

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 3: ISWARAN THE STORYTELLER



ISWARAN THE STORYTELLER

~Summary~

-by RK Laxman

Job of Mahendra

Mahendra was a junior construction supervisor in a firm. His job was to supervise the work at a construction site. Once the job would be over, he used to be shifted to another construction site. Thus, the nature of his job was to move from one place to another place.

Iswaran: Amazing Servant and Entertainer

Mahendra's needs were simple as he was a bachelor. He had kept a servant named Iswaran for domestic work. Iswaran followed Mahendra without any complaint. He cooked for Mahendra, washed his clothes and cleaned his shelter. In leisure time, Iswaran read Tamil thriller stories and this affected him so much that even a small incident like a fallen tree appeared to him a bushy beast. Iswaran described everything in detail and weaved a new story full of thrill and horror to Mahendra every day. He played the role of a TV in providing entertainment to Mahendra.

Iswaran Narrates Story of a Tusker

Once, Iswaran told Mahendra a story about his schooldays describing a tusker (wild elephant) and how he behaved when he got mad. The tusker escaped out of a timber yard, destroying everything that came in his way. It entered Iswaran's school. Everyone there was terrified but not Iswaran. He grabbed a cane from a teacher's hand and faced the mad tusker boldly. He hit sharply with the cane onto the third toe of one foot of the elephant and it shivered and collapsed. At this point, Iswaran would leave the story and Mahendra remained in a dangling situation.

Iswaran Narrates Story of a Ghost and Mahendra's Reaction

On another occasion, one auspicious day, he weaved a story about a ghost woman holding a fetus in her hands on a full moon night. Mahendra asked him to stop telling him such nonsense stories as Mahendra did not believe in ghosts and there are no such type of figures.

Mahendra's Encounter with Ghost

After a few days, Mahendra was woken up by some noise near his window sill during the night. First he thought that it was some sort of small animal like a cat, but the noise became louder and louder.

When he peeped through the window, he thought that he saw a cloudy figure clutching a bundle near his window sill. Mahendra could not sleep any more that night. In the morning, Iswaran smilingly asked about the sound and the woman ghost. He also complained about how Mahendra had chided him the other day. Mahendra was so upset that he resigned his site job immediately.

Conclusion of Iswaran the Storyteller

The chapter – Iswaran the Storyteller illustrates a lesson that we should not get carried away by stories shared by other people or assume it as reality. We should apply our own wit and intelligence before we see it with our own eyes. Don't be quick to believe what you hear because lies or rumours spread faster than the truth.

NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 18)

(Think about it)

Question 1. In what way is Iswaran an asset to Mahendra?

Answer: Iswaran was the cook of Mahendra. He would follow him uncomplainingly wherever he was posted. He would cook for him, wash his clothes and chat away with him. He could weave out endless stories and anecdotes on varied subjects. That is how he was an asset to Mahendra.

Question 2. How does Iswaran describe the uprooted tree on the highway? What effect does he want to create in his listeners?

Answer: Iswaran described the uprooted tree on the highway with his hands held out in a dramatic gesture. He said, "The road was deserted and I was all alone. Suddenly I spotted something that looked like an enormous bushy beast lying sprawled across the road. I was half inclined to turn and go back. But as I came closer I saw that it was a fallen tree, with its dry branches spread out."

He wants to create suspense in his listeners.

Question 3. How does he narrate the story of the tusker? Does it appear to be plausible?

Answer: He narrates the story of the tusker in an exaggerated way. He tells that a tusker escaped from the timber yard and began to roam about, tearing up wild creepers, stamping on bushes and breaking branches at will. It came into the main road and smashed the small shops selling fruits, mud pots and clothes. It then entered a school ground. It grunted and wandered about, tearing down the volleyball net, kicking and flattening the drum kept for water, and uprooting the shrubs. Teachers had climbed up to the terrace of the school building and helplessly watched the depredations of the elephant.

Iswaran tells that he was in junior class back then and was watching the drama from the rooftop. He hit the elephant's toenail with a stick and the elephant shivered from head to foot and then it collapsed.

It does not appear to be plausible because it is close to impossible for a child to control a mad elephant where even the adults are trying to save themselves! Also, getting beaten by a stick on the toenail would not make a huge mammal shiver and collapse.

Question 4. Why does the author say that Iswaran seemed to more than make up for the absence of a TV in Mahendra's living quarters?

Answer: The author says that Iswaran seemed to more than make up for the absence of a TV in Mahendra's living quarters because not a day would pass without Iswaran telling some story packed with adventure, horror and suspense. Whether the story was credible or not, Mahendra enjoyed listening to it because of the inimitable way in which it was told.

Question 5. Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination. What happens to him on a full-moon night?

Answer: Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination when Iswaran tells that he has seen a female ghost holding a foetus in its arms.

One full-moon night, Mahendra was woken up from his sleep by a low moan close to his window. He first thought it to be a cat prowling around for a mouse. He was tempted to know the source of the sound. Lowering himself to the level of the windowsill he looked out at the white sheet of moonlight outside. Not too far away, there was a dark cloudy form clutching a bundle. Mahendra broke into a cold sweat and fell back on the pillow, panting.

Question 6. Can you think of some other ending for the story?

Answer: In the given story, the climax is that Mahendra is acutely frightened by the possibility of the ghost actually entering his room the previous night. He resolves to leave the haunted place the very next day.

Another climax could have ended up with Mahendra being more courageous and trying to find out the reality instead of running away from it. He would have found that the entire story was cooked-up by Iswaran and he was the one holding the bundle in the night to scare Mahendra and make him believe his story.

Questions (Page No. 18) (Talk about it)

Question 1. Is Iswaran a fascinating storyteller? Discuss with your friends the qualities of a good storyteller. Try to use these qualities and tell a story.

Answer: Yes, Iswaran is a fascinating storyteller. He has the art of storytelling. He builds up the required amount of suspense and thrills his listeners.

- Qualities of a good storyteller are:
- Sound oratory skills
- Understanding of gestures to be used
- Understanding of facial expressions to be used
- Good imagination and creativity
- In-depth understanding of tone and pitch to be used
- Decent acting skills so as to keep listeners engaged