

4.2 Baby Pangolin's Night Out



Bhau Katdare is a nature lover and an eminent activist. He has won many honours and awards for substantial contribution towards the protection and conservation of various endangered species. Since 1992, he has striven through Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra Organisation, Chiplun to make the concept of 'Conservation of Nature through Livelihood' a reality.

☼ You are visiting a nearby hill with your Aunt. Think of 5-8 questions you would like to ask about the hill. (in English!)

1. What instructions does a human mother give to her two year old baby in the course of the day ?
Write five to eight of those in English, using your imagination.
2. Imagine yourself in the following situations :
 - You have gone to a local tourist spot with your school friends. There you meet someone from another country who wants to know more about you and your school. Introduce yourself to that person and provide information about your school.
 - You and your schoolmates have gone to visit a famous organisation / institute to get more information about their work. Introduce yourself to the authorities there.
 - You and your team have lost your way in another school where you have gone for a competition. Introduce yourself to the students of that school and enquire about the way.
3. From your science textbook and the internet, find the names of at least 10 rare animals that are seen in Maharashtra State.

**Warming
up!**



BABY PANGOLIN'S NIGHT OUT

“Come, Baby, Wake up! We will go ant-eating today!” Mama Pangolin gave a gentle loving push to her one-month old baby, with her long tapering mouth. Baby was still drowsy after a day’s sleep. Mother tried to persuade him, “You keep asking me to take you out; you say you are tired of drinking milk all the time. Now get up, get ready.”

“No! Won’t!” said Baby, stretching his long tail lazily, “I don’t want to walk all the way!”

“Don’t worry,” said Mama, “I’ll carry you on my tail. Good boy, come on, it’s time!”

Mama set him on her tail and finally brought him out of the home. Their home was a snug hole in the earth, nine inches wide and more than a metre long. Mama cautioned Baby to sit tight and hold on to her scales with his claws. She began to walk steadily and cautiously. Just then, a porcupine went past them.

“Who’s that?” Baby wondered.

“Oh, that! That’s a porcupine!”

“And who are we?”

“Hmm,” Mama began to explain as she walked. “We are pangolins. We have many cousins. Four of them are in Africa and four are in Asia. We live in India, so people call us Indian Pangolins. In the northern part of India, our cousins Chinese Pangolins are also seen.”

Listen and answer :

- ✿ What did Mama Pangolin do ? Why ?
- ✿ How did Mama Pangolin carry her baby ?
- ✿ What did Mama and Baby see on their way ?
- ✿ Guess where they live.

- cautioned : warned,
- cautiously : carefully



✿ Guess the meaning of anthill.

- devour : eat quickly and a lot at a time

✿ What do human babies eat as their first solid meal? Discuss.

- In a trice : quickly
- belly : stomach
- diminished : reduced

- beyond measure : without limit

- loads and loads of : a lot of

By now, Mama and Baby had reached the anthill. Mama used her strong, sharp and curved front claws to quickly demolish the anthill. The termites inside began to run helter-skelter. In and out, in and out went Mother's one and a half foot long sticky tongue. She began to devour the termites.

"Look, Baby, they're delicious! Eat them up! Quickly! This is how we pangolins gobble up termites!"

Baby watched Mother and tried to follow her example. Slowly, slowly, Yes! Baby could do it too! In and out, in and out went his tiny tongue. This was his first solid meal after being nursed on mother's milk for a month. And he found the termites truly delicious! Just like Mother had said they would be! She, too, was happy.

"Good! Baby, remember, this is the proper food for us pangolins. We don't have teeth like other animals, so this is what we eat!"

Just then, Mama smelled something. In a trice, she pulled her Baby to herself and held him close to her belly. She hid behind a rock and pulled her long body together into a tight ball. Anyone would think she was just another piece of rock. After a while, the smell diminished. It seemed to come from a safe distance. Mama loosened her tail a bit and listened carefully. She sensed a bright light passing on, and with it, some sounds. She uncurled herself very very cautiously and let the Baby go.

"Did you note the smell just now? Remember it better than anything else. This is the smell of man. Some of them are wicked beyond measure. They search for our holes/nests and dig them up. They kill us, eat our flesh and sell our scales to earn loads and loads of money. Humans think our scales are medicinal.

“Long ago, when only tribal people living in the jungles knew about us, the situation was not so bad. They too killed animals but not for greed. Now you have to be on your guard against greedy people such as those we smelled just now. When we step out for our nighttime wandering, they flash harsh torch lights to spot us and then shoot us with their guns. These very same wicked people have destroyed our habitats and cleared away jungles. There’s no room for us to build our homes and to roam around anymore. Life is now full of hardships. You can never tell when someone lurking around might kill you. Be warned, Baby, be careful!

“These men don’t realize we are their helpers - we remove millions of ants and termites for them. They will spend huge amounts to do that themselves but will not spare us. May God give them good sense!

“Baby, one more thing. There are some good people, too. They know our importance in the food chains in nature. They strive to make our life easier, to help us grow in numbers. Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra and other organizations in Maharashtra run awareness campaigns with the help of the Forest Department. They hold meetings in villages and urge people to protect us. They put up posters with these messages everywhere and hand out pamphlets. They try hard to put a stop to international smuggling. They set up modern trap cameras to get our photographs and study us.

“I do hope these good people will succeed in their work. Our life will be easier and our kith and kin will flourish. Come, Baby, that’s enough for today. It’s getting late. Did my love relish the termites? We’ll return here tomorrow night. Now we must reach home before the day breaks.”

– Bhau Katdare

☼ Guess the meaning of

- medicinal
- tribal

• habitats : natural homes

• spare us : let us go

• urge : request

• relish : enjoy eating.

Things to do :

☼ Find out more about

- food chains
- trap camera

Pangolin Fact Sheet

1. Indian Pangolin is included in Schedule I as per Indian Wild Life Protection Act 1972. That means they enjoy the same protection that tigers do.
2. They are included in the Red List of endangered species published by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
3. This is the only mammal to have scales on the body. The scales are made of a protein called Keratin. Our nails, hair, a rhino's horn all consist of Keratin. The scales on a pangolin's body comprise as much as 20% of its total body weight.
4. Pangolin scales are used in Chinese medicine and are in great demand.
5. Indian pangolins weigh from 10 to 20 kg. Females are smaller than the males. Their total length is 60 to 75 cm and the tail is 40 to 45 cm long.
6. One pangolin eats up as many as 7 crore ants/termites in a year.
7. Even tigers and lions find it difficult to crack/eat a pangolin that has curled itself into a tight ball.
8. A pangolin uses its strong claws and tail to climb up a tree.
9. Pangolins have a weak eyesight but a strong sense of smell.



ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. Make other meaningful sentences by using other words in place of the words in the boxes.

- We will go **ant-eating** today.
- This is how we **pangolins gobble up termites** .
- You have to be on your guard against **greedy people** .
- Life is now full of **hardships** .



2. List all the references in the story that tell you that it is nighttime.

Translate the phrases into your mother tongue.

3. Use the Pangolin Fact Sheet to make a collage giving interesting information on Pangolins.

4. Write what Mama Pangolin told her Baby about the following topics.

- Pangolins as animal species – their habitat, food, habits, etc.
- Threats to pangolins
- Good people's efforts to save pangolin

5. Say whether the following sentences are true or false :

- (a) The pangolin's home was a snug hole in the earth.
- (b) Mama pangolin used her claws to eat ants and termites.
- (c) Baby pangolin did not like termites.
- (d) Mama pangolin pulled her long body together into a tight ball.
- (e) Pangolin scales are medicinal.
- (f) Human beings have destroyed pangolin habitats.

- Now, use the sentences in the passage to frame a similar 'true / false' exercise. Remember, you must know the correct answer yourself.



Language Study

Consider the following sentences :

- She began to devour the termites.
- Baby watched mother.
- Mama smelled something.
- They flash harsh torchlights.
- * Underline the verbs in the sentences.

These verbs show action. There is someone who does / did the action. In grammar, a word or phrase that shows who or what does / did the action (stated by the verb) is called 'subject'. Note that non-living things can also be the 'subject' in a sentence. For example, 'The ball hit the window'. Here, 'The ball' is the subject.

A word or phrase that refers to the person, thing, etc. affected by the action of the verb is known as 'object'. The word in the coloured box in each of the following sentences is the object of that sentence.

- She began to devour the **termites** .
- Baby watched **mother** .
- Mama smelled **something** .
- They flash harsh **torchlights** .

Now, can you spot the subjects and objects in the following sentences ?

- * They search for our holes.
- * They kill us.
- * They will spend huge amount.
- * They hold meetings.