

GILLU

Mahadevi Verma

MAHADEVI VERMA (1907-1987) was a leading poetess of the Chayavadi School of poetry in Hindi. She was also a well-known storywriter and editor of the famous Hindi weekly "Chand". Some of her important works include Deep Shikha; Yama, Nihar (Poetry) Shrinkhla ki Kadiyan, Mera Pariwar. She was the recipient of Mangla Prasad Prize, Bharat Bharti Award and the Jnanpith Award along with Padma Bhushan. She was elected Fellow of the Sahitya Akademy.



A. Work in small groups and discuss the following:

1. Do you like stories?
2. Why do you like stories?
3. Tell any story on love between man and animal.

GILLU

Unexpectedly, one morning, when I entered the verandah from the room, I saw two crows playfully poking their beaks at the flowerpots, as if engaged in the game of hide and seek.

Suddenly, my assiduous critique of this mythical tale of the crow was intercepted by my gaze that fell on this tiny being, lying hidden in the

gap at the junction of the pot with the wall. Moving closer, I saw that it was a tiny baby squirrel that must have accidentally fallen down from a nest and was now being considered by the crows to be an easy prey. Having sustained two wounds due to the assault by the pair of crows was enough for this tiny being and he was now motionless, clinging to the pot.

Everyone remarked that as he would not survive after having been so assaulted by the crows, he be left alone. But, my mind refused to accede to their views, and therefore, I gently lifted him up and brought him to my room, and after wiping the blood from his wounds with cotton wool, applied Penicillin ointment.

I tried to feed him by somehow putting a thin cotton wool wick, dipped in milk to his mouth, but he was unable to open his mouth and the drops of milk only slid down from both sides. Only after several hours of tending could I manage to pour one drop of water in his mouth. But, on the third day he became so much better and assured that he would use his two tiny claws to hold my finger and gaze all around with his blue, glass-beads-like eyes. And in three-four months, he astonished everyone with his smooth fur, bushy tail and naughty, refulgent eyes.

A transformation from common to proper noun followed and we started calling him, Gillu! I hung a light-weight flower basket lined with cotton wool on the window with the help of a wire. For two years, this was Gillu's abode. All were pleasantly astonished at his antics and intellect.

When I would sit down to write, he would be seized by such an acute desire to attract my attention that he devised a novel way of doing it. He would venture close to my feet, go swiftly up the curtains and descend with the same breakneck speed. This sequence would continue till the time I got up to catch him. On some occasions, I used to hold

Gillu and put his tiny body in a long envelope. Sometimes, he would continue to stand on the table leaning against the wall in such an amazing condition for hours, and watch my activities with his radiant eyes.

B.1. Answer the following questions briefly:

- 1. How did 'Gillu' sustain wounds?**
- 2. Who started calling the tiny baby Squirrel as Gillu?**
- 3. Which ointment was applied on the wounds of the tiny baby squirrel?**
- 4. What does the transformation from the common to the proper noun imply? What difference does a name make?**

When hungry, he would inform me by twittering 'chik-chik, and after having received some biscuits or Kaju. I wondered with the twittering of chik-chik, what transpired between him and the other squirrels that were often spotted near the wire-meshed window! Seeing Gillu sitting near the window and affectionately peering at the world outside, made me realise that it was necessary to set him free.

By removing some nails, I made a small opening in a corner of the wire-mesh and, on being able to go out from this opening Gillu was thrilled to be liberated.

Due to my important papers and letters, my room used to remain locked in my absence. The moment the room was opened on my return from college and I stepped in, Gillu would rush on to me and climb up and down from my head to toe. Since then, this had become a regular practice. On my leaving the room, Gillu would also make an exit through the wire-mesh opening of the window. He would spend the whole day

with his lot, jumping and prancing up and down the branches.

I have several pet animals and birds and all of them are quite fond of me, but I don't remember any of them daring to eat from my plate.

Gillu was an exception. The moment I would reach the dining-room, he would emerge from the window, cross over the courtyard wall and the verandah, reach the table and would want to sit in my plate. With great difficulty, I taught him to sit close to my plate. His favourite food was Kaju and when not available for several days, he would refuse other food items and throw them down from the swing.

Around that time, being injured in a motor car accident, I had to spend some days in the hospital. Those days, whenever my room was opened, Gillu would rush down from his swing, but on seeing somebody else, he would, with the same alacrity, scuttle back to sit in his nest. Everyone would offer him Kaju, but when I cleaned up his swing on my return from the hospital, I discovered it was full of Kaju, which only showed how little he was eating his favourite food those days! During the course of my indisposition, he would sit near my head on my pillow and gently stroke my forehead and hair, and his moving away was like the going away of a nurse or attendant!

When I used to work during summer afternoons, Gillu would abstain from going outside or sitting in his swing. To keep himself close to me and also to tackle the summer heat, he had discovered a totally new method. He would lie prostrate on the surahi kept near me and thus remain cool and also close to me!

Squirrels have a life span of barely two years; as such, Gillu's lease of life finally came to an end. For the whole day, he neither ate nor ventured out. In the night, even with the pain of going away, he came to my bed from the swing, and clutched the same finger with his icy claws, which he had clung to, in his near death-like state during his natal days.

The claws were getting so cold that I switched on the heater and tried to give him some warmth. But, as the first ray of the morning touched him, he departed.

His swing was taken off the hook and the opening made in the wire-mesh window was closed.

Gillu was put to eternal rest under the Sonjuhi creeper—both, because he loved this creeper most and also because of the satisfaction I derive from my belief that some spring day I will find him flowering and blossoming in the guise of a tiny yellow Juhi flower!

B.2. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. How would Gillu inform that he was hungry?
2. What prompted the narrator to set Gillu free?
3. What is the life span of squirrels?
4. What was Gillu's favourite food?
5. When was his swing taken off?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

unexpectedly (adv) : which was not expected to happen

poking (gerund) : pushing sharply

assiduous (adj) : hardworking, diligent

critique (n) : critical essay or revision

mythical (adv) : belief about the early age, concept of primitive period

intercepted (v) : stopped, caused interruption in action

prey (n) : animal or bird hunted for food

assault (n) : violent and sudden attack

survive (v) : to exist, continue to line

accede (v) : assent, agree

antics (adj) : queer or typical behaviour

astonished (adj) : surprised, wondered

intellect (n) power of the mind to reason, talent

abode(n) : home, residence

eternal (adj) : lasting forever

derive (v) : to take from the original

prostrate (adj) : lying on the ground

alacrity (n) : eager and cheerful readiness

ventured out (phr.) : dared to go out

abstain (v) : refrain, prevent

refulgent (adj): shining, bright

C.1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What did the narrator do with the wounded squirrel?
2. How did the narrator make the tiny baby squirrel hale and hearty?
3. Gillu took little food during the indisposition of the narrator. What does this suggest?
4. Do you have any pet animal? How does it show concern for you?
5. What did the narrator feel at the death of Gillu? Describe her feelings in your own words.
6. In what condition did the narrator find Gillu? What did she do with it? What would you do in a similar situation?

C.2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in groups or pairs:

- a. Animals/ birds can be a good companion to men.



- b. Discuss with your friends whatever you notice in the picture given below:



C.3. COMPOSITION

- Write a paragraph in about 100 words on "Relation between men and birds".
- Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper, drawing his attention to the gradual extinction of certain birds in the locality. Also suggest some measures to be taken to preserve birds.

D. WORD STUDY

D.1. Dictionary Use

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

sudenly	pencilin	biscit	faverite	squirrel
exeption	spoted	invelop	pillo	beleif

Ex.2. Transcribe the following words in phonetic alphabet as given in the dictionary:

he,	be,	seek	beek	room
hook	my	by	gap	have

D.2. Word Formation

Read carefully the following sentences taken from the lesson:

- I **gently** lifted him up and brought him to my room.
- All were **pleasantly** astonished at his antics.

In the first sentence the word 'gently' is an Adverb which is derived from the word (Adjective) 'gentle'. The new word has been made by adding suffix '-ly' to it. Similarly, in the second sentence 'pleasantly' is an Adverb which is derived from the Adjective 'pleasant' by adding suffix '-ly' to it.

Ex.1. Now make Adverbs from the following Adjectives by adding suffix '-ly' to them:

glad,	nice,	accurate,	
sudden,	swift,	affectionate,	
total,	time,	bad,	sad,
beautiful,	prompt,	intelligent,	perfect,
profound,	polite,	dear	

D.3. Word- Meaning

Ex.1. Find out from the lesson the words, the meanings of which have been given in column A. The last few letters of each word have been given in column B.

A	B
sudden attack	ault
eager and cheerful readiness	rity
lasting for ever	nal
queer and typical behaviour	 tics
lying on the ground	rate

Ex.2. Fill in the blanks with words given below:

verandah, basket, twittering, swing,
playfully, free, exception, remarked.

1. I entered the from the room
2. I hung a light weight flower
3. He would inform me by

4. It was necessary to set him
5. Gillu was an
6. His was taken off the hook.
7. I saw two crows poking their heads at the flowerpots.
8. Everyone that he would not survive.

D.4. Phrases

Ex.1. Read the lesson carefully and find out the sentences in which the following phrases have been used. Then use these phrases in sentences of your own.

unexpectedly, hide and seek, glass- beads like eyes, breakneck speed, the wire-mesh opening, during the course, as well as.

E. GRAMMAR

E.1. Read carefully the sentences given below:

1. When I entered the verandah from the room, I saw two crows playfully poking their beaks at the flowerpots.
2. I used to hold Gillu and I put his tiny body in a long envelope.

You see that sentence No.1 consists of two clauses or simple sentences. These two sentences are combined by using a Relative pronoun 'when'.

Similarly the sentence 2 also consists of two sentences combined by conjunction 'and'.

There are many ways to combine two or more than two sentences into one. Such a process in Grammar is called 'synthesis' or 'combination'. Following is the list of some conjunctions or sentence connectors:

and , but, or, either or,
 Neither-nor, since, because, though,
 as, beside, as long, therefore,
 hence, having, seeing, so,
 now, being, when, whenever, wherever,
 despite, as soon as, no sooner than due to.

Ex.1. Now combine the following sentences into one sentence:

1. She came, she took her lunch.
2. He got first class. He laboured hard.
3. Sheela was suffering from fever. she could not attend her school.
4. The teacher entered the class. He started teaching.

F. ACTIVITY

1. Do a project work on Indian woman poets of English and Hindi and enlist their poetic works.

G. TRANSLATION

Translate the following sentences into English.

सन् 1907 में भीमराव ने मैट्रिक परीक्षा उत्तीर्ण की। महार जाति के लिए यह बहुत गौरव की बात थी। घर में खूब खुशियां मनायी गयीं। भीमराव एलफिंस्टन कॉलेज में पढ़ने लगे। बड़ौदा के महाराज सयाजीराव गायकवाड़ ने प्रसन्न होकर उन्हें 25 रुपये मासिक छात्रवृत्ति देना आरम्भ कर दिया। सन् 1913 में वे बी.ए. उत्तीर्ण हो गये। महाराज ने उन्हें बड़ौदा बुलाया और दरबार में नौकरी दे दी। दुर्भाग्य से इसी वर्ष उनके पिता का स्वर्गवास हो गया।
