deserted. The shops were closed and nothing could be seen outside. As soon as the sun set, the whole city woke up. Being hungry, they went to buy some eatables from a shop. They were surprised to find that everything cost the same, a single 'duddu'. Both of them were delighted to find such a cheap city. No, I would never advise anybody to live in such a place as it seems 'tempting but in fact may pose problems anytime in the life. One should think before making any hasty decision.

2. Why, according to you, is it always risky to live among fools? Elaborate your answer with reference to the story 'In the Kingdom of Fools.'

One never knows what a fool has in his mind. So, it is always risky to live among fools. The guru in the story tells his disciple, "The king and the minister are all fools. They won't last very long, and you can't tell what they'll do to you next." Their behaviour is not predictable. The disciple did not follow the advice of his guru and was in trouble. He remembered Guru's





words when he was arrested by the men of the king to execute merely because he fitted the stake. The king, the most foolish creature of the kingdom, had a unique way of judgement. He did not apply his mind when deciding cases. He became victim of his own foolishness and died.

3. One should not be greedy. How did greed bring the disciple in trouble?

It is true that one should not be greedy. The disciple was a food freak. He did not listen on his Guru's advice. He decided to stay in the kingdom of fools. He found the food very cheap and ate his fill every day and grew fat like a street side bull. He became so greedy that he disobeyed his guru. It was his greed for food that put him in trouble. He became the victim of the foolishness of the king. He was arrested and sentenced to death. The King wanted someone to be executed for a crime which was not committed at all. The disciple fit his requirement. So he was in trouble. If he had not been greedy, he would have left the kingdom like his guru. But his greed for food put him in trouble.

4. In the lesson, 'In the Kingdom of Fools', the king is the kingpin of troubles that beset his kingdom. Cite examples from the lesson to draw up a pen picture of the king.

The King of the Kingdom of Fools, by his actions really lives up to the name of his kingdom. He is a despotic ruler who has changed the working routine of his subjects by ordering them to sleep by day and work by night. He lacks financial acumen and has ordered a common price tag for all goods in the kingdom. The king lacks far-sightedness and cannot visualize what the repercussions of his current actions will be, in the future. Thus he orders a stake to be made that does not fit the proportions of the convicted criminal. With no understanding of legalities, he metes out justice according to hearsay. He blindly follows advice and thus gets entrapped in the rationale posed by the guru and his disciple who persuade him to hang on the stake to ensure he becomes a king in the next life.

5. In the story 'In the Kingdom of Fools', the Guru who had visited the kingdom, managed to rescue the kingdom through his ways. What character qualities in him proved to be ideal for this task?

The Guru's keen observational skills made him quickly assess that it was a kingdom of fools, when he saw the entire city asleep in broad daylight. The Guru was an ideal disciplinarian. When his obstinate disciple refused to listen to reason and insisted on enjoying the comforts the kingdom provided, the astute guru abandoned him. The Guru was an innovative man and devised a clever way of rescuing his disciple from death at the stake. He informed the gullible king that the man dying first at the stake would be reborn as king. Being a fine





strategist he cleverly had himself imprisoned to be hung, pretending to cover the throne in his next life. The foolish ruler schemed to exchange places in prison and thus died at the stake. The guru lived a disciplined and orderly way of life so when he was made the ruler, he restored the kingdom to normalcy.

6. **A disciple is blessed when he finds the ideal Guru. In the case of the disciple in the story 'In the Kingdom of Fools', despite having an ideal guru, the disciple had drifted away from him. What traits in his character had made him behave in this manner?**

The disciple being short sighted, did not realize the temporary nature of the abundance that he saw all around in the kingdom and felt that the good times would last forever. He liked immediate gratification and thus, when his guru tried to make him realize that the good times were limited and that they should leave the kingdom before it fell into ruin, the obstinate disciple preferred not to sacrifice the comforts the kingdom provided. The disciple was easily won over. Thus he was easily persuaded to become the minister, of the kingdom, unlike his guru. Being a glutton, all he wanted in life was good, cheap food. He fattened on ghee, bananas, rice and wheat, by eating his fill. Finally, he was quick to reform. Thus when he was condemned to die at the stake, he did not appeal for mercy but prayed to his guru for help.

7. **The disciple was in trouble because he was greedy. The king and his minister also met their end because of greed. Elaborate.**

Greed is a vice. A greedy person can never be happy. In the story 'In the Kingdom of Fools' all the three persons suffered because of their greed. The disciple suffered for his greed for food. He found the food very cheap and decided to stay in the kingdom of fools. He disobeyed his guru who had advised him to leave the country. Not only the disciple but the king and his minister were also greedy and became the victim.

Both the King and his minister wanted to grab the power and luxury in their next birth. They wanted to reborn as the king and the minister. The Guru knew their weakness. Greed was their weakness. He used their weakness to saw his disciple. The Guru told the King that the stake was the stake of God of Justice. Whoever died first would be reborn as the King of that country and whoever died next, would be the minister. Both were trapped in greed and, as a result, died.





8. "My mind was not on it," said the bricklayer. Was this a good excuse for not building the wall properly? What will happen if we do something without our mind in it? What can we learn from this situation? Example.

The bricklayer defended that while building the wall, his mind was not on it due to a beautiful dancing girl who was going up and down the street all day with her anklets jingling. So the wall was weak and got collapsed. However, it was a lame excuse for not building the wall properly. There was no answer for his blunder. So, if we do anything carelessly and without concentration mishap is sure to occur. We shall be held responsible for its consequences. In the story, the wall of the old house collapsed and the thief was killed on the spot. So, in the context of the situation we learn that we should do our duty with concentration and attention, otherwise we will have to repent our fault.



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