



Chapter 4

The Story of Amrita

This is a story from long long ago. Jodhpur is located in Rajasthan. Near it lies a village called Khejadi. Why is the village named *Khejadi* ? The village got its name because many *Khejadi* trees grew there. The people of the village took great care of the plants, trees and animals. They used to say. “If trees are there, then only we can survive.”

Amrita’s Friends

Amrita would get up early every morning and greet her friends, the trees. She would choose a special tree for the day and put her arms around the tree trunk and whisper, “Friend, you are strong and beautiful. You care for us, I love you very much. Make me also like you.”



For the teacher : Encourage children to locate Rajasthan on the map of India.



Like Amrita, other children also had their special trees. They would play for hours in the shade of the trees.

- Is there a place near your house, school or along the road side, where trees have been planted ?
- Why do we plant trees ?

- Have you seen anyone watering plants ? Who does this ?

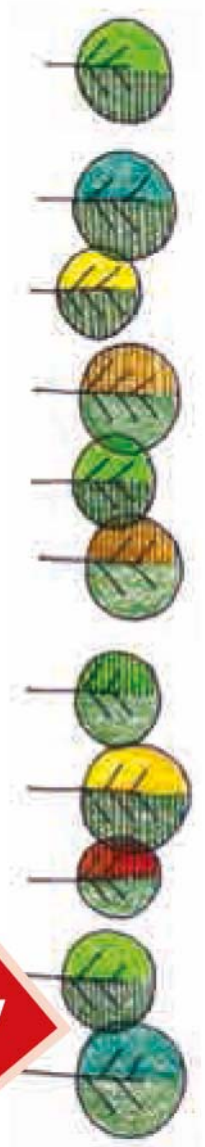
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- Have you seen fruits on any of the tree ? Who eats these fruits ?

- Lalita feels that grass and small plants growing near her school wall have not been planted by anyone. Do you know of any place where grass, small plants or trees are growing on their own without being planted by anyone ?
- Why do these trees grow here ? What do you feel ?

Trees in Danger :

Time went by.
Amrita was now grown up.
One day she went to greet
her trees. She saw some
strangers there. They had
axes with them. They said
that the King had sent them
to cut the trees for wood.
The wood was needed for
building the king's palace.





Amrita was shocked. She went to the tree that the men were about to cut. She put her arms around the tree and hugged it tightly. The men shouted and threatened her, but Amrita did not let go the tree. The King's men had to follow his order. They had to cut the tree. One seeing this, Amrita's daughters and hundered of villagers, old and young hugged the trees to protect them. Many people including Amrita and her daughters died to save the trees.

When the king heard of this, he could not believe that people gave up their life for the trees. He visited the village himself. There he saw the deep feeling of the villagers towards trees and animals.

- Do you remember what the elders of this village used to say ?
- Do you think we could survive if there were no trees and no animals ? Discuss this in your class.



The Village is protected

The villagers' strong feelings for trees affected the king greatly. He ordered that from then on, no tree would be cut and no animal would be harmed in that area. Even today, almost three hundred years passed, the people of this area, called Bishnois, continue to protect plants and animals. Even though in the



middle of the desert, the area is green and animals roam about freely and without any fear.



Write about any one tree :

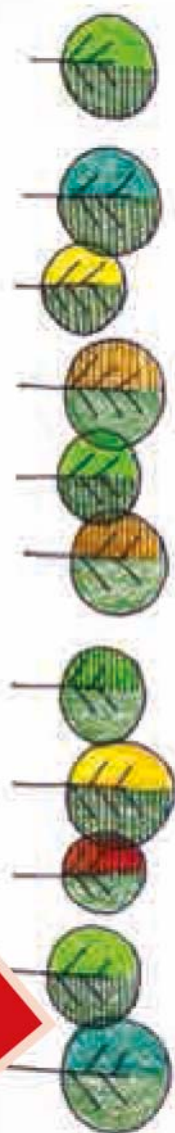
- Name of the tree.

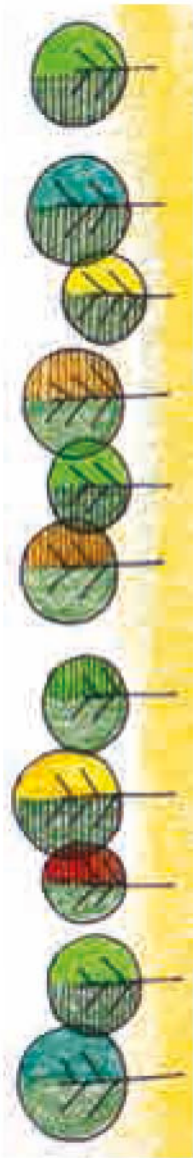
- Does the tree have flowers ? Which colour ?

- Do the flowers remain on the tree through out the year ?

- In which month do their leaves fall ?

- Do fruits grow on the tree ? Write their names.





- In which month do the trees have fruits ?

- Have you eaten these fruits ? How do they taste ?



Discuss :

- Why do people hunt ?
- There are rules against hunting of some animals. People can be punished for hunting. Why are such punishments imposed ?

Talk to your grandparents and find out :

- Which birds did they see around them when they were of your age ?

- Has the number of some of these birds become less ?

- Are there some birds or animals which they cannot see any more now ?

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- Shanti's grandfather told her that when he was a small child he saw more birds like sparrows and *mynah* then he sees today. Can you tell the reason why their numbers have become less ?

The *Khejadi* tree was the most common tree that grew in Amrita's village. Which kind of trees can you see the most in your area ? Name two such trees.

- Find out more about these trees from your elders.

The *Khejadi* tree is found mainly in desert areas. It can grow without much water. Its bark is used for making medicine. People cook and eat its fruits (beans). Its wood is such that it will not be affected by insects. Animals in this area eat the leaves of the *Khejadi* and children like you, play in its shade.



For the teacher : Encourage children to ask their elders about animals and insects. Discuss with the children about the reducing number of birds due to environmental changes.

