



The Story of the Hills

READ AND ENJOY



I heard so much about Basaintgarh and its environs and the denizens of that area that I decided to go and spend my summer vacation there. When I reached Basaintgarh I felt as if I had been dropped in a bucket of cold water after having been picked out of a cauldron of boiling oil. All around there were green maize fields with farmers working in them and the sweet sound of sohadis floated in now and then, carried by the blowing breeze.

Deodar and Partal trees on the high hill ranges swayed in the breeze like young boys dancing merrily.

The next day news spread all around that a man from the city had come. It is my nature that I cannot sit still at one place. I came out of the forest rest-house to look for a suitable spot where I could sit and watch the spectacle of the mountains and if I got into the mood, to write something.

I found a spot. Under a deodar, there was green grass (no need to spread a duree), and from there, one could have a lovely view of the river Ujh. I looked at the bottle green clear water and could not take my eyes off it. A little further down, the water of the river struck against a rock; it looked like someone foaming at the mouth in a frenzy of rage. Flakes of clouds in the blue sky looked like bits of cotton wool.

Close to my chosen spot, I noticed a girl of very tender age, grazing the cattle. Something was it the cool breeze? sent me dozing.

After a spell of dozing, I was startled to find the girl sitting close to me.

Seeing me sit up with a start, she got a bit embarrassed and pulling the end of her dupatta on her head, she said, “I have been watching you all these days and wondering who you are. The village folk told me strange stories about you. I also thought you would be like one of those fellows. That’s why when I saw you for the



first time, I hid behind the tree. I thought that I would break your head with a stick if you advanced towards me.”

“But why?” I asked, surprisingly.

She felt a little awkward, “I had heard that city people who come here are selfish and since you are also from the city I thought But when I saw that you remain lost in yourself or walking around or writing, I thought that you are some.....”

“Madcap?” I asked. Her already large eyes became even larger. She did not say anything, but just nodded in affirmation. “But who are you?”

“A man from the city.”

“That I can see. But what is it that your are writing?”

“Whatever comes to my mind.”

She didn’t seem to like this answer. She asked again, “What have you written on that piece of paper?”

“This? This is a story which I have written.”

“Can you read it out to me?”

I smiled to myself. A little while ago she was ready to break my head. And now? She is so full of talk. I did not tell her, though, what passed through my mind.

I began to read, “There is the custom of dohri in the hilly regions. Ten years had passed since Santoo Gaddi’s wife died. He could get another wife only if he gave a girl from his family into the family of his in-laws to be. But Santoo had no one except Patoo, his little niece. And who would inherit and take care of all his land and belongings after him? He had kept a woman but she had also gone back to her people. Without a son, there would be no one after his death, to keep the name of his family going. I have to find a husband for Patoo, he thought. If not today, then tomorrow and if she had to be married off one day, then why not today? My home will become full of life again. Mast Ram, the village lambardar is in need of



a wife and his sister is in need of a husband. Mast Ram is middle-aged, about forty and my niece Patoo is about ten. But what does it matter? Girls grow up pretty fast. Mast Ram has asthma, no doubt. But then, who lives for ever? All of us have to go one day. After Mast Ram goes, Patoo too may find another husband.

“If a lot of thinking helps in the success of some ventures, it can also mess up some. Therefore, why should I rack my brains too much? The decision was made. A bride came home, another was dispatched, Santoo got a wife and Patoo got her own household to look after. What did little Patoo know that her household would be her prison? What did she know of the world and of life? His asthma had assumed such an advanced stage that he looked to be in the last leg of his journey. Patoo wondered what fate had kept in store for her. There were other girls of the village, why was she alone so ill-starred? Should she also desert her husband and marry someone else, like the other girls? She would have perhaps reconciled herself to her fate, had she not come across a young man that had once again kindled in her desire to live happily. Patoo was in a fix – ‘O God, tell me what to do? Where should I go?’”

I stopped reading. “Then?” She asked with surprise. Without lifting my head, I replied, “I have written only this far.”

“O man!” She said in a painful voice. When I looked up I found her eyes wet but I didn’t understand why. “O man! Are you a jotisi?”

Though knowing it was not proper to laugh, I could not check myself. “What makes you think so?” I asked.

“You have penned my story.”

I understood in a flash the tale of her tears. “Your story?” I didn’t want to believe it.

“Yes,” and she got up, and like one lost, picked up her staff, dusted her clothes and ran out from there, muttering. “This is my story, O man, this is my story,” her voice echoed. And each hill was saying, “This is my story, O man, this is my story!”

(Nilamber Dev Sharma)

**Glossary**

| | | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| <i>denizens</i> | : | inhabitants, people who live in a particular area |
| <i>sohadis</i> | : | folk song sung by farmers at the time of planting paddy saplings |
| <i>deodar</i> | : | a cedar tree |
| <i>partal</i> | : | a fir tree |
| <i>spectacle</i> | : | a striking sight |
| <i>duree</i> | : | thickly woven cotton spread |
| <i>dozing</i> | : | sleep lightly; be half sleep |
| <i>startled</i> | : | surprised |
| <i>madcap</i> | : | an impulsive person |
| <i>affirmation</i> | : | approval |
| <i>dohri</i> | : | reciprocal marriage; barter-type marriage |
| <i>lambardar</i> | : | village chief |
| <i>asthma</i> | : | a respiratory disease making a person breathe with an audible sound |
| <i>jotisi</i> | : | a soothsayer: one who foretells the future |

THINKING ABOUT THE TEXT**Answer the following questions:**

1. Where does the writer spend his summer vacation? How does he find the place?
2. How does the writer describe the beauty of the place?
3. Whom does the writer meet? What do they talk about?



4. What is the name of the custom of a type of marriage mentioned in the story? What type of custom is it?
5. What makes the little girl weep at the end of the story? What does she go on saying?

LANGUAGE WORK

I Rearrange the jumbled letters to make them meaningful. The words are in the story.

d i s a h o s

r d d o e a

e d o z

i o h r d

i r e b d

n a n s t e g

e a r s t

m r r o t o w o

r e t i s s

II. Write down the meanings of the following phrases:

Come across

Pick up

Pen my story

Marry off

Full of time

Be in a fix

GRAMMAR WORK

I. Study this sentence:

– When the other wives of the king heard of this, they felt very jealous.

This sentence consists of two parts: one, ‘When the other wives heard of this’ and two, ‘they felt very jealous.’ As you can see, the second part of the sentence



gives a complete meaning, therefore, it is called an **independent clause**. The first part depends on the second part for the completion of its meaning and is therefore called the **dependent clause**. Such sentences where one is an independent clause and the other is dependent on another one, are called **complex sentences**. They are different from compound sentences that you read about in an earlier lesson.

Some of the words that connect the two clauses together are: **wh-words, that, if or whether, unless, until** and many others that you will learn later. These can be used in the beginning or in the middle of the sentences.

Now join the following pairs of clauses together using the connectives given in the bracket.

- (A) i. The king inspected the rooms of his six soldiers.
ii. The king was very pleased with them. (when)

When the king inspected the rooms of his six soldiers, he was very pleased with them.

- (B) i. The crow brought a herb from the jungle.
ii. The crow gave the herb to the girl. (which)

- (C) i. The crow promised the girl.
ii. The crow would get a herb. (that)

- (D) i. I'll wait here.
ii. You come back. (until)

- (E) i. You speak slowly.
ii. I can understand. (if)

- (F) i. I told him.
ii. I had finished my work. (that)

**II. Fill in the blanks with **what/which/who**:**

1. is your name?
2. You can have an ice cream or a coke.....you want?
3.is older, you or your brother?
4.is your favourite leader?
5.colour is your umbrella. Mine is red.
6.hotel did you stay at in Delhi?

**LET'S TALK**

Did you like the above story? What are your feelings about the little girl?

**LET'S WRITE**

The following jumbled sentences make up a complete story. Re-arrange them properly.

- i. Saying these words the wolf attacked the lamb and ate it.
- ii. A hungry wolf reached there.
- iii. Now the wolf said, "Your father must have abused me then."
- iv. Once upon a time a lamb was drinking water near the bank of a river.
- v. The lamb replied respectfully, "Sir, the water is flowing down from your side. How can I make it muddy?"
- vi. "Why are you muddying the water?" asked the wolf.
- vii. The wolf then said, "Why did you abuse me last year?"
- viii. On seeing the lamb, his mouth watered. He wanted to kill the lamb.
- ix. The lamb replied, "But I was not born last year."



DO IT YOURSELF

Folk tales make interesting reading. Read a folk tale from Kashmir or Ladakh and note down what similarities and/or differences it has from the above folk tale from Jammu.