

SUMMARY

UNIT 1: GLIMPSES OF GREEN

1. Adventures in a Banyan Tree (Short Story)

Ruskin Bond

‘Adventures in a Banyan Tree’ is a short story written by the famous Indian writer Ruskin Bond.

The story tells us about the close relation of a young boy with nature. The boy is the narrator of the story. The locale of the story is his grandfather’s house in Dehra Dun, especially a very old banyantree with spreading branches grown in the yard of the house. The grandfather, being sixty-five years old could no longer climb the tree. So the tree was the boy’s, while the house and its premises were Grandfather’s domain. The wonderful tree provides the boy with variety of experiences. He used to sit in a platform half way up the tree and enjoy reading books. The boy made friendship with a small grey squirrel in the tree. One April afternoon, the boy witnessed a dreadful fight between a cobra and a mongoose. For watching the fight, a myna and a jungle crow came, and the crow lost its life in his try to participate. It was really a battle of champions. Finally, the mongoose killed the cobra and dragged it into the bushes. The grandfather was quite happy to know that the mongoose had been the winner. The grandfather had grown a white rat which was often taken to the tree by the boy. The grey squirrel and the white rat became friends. They would go off together on little excursions among the branches. When the boy went in search of grandmother’s lost knitting, he found three white, baby squirrels in the hole of the tree. The grandfather told the boy that the rat must be the father of the baby squirrels as the rats and the squirrels were related to each other.

2. The Snake and the Mirror (Short Story)

Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, the Sultan of stories, highlights the blend of all creatures and nature in his story ‘The Snake and the Mirror’. The story is a narrative. The narrator presents the story which was told to him by a Homeopath. The Homeopath has been portrayed as a person who can assess himself critically and humorously. He had just started a medical practice and his earnings were very meagre. He lived in a small rented room that was not electrified. It was full of rats. One hot summer night, the doctor returned home and settled on the chair to read a medical book. He looked into the mirror in front of him, admiring himself, planning to improve his appearance as he was an eligible handsome bachelor. He was planning to marry a fat and rich lady doctor.

Suddenly there was a sound of something falling behind him and he realised with a shock that it was a dangerous cobra. No sooner had he turned than the cobra wriggled over the back of the chair and landed on his shoulder. The doctor sat there like a stone statue, afraid to move as he witnessed death. He realized the presence of God, when he saw the snake crawled off to the mirror as it saw its reflection. The doctor got up silently and rushed out of the door to his friend's house. Next morning, when he returned, all his belongings had been robbed, leaving behind his dirty vest as a final insult. The homeopath revealed that in his real life, he married a thin and reedy person who could run like a sprinter.

UNIT 2: THE FRAMES

1. Project Tiger (Memoir)

Satyajit Ray

Project Tiger is a memoir by Satyajit Ray, one of the renowned Indian film makers. In this article, he speaks about the stress and strain in the making of films with animal actors. He states that no one can beat Hollywood in making films with animals. He praises the Hollywood film industry for the reverence shown to animal actors. He remembers some films he saw in his childhood. Films with the stunning performances of an Alsatian dog Rin-tin-tin and another dog Collie in Lassie series are mentioned. The animals in Hollywood films are well-trained and well-paid. Once he happened to see the shooting of a film twenty years ago in Disney studio, Hollywood in which a man acted as the stand-in for a large dog. He describes the brilliance of the world famous director Alfred Hitchcock in shooting with more than a hundred ravens in his film called 'Birds'. Satyajit Ray mentions about trained animal actors in Indian films. Ray also made use of a police dog 'Bhulo' in Pather Panchali. He says about his project 'Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne' for which he managed to get a trained tiger for shooting from Bharat Circus. He wanted to show his heroes and the wild animal together in the same shot. The trainer of the animal helped to shoot the scenes as Ray wished. But the strange behaviour of the tiger made it uneasy. Ray details his adventurous shooting experience with the real tiger and how he had to reshoot the scenes due to camera malfunction.

2. My Sister's Shoes (Screenplay)

Majid Majidi

'My Sisters Shoes' is the screenplay of the first four scenes of the film 'Children of Heaven'. 'Children of Heaven' is a 1997 Iranian family drama film written and directed by Majid Majidi. It tells the story of a brother and sister and their adventures over a pair of lost shoes. This part of the screenplay begins with the description of the scene from a cobbler's shop. Ali goes to the cobbler to get his sister's shoe repaired. On the way back home, he stopped at a vegetable shop to pick up vegetables. From there, a junk collector accidentally takes away the repaired shoes. Ali is afraid to tell his parents that he had lost his sister's shoes. His family is very poor and they could not afford to buy a new pair of shoes. While studying Ali and his sister Zahra communicate each other by writing in their note book. He convinces Zahra to share his pair of sneakers until they get a new pair of shoes.

UNIT 3: LORE OF VALUES

1. The Best Investment I Ever Made (Anecdote)

A J Cronin

In the story, 'The Best Investment I Ever Made', A J Cronin narrates how one's act of kindness and humanity transforms the life of people. The author himself is the narrator of the story. Based on the past and present life of the characters, this story has two parts. When the story begins, Cronin is on a travel on a liner. He noticed that somebody was watching him closely. Later that man and his wife approached Cronin and introduced themselves as Mr & Mrs. John. The couples were on their tour to visit settlement houses in New York as part of their charitable works. On further enquiry, the narrator understood that Mr. John was a solicitor and also the director of a charitable institution devoted to the delinquent youth. Mr. John expected that Cronin could recognize him by then. But the narrator failed to remember him so that Mr. John whispered something in his years. This brought the narrator back to an incident that happened twenty five years ago in their life. Here starts the flash back of the story that portrays the past life of Mr. John.

A J Cronin was a young doctor at that time in London. Once a police sergeant requested him to attend a suicide case of a young boy who lived in the house of a landlady. With the help of the sergeant and the land lady, the doctor saved him from death. That boy said his pathetic story to them. His name was John. He was a poor orphan boy. He was engaged in gambling and lost everything. He stole some money from the office where he was working. He lost that money too

in his last try to recoup. He was scared and attempted suicide. The sergeant, the landlady and the doctor decided to help the boy to start a new life. A J Cronin gave him the money to replace the amount that he had stolen from the office. Cronin forgot this incident in a short while. But now, with this unexpected meeting he realised that his timely help transformed the young man's life to a great social worker. It was really the best investment he ever made because it increased into immense profit in the form of kindness and charity.

2. The Danger of a Single Story (Speech)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

In 'The Danger of a Single Story' a 2009 TED speech, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes the danger of a single perspective towards something. Adichie uses the term 'Single Story' to describe the danger of only one perspective of a person, place or event. To know something as a whole we need to know it fully. She argues that such single stories create stereotypes. She explained it with some examples from her life. When she began write stories in her childhood, her characters were exactly the same as the characters she came across in the foreign books she read. Only after opening the window of African literature, she realised that people with the skin colour of chocolate and kinky hair could also exist in literature. In Adichie's home there was a house boy named Fide for domestic help. The only thing she was informed about Fide's family is that they were poor. She really was startled when they showed her a beautifully patterned basket of raffia. She never thought that any body in Fides' family could actually make something. The single story she had about them was their poverty. When she came to United States to pursue her studies in a university, her American room mate was shocked with her fluent English language. She didn't know that the official language of Nigeria was English. She, further, was disappointed when she happened to know that Adichie didn't have the collection of any 'tribal music'. The single story her room mate and many other Americans had about Africa is that it's a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals and incomprehensible people, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. Even her Professor had a single story about Africa. Once he told Adichie that her novel was not authentically African. He couldn't accept an African writer's novels with characters who were much like him; the characters who were educated or who could drive cars. Finally she stamps her views on single stories with the common notion that the writers are expected to have really unhappy childhoods to be successful. But the truth is that she had a very happy childhood, full of laughter and love, in a very close-knit family. She concludes her speech with an advice to get away from dangerous single stories by approaching

them with a universal outlook. The problem with the stereotypes is that they will give you an incomplete picture of something.

UNIT 4: FLIGHTS OF FANCY

1. The Scholarship Jacket (Short Story)

Marta Salinas

'The Scholarship Jacket' is written by Marta Salinas. The story is about a girl's dream and her determination to standing up for what's right. Martha, a fourteen year old girl, was a brilliant student and a vibrant young soul. She lived in Texas with her grandparents as her parents couldn't afford to raise eight children. She was in 8th grade in Small Texas school where a Scholarship Jacket was awarded to the class valedictorian during the graduation. Martha was in full hope to get the jacket as she had maintained the highest grades for eight years. For her, it was the symbol of her hardwork and perseverance. That year, all her hopes came crashing down. She overheard a conversation between two arguing teachers, about how the jacket should be given to Joann, since her father was part of the Board and also owned the only shop in town. Even more she happened to hear that the teacher mentioned her as 'Mexican'. The next day the principal called her in, telling her that the scholarship jacket was going to cost fifteen dollars, and if she couldn't pay for it, it would be given to the runner-up. Martha left school tearfully, and was even more heartbroken when her grandfather said she couldn't have the money. She knew her grandfather was right when he said that she shouldn't have to pay for something she earned. When the principal asked her decision she dejectedly told the Principal that she wouldn't pay for the award. She informed that the grandfather told her that if she had to pay for it, then it wouldn't be a scholarship jacket. She mentioned Joann's name also. The principal, feeling guilty told Martha that she would have the scholarship jacket. Martha felt great and she thanked Mr. Boon, who stood for her in the argument. This time too she was tearful, but with pleasure.

2. The Never Never Nest (One-Act Play)

Cedric Mount

'The Never Never Nest' is a modern drama which satirically portrays the luxurious life of a young couple Jack and Jill. Jack is presented as an easy going man who likes to purchase things

on instalments. Jill supports her husband's policy of 'buy now, pay later'. Their aunty Jane visits the newly married couple. She does not understand how the couple managed to buy the house and other possessions. On enquiry, she realises that their possessions are bought on instalments, and to pay the instalment amount the couple has borrowed money from an insurance company. She gets annoyed and warns the couple not to fall in trap. She says that cash down is her motto and advises them to follow that. She gives them a cheque for ten pounds and leaves disheartened. Jill, who realises the pathetic situation they face, sends the cheque for Dr.Martin to pay the last instalment on their baby. She feels that the baby is really theirs when they completed the payment of the doctor.

UNIT 5: RAY OF HOPE

1. Vanka (Short Story)

Anton Chekhov

'Vanka' is one of the most read Russian short stories written by Anton Chekhov. It tells the story of a nine year old distressed boy whose whole world is taken away from him, when orphaned and left under the care of a shoe maker. Konstantin Makarich, Grandfather of vanka, is a night watchman on the estate of the Zhivarev family. He was presented as a jovial, lively man of sixty-five years old. He sends VankaZukhov to Mosco to be apprenticed in the shop of Alyakhin after his mother's death. The story opens on Christmas eve with Vanka writing a letter to his grandfather. As he writes the letter, Vanka recalls his lively grandfather and his life at the village, before he was sent to the shoemaker. He writes about the harsh treatments of Alyakhin, his wife and the other apprentices there. Vanka promises to protect his grandfather and do the odd jobs in the village if grandfather comes and rescues him from the terrible life at the shoemaker's. His thoughts, as he writes, are again dominated by memories of Christmas at the Zhivarev household in the village. He remembers Olga Ignatyevna, a lively young women from the Zhivarev family who took good care of Vanka and educated him. The memories leave Vanka happy and tearful at the same time. After finishing the letter, writes the name of his grandfather, Konstantin Makarich on the envelope and without address or stamp. He puts the letter into the nearest post box. He goes back to sleep, happily dreaming about his grandfather sitting by the stove and reading the letter to the cooks.

2. The Castaway (Short Story)

Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore, the ever greatest genius of Indian literature, portrays the emotional turmoil of the youth and the stark reality of abandonment in the story 'The Castaway'. The story opens in a family setting where a young lady Kiran and her husband Sharat were engaged in a discussion on her illness and recovery. Kiran had fallen ill a few days ago and the family moved to a healthier environment for her complete recovery, but she hated the loneliness of her riverside village and wants to get back to her social life, much against the wishes of her husband and mother-in-law. The whole family loves Kiran very much and they feel anxious about her health. Meanwhile a teenage boy named Nilkanta reaches their house. He belongs to a theatre group and gets caught in a boatwreck in the storm-hit Ganges. He, however, manages to swim ashore to the safety and was welcomed to stay with the family members. Kiran is amused by his theatrical presentations every afternoon and Nilkanta had the happiest days in his life under the loving care of Kiran. Sharat and his mother like Nilkanta as he engages Kiran in laughter. But the boy soon turns out to be a reckless brat, making all in the family except Kiran regret their decision and develop a genuine dislike for the boy. Even the villagers are fed up with his misbehaviour. But Kiran loves him more and pampers him with delicious food and gifts.

Things take a turn for Nilkanta when Sharat's younger brother, Satish, comes to stay with them on vacation. He is of Kiran's age and Nilkanta loses the affection and attention he got from Kiran. This makes him angry and he decided to take vengeance on Satish. The family plans to return to their native village. Kiran gently advises him to return to his home. Nilkanta, planning to burn Satish into ashes, steals his precious inkstand. Everyone suspects Nilkanta, but Kiran alone protests them on behalf of the boy. Finding the inkstand accidentally in the box of Nilkanta breaks her heart. Realising that he will not be able to convince her of his true motivation, Nilkanta disappears from the village. This is one of the most famous short stories written by the versatile genius Rabindranath Tagore. The story beautifully captures kindness and mercy are explored throughout the story which also has the underlying themes of jealousy, honesty, shame and loyalty.

CHARACTERS

Nilkanta- A ship-wrecked orphan who worked with a band of travelling players and found shelter in a bungalow where he was taken good care of by the affectionate and sympathetic woman, Kiran.

Kiran- an affectionate and sympathetic woman, a jovial, amiable, caring and sensitive lady.

Sharat- Kiran's husband who surrenders unconditionally to her complaints; gradually develops dislike for and wants him to leave.

Satish- Sharat's younger brother who is of the same age as kiran. The story takes a twist with his arrival to spend the vacation with his brother and family, Kiran's mother-in-law- a woman who firmly believes in retaining the traditions of the family; initially welcomes Nilkanta, but slowly shows a disapproval of his antics and some how wants to clear the boy from her family.

Main Points in the Story

Nilkanta is initially seen as a boon by Sharath and his mother due to the changes in Kiran. She becomes more active in the presence of the boy, whom she showers with lots of love and affection as well as with choicest food and gifts. Although Kiran protests the family member's allegation that Nilkanta stole it, She accidentally discovers the grand ink-stand in his box.