

4.5 A Battle to Baffle

WARMING UP

1. Form suitable groups and discuss the following.

You have heard / read stories of Akbar and Birbal, Tenali Raman, Mulla Nasruddin. Recollect and write down the names of those stories.

Pick out those aspects of a story that you find a common in all their stories.

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| (1) Humour | (2) Supernatural events |
| (3) Wisdom | (4) Suspense |
| (5) Magic | (6) Beauty of Nature |
| (7) Wit | (8) Play upon words |
| (9) Sad end | (10) Violence |

2. Read the different types of sentences in Reported Speech and note the differences in the Direct and Indirect forms.

- (a) Direct : The old man said, “What is the time?”
(b) Indirect : The old man asked what the time was.
- (a) Direct : Mother said to her, “Are you hungry now?”
(b) Indirect : Mother asked her if she was hungry, then.
- (a) Direct : Teacher said, “Be quiet students.”
(b) Indirect : Teacher ordered the students to be quiet.
- (a) Direct : Mother said, “How pretty she looks!”
(b) Indirect : Mother exclaimed with delight that she looked very pretty.

You will observe that –

- (1) The Reporting Verb changes according to the type of sentence in the speech.
- (2) Change of Tense
- (3) Change of the word order in the sentence.

3. Use a dictionary and find the differences in the following terms related to ‘Drama’.

- | | | | |
|------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| (1) A Play | (2) One-act Play | (3) Skit | (4) Mime |
| (5) Farce | (6) Opera | (7) Tragedy | (8) Comedy |

A Battle to Baffle

A Skit

Characters :

Tenali Raman : a witty poet - jester in the court of Emperor Krishnadevaraya

Krishnadevaraya : Emperor of Vijayanagar Empire (1509-1529)

Pundit Shahane : A highly learned visiting scholar

Mantriji : The Chief Minister

8 to 10 other courtiers / ministers / scholars

Scene

The Court room of Krishnadevaraya

(The Emperor is seated on his throne Courtiers / scholars / ministers are seated in two rows facing one another and discussing softly.)

Mantriji : (Standing up and bowing) Your Royal Highness, I have some urgent news to convey. May I have your kind permission to announce it?

Emperor : Yes Mantriji, you may.

Mantriji : Maharaj, a very great scholarly Pundit – Pundit Shahane – has arrived here. He has mastered all our **scriptures** and has won great **renown** all over India.

Emperor : He must be a truly brilliant Pundit.

Mantriji : Very true, Maharaj! What's more, Pundit Shahane has come here to challenge all the Pundits in our Kingdom. He is visiting our court tomorrow.

(All Courtiers, Pundits etc. begin to show nervousness and appear restless.)

Emperor : Hmm! Challenge the knowledge of our Pundits? I'm not sure.

(Looking at the court.)

Who all among you can take up this daring test of **defiance**? Come forth.

(All put their heads down in silence.)

Emperor : (annoyed) : Not one of you can face the Pundit? I am ashamed of all of you. I shall debar you from my court. I have never felt more disgusted. Hmmph! In fact, I shall sentence you all to.....

◆ **scriptures** : sacred writings

◆ **renown** : fame

◆ **What announcement unnerved the Courtiers and Pundits?**

◆ **defiance** : (here) a bold challenge

● **voice** : to express something

● **exiled** : sent away from the native country

◆ *What suggestion was proposed by the first scholar?*

● **predicament** : a difficult, unpleasant situation

● **tight corner** : a difficult situation

● **diffident** : not confident

● **outwit** : prove to be cleverer than

◆ *What was the condition put forth by Tenali Raman?*

● **protocol** : an official procedure

First Scholar : Excuse me, Maharaj! I have a suggestion. I humbly seek your permission to **voice** it.

Emperor : (*still annoyed*) What is it? It had better be a good one or you shall be the first one to be **exiled** from Vijayanagar.

First Scholar : Thank you, Your Majesty! I am confident. Let us send for Tenali Raman. He will certainly find a solution to this **predicament**.

Second Scholar : (*Standing up*) That's an excellent idea. Let us call Tenali Raman. He shall certainly pull us out of this **tight corner**.

Emperor : Summon Tenali Raman at once.

(*A guard leaves and fetches Tenali Raman.*)

(*Enter - Tenali Raman bowing to the Emperor.*)

Tenali Raman : (*bowing*) I am at your service, Your Highness. Your wish is my command.

Emperor : Tomorrow, Pundit Shahane, a most well-read, well-known scholar is coming to our court to challenge our Pundits. All of them here are **diffident** of taking him up. They have recommended you to **outwit** the challenger. Will you accept it?

Tenali Raman : Most certainly, Your Majesty. Let me assure you that I shall not let you down. But I have a small request. When Pundit Shahane arrives tomorrow, all must accept me and honour me as the Chief Pundit, for one day.

(*All agree and nod their heads.*)

Mantriji : We certainly will. And I shall see to it that you are brought in with honours.

Emperor : Court dismissed!

(*All exit after the emperor does.*)

(*Next Day - Courtiers, etc are seated.*)

Emperor's arrival is announced. As per

protocol *all stand up and bow as the*

Emperor proceeds and takes up his place.)

Emperor : Be seated!

(All sit)

- Mantriji** : With your **benign** permission, you Royal Highness, may I call the great Pundit Shahane and Pundit Tenali Raman?
- Emperor** : Yes, let them be brought forth at once.
(Guards hurry out. Enters Pundit Shahane, escorted by two soldiers.)
- Mantriji** : Your Highness, this is Pundit Shahane – the most **revered** and honoured master scholar of our ancient scriptures. The Pride of India.
(Pundit Shahane gives a slight bow to the Emperor. Emperor nods in **acknowledgement** and gestures him to be seated.)
- Mantriji** : And now may I announce the greatest of great scholars in Vijayanagar, the Chief Pundit Tenali Raman.
(Tenali Raman enters, carried on a **palanquin**. Gets off, bows to the Emperor, then to Pundit Shahane.
Two Pundits follow carrying a huge bundle in silken cloth. They place it next to Tenali Raman.)
- Emperor** : All of you, be seated, let the Pundits begin the debate.
- Tenali Raman** : (Placing his hand on the bundle next to him and twisting his moustache with the other)
Let us begin by discussing the merits of ‘tila- kashta - mahisha - bandhana’
- Pundit Shahane** : (Taken aback) Wh.....wh..... What was that?
- Tenali Raman** : (loudly) Let us debate on the virtues of the scripture ‘tila kashta - mahisha - bandhana’
- Pundit Shahane** : (Stands up, wondering. Moves forward, talks to himself)
I have read thousands of scholarly works in Sanskrit. But I’ve never even heard of what was that name tila. bandhana something like that. How can I discuss its merits?

● **benign** : kind and gentle

● **revered** : respected

◆ **How did Mantriji introduce Pundit Shahane?**

● **acknowledgement** : acceptance

● **palanquin** : an ancient box-like structure to transport one person and carried by four to six people with the help of two long poles

◆ **How did Tenali Raman make his entry to Emperor’s court?**

● **Taken aback** : shocked

◆ **What scripture did Tenali Raman wish to debate upon?**

◆ **Why was Pundit Shahane defeated?**

● **concede** : admit, confess

● **coarse** : rough

◆ **What explanation did Tenali Raman give about the name of the strange scripture?**

◆ **How did the emperor and courtiers react?**

(Pundit Shahane walks up and down in deep thought. The onlookers give sly smiles. Finally Pundit Shahane throws up his hands.)

Pundit Shahane : I give up! A thousand apologies, Your Highness. I have not read the scripture that Tenali Raman mentions. I **concede** defeat. Tenali Raman is the greatest of all scholars.

(Bows and exits)

(Emperor looking at Tenali Raman)

Emperor : I am proud of you and grateful for saving the reputation and honour of our great empire. Let me reward you.

Tenali Raman : *(Smiling and bowing)* Your words of praise are my greatest reward, your Highness.

Emperor : But tell me Raman, to what great work did you refer?

(Tenali Raman opens the bundle and removes a bundle of sticks tied with a thick coarse rope.)

Tenali Raman : Maharaj, 'til' is sesame 'Kashta' is a stick, so 'tilakashta' refers to the sticks or stems of sesame plants, that you see in my hands. *(Pointing to the rope)* This is a rope used to tie up buffaloes. 'Mahisha' means a buffalo, 'bandhana' is the rope used to tie up something. So this is the 'tila-kashta- mahisha-bandhana.'

Emperor : *(laughing loudly)* So the Pundit got scared when he heard such a complicated name.

(Laughs again. Everyone joins in the laughter.)

(Curtain)

1. Read the following words and use them in sentences of your own.

Renown, defiance, exiled, predicament, diffident, benign

2. Read the following phrases and use them in the sentences of your own in proper form.

- voice something
- a tight corner
- outwit
- concede defeat

3. Pick out dialogues of Tenali Raman that prove that he had the following qualities.

- (a) Wit and wisdom
- (b) Self-confidence
- (c) Politeness
- (d) Humility

4. Answer the following questions in short.

- (a) What was Pundit Shahane's claim as a scholar?
- (b) Why did Pundit Shahane visit Vijaynagar?
- (c) What do you learn about Pundits of Vijaynagar?
- (d) What punishment did the emperor threaten the Pundits with?
- (e) Why was Tenali Raman summoned to the court?
- (f) On what condition did Tenali Raman agree to take up the challenge?
- (g) Why was Tenali Raman taken to the court in a palanquin?
- (h) How did Tenali Raman outwit Pundit Shahane?
- (i) What did the bundle in silken cloth contain?
- (j) Explain the significance of the title.

5. Fill in the elements that you find in the drama script of 'A Battle to Baffle.'

Characters :

- Background Scene :
- Crisis :
- Steps taken to resolve the crisis :
- Climax :
- The end :

6. Do as directed. (Make sure you do not change the meaning and tense of the sentence).

- (a) Tenali Raman proved to be wittier than Pundit Shahane. (Rewrite using 'as witty as')
- (b) Pundit Shahane has come here. He wishes to challenge all the Pundits in our Kingdom. (Combine the two sentences using 'so'. Now combine the same sentence using 'because')

- (c) How can I discuss its merits? (Make it Assertive)
- (d) I have not read that scripture. (Rewrite using ‘unaware’)
- (e) Your words of praise are my greatest reward. (Begin the sentence with ‘No other’)
- (f) I am proud of you. (Rewrite using the noun form of the underlined word).
- (g) The Emperor said, “ But tell me Raman, to what great work did you refer?”
(Convert into the Indirect Speech).
- (h) Tenali Raman was a poet scholar and jester in Vijaynagar in Krishnadevarayas court. (Punctuate.)
- (i) Mantriji said Maharaj Pundit Shahanes visit to our court is an open challenge.
(Punctuate.)

7. A past student of your school has cleared his UPSC examination and being an IAS officer, has been appointed the Collector of your district. Write a formal letter to invite him to your school to share the story of his success, at a special function.

8. Understand the quotation and expand it in a paragraph format.

‘Pride goes on horseback, but returns on foot’.

