

5. Rewrite the following dialogues in indirect or reported speech.

He glowered at the waiting group near the gate, and then he waved a huge red arm in my direction.

'You there! Can you speak Hindi?' he yelled. 'Yes. You!'

It took me some time to realise he was speaking to me.

'Yes, sir,' I said.

'Can you drive a car?'

'Oh, yes.'

He inspected me from head to foot, like a butcher judging his buy at the sheep market. 'Khum on,' he pronounced. 'You'll do.'

6. Writing task

Do you think the clerk found love yet again with Shilamati? Imagine that he did and write about his renewed interest in film actors after that.

8. The Spell

Romila Thapar

Romila Thapar (1931–) is a well-known historian and author of many interesting and valuable scholarly works. After graduating from the Punjab University, she secured her doctorate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of London, in 1958 and worked as Professor of Ancient History at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In her *History of India*, she describes the origin and evolution of Hinduism. She has written a book that provides a historical account of the famous Somnath temple, Gujarat. She has been conferred honorary doctorates by the University of Calcutta, the University of Oxford and the University of Chicago. She is now Professor Emeritus, JNU, New Delhi, and a visiting Professor at Cornell University, and the University of Pennsylvania. In 2005, she declined the Padma Bhushan awarded by the Indian Government saying that she would accept awards only from academic institutions and not State awards. *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryans*, *Ancient Indian Social History*, and *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History* (Editor), *Indian Tales, 1991* and *India, Another Millennium* are some of her major works. ② ③ ⑥ ④ ⑤

'The Spell' tells the story of a learned Brahmin who could use a magic spell to produce valuable gems. He was captured and killed by a band of robbers as he foolishly revealed his secret imagining that he would be released. It is interesting to read how two bands of robbers fought and killed each other to get his gems. The Brahmin's pupil feels very sad since the robbers, as well as his own teacher, had killed themselves for the sake of 'a handful of jewels'.

Many hundreds of years ago, a brahman lived in a town in northern India. He spent many years studying the ancient books and talking to the learned priests who came to visit the city. After much effort, he obtained the knowledge of a particular spell. He was very proud of this and guarded the secret carefully. When the moon and the stars were in a particular position in the sky and he repeated the spell in a certain way, then seven precious stones would fall from the sky and into his hands.

In order not to arouse people's suspicions as to where his money was coming from, the brahman used to teach pupils from time to time. He had one pupil amongst all of them of whom he thought very highly. This young man knew what the brahman's spell could do, but he did not know the secret of how it worked. One day, the brahman and his pupil left the town and began a journey to a neighbouring country. The first day of the journey went well and they slept the night in a small town near the frontier. But the next day, soon after they had set out, they found themselves in a deserted part of the country. The road ran through a dried-up river-course and on each side of them rose cliffs, rugged rocky cliffs which seemed to cut them off from the sight and sound of any other human being. It was a hot day, the air was still, and the sun, shining down on them, seemed to set them on fire. Nor were there any trees to provide some shade. So they perspired and trudged on.

They consoled themselves with the thought that they would soon be out of this deserted place. They began telling each other what they would do as soon as they arrived at the next village. Would they make for the village well, or just collapse in the cool of a friendly house? Suddenly they heard much shouting and scrambling and, on looking up, saw that the place was swarming with bandits. There were crowds of them – on the tops of the cliffs, some following behind them on the road, and some emerging in front of them. Their faces were partly covered with the ends of the turbans which they had wound round their heads, and each one was brandishing a sword or a fearsome knife in his hand. There was no escape for the brahman and his pupil, as they were surrounded.

The unfortunate two were soon tied with ropes and carried to the bandits' hide-out, which was not far from the road. Both the brahman and the young man were absolutely terrified, since they did not have much money on them. The bandits, they thought would naturally be very annoyed

when they discovered that the two prisoners were almost penniless. And the bandits were in fact most annoyed at discovering this. All the same, they explained that they had a method of dealing with such situations. 'We shall demand a ransom for you before we set you free,' declared their Chief. 'The older man can remain here with us, but the younger one must return to his home town and collect the money.' This order was passed on to the brahman and his pupil. It did not encourage them very much, as they did not know where the young man would find the money. However, the pupil tried to reassure the brahman. 'Don't be anxious. I shall definitely be back with the money in a few days,' he said. 'May I advise you not to try out your spell in an effort to pay the ransom, because if the bandits discover that you have the power to produce precious stones, they will never set you free. I am requesting you therefore, revered teacher, not to recite your spell.' With these words, the pupil departed, and left the brahman to his thoughts.

That evening when it became dark, the brahman was lying on the ground outside the hide-out. He was still chained and his hands were tied. Looking up at the sky, he noticed with excitement that the moon and the stars were in the right position for him to recite his spell. He argued with himself for a while about the advice that his pupil had given him. In the end he thought he would be better off if he paid for the ransom with the jewels that would fall from the sky and decided to recite his spell. So he called to the bandit Chief, and said, 'You have sent my pupil to fetch a ransom for me, but I wonder if he will return. If I were to give you quantities of jewels instead by this evening, would that satisfy you?' 'Indeed it would,' replied the Chief. 'But how will you do that?' 'Please order your guards to cut the ropes and remove the chains that bind me,' said the brahman. This was promptly done, though the guards remained suspicious.

The brahman withdrew to a little distance, and there, after a short ceremony, he recited the spell. Within a matter of

moments, there fell into his hands seven large and precious gems. He returned with these to the bandit Chief, who, seeing them, was overjoyed. The brahman was released immediately, was permitted to bathe and was invited to eat with the bandit Chief that night. There was much rejoicing among the bandits. They had never in their profession come upon so much wealth from one man alone. Whilst the brahman was eating his fill with the Chief, the other bandits began to murmur, 'We should not let him go. He may come in useful again. He is a walking treasure-house.'

After the merry-making of the night, the bandits broke camp and decided to move to another part of the country. They invited the brahman to go with them. The brahman accepted this invitation. He was at first afraid to break away from them so soon, and thought it would be wiser if he remained with them until they came to the next village. So the entire troop moved off. But they had not gone very far when another group of five hundred bandits swooped down on them and began to rob them.

The chief bandit of the first troop turned to the leader of the second group and said, 'Why are you robbing us? We are merely bandits like yourselves and haven't any great riches on us. If you really want treasure, then capture that brahman there. He can make jewels fall out of the sky.' The poor brahman had hardly had time to understand what was going on when the second group of robbers fell upon him and made him captive. They demanded the same amount of treasure as he had given to the earlier bandits. The brahman pleaded that he was willing to give it to them, but only in a year's time. 'Why must we wait for a year?' demanded the Chief. 'Because I can only recite my spell when the moon and the stars are in a certain position,' replied the brahman, 'and it will take a full twelve months before that happens again.' Last night I managed to obtain the gems because the moon and the stars were in the correct position.' 'Wretch,' shouted the bandit Chief. 'You lie in order to save your life.

Off with his head,' he ordered his followers. The brahman was soon cut to pieces.

But now the conflict between the two bands of robbers became heated. The second band realized that the first band must have the gems given them by the brahman hidden in their clothes. So the two groups clashed and fought each other with their swords and knives. Eventually, all but two of the bandits were killed. These two went round and collected all the treasure in one heap and then hid it in some nearby bushes.

It was noon by now and they were both very hungry. So they decided that one of them should stay near the treasure and guard it, while the other one would go to the village in the neighbourhood and buy some food. So one of them placed his sword near the treasure and kept guard over it, and the other bandit set off in the direction of the village. Now the one who sat and guarded the treasure, thought, 'It is a pity that this treasure has to be divided into two. It would be so much simpler if I could take it all. We have already killed so many people, that it will not matter if I kill the other bandit as well. So I will wait here in readiness. As soon as he approaches with the food, I will spring on him and cut him down with my sword.' And so he waited in readiness to kill the other bandit.

Meanwhile, the other bandit had had similar thoughts. 'Why should I have to share the treasure with this man, after the trouble we have had in collecting it?' he said to himself. 'It is very simple. I will eat my fill in the village. Then I will buy some food for the other bandit and put poison into it, so that when he eats it he will die.' And he did accordingly. He ate his fill in the village, bought some more food for the bandit who was waiting for him and mixed some poison with it. And he returned to where the treasure was being guarded.

As he approached the bushes where the treasure had been hidden, he called out to the other bandit to come and eat. The other bandit emerged from behind the bushes, took the

food from him, and almost immediately struck him with his sword and killed him. He hastily pushed the corpse out the way, and, being very hungry, sat down to eat the food. The food being poisoned, soon he too was dead. The treasure thus lay unguarded in the bushes.

The next day, the pupil having collected the ransom money, returned along the same road, looking for the first band of robbers, in order to pay the ransom and free his teacher. He followed the road to where the fight had taken place. He was horrified when he saw all the bandits lying there, dead. He saw the body of his teacher and thought, 'Alas, he must have boasted about his power and shown them what he could do.' Then he counted all the corpses. There were nine hundred and ninety-eight bodies. So he realized that there must have been a fight over the treasure. 'But two have got away,' he thought. He looked round and searched in the bushes. There they were, the last two, and not far away was the heap of jewels.

He shook his head sadly. 'So much killing, and over a handful of jewels. If only my teacher had taken my advice and not tried to produce the treasure.'

Glossary

spell	: words used as a charm and supposed to have magic power
arouse	: to provoke, stir up
suspicious	: having or causing a feeling of doubt that something is wrong or bad
frontier	: borderline, boundary
cliff	: steep face of rock (especially at the edge of the sea)
perspire	: to sweat
trudge	: to walk wearily
collapse	: drop, fall down
scramble	: to struggle with others to get as much as possible
swarming	: coming in large numbers

bandits	: robbers carrying arms
emerge	: to come out
brandish	: to wave something about (usually a weapon) in a threatening way
hide-out	: hiding place, den
reassure	: to encourage, to restore confidence
revere	: to respect
swoop	: to make a sudden, swift attack
ransom	: payment demanded to release a captive
plead	: to request earnestly
wretch	: a contemptible, mean person
clash	: to fight with each other
horrified	: shocked, filled with extreme fear
boast	: to brag

Comprehension

1. What was the spell that the brahman had learned and why did he guard it carefully?
2. Why did the pupil advise the brahman not to try out the spell in an effort to pay the ransom?
3. Why did the bandits decide not to release the brahman?
4. What did the brahman say to the second troop of bandits in order to escape from them?
5. What do you learn from the story? Explain.

Language Work

1. Use the following words in sentences of your own.
brandish, swoop, trudge, contrary, virtue, discord
2. Rewrite the following passage using capital letters and punctuation marks wherever necessary:
it was getting dark and reena was still a good distance from her house dont I know you asked a familiar voice from a seat next to her on the bus it was her childhood friend from the school in Mumbai