



पुर्णता International School

Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul, Zundal

Class 9 Lesson 3 - Iswaran the Storyteller

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Introduction

The title of this chapter- “**Iswaran the storyteller**” tells us that this story is about Iswaran. He is called the storyteller because as storytelling is an art, he is good at it. Iswaran uses special effects, does voice modulation, uses his body language to make the story realistic so that the listener, i.e. Mahendra gets attracted and captivated in his story. The writer wants to highlight this quality of Iswaran - that he was so good at telling stories that they appeared to be real. His stories were a source of entertainment for Mahendra.

Explanation



Mahendra narrated a story about his cook Iswaran to Ganesh. Mahendra worked as a junior supervisor in a company which provided junior supervisors to various construction companies on rent. He got posted at different sites like factories, bridges and dams which were under construction. Mahendra’s work was to keep an eye on all the workers at the site. He had to change places often and worked at various places like a coal mine, railway bridge construction site and the construction site of a chemical plant.

As Mahendra was unmarried, he did not have a family, he was able to live in these temporary quarters provided at the construction sites. He adjusted well in the circuit houses which did not provide the basic amenities or even the tents which were temporary in nature. Mahendra had an

advantage - he was accompanied by his cook Iswaran. Iswaran was very close to Mahendra and accompanied him everywhere. He did not complain about the tough conditions in which he had to live. He cooked food for him, washed his clothes and gave him company by talking to him at night. Iswaran had a quality- that he was good at telling stories and he entertained Mahindra with his stories which were based on different subjects.



Mahendra tells Ganesh that Iswaran was a great cook. Whenever they shifted to a new location, he would gather all the vegetables and other ingredients required by him to cook in no time. As they lived at places which was not inhabited by many people, in temporary shelters with roofs made of metallic sheets, it seemed as if he would do some magic and gather all the ingredients out of nowhere.

Mahendra would wake up early in the morning, get ready and leave for work after eating his breakfast. He would carry his lunch along with him. After he left, Iswaran would clean their living place, wash Mahendra's clothes and have a nice bath. He would take many buckets of water and pour water on his head while mumbling a prayer. After that he would eat his lunch and read his favourite book in Tamil language. Iswaran would get carried away with the details and descriptions given in the books that he read. Then, he would go off to sleep.

As Iswaran read stories with detailed descriptions, he narrated them in the same way. Mahendra recollects that he would narrate even a small incident with a lot of suspense and surprise which made it very interesting for the listener. Then he gives an example that instead of saying that he was walking down the highway and he came across a tree which had broken and had fallen on the road, Iswaran would use his facial expressions and bodily gestures to narrate it. He would say that the road was empty and he was all alone. This would create suspense in the listener's mind. Then he would say that all of a sudden he saw that a huge beast was lying across the road. As he walked ahead, his mind was telling him to turn and go back. As he reached closer, he saw that it was a tree that had fallen and was lying on the road. The branches of the tree had spread out and seemed as if it was a huge beast. Mahendra says that this talent of Iswaran made the simple story very interesting and it captivated him. Although he knew that some of the stories were not true.



the way in which Iswaran narrated them was so interesting that Mahendra would not say



anything and listened to him quietly.

Mahendra recollects another story told by Iswaran. Iswaran said that his native village was surrounded by a huge forest which was full of trees. The huge logs of timber were sold for commercial purposes. They were transported onto the vehicles by elephants. They were huge elephants and if they became mad, they would get out of control and the mahout would not be able to tame them. This introductory session was followed by a detailed story involving an elephant.

The story was narrated as follows. One day, an elephant escaped from the timber yard and roamed around the forest. It stepped on the bushes and crushed them, tore the creeper plants and broke branches of trees which came in its way. Iswaran asked Mahendra whether he knew how a mad elephant behaved. In order to make his story more effective, Iswaran stood up and jumped around the place, hitting his foot on the ground in order to copy the actions of the mad

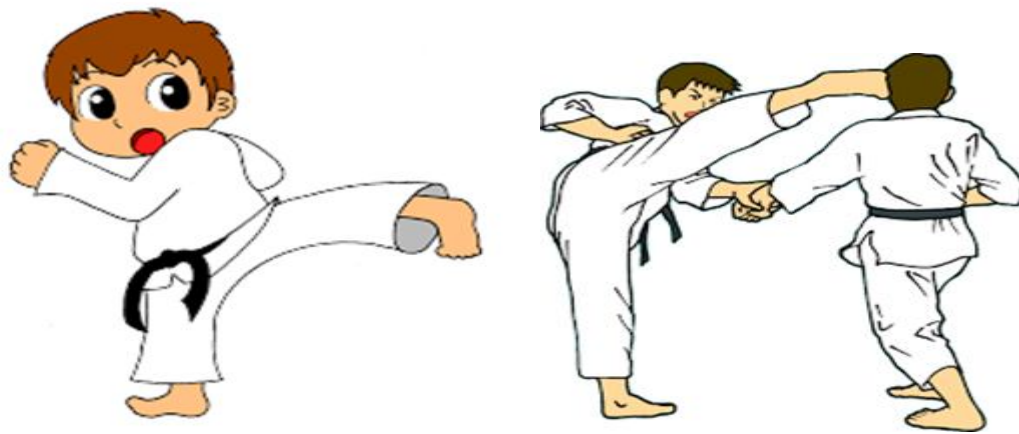
As the elephant reached the outer boundary of their town, it broke the fences. The fences seemed as if they were like matchsticks for the huge elephant. The elephant reached the main road and broke all the stalls selling different things like fruits, mud pots and clothes. The people were taken unaware and so, they ran here and there. Then it broke the wall of a school and entered the ground where the students were playing. All the students ran back into their classrooms and closed the doors. The elephant made loud noises and roamed around in the school ground. It broke the goal post in the football ground, tore the net that had been put up in the volleyball court, stepped on the water drum and broke it and tore many plants as well. The teachers had climbed onto the roof of the school building and watched helplessly as the elephant destroyed the school property. There was not even a single person to be seen around. All the streets of the town were empty as all the people was scared of the mad elephant.

At the time of the incident, Iswaran was studying in one of the junior classes in the school. He was watching the elephant from the rooftop. Suddenly, he took the stick from one of the teachers and ran downstairs towards the school ground. The elephant made a loud noise when he saw a small boy approaching it. It lifted a branch of a tree in its trunk, hit its foot on the ground which threw a lot of mud and dust in the air. The elephant was threatening Iswaran but the boy was not afraid of it. With the stick in his hand, he moved towards the elephant, slowly. Many people had climbed on to the rooftops of their houses and were watching the incident. They were standing still and were awestruck, waiting to see what happened next. Iswaran saw that the

elephant had red - coloured eyes which were full of anger. It again lifted its trunk and made a loud trumpet sound as it was about to attack Iswaran. Just then, Iswaran gathered all his force, and hit the elephant's third toenail, quickly. The elephant was stunned at what had happened, then it reacted by shivering all over, fainted and fell on the ground, unconscious.

Mahendra was curious to know that how did the young Iswaran manage to overpower the huge elephant.

Iswaran said that he performed a Japanese martial art. He said it was either Karate or jujitsu. He had read about it somewhere that the martial art rendered a person unconscious by disrupting the nervous system.



Everyday Iswaran would narrate one or the other story full of adventure, horror and thrill. Sometimes Mahendra felt that the story was a fiction but still, he enjoyed listening to it because of the unique way in which it was narrated by Iswaran. As there was no television set at the place where they lived, these stories were a source of entertainment for Mahendra.

One morning, Mahendra was having his breakfast. Iswaran asked him if he could prepare a special meal for dinner as it was a good day. He added that on that day, they prepared special food for the souls of the dead elders of the family.

Iswaran had preparing a delicious dinner and Mahendra praised his cooking skills. Iswaran was happy on being praised but all of a sudden started narrating a detailed story relating to ghosts and supernatural powers which was disliked by Mahendra.



Iswaran said to Mahendra that the site of the factory was earlier a place where the dead were buried. Mahendra jerked out of the pleasant thought after the tasty meal. Iswaran continued that on the first day itself, he had seen a human skull lying on the ground when he was returning after buying vegetables. Even later, he had come across a number of skulls and bones lying around the place.

Iswaran added that sometimes he saw ghosts at night. Although he was not scared of them as he was a brave person but once, he saw a very horrible ghost of a woman. It appeared on a full moon night at 12 o'clock. It was very ugly, had matted hair and a shrunken withered face. It looked like a skeleton holding an unborn baby in its arms.

Mahendra disliked the story and interrupted sharply. He scolded Iswaran and said that he had gone mad. Mahendra said that ghosts did not exist. He added that it was Iswaran's imagination. He ordered Iswaran to get himself checked up - to get his digestive system and his brain examined as he was speaking nonsense. (Mahendra asked him to get his digestive system checked up because when a person is suffering from constipation, he gets nightmares and dreams of ghosts and supernatural powers).

Mahendra had thought that Iswaran would remain quiet for a few days as he had scolded him the previous night. He was astonished to see a cheerful and talkative Iswaran the next morning.



Mahendra showed that he was very brave but on the contrary, he was uneasy because of the story Iswaran had narrated. Every night before going to bed he peeped out of the window next to his bed to assure himself that there was no ghost around. He did not see any ghost but only saw darkness and the twinkling lights of the factory.

Before listening to insurance story Mahendra light watching the White coloured landscape on a full moon night as easwaran had told me that on a full moon night a female ghost haunted place, he stopped looking out on that night as he was afraid bumping into the Ugly ghost

One night as Mahendra was asleep, he was awakened by the sound of someone crying. He thought that it could be a cat looking for mice and tried to go back to sleep. The sound became more harsh and seemed to be a human sound. Mahendra wanted to peep out of the window but stopped himself as he was afraid that if he saw a ghost he could even die. The crying sound became louder and it did not appear to be the sound of a cat. Mahendra could not stop himself and so, he bent down and lifted his head slightly in order to peep out. In the White coloured moonlight, Mahendra saw the ghost. It was holding a bundle in one hand. Mahendra panicked, he was breathing heavily and fell back on the bed. After sometime, he recovered from the scary experience and thought that probably his subconscious mind was showing him the ghost as he had been thinking of it. He assured himself that actually there was no ghost and his mind was playing a trick on him.

By the time Mahendra woke up, took his bath and came out for breakfast, he had forgotten the ghostly experience of the previous night. Iswaran greeted him, gave him his lunch and his bag. As Mahendra was about to leave, Iswaran smiled and said that the other day, Mahendra had scolded him for discussing the ugly ghost but last night, Mahendra himself saw it. Iswaran had heard Mahendra's cries the previous night..

Iswaran's comment scared Mahendra once again. He did not hear him further and hurried off to his office. He decided to resign from the job and leave the haunted place. He could not live there any longer.

Summary

Iswaran's story was told to Ganesh by Mahendra who worked as a junior supervisor at different construction sites. As Mahendra was unmarried, he was able to live in the temporary shelters provided by the construction company. Iswaran accompanied Mahendra wherever he went. He was an advantage to him as he provided him company, cooked food for him and even washed his clothes. Mahendra says that Iswaran would gather all the things required to prepare a meal within no time. Every morning Mahendra would get ready, eat his breakfast, take his lunch along and go for his work. In the meantime, Iswaran would clean the living place, wash the clothes, take a bath, eat his lunch, read his favourite Tamil story book and take a nap. In the evening, Iswaran would entertain Mahendra with his stories. He had the art of storytelling as he would use his body gestures, facial expressions and voice modulation in order to bring his characters to life. Even though the stories seemed untrue, Iswaran narrated them in such a unique way that Mahendra listened to him with curiosity. Iswaran would start a story with an introduction, he would lay the background of the character, followed by the story. He described a simple incident in such detail, along with actions that it would create suspense in the listener's mind. Once he told Mahendra the story of an elephant that had escaped from the jungle and entered the town. The beast reached Iswaran's school. As it destroyed the school property, all the students locked themselves up in the classroom. At that time, Iswaran was studying in one of the junior classes. He was watching the incident from the rooftop. He took a stick from the teacher and came down stairs, in the ground. He walked towards the elephant as it threatened to attack him. Iswaran was not scared of it. He gathered all his strength and hit the elephant on its toenail quickly. This attack stunned the elephant, it fainted and fell on the ground. He did not complete the story and said that he was getting late for the dinner. He went to get the dinner but Mahendra was curious to know what happened next. As Iswaran did not continue with the story, Mahendra

had to remind him that the ending was pending. Then Iswaran said that a veterinary doctor was called. He brought the elephant back to consciousness and after two days a mahout was called who took the elephant back to the jungle. Mahendra asked Iswaran that how did he manage to overpower the huge beast. Iswaran replied that he used the technique of a Japanese martial art which was either Karate or Jujitsu. He had read about it somewhere, that the martial art was able to make a person unconscious by paralyzing the nervous system. Everyday Iswaran would narrate one or the other story which was entertaining for him and fulfilled the absence of a television in his living quarter. One morning Iswaran asked permission to cook a special dinner as it was the day when they cooked meal for the dead elders of the family. That evening Mahendra enjoyed a tasty meal and complimented Iswaran on his cooking skills. As Mahendra was relaxing after the meal, to his dislike, Iswaran started narrating a story related to ghosts and supernatural powers. He said that the factory area where they lived was earlier a burial ground. On the very first day, he had seen a human skull lying around. He added that he was not afraid of ghosts and saw many bones and skulls. On a full moon night, he saw an ugly ghost of a woman who had a shrunken face, matted hair and held an unborn baby in its arms. Mahendra was uneasy and scolded Iswaran for talking nonsense. He said that Ghosts did not exist and ordered him to get himself examined as he thought that he had gone mad. Since that day, Mahendra felt uneasy and would peep out of the window in order to check the presence of any ghost around. One night, Mahendra woke up from his sleep as he heard someone crying. At first, he thought that it was a cat looking for mice. As the sound became more harsh and deep, Mahendra could not ignore it and gave into the desire of peeping out of the window. As he looked out, he saw the white moonlight and a dark shadow holding a bundle in its arms. As he saw the ghost he started sweating, breathing heavily and fell back on the bed. After sometime, Mahendra thought that probably his subconscious mind was playing a trick on him and actually there was no ghost. He got ready the next morning and had forgotten the incident of the previous night. Iswaran greeted him and gave him his lunch bag. He said that a few days ago Mahendra had scolded him for discussing the ghost but last night he saw it himself. Iswaran had heard Mahendra crying at night. It was confirmed that Mahendra had seen the ghost the previous night and it was not a trick played by his mind. Once again, Mahendra was frightened, he left in a hurry and resigned from the job. He could not live at a haunted place for a single day.