

CHAPTER - IX

The Passive

Mark these sentences from your textbook for class IX and their changed forms :

- 1.a. After five years I came back home and **was met** by her at the station.
2.a. The unique attempt **was made** (by Janaki) on 28 July 1992.
1.b. After five years I came back home and **she met me** at the station.
2.b. Janaki made this unique attempt on 28 July 1992.

In 1a, “**I was met by her**” has been changed to “**she met me**” in 1b.

The attempt was made (by Janaki) in 2a has been changed to “**Janaki made the attempt**” in 2b.

1b and 2b are said to be in active voice whereas 1a and 2a are said to be in the **passive voice**.

- (i) The object of the active sentence is used as the subject of the passive sentence. Me (1b) and the unique attempt (2b) became subjects of 1(a) and 2(a) respectively.
- (ii) The *verb* in the active sentence is changed into its appropriate passive form i.e. be + en - form of the main verb.
- (iii) The *by + the agent* phrase may be left out, depending on the situation in which the passive is used.

Note that the forms of the ‘be’ verb are : *is / am / are / was / were / be / being / been*
Also remember that when the past participle form of a verb has an adjectival meaning referring to a state, it is not in the passive form. So sentences like ‘He was worried to hear of his failure’, ‘she was married when I last saw her in a wedding.’ etc are not passive sentences.

(B) Use of the Passive in different patterns of sentences :

(i) Present Simple :

- Badminton *is played* here every afternoon.
- New warm clothes *are given* to the children every winter.

Mark the *be* auxiliaries in present tense followed by main verbs in *–en form*.

(ii) Past Simple :

- My purse was stolen yesterday.
- Sweets were distributed among the school children.

Here *was / were + en - form* of the verb has been used in the passive.

(iii) Present Progressive :

- Football is being played in this playground.
- The sum is being worked out on the black board.

Note that the active forms of these sentences are respectively (i) *The Children / People are playing football in this play ground.* (ii) *The teacher is working out the sum on the black board.* Here *are playing* and *is working out* have been changed into *is being played* and *is being worked out* in the passive because of their singular subjects. In other words, *be auxiliary + ing - form* of the verb in the active becomes *be auxiliary + being + past participle form* of the main verb. Mark that the tense of the *be* auxiliary in both active and passive sentences is the same.

(iv) Past Progressive :

- The walls of my room were being painted green.
- A chair was being made for me.

Here *were painting* has been changed into *were being painted* and *was making* verb into *was being made*.

(v) Present Perfect :

- The room has been decorated.
- Flowers have been collected for the puja.

Here *has / have decorated* has been changed into *has / have been decorated*.

(vi) Past Perfect :

- The room looked beautiful. It had been nicely decorated.
- Roofs of houses had been blown off in the storm.

Here **had decorated / had blown off** has been changed into 'had been decorated / had been blown off'.

Present and past perfect progressive verbs cannot be passivized. Why ?

(vii) Passive with Modals :

- The letter will be typed soon.
- The work should be completed by 5 p.m. to-day.

Notice that '**will type**' and 'should complete' have been changed into '*will be typed*' and '**should be completed**' respectively.

The other modals such as shall / would / must / may / might / can / could / ought to / needn't / used to etc used in the active can be used in the passive with modals + be + past participle form of the main verbs.

(viii) Passives with get / have :

- He got his hair cut.
- They had their house painted yellow.

Remember we use such sentences in very limited situations only in informal English.

(ix) The Passive used with a Complement :

Active : The students have selected Sushama Rout monitor of the class.

Passive : Sushama Rout has been selected monitor of the class.

Notice that the object complement in the active becomes subject complement in the passive.

(x) Passive form of verbs having two objects :

1. Father gave the son fifty rupees.
→ The son was given fifty rupees.
2. Father gave fifty rupees to the son.
→ Fifty rupees was given to the son.

You must have observed that the nearest object becomes the subject in the passive sentence. Ditransitive verbs like give, ask, bring, take, tell, etc. can be passivized in this way.

(xi) Passives with the verbs of reporting :

Active : People say that elephants have good memories.

Passive : It is said that elephants have good memories.

or Elephants are said to have good memories.

Active : People say that he was an honest officer.

Passive : It is said that he was an honest officer.

or He is said to have been an honest officer.

This is because in the first example both the main clause and the 'that - clause' are in the same tense form (present simple) while in the second example the main clause has the present simple tense but the 'that' clause is in the past simple tense.

(xii) Passives with that - clause / wh - clause as the subject :

That the earth moves round the sun is believed by everybody.

But such sentences are not commonly used by the people. They prefer to use this idea in the sentence '*it is believed that the earth moves round the sun*' making the that - clause an opposition to the pronoun 'it'.

(xiii) The Passive with to - infinitive / ing - form of the verb :

Active : The teacher made him stand up.

Passive : He was made to stand up.

Active : I saw him climbing the ladder.

Passive : He was seen climbing the ladder.

We see that bare infinitives in the active become to - infinitive in the passive. The main verbs used in this way are **let, hear, see, have, watch, make** etc.

(xiv) We use either an active infinitive or a passive infinitive when the subject of the sentence is 'there'.

– There are a lot of windows to paint / to be painted.

– There is some home work to do to be done.

(xv) Sentences in the active form with passive meanings :

- _ These clothes need washing.
- = These clothes need to be washed.
- The room requires tidying.
- = The room requires to be tidied.

Activity - 1

Verbs in some of the following sentences are *active*, in some *passive*. Identify them and then write **A** for active sentences and **(P)** for the passive ones in the box given against each sentence.

- (i) Prakash killed a snake with a stick.
- (ii) Mother has made a sweet cake for me.
- (iii) Mr Patnaik has been selected President of the Congress Party.
- (iv) R.N. Tagore wrote the Gitanjali.
- (v) Why was he beaten ?
- (vi) He must have finished his work by now.

Activity - 2

Put the verb in brackets into the correct passive form :

- (i) A car will (buy) next year if the savings increase.
- (ii) Thousands of people (kill) in the earthquake in Japan last year.
- (iii) What cannot (cure) must (endure).
- (iv) He should (punish) for telling a lie.
- (v) English (speak) all over the world.
- (vi) The road (repair) when I saw it last year.
- (vii) The accident might (cause) due to the carelessness of the driver.
- (viii) People (deny) justice these days.
- (ix) His grandfather (say) to have been a landlord.
- (x) I like (leave) alone.

Activity - 3

Hereunder is a letter written by a father to his son. Rewrite it changing the verbs in brackets into their appropriate forms :

Buxibazar

Cuttack

2nd January, 2013

Rakesh

I understand that the Annual Day function of your school is going to (hold) on your school premises this evening. I (tell) that the Governor of our state has (invite) to inaugurate the function and to give away the prizes to the winners. I know that you secured the first position in your class in the last annual examination and also came first in the debate and essay competitions which (held) at your school. You would certainly (awarded) some prizes and medals for your merit and proficiency I would have been very glad to see you receive prizes from the Governor if I (invite) to the function and (be) present there at such happy moments.

However, enjoy yourself and stay happy at the function.

More when we meet.

Lots of love and good wishes.

Father.

Activity - 4

The following is a part of a newspaper report. Use the verbs supplied in brackets in their appropriate forms :

Fifty houses in the Khandagiri Slum area in Bhubaneswar (burn) to ashes last Sunday. Ten Children and six women (burn) alive. All the belongings of the people (completely destroy) in the fire. About two hundred people (render) homeless and eighty people (hospitalise) for treatment of their injury (cause) in the fire. How the houses first caught fire (still shroud) in mystery. Government's assistance for rehabilitation of these affected people (badly need) at this hour.

We have discussed declarative sentences in their active forms are changed in their equivalent passive forms. Let's now see how interrogative sentences in their **active forms** are changed into the **passive**.

Consider the following sentences :

Active : Did the hunter kill the bird yesterday ?

First we have to change it into a declarative sentence.

Step - I : The hunter did kill the bird yesterday.

Step - II : The hunter killed the bird yesterday. (did kill = killed)

Step - III : The bird (using the object of the active sentence as the subject of the passive)

Step - IV : The bird was killed (changing the active verb 'killed' into its passive form 'was killed')

Step - V : The bird was killed yesterday.

(Now we have to decide whether we would use the 'by + the agent' phrase i.e. 'by + the hunter' here or not. Since it is not necessary to use the 'by + the agent' phrase in such a situation, we needn't use it.

Step - VI : Was the bird killed yesterday ?

(changing into the question form)

Let's consider how some other types of interrogative sentences are changed into their corresponding passive forms.

Example - 1 : Who wrote this book ?

Step - I : Somebody wrote this book

(changing the sentence into a declarative one in the active form)

Step - II : This book

(using the object of the active sentence as the subject of the passive)

Step - III : This book was written

(changing the active verb 'wrote' into the passive form)

- Step - IV** : This book was written by somebody
(using the by + the agent phrase in the end position)
- Step - V** : This book was written by whom / who.
(Replacing somebody by whom / who)
- Step - VI** : By whom was this book written ?
or Who was the book written by ?
(changing the sentence into the interrogative form)

Example - 2

- Active** : How did you work out that sum ?
Passive : How was that sum worked out ?

Example - 3

- Active** : Why did he beat his servant ?
Passive : Why was his servant beaten ?

Example - 4

- Active** : When did he return the book to the library ?
Passive : When was the book returned to the library ?

Example - 5

- Active** : Where did he find it ?
Passive : Where was it found ?

Restrictions on the use of the passive :

We use the passive when we are more interested in the action that is performed than in the agent that performs the action. But there are certain restrictions in its use.

The restrictions are :

- (a) Not all active verbs can have passive forms.

Example :

(i) Active : **I have a car** (grammatical). But '**A car is had by me**' (which is wrongly thought to be its passive form) is ungrammatical and unacceptable. So 'have' (as a main verb meaning to possess), to eat, to take, to experience, to suffer etc cannot be passivised.

(b) Similarly passive sentences like :

- * I am resembled by my father.
- * Courage is lacked by him.
- * I am well fitted by these shoes.
- * The country was fled by him.

are not acceptable.

So the active verbs like *resemble, lack, fit, suit, flee, hold, let, owe, like, possess* etc. cannot be passivised.

(c) Though the following underlined verbs occur with objects, they have no corresponding passive forms :

- Rama Chandra married Sita.
- Two and three make five.
- Children like chocolates.
- I can read Bengali.
- Babies drink milk.
- The monkey climbed the tree.
- We eat rice.
- Mother loves her children.

The passive forms of these sentences will be absurd and unnatural. So they are not acceptable.

(C) Reflexives as the subjects of passive constructions are unacceptable although their use as objects in active sentences is grammatically correct.

Example :

- * 'Himself was hurt'
- * 'Itself was opened'
- * 'Herself was seen in the mirror'

are all ungrammatical and unacceptable sentences.

- (D) Reciprocal pronouns like each other and one another cannot be used as the subject of a passive construction.

- * Each other was helped by Prakash and Robin.
- * One another was loved by the children.

are ungrammatical and unacceptable sentences.

But their use in active sentences like

'Prakash and Robin helped each other' and 'The children loved one another' are grammatically correct.

- (E) Intransitive and link verbs have no passive forms.

So sentences like the following have no passive forms.

- This baby sleeps ten hours a day.
- The pen costs ten rupees .
- The plane took off at 2 p.m.
- The meeting lasted two hours.
- The stick measures one metre.
- He weighs sixty kilogram.

(The phrasal verb 'took off' is intransitive.)

Such other intransitive and link verbs cannot be passivised.

- (F) Imperative verbs cannot normally be passivised.

However, imperative sentences with the verb 'let' can have passive forms.

So '*Let the door be shut*' cannot be accepted as the passive equivalent of 'Shut the door'. The sentence '*Let the door be shut.*' loses the force of the command contained in the sentence '*Shut the door*'. Moreover, in 'Shut the

door'. the order (command) is directed at a person asking him / her to do the work while *Let the door be shut*, simply offers a suggestion for the work to be done by anybody. So both of these sentences are not equivalent to each other in meaning.

- (G) There are some verbs which are used only in the passive. Mark their use in the following sentences.

Example :

- _ Gandhiji was born in 1869.
- He was drowned in the river.

- (H) Intransitive phrasal verbs cannot be passivised, but transitive phrasal verbs can have passive forms.

Example :

- All the lights in the town went out.
- The car broke down on the way.

Here *went out* and *broke down* are intransitive phrasal verbs But transitive phrasal verbs like, *cut down*, *called off*, *run over* etc. can be used in passive sentences.

Example :

'The tree was cut down'. 'The strike was called off' and
'The owl was run over by a truck- are all acceptable sentences.

(1) Active infinitives with passive meanings :

Example :

- _ You are not to blame. (Active)
- = You are not to be blamed. (Passive)
- There is a house to let. (Active)
- = There is a house to be let. (Passive)

There are some such active infinitives which have passive meanings.

(5) Use of the *by + the agent* phrase in the passive :

We have seen that the use of the *by + the agent* phrase in most passive sentences is not necessary. But there are a few situations where the *by + the agent* phrase is used in passive sentences because the speaker here, while talking about the action, wants to provide additional information about the doer (agent) of the action.

- (a) We use the *by – phrase* in the passive when the agent is an important person - a renowned scientist, a poet or a writer, a painter or an artist, an inventor or a discoverer.

Example :

- The Ramayan was written by Valmiki.
- Radio was invented by Marconi.
- The Monalisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci.

- (b) We use the *by – phrase* in the passive when the agent is an indefinite person or thing and the speaker thinks it will provide the readers with new information.

Example :

- While the wood-cutter was passing through the forest, he was suddenly killed by a tiger.
- Although the problem was very difficult, it was solved by a child.

Here ‘a tiger’ and ‘a child’ are indefinite and they provide the readers with new information.

- (c) We use the ‘by-phrase’ in passive sentences when the agent is an inanimate or non-living thing or object and is regarded as something unusual or unexpected.

Example :

- The traffic in our city is manned by electrical devices.
- This hotel is run by a robot.

In these situations we would not expect non-living agents to act like living beings, so the agent in each sentence is thought to be unusual or unexpected.

We have also seen that most passive sentences are without the *by*-phrase. Therefore we use passives in situations where it is not necessary to mention the agent.

- (d) Let's now identify some such situations where the passive is used without the *by* + *phrase*.

Example :

- Stars were created millions of years ago.
- My purse has been stolen.

- (ii) We use the passive without the *by* – *phrase* when we are not interested in the agent :

Example :

- My dog has been killed.
- This car is made in India.

- (iii) The *by* – *phrase* is not used in the passive when the speaker thinks that the agent is obvious or commonly known :

Example :

- The thief was arrested.
- The patient was admitted into a hospital.
- Grapes are grown in Hyderabad.

- (iv) The passive is used without the *by* – *phrase* when the speaker knows who / what the agent is, but does not want to mention him / it for some reason.

Example :

- All the biscuits have been eaten up.
- Mistakes were made in the totalling of marks.

- (v) We use the passive without the *by* – *phrase* :

Example :

- It is hoped (that) he will flourish in his business.
- It is believed that the sun is a ball of fire.

- (vi) We use passive sentences in official, legal, scientific and newspaper writings and in public notices :

Example :

- The peon was punished for his late attendance in the office. (official)
- The criminal was at last granted bail. (legal)
- Dust particles are found in the air. (scientific)
- Smoking is prohibited here. (public notice)
- One thousand people are reported to have been killed in the tsunami in Japan (newspaper).

It is now clear that the passive is usually used in scientific, legal and official situations. We should not blindly change every active verb into a passive one. The passive is used when a context demands it. It is therefore, necessary to study the context first to determine whether or not a passive is needed.

Activity - 5

Write a passive sentence for each of the following situations, using the active verb supplied in brackets. The first one has been done for you.

- Example :** (i) My grandfather did not die. (murder)

He was murdered.

- (ii) People say he resigned his job, but he didn't. (sack)
- (iii) He did not leave the examination hall. (ask to leave)
- (iv) The shop did not open. (close down)
- (v) He didn't do his homework yesterday. (punish)
- (vi) He could not come out of water. (drown)
- (vii) My request was not entertained. (turn down)
- (viii) The doctor didn't come in time. People waited for him. (keep)

Activity - 6

Study the following situations and write a passive sentence for each of them.
The first one has been done for you.

1. You want to talk about the Odia Bhagabat, You would like to mention its author Jagannath Das.

Answer: The Oriya Bhagabat was written by Jagannath Das.

2. You would like to talk about the prize your friend Mohan won. You would also like to mention your friend's name.
3. You have seen one of your friends breaking a chair. You have to report the matter to your class teacher without disclosing your friend's name.
4. Your teacher asks you to write an essay in a week's time. You are not sure of yourself. You have to tell your teacher that you will finish it in time. But you don't want to take a risk.
5. You want to talk about the delicious cakes your villagers make during the Raja festival every year. You are at this moment not interested in the villagers.
6. You don't know who created the earth long ago. You want to talk about its creation.
7. You want to tell your best friend that your other friends will celebrate his birthday this year. You don't want to say who they are.

Activity - 7

Use the verbs given in brackets in the following sentences in the correct form :

- (i) Originally, this novel (write) in Hindi, but it (translate) into odia in 1990.
- (ii) Cheese (make) from milk.
- (iii) An accident occurred here this afternoon. Somebody called an ambulance, but as nobody (injure), the ambulance (not require).
- (iv) The office is in a mess. The telephone (never answer), no proper records (keep) and no work (do).

- (v) A tree is lying across the road. It (blow down) in the storm.
- (vi) The letter (post) a week ago and it reached me yesterday.
- (viii) The child playing on the road (run over) by a truck.

Activity - 8

The following are the instructions given for making tea using tea bags. Make them carefully and write the process in the passive form as per the instructions given : The first one has been done for you.

The Instructions are :

1. Use one tea bag to make each cup of tea.
2. Place the required number of tea bags in the kettle.
3. Add boiling water as per the requirement.
4. Stir the water, but make sure that the tea bags do not open.
5. Allow the tea to stand for five minutes.
6. Pour the tea into cups.
7. Add sugar and milk to taste.

How tea is made, using tea-bags :

1. One tea-bag is used for making each cup of tea.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

