



A GRAIN AS BIG AS A HEN'S EGG

A. Before you read :

- 1) Every day you eat rice and chapati. Have you seen a grain of rice / wheat ? How big are these grains ?
- 2) Ask your parents / grandparents about the size of the grains during their time.
- 3) Imagine the size of a grain as big as hen's egg. Where does it grow, and who grows it ? Why can't we grow that size of grains in our fields ?
- 4) Discuss in groups and note down the ideas.

Now read the following story to know more about the grains which are as big as hen's eggs.

B. Text :

I

One day some children found, in a ravine, a thing shaped like a grain of corn, with a groove down the middle, but as large as a hen's egg. A traveller passing by saw the thing, bought it from the children for a penny, and taking it to town sold it to the king as a curiosity.

The King called together his wise men, and told them to find out what the thing was. The wise men pondered and pondered and could not make head or tail of it till one day, when the thing was lying on a window-sill, a hen flew in and pecked at it till she made a hole in it, and then every one saw that it was a grain of corn. The wise men went to the king and said : 'It is a grain of corn'.

At this the King was much surprised; and he ordered the learned men to find out when and where such corn had grown. The learned men pondered again, and searched in their books, but could find nothing about it. So they returned to the King and said :

‘We can give you no answer. There is nothing about it in our books. You will have to ask the peasants; perhaps some of them may have heard from their fathers when and where grain grew to such a size.

So the King gave orders that some very old peasant should be brought before him; and his servants found such a man and brought him to the King. Old and bent, ashy pale and toothless, he just managed with the help of two crutches to totter into the King’s presence.

The King showed him the grain, but the old man could hardly see it; he took it, however, and felt it with his hands. The King questioned him, saying :

‘Can you tell us, old man, where such grain as this grew ? Have you ever bought such corn, or sown such in your fields?’

The old man was so deaf that he could hardly hear what the King said, and only understood with great difficulty.

‘No He answered at last. ‘ I never sowed nor reaped any like it in my fields, nor did I ever buy any such. When we bought corn, the grains were always as small as they are now. But you might ask my father. He may have heard where such grain grew.

So the king sent for the old man’s father, and he was found and brought before the King. He came walking with one crutch. The king showed him the grain, and the old peasant, who was still able to see, took a good look at it. And the King asked him:

‘Can you not tell us, old man, where corn like this used to grow ? Have you ever bought any like it, or sown any in your fields ?’

Comprehension check :

1. What did the children find in the ravine ?
2. How did the wisemen know that was a grain of corn ?
3. What did the king do to collect information about the grain ?
4. Could the learned men find out the answer ? What was their suggestions ?
5. What was the king’s question to the old peasant who came first?

6. Was he able to hear and see ? What was his answer ?
7. How did the old peasant's father come to the king ? Was he able to see ?
8. The king asked the same question to the old man's father. Now goes what could be his answer, will he be able to recognise the grain ? Let's read the remaining part of the story to know when exactly these grains were harvested.



Though the old man was rather hard of hearing, he still heard better than his son had done.

'No', he said, "I never sowed nor reaped any grain like this in my field. As to buying, I never bought any, for in my time money was not yet in use. Every one grew his own corn, and when there was any need, we shared with one another. I do not know where corn like this grew. Ours was larger and yielded more flour than present-day grain, but I never saw any like this. I have, however, heard my father say that in his time the grain grew larger and yielded more flour than ours. You had better ask him."

So the king sent for this old man's father, and they found him too, and brought him before the king. He entered walking easily and without crutches: his eye was clear, his hearing good, and he spoke distinctly. The king showed him the grain, and the old grandfather looked at it, and turned it about in his hand.

'It is long since I saw such a fine grain', said he, and he bit a piece off and tasted it.

'It's the very same kind', he added.

'Tell me, grandfather, said the 'King', 'When and where was such corn grown ? Have you ever bought any like it, or sown any in your fields ?'

And the old man replied :

‘Corn like this used to grow everywhere in my time. I lived on corn like this in my young days, and fed others on it. It was grain like that we used to sow and reap and thrash’.

And the king asked :

‘Tell me, grandfather, did you buy it anywhere, or did you grow it all yourself?’

The old man smiled.

‘In my time’, he answered, ‘no one ever thought of such a sin as buying or selling bread; and we knew nothing of money. Each man had corn enough of his own.’

‘Then tell me’, grandfather, asked the king, where was your field, where did you grow corn like this ?’

And the grandfather answered :

‘My field was God’s earth, wherever I ploughed, there was my field. Land was free. It was a thing no man called his own. Labour was the only thing men called their own.’

‘Answer me two more questions, said the King. ‘The first is, why did the earth bear such grain then and has ceased to do so now ? And the second is, why your grandson walks with two crutches, your son with one, and you yourself with none? Your eyes are bright, your teeth sound, and your speech clear and pleasant to the ear. How have these things come about ?’

And the old man answered :

‘These things are so, because men have ceased to live by their own labour and have taken to depending on the labour of others. In the old time they lived according to God’s law. They had what was their own, and coveted not what other had produced.

Leo Tolstoy

Comprehension check :

- 1) How big was the corn in his fathers time ?
- 2) Read the lines that describe the old man's grand father.
- 3) What was the grandfather's reply to the king's question ?
- 4) Did the people in grandfather's time buy or sell bread ?
- 5) Was the land free during his time ? Say the lines that suggest.
- 6) What were the last two questions of the king ?
- 7) What reply did the grandfather give ?

C. Glossary :

ravine	:	a very deep narrow valley
grove	:	a long, narrow, deep line cut in a surface
pondered	:	thought carefully
ashy pale	:	unhealthy
totter	:	to walk in unsteady way.
thrash	:	to beat repeatedly
have taken to	:	are attracted to / liked to
coveted	:	strong desire to have something that belongs to others.

D. Writing :

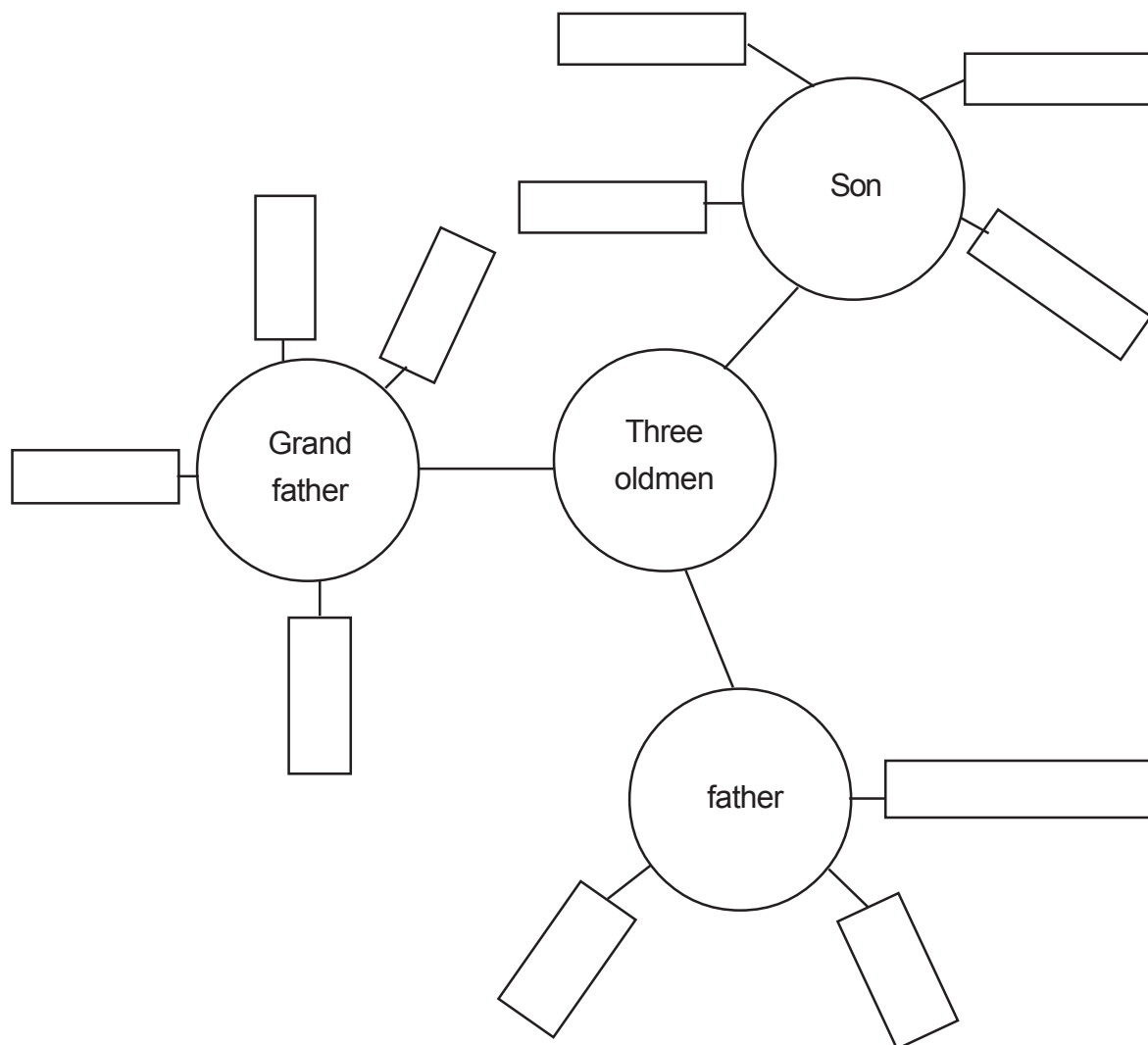
Answer the following questions in about fifty words.

1. How did the grain of corn reach the king ?
2. How did the wise men know that it was a grain of corn ?
3. What suggestions did the learned men give to the king to find out when and where such corns had grown ?
4. What were the replies given by the old peasant and his father regarding the corn ?
5. How were the three old men in the story described ?
6. Briefly describe the life style of the people during grandfather's time.
7. What comments did the grandfather give on the life style of people today?

E. Activity :

1. Draw a family tree using the information given in the story.
 - (a) Here are some words and expressions given in the box. Choose the right words / expressions and fill in the following diagram.

toothless, one crutch, eyes clear, old and bent, two crutches, without crutches, heard better, spoke distinctly, ashy pale still able to see, hearing good.



- (b) Now use the words and expressions in your own sentences to describe the three oldmen. Then arrange the sentences in order of the story.

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A GREAT SON OF INDIA

A. Lead-in :

Many great saints were born in India. One among these carried the teachings of the Upanisads to the people of the world. The great and liberal philosophy of India fascinated the audience when the young saint spoke to them in simple words but with profound faith and confidence. Can you guess the name of the young saint ? Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the great teacher and philosopher speaks about him on the saint's 92nd birth day. Read the lesson to know more about the great son of India.

B. The Text :

I am happy to be here and distribute prizes for recitation and speech competitions. I congratulate those who have won these rewards on their achievements. The students who won the prizes and the many others who competed for them had the great opportunity of reading some of the writings of Swami Vivekananda. I have no doubt they have been impressed and inspired by what they have read. Vivekananda's life and teachings have prepared us for the new age of freedom in which we live. They tell us how best we can consolidate the freedom we have recently won. He was one of the great leaders of the Indian Renaissance.

Like all the great teachers of India, Vivekananda did not profess to be the formulator of a new system of thought. He interpreted for us and the world India's religious consciousness, the treasures of her past. His writings and speeches are all fortified by

quotations from the Indian scriptures and the life and sayings of his great Master, that transcendent religious genius, Shri Ramakrishna.

In the short time at my disposal it will not be possible for me to speak on more than one or two aspects of Vivekananda's teaching.

The two dominant features of our age are science and democracy. They have come to stay. We cannot ask educated people to accept the deliverances of faith without rational evidence. Whatever we are called upon to accept must be justified and supported by reason. Otherwise our religious beliefs will be reduced to wishful thinking. Modern man must learn to live with a religion which commends itself to his intellectual conscience, to the spirit of science. Besides, religion should be sustaining faith of democracy, or race. Any religion which divides man from man or supports privileges, exploitation, wars, cannot commend itself to us today.

If we are passing through a period of the eclipse of religion, of the light of heaven, it is because religions as they are practised seem to be both unscientific and undemocratic.

The most obvious fact of life is its transience. Everything in this world passes away, the written word, the painted picture, the carved stone, the heroic act. Great civilizations are subject to the law of time. The earth on which we live may one day become unfit for human habitation as the sun ages and alters. Our acts and thoughts, our deeds of heroism, our political structures are a part of history, of becoming, or process. They all belong to the world of time. Time is symbolized in India's tradition by birth and death. Is this world which is a perpetual procession of events, self-sustaining, self-maintaining, self-established, or is there a Beyond underlying it, unifying it and inspiring it, standing behind it and yet immanent in it ? Is becoming all or is there being behind it ?

Will man annihilate nothingness or will nothingness annihilate him ? This very problem, this dread, this anxiety that we have, this feeling of the precariousness of the world bears witness to the world beyond. It is a longing for life eternal in the midst of time. Because of the implicit awareness of the ultimate reality we have the sense of godforsakenness.

Comprehension Check :

1. Who is the speaker ?
2. On what occasion does he speak ?
3. What does the 'treasure of her past' refer to ?
4. Where from did Vivekananda collect the treasure ?
5. How are religion and science interrelated ?
6. Why should religion be the maintaining faith of democracy ?
7. What could be the reason for the eclipse of religion ?
8. What is the ultimate truth of life ?
9. How does time act as a powerful force ?
10. What explanation of the fundamental problem is provided by the Upanisads ?

II

By logical investigations and by personal experience, our great thinkers came to the conclusion that there is a Beyond of which all this world is the expression. The Upanisads give us an explanation of this fundamental problem. They mention logical arguments and also experiences of men who bear witness to the reality of the Supreme. What we call the Vedas are merely the registers of the spiritual experiences of the

great seer. Says Vivekananda : 'By the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasure of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times'. They are therefore ever-expanding. What is built for ever is for ever building. For Vivekananda religion is Yoga. It is personal change, adjustment, integration. It is not profession of a doctrine. It is the reconditioning of one's nature. It is not intellectual orthodoxy. It is the reconditioning of one's nature. It is not intellectual orthodoxy. It is awakening of the life of spirit in man. He wrote books on Jnana Yoga, Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and urged that the goal of spiritual realization can be reached by any one of these different methods.

When we express the truths of spiritual life in intellectual forms, these latter are abstractions from live experience. They do not deal justly with the immensity and mystery of spiritual life. If we exalt the particular creeds over the universal truths, we tend to become intolerant. Intolerance is an expression of religious conceit and not humility.

We today speak of our secular attitude. We are not secular in the sense that we are indifferent to religion. We are secular because we regard all religions as sacred. We believe in freedom of conscience. Each soul has the right to choose its own path and seek God in its own way. Secularism requires us not merely to tolerate, but to understand and love other religions. Bearing in mind Shri Ramakrishna's experience, Vivekananda said: 'We Hindus do not merely tolerate. We unite ourselves with every religion, praying in the mosque of the Mohammedan, worshipping before the fire of the Zoroastrian and kneeling to the Cross of the Christian.'

In his travels abroad, Vivekananda felt miserable about the backwardness of India in several matters, the way in which religion is confused with so much obscurantism and superstition. He protested vehemently against the abuse of religion, about our

insistence on touchability and untouchability. All this was inconsistent with the great principle of our religion that the Divine is in us, in all of us, operative and alive, ready to come to the surface at the first suitable opportunity. The light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, this antar-jyoti cannot be put out. Whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not, the Divine is in us, and the end of man consists in attaining union with the Divine.

The ultimate tests of true religions are recognition of truth and reconciliation with human beings. To overcome enemies we must possess that which far surpasses enmity, ahimsa, or renunciation of hatred.

Vivekananda raises work to the level of worship and exhorted us to seek salvation through the service of God in man. If we in our country are to profit by the teachings of Vivekananda, it is essential that we should all be interested in not only constructive work, but become dedicated spirits, spirits dedicated to the task of establishing a spiritual religion which transcends ecclesiastical organizations and doctrinal sophistries and subtleties, a religion which leads to the transformation of human society and brings it nearer to the Ramrajya or the Kingdom of God, which our prophets have set before us.

A speech by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

Comprehension check :

1. What are the Vedas according to Vivekananda ?
2. What is Yoga in his opinion ?
3. Which Yogas have been discussed by him in his writings ?
4. What is secularism ?

5. Which experience of Sri Ramakrishna does Vivekananda teach people ?
6. What are the abuses of religion ?
7. What is 'antar-jyoti' referred to in the text ?
8. What is the ultimate test of true religion ?
9. What are necessary for creating the Ramrajya ?

C. Glossary :

renaissance	: rebirth/reawakening of art, culture etc.
profess	: to claim
fortified	: strengthened
transcendent	: beyond human experience
deliverances	: the act of delivering something
commends	: presents as suitable
transience	: lasting for a short time
perpetual	: never ending
annihilate	: to destroy completely
precariousness	: uncertainty
implicit	: not directly expressed or inherent / implied
godforsaken	: not interesting or attractive in any way
exalt	: to praise highly or promote
obscurantism	: the practice of opposing enlightenment

vehemently	: strongly / forcefully
reconciliation	: setting differences / harmonising
renunciation	: the act of giving up
exhorted	: strongly advised or urged
ecclesiastical	: relating to religion specially to church
doctrinal sophistries	: unsound reasoning for principles
subtleties	: fine distinctions or the ability to make such distinctions

D. Writing :

Answer the following questions in about fifty words.

1. What made Dr. Radhakrishnan think that the students were impressed and inspired ?
2. How can we explain that Vivekananda was one of the leaders of the Indian Renaissance ?
3. Why were the writings and speeches of Vivekananda very powerful ?
4. Why does the speaker consider 'science and democracy' as the dominant features of the modern world ?
5. What could be the reasons for this earth being unfit for human habitation ?
6. Why are the Vedas ever-expanding ? And what is the light that lighteth every man ?
7. How can religion lead to the transformation of human society ?

E. Activity :

- The class is divided into four or five groups.
- Each group is asked to think of an activity, they would like to undertake as per the advice of Vivekananda.
- Each group discusses among its members.
- Each group presents its plan.
- Other groups ask questions, interact and make suggestions.

The following may be written on the blackboard or the teacher may draw the learners' attention to the text.

“If we in our country are to profit by the teachings of Vivekananda, it is essential that we should all be interested in not only *constructive work* but become *dedicated spirits, spirits dedicated to the task of establishing a spiritual religion* which transcends ecclesiastical organization and doctrinal sophistries and subtleties, a religion which leads to the transformation of human society and brings it nearer to the Ramrajya or the kingdom of God, which our prophets have set for us”.

Questions not to be set in the examination from this topic

