



QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

A. Reading With Insight

Question 1. Comment on the influence of English—the language and the way of life— on Indian life as reflected in the story. What is the narrator's attitude to English?

Answer: The narrator says that during the last ten years English language has made inroads into Indian countryside. Now there are many who know English. During the holidays, one comes across them on every street, talking in English. They bring in English words even while talking in Kannada. The narrator considers it disgraceful. He illustrates his point of view by giving an example. A bundle of firewood was bought at Rama Rao's house. Rama Rao's son asked the woman how much he should give her. When she said, "Four pice", the boy told her that he did not have any "change" and asked her to come the next day. The poor woman did not understand the English word "change" and went away muttering to herself. Thus the use of English language before a native Kannada speaker caused confusion.

Ranga was influenced by the English way of life. Like them he wanted to marry a mature girl and not a young present-day bride. He told the narrator that he would marry when he grew a bit older. Secondly, he wanted to marry a girl he admired. He was not in favour of arranged marriages. This shows the influence of English way of life on modern young educated Indians. The narrator did not approve of it.

Question 2. Astrologers' perceptions are based more on hearsay and conjecture than what they learn from the study of the stars. Comment with reference to the story.

Answer: This story presents astrologers in an unfavourable light. The author seems to be having a dig at them through the words of the narrator. The story gives a graphic description of how the narrator employs the astrologer to trick an unwilling youngman to agree to marry a young girl. He tutors him in all that he wants him to say.

The narrator took Ranga to the astrologer. The Shastri took out his paraphernalia. These included two sheets of paper, some cowries and a book of palmyra leaves. He called astrology ancient science. He moved his lips fast as he counted on his fingers. He did some calculations before telling Ranga that he was thinking about a girl. She had the name of something found in the ocean. He assured them that their negotiations would definitely bear fruit. Ranga was impressed by the science of astrology.

That evening the narrator congratulated Shastri for repeating everything he had taught without giving rise to any suspicion. He mocked astrology by saying, "What a marvellous shastra yours is!" The Shastri didn't like it and said that he could have found it out himself from his shastra.

This shows that astrologers' perceptions are based more on hearsay and conjecture than what they learn from the study of the stars.

Question 3. Indian society has moved a long way from the way the marriage is arranged in the story. Discuss.

Answer: In the past, marriages in India were usually arranged by parents/relatives. The story 'Ranga's Marriage' shows how the narrator arranges Ranga's marriage with the help of the astrologer. After independence, certain changes have come in the economic and social set-up of the Indian society. Women empowerment has made women men's comrades and equals and not a mere prisoner confined within the four walls. Women education and access to jobs have changed the attitude of modern males towards them. A girl is now accepted as a partner in marriage for her worth or qualities rather than the dowry. Marriageable young boys and girls have now more say in the choice of partners. Early marriages have been banned legally. The minimum age for marriage for a girl is 18 and for a boy it is 21. By this time they attain physical, emotional and mental maturity. Indian society has certainly moved a long way from the time of arranged marriages when the formal consent of the bride/bridegroom was taken for granted and the elders fixed everything.

Question 4. What kind of a person do you think the narrator is?

Answer: The narrator, Shyama, is dark in colour. He calls himself 'a dark piece of oil-cake'. He is an elderly gentleman. He is keen observer of men and manners. He notices the influence of English—the language and the way of life on Indian society. He is a purist who is pained at the indiscriminate use of English words in Kannada conversation. He considers it disgraceful. He does not approve of the English custom of love-marriage either. He is a well-meaning gentleman who has the good of others in his heart. He learns of Ranga's views about marriage from Ranga himself. He is a good judge of human character. He thinks that Ranga would make a good husband. The narrator is a good strategist. He cleverly calls Ranga to his home when Ratna is singing a song. He notices Ranga's reaction and interest in her and arouses his curiosity by arranging a meeting with the astrologer. First he says that Ratna is married, but when he finds Ranga deeply interested in her, he confesses that he was wrongly informed. In short, the narrator tries his utmost to get the marriage settled.

The narrator loves fun and humour. He has the capacity to make others laugh at him. He employs a rambling style and gives many similes and metaphors to heighten the literary value of the story. The touches of local colour make the story full of ethnic colour and authentic.

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