

## The prison ordeals of Lalu, Kalu, Balu

Lalu, Kalu and Balu were convicted for petty theft and were sent to the Tihar prison for rigorous imprisonment of seven years. They all had been in the regular practice of stealing and picking pockets, but had never been caught or even if when caught, they had got away by bribing the local cops. But this time, they were charged, tried in the court and sentenced with rigorous imprisonment.

Once inside the prison, Lalu, Kalu and Balu were placed in three different cells and assigned prison duties, and their behaviors were also contrasting.

Lalu, being quite sharp, very soon made friends with his fellow prisoners and the prison officials. He would perform all his assigned duties promptly, and being helpful in nature, would also help his prison mates in their duties. He would save the labor wages he would get and send it to his family on regular basis. Once when one of the prison inmates suffered from a serious health problem, Lalu personally served and nursed him and also donated his personal wages to help treat him. Over a period of time, Lalu started feeling very comfortable in the prison, feeling at home. He was liked by all his fellow inmates, and he had now almost forgotten all about the outside world. He was convinced and had decided to continue the rest of his life here. The prison authorities also recognized his refined attitude and placed him in a position of responsibility within the prison. The icing on the cake came when the prison authorities awarded him with the title, 'Best Prisoner of the Year' award and he was felicitated in front of all the inmates. Lalu was ecstatic and felt on top of the world!

Kalu on the other hand had a different story in the Tihar jail. Being prone to the habit of stealing, he only resumed his daily routine even while in the prison house. He began first by stealing the chapattis off the plates of his fellow inmates, and he was soon caught and was given a good beating by the fellow inmates. When the jailor noticed the scuffle among the prisoners, figuring out Kalu to be the culprit, he gave him a thorough whipping of fifty strokes. Undeterred, Kalu only continued with his thievery. This time it was stealing the wages of his fellow inmates. Soon he was discovered, and the jailor deeming this offence to be quite grave, sentenced him into solitary confinement for 6 months and extra 6 hours of daily labor at half the wages and also reduced his rations to only 2 chapattis per meal. Kalu was now known in the entire prison as the 'most notorious prisoner' of Tihar jail.

Balu had understood and repented thoroughly since the day he was convicted and sentenced to the imprisonment. He took no interest in the prison activities, nor did he befriend other prisoners to make his life comfortable there. He very well knew that the prison was designed to be a miserable place, and was meant to be only a temporary place for reformation. He promptly performed his assigned duties, but remained aloof from any unnecessary extra activities. He spent most of his time introspecting on his faults and determined to lead a reformed life once he would be out of this terrible place. When he saw Kalu being punished for his continued offences, he felt compassionate and preached to him to reform himself and work on getting out of there by his reformed behavior. He was unmoved, neither happy nor sad when he saw Lalu receiving 'Best Prisoner of the Year' award. In fact once he confidentially preached to Lalu of the futility of all his achievements and awards, as after all they would not take him out of this miserable place. He urged Lalu to not be satisfied in the jail and settle down there but rather by his reformed actions, attract the attention of the Government so they could get a pardon and come out of the jail, again into the free society.

Balu continued to work relentlessly, and wrote constantly to the Home Minister and contacted many influential persons in legal circles and worked on his case, so he could get his sentence annulled and be released again into free society. Finally, on the Independence Day, when Home Minister visited the Tihar Jail, Balu was granted pardon and was released out of the jail. Balu was now truly ecstatic, for now all his efforts of reformation had paid off. Balu determined himself to never stray again into illegal activities and live a life of a responsible citizen of the civil society.

**Group Discussion:** After forming 3 groups, nominate one representative from each of your teams. Choose one among Lalu, Balu and Kalu as the best according to their actions in prison. Justify your choice with valid reasons.