

5. Fill in the blanks with appropriate articles.  
Here is ..... interesting story. .... great painter, who was competing for ..... prize, painted ..... garland of flowers. .... unsuspecting bee came and settled on it. .... painter smiled happily.
6. The following paragraph has a variety of errors in language, tense and subject-verb agreement, among others. Rewrite the sentences correctly.  
What the master said to you? You will please tell to me. Those big books cost very less. Is it not? Sir, I came to take your conduct certificate. He was unable to make both his ends meet; his income was not more. You saw this boy yesterday at evening?

### 3. SWEETS FOR ANGELS

R K Narayan

**R K Narayan** (1906–2001), one of the best-loved novelists and short story writers, was born in Chennai (Madras) and was educated in Mysore, Karnataka. After graduating, he took to writing as a profession. Graham Greene, the English novelist, appreciated Narayan's works and persuaded some publishers to bring out his novels. In 1956, he was invited by the Rockefeller Foundation to visit America. He recorded the impressions of his visit in his book *My Dateless Diary*. The portrait of Mahatma Gandhi in his book *Waiting for the Mahatma* was well received by American readers. Viking Press published his novel *The Guide* in 1958. This famous novel won the Sahitya Akademi award and was made into a film in English and Hindi by Vijay Anand. Several American and British universities honoured him. The University of Mysore, the Delhi University and the University of Leeds conferred honorary doctorates on him. In 1989, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. The Indian Government honoured him with the Padma Bhushan in 1964 and Padma Vibhushan in 2000.

*Swami and Friends*, *The Dark Room*, *The English Teacher*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, *The Financial Expert*, *The Guide*, *Gods, Demons and Others*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *Talkative Man* and *Mr Sampath* are some of his famous works. Commenting on R K Narayan's stories, the American novelist John Updike says, 'Few writers since Dickens can match the effect of colourful teeming that Narayan's fictional town of Malgudi conveys; its population is sharply chiselled as a temple frieze, and as endless, with always, one feels, more characters around the corner.' Narayan's style is an exquisite blend of keen observation and realism, gentle humour, pathos and subtle irony, lucidity and elegance.

'Sweets for Angels' is the story of Kali, a porter, 'who had been an urchin left adrift in the world with not a soul to claim him.' He earned a rupee a day by hauling bags of rice from a lorry to a store. One day, when he earned a little more than usual, he wanted to offer sweets to a few school children, the little 'angels' he loved. Unfortunately, he was mistaken for a kidnapper and was beaten up mercilessly by an angry crowd.

Kali's home was a brick pyol attached to a locked-up deserted house in Royapuram. There were two fellow-occupants of



(1) the same pyol: Kuppan the rickshaw-puller who dropped in at unexpected hours of the day for rest, sometimes bringing in, just for display, lolling on the back cushion of the rickshaw, a drunken sailor wanting to return to the harbour; Kali's other companion was Pachai, who begged at bus stands, pretending to be blind. None of these was hampered by a family. Kuppan's wife had run away with a lover years ago; and the 'blind man' spoke of a family in the village to whom he sent money-order off and on. Kali himself was . . . how could anyone say what his age might be; he had been an urchin when left adrift in the world with not a soul to claim him; he thought he was still that although to the outside world he appeared six feet tall with such brawny arms that people believed him to be a formidable rowdy, an impression strengthened by the presence of the beard that flourished on his chin through sheer neglect.

He lived quite contentedly from moment to moment, having no reason whatever to brood or be bitter. All that he needed a day was about a rupee and that he earned by hauling bags of rice from a lorry to a grain store at the market. At other times he liked to sprawl on the pyol and watch little children go to a school nearby. It filled him with delight. He often remarked to Pachai, 'How do these babies read so much! What is the use of wooden dummies like you and me! We cannot really count even our own earning.' He looked admiringly at the children, at their pencils, books and slates, and often thought, 'I wish they had taught me how to use these. Even a tiny tot among them holds a pencil and scrawls so confidently!' The children were unaware that there was a man fervently worshipping them as he, sometimes, softly walked behind them, and stood at the school gate, staring far into it. The hum emanating from that yellow building was as music to his ears. It filled him with a mystic joy—I call it 'mystic' purposely: it was an emotion that could not be satisfactorily explained.

Today he felt elated. He had hauled several sacks of grains on the previous evening and as a result his little money-purse bulged with coins. He would not go near the market today. He kept his coins hidden within the stuffings of an old pillow otherwise that rickshaw man might declare a holiday for himself too, and drag him to a grog ship, and his other friend might stick close and pester him for a loan. It was on the whole safer not to reveal one's assets to one's friends.

Kuppan asked him why he was not stirring out yet. Kali had the wisdom to answer, 'Oh, pain all over my shoulder.' He made a wry face and added, 'I must rest at least for half a day.' 'If you have a pain at the shoulder, you must have had quite a load for your back and . . . for your purse,' said the other testingly. 'Oh, no I got the pain by knocking against a bullock-cart.' This satisfied his friends; they went away.

At about eleven Kali felt hungry. He went to a street tap; some women were waiting to fill their pots. After they left he threw himself under the tap. It was exhilarating. He sat looking through the blur of water trickling over his eyes at the bright sun-lit street and the hazy figures of pedestrians moving about. He sat there forgetful of existence till the water suddenly ceased to flow. He got up, dried his body with a piece of cloth, and combed back his straggling hair with his fingers. He felt hungry. He sniffed the air—the smell of clove, cinnamon, and strange spices frying in ghee floated down with the breeze. It reminded him of The Great Mahratta Hotel — a smoke-stained shack beyond a couple of lanes, which was as heaven to those that had a taste for biriyani, or pulay. When he emerged from its portals he could hardly stand erect, being heavy with food. He returned to his pyol, flung himself on it, and slept instantly.

He opened his eyes at about four o'clock in the afternoon. He flung out his limbs, and twisted his trunk and yawned. He still felt drowsy. He didn't like the drowsiness that clouded his mind. They say coffee is good for such things—' He got down from the pyol and slouched along till he came to a



coffee hotel on the main road. He felt proud that he could afford to sit in a chair and order coffee. He touched his money bag tenderly. After two cups of coffee he felt refreshed and came out. While receiving change at the counter, he heard the school bell ring. This put him in mind of the children. 'Let me run back to my place; they will soon be passing down-'. His eye fell on a display of sweets and edibles of all fascinating colours and shapes in a shelf beside the counter. He reached out his hand, pointed at a group of sweets and said, 'Give me those-' 'One rupee a seer,' said the vendor impressively. 'Never mind,' said Kali and said, 'Give me a seer.' The vendor made a neat parcel of it in a green leaf and handed it to him. Its sweet flavour was overpowering. Kali unwound the thread that bound the package, took out a bit, put it on his tongue and shut his eyes in ecstasy. His fingers strayed towards the opening of the package to pick up another bit, 'Mustn't eat away all of it. It's for those children. How little for a rupee!' he said to himself. He saw school children already coming down the road. He held out the package towards three children who came chattering among themselves. They were so much engrossed in their own talk that they did not notice him. He felt disappointed. He felt somewhat shy in the presence of these angels. Then came a pair, a young fellow wearing shorts and carrying a broken slate under his arm, and his sister flying green ribbons in a pig-tail. He stepped up before and asked, 'Sweets?' He opened and held up the package. They looked into it, lured by its aroma and colour. Their mouths watered, but they hesitated. Kali said, 'Come on, take as much as you want.' 'Father will be angry if we eat anything outside.' Kali laughed at it and said, 'Why should a father be angry? He will be happy if you tell him what good sweets you have eaten. It costs a rupee a seer.' This argument appealed to the younger of the two, and he put his hand in, snatched up a piece and ate it with great relish. Meanwhile more children arrived and surrounded Kali. He was delighted. They pressed forward, and

very soon the package was snatched away from Kali's hand and the children shouted and scrambled. The street presented a scene of wild revelry. Traffic came to a standstill. Passers-by stood around, wondering what all the commotion was about. Somebody asked a child, 'What's all this?' The child answered, 'Sweets. That bearded man gave us sweets.'

'Who? That fellow!' The man dashed forward and caught Kali by the wrist. Kali was taken aback and shook the other off at which he shrieked out. 'Help! Help! Here is the kidnapper of children.' Soon a big crowd collected. Various persons held up the children and asked excitedly. 'Did he give you sweets? Oh! Why did you accept? Don't you know what is happening?' A babble broke out: 'You know five children are missing in a school, and ten children have died of poisoned sweets in our street.'

'I saw with my own eyes children dying on road-side.' Over this another shouted, 'It is a regular gang. They are from Himalayas.' 'It is a monstrous sect, every member of which has vowed to sacrifice a hundred children.'

'See how he looks! He is not of these parts.' The children gazed on Kali from a distance and shuddered, 'Oh, how frightful he looks with his beard!' The result of all this talk was that a crowd was pounding and tearing at Kali, the more he resisted, the more violent they grew. They chased him from place to place. The whole city seemed to be after him now. They pushed him down and sat on his chest. He tried to ask 'What have I done?' But nobody would let him speak. Blood trickled down and dripped on his tongue. He felt suffocated. 'They will kill me if I don't get up.' He heaved himself up, shot out his arm, seized a nearby stone and hit the nearest man. That relieved the congestion a little. He shot out his elbows and hit people in their faces; that gave him a little more space; he wriggled and kicked and was on his feet very soon. He fled down the road with a yelling crowd behind him. A crowd from the opposite side hemmed him in. He turned and dashed into the nearest house on his side



and bolted the door. The inmates of the house hugged their children and rushed away screaming. Kali sank on the floor as the door was banged upon on the other side. He half-heard the clamour that was going on all around. He heard it distantly. He was bleeding through a dozen wounds, and felt drowsy. Presently some persons climbed the roof tiles, dropped themselves in, and opened the secret door. A great crowd pressed their way into the house. Kali's mind was far away, and he could not take any interest in his surroundings. Presently several arms carried him out. He might have been a hero they were attempting to chair. They tossed him about like a ball.

The police arrived. They had to struggle their way through the crowd and get at Kali only by the use of their batons.

Two weeks later, Kuppan and the 'blind beggar' stood beside Kali's bed in a hospital. When the nurse moved away Kuppan leant over and whispered, 'You can come back to our old pyol and people won't hurt you any more because they will think you are someone else. The doctors have shaved off your beard and every hair on your head. Did you know it?' The 'blind man' added 'You will be all right soon. But thereafter leave children alone. What have you to do with them?' Through the gaps in the bandage swathing his head, Kali's eyes twinkled as he murmured, 'Hereafter I'll turn and run as if a tiger chased me, if I see the tiniest tot ahead of me in a street.'

### Glossary

pyol	: a raised platform either on one or both sides of the front door of houses; could be used to sit on
engrossed	: deeply absorbed in
lolling	: resting lazily
hampered	: hindered, prevented
urchin	: generally applied to a street rogue

adrift	: floating, free
brawny	: having strong muscles
formidable	: causing fear
brood	: worry, feel sorry for oneself
sprawl	: spread out, to lounge
admiringly	: in an approving manner
scrawl	: to write or draw in a hurry or in an untidy manner
ferverently	: excitedly, with great enthusiasm
hum	: continuous noise
emanate	: to come from or come out of
mystic	: of hidden meaning
elated	: filled with great joy
stuffings	: materials used for filling
grog shop	: arrack shop
pester	: to annoy, to trouble
testingly	: to subject one to a test
exhilarating	: making one feel glad
blur	: haze, cloud
straggling	: spreading out in different directions, untidy
clove	: a dried aromatic flower bud, used as a spice
cinnamon	: a dried aromatic tree bark, used as a spice, either ground into powder or used in strips
shack	: a small shed
portals	: doorways
yawn	: to open the mouth sleepily
clouded	: not clearly visible
slouched	: to stand, sit or walk with a part of one's body drooping or bending down
edibles	: eatables
vendor	: seller
seer	: unit of measurement that is now no longer used
ecstasy	: great joy
strayed	: wandered
engrossed	: occupied, engaged