

Unit 7



- Reading A** : Bonsai Life – Part I
- Reading B** : Bonsai Life – Part II
- Reading C** : I Can Take Care of Myself



Women Empowerment

Women Empowerment

Observe the pictures and discuss the questions that follow.



1. Who are these people? What do you know about them?
2. What makes a woman empowered?

Oral Discourse: Debate - “Education leads to empowerment of women.”

Bonsai Life

Part I

The moment I see letters waiting for me on the doorstep when I return from work, I can't contain my excitement. It's almost as if I'm face to face with my near and dear ones and they are speaking affectionately to me. Instantly the exhaustion of office work vanishes and my heart grows light. Instead of entering the kitchen muttering, 'Oh no, Oh God'—which is what I usually do when I come back tired—I feel like singing a song, humming a tune, making a nice cup of coffee and savouring each sip. What is more, the sight of inland letters or envelopes in a familiar hand gives me the energy and enthusiasm to quickly make and eat some *pakodas* or *bajjis*! Even though I am lazy about writing letters I love to receive one from some place or the other, every day.

This is an unexpected letter. If my *Akkayya*, who doesn't normally write, went out of her way to write a letter, there has to be a reason. As I open the letter, I am a little apprehensive. I hope it is not some bad news. Actually, when things are fine, no one bothers to write . . .

Ammalu!

You must be very surprised to receive my letter. You would be even more surprised if I were to tell you that your *Baavagaru* and I are coming to your place. We have been planning for quite a while to visit Kasi and Haridwar. We have now found the time. I hope you won't find our visit inconvenient. . .

"My dear, it seems *Akkayya* and *Baavagaru* are coming over," I said to my husband excitedly.

"Is that true? When? Where is it? Give me the letter," he said and pulled the letter from my hand. I went into the kitchen to get the coffee and other things ready.

Akkayya and *Baavagaru* were coming to this city and our home for the first time since my marriage. I had looked forward to their visit all these years. They had never left their little village to go anywhere. Using children, cattle, cooking etc., as excuses, they had always avoided moving out. Under such circumstances, imagine their coming to our house and to this big city!

Akkayya is not as educated as me. By "not as educated" I mean *Nannagaru* did not let her study after Class Five. Of what use was education for a girl? Those were the days when people thought it was enough if a girl was able to keep the washerman's accounts. A decade

later, when I was born, there wasn't much debate as to whether a girl should have education or not. I was lucky that my father changed with the times. He didn't even hesitate to send me to college. No girl who is well educated can be satisfied with staying at home, being a housewife and looking after the household after marriage. She would want to put her education to good use and achieve something in life. I too was driven by the same desire. Even though my husband had a good job, I took up one as well.

Because *Akkayya* was not educated, she was married to a man from the village. Though my *Baavagaru* was educated, his ideals made him choose agriculture as his profession and he settled down in the village to cultivate his land. *Akkayya* grew accustomed to the village life.

Akkayya brought so many things – cucumber, *gongura*, drumsticks, *appadams*, *vadiyams* and coconuts. “I hope you don't mind, I have brought you all these things, like *Kuchela*. I don't know whether you'll like them or not,” she said, rather hesitantly.

“Why do you say that? You've actually brought all the things we wanted! We don't get these things here.” If your *Maridi* has *gongura pulsu*, cucumber *pappu* and drumstick *charu* he feels as elated as if he has had a sumptuous feast! With my office work, I am unable to make *appadams* and *vadiyams*. Even if I have some free time, I am too lazy to do such work. You know me, don't you?” I said with a laugh.

“That's true, but by the time you come back from office you must be dead tired. How can you then prepare *appadams* and *vadiyams* and make *idlis* and *dosas*? I don't know how you are able to manage work at home and in the office,” *Akkayya* consoled me.

“What a wretched job! Sometimes, I feel like giving it up. You know, people say, solve your problems at home before you solve those outside. To neglect work at home and look after office work is an uphill task for a woman,” I said, speaking from experience.

“Don't think like that, *Ammalu*. How fortunate you are! Touchwood! You've studied well, have a job like a man and are earning very well. You don't have to beg anyone for anything. You are able to lead a dignified life unlike us who have to depend on our husbands even for a few paise worth of *karivepaku*,” said *Akkayya*.

The grass is greener on the other side, I thought to myself. “What's your daughter doing now?” I asked, changing the topic.

“She's in her final year at school. If by God's grace she clears her exams, I am determined to send her to college. Your *Baavagaaru* doesn't really like the idea of sending her to the next town and putting her in a hostel. But I don't like to keep a girl at home without educating her. Isn't what I'm going through enough? In these times, if a woman doesn't have a degree, she'll come to nothing. Without it, she will have to live under her husband's thumb, like a scorpion under a slipper,” she said.



Glossary

exhaustion (<i>n</i>)	:	extreme tiredness
vanish (<i>v</i>)	:	disappear
mutter (<i>v</i>)	:	complain about something privately
savour (<i>v</i>)	:	enjoy eating
elated (<i>adj</i>)	:	very happy, excited
sumptuous (<i>adj</i>)	:	grand
wretched (<i>adj</i>)	:	very unhappy, miserable
uphill (<i>adj</i>)	:	difficult
dignified (<i>adj</i>)	:	deserving respect



Comprehension

I. Tick (✓) the statements that are true.

1. The narrator receives letters very frequently.
2. The letter brought the news of the narrator's sister and brother-in-law's arrival.
3. The narrator's husband was very happy to hear the news of the visitors.
4. *Akkayya* was not interested to continue her studies.
5. The narrator's husband likes the traditional food of Andhra Pradesh.

II. Answer the following questions.

1. "The moment I see letters..... can't contain my excitement." Why does the narrator get excited?
2. What change did the narrator observe in her father's attitude towards education over a decade?
3. Why was *Akkayya* determined to send her daughter to college?
4. In what way is the narrator more fortunate than her sister?
5. Can one be independent without a job or earning? Justify your answer.

Bonsai life

Part II

From the very start *Akkayya* had been keen on studying. But *Nannagaru* didn't educate her. Because she was not adept at oral arithmetic, *Nannagaru* had said, "Ah 'she's a girl, how will studies get into her head?'" and had made her discontinue her lessons concentrating only on *Annayya's* education. Because she was uneducated, she got married to a man from a village, had to look after the cattle, keep the stove clean, draw water from the well. . . *Amma* used to be very upset that *Akkayya* had to go through such drudgery. Realizing that *Akkayya* was upset thinking of the past, and in an attempt to divert her mind, I led her to the balcony saying, "Come, let's go and sit outside."

Looking at the plants in the flowerpots, *Akkayya* mentioned that all the cucumbers, drumsticks and *gongura* were from their own backyard. I asked her to send some *gongura* seeds the next time someone came this way...

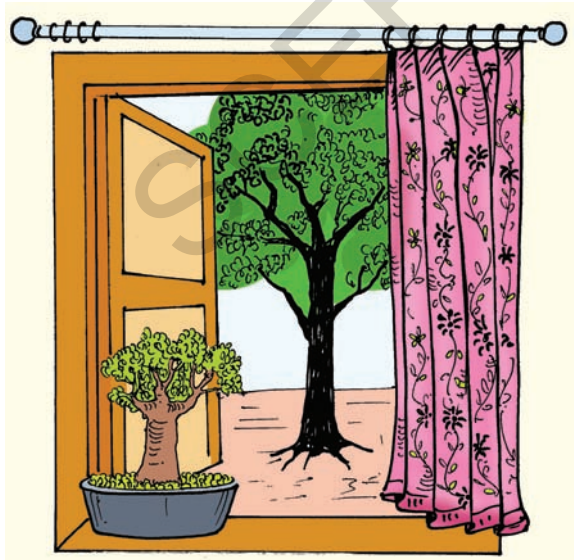
"But, *Ammalu*, what's this? Why have you planted the turayi and pomegranate trees in these flowerpots? See, how stunted they have become! If, like flower plants, you put these trees in pots instead of letting them grow freely in the backyard, how will they grow?" she asked, surprised, feeling sorry for the trees.

I burst into laughter. *Akkayya* was perplexed.

"I did it on purpose. It's a special method. It's called bonsai in Japan. You can grow

even a huge banyan tree in a flowerpot. You can grow it even with its roots hanging down from the branches. You have no idea how beautiful a pomegranate tree looks when you keep cutting its branches, changing the pot now and then, trimming it into a small-sized tree and making it bear fruit! Do you know how carefully you have to tend this small tree? Bonsai is a great art" I said.

But it seemed as if *Akkayya* didn't appreciate what I said. "I don't know. You have confined a turayi tree to a flowerpot when it could have grown to the height of a building," she sighed.



Feeling disheartened at being unable to impress *Akkayya* with my bonsai, I collapsed weakly into a chair. I was most distressed – as if the entire art I had learnt had come to nought. It was like throwing perfume into ash. Suddenly a dust storm began to rage. The sand hit our faces harshly. I caught hold of *Akkayya*'s shoulder and dragged her into the room. Then I closed the doors and windows in a hurry.

Akkayya was stunned.

“What’s all this? Everything was normal till now. Where did that dust and wind come from suddenly? You have tar roads too,” she said.

“This is how it is in the big city, my dear. Before we know what is happening, the storm brings all the sand from the Rajasathan desert and hits our face. . .” I had not completed my sentence when I could hear the rain beginning to fall. I opened the door and pulled the bonsai tree pots and flowerpots inside, under the canopy. *Akkayya* opened side window and looked at the streets to observe the weather in the Indian capital. “Look, *Ammalu*, look there,” she said. A new enthusiasm seemed to have crept into her voice. I looked eagerly through the window towards the street. I couldn’t understand what she meant. I looked at her and said, “What is it?”

“Look at that tree. . . look at how many people are standing under it without getting wet,” she said, as if it was something out of the ordinary. I saw nothing unusual in it. Realising that I had not understood what she was getting at, she said again, “Look how tall that turayi has grown. Out in the open, see how freely it has grown. However powerful the sand storm, it hasn’t bowed a little bit. Moreover, it has provided shelter to so many people, and is protecting them. Imagine how many would find respite from the hot sun under its shade!”

“What’s so surprising about that?” I asked.

“Not that it is surprising, *Ammalu*. Look at the bonsai you have tended so lovingly! It looks proper and sweet, like a housewife. But see how delicate it is. You have to tend it very carefully. It can’t even withstand a small dust storm or squall. When it is dependent on



someone, how can it provide shelter to anyone? Isn't it because of the difference in the way one brings up a boy and a girl, that a woman's life is like that of a bonsai?"

My heart was touched by Akkayya's words. Just as one frees a bird from a cage to let it fly, I felt the urge to free the bonsai trees from their flower pots.

Original Title: *Bonsai Bratukulu* by Abburi Chayadevi.
Translated from Telugu by Alladi Uma and M. Sridhar.

About the author

Abburi Chayadevi is a well known feminist writer born in 1933. She has written many short stories and essays. She was awarded the Central Sahitya Akademi in 2005. In her works, she elucidates women's life and their feelings.



Glossary

- adept (*adj*) : a natural ability to do something skilfully
- drudgery (*n*) : hard, boring work
- perplex (*v*) : confuse
- nought (*n*) : nothing / zero
- rage (*v*) : come with force
- stunted (*v*) : prevented from growth
- canopy (*n*) : a cover fixed over something for shelter
- respite (*n*) : a short period of rest
- squall (*n*) : a strong wind



Comprehension

I. Complete the statements giving more than one reason.

- 1. Girls should be educated like boys because...
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____

2. Fully grown trees are more useful because...
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____

II. Answer the following questions.

1. Why was Akkayya perplexed?
2. How is a bonsai reared?
3. What similarities do you notice between the bonsai tree and the house wife?
4. What made the narrator feel the urge to free the bonsai?
5. What is the central theme of 'Bonsai Life'?

III. Make a list of activities done by a homemaker and a working woman.

Homemaker	Working Woman

IV. Put a tick (✓) mark against the most appropriate meaning for the phrases given below.

1. '... to keep the washerman's account' means
 - a) to take care of household work.
 - b) to count clothes.
 - c) to maintain the washerman's account.
2. '... uphill task' means
 - a) high quality work.
 - b) a difficult job.
 - c) working on a hill.
3. '..... grass is greener on the other side' means
 - a) the grass on this side is green.
 - b) others are as good as we are.
 - c) others are in a better position than us.

4. ‘...like a scorpion under a slipper’ means

- a) killing a scorpion with a slipper.
- b) being guided and controlled.
- c) feeling totally suppressed.



Vocabulary

I. Look at the phrasal verb underlined in the following sentence.

‘I feel like giving it up. (give up).

What does it mean?

‘Give’ is a verb and ‘up’ is a preposition. Such combinations are called phrasal verbs. A phrasal verb normally gives a meaning different from the meaning of its parts.

‘Give up’ means ‘to stop doing something’.

Refer to a dictionary and find out the meaning of some more phrasal verbs beginning with ‘give’ and ‘look’.

give in	_____	look after	_____
give out	_____	look up	_____
give away	_____	look into	_____

Use the above phrasal verbs in your own sentences.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

II. Look at the simile in the following sentence.

Without it, she will have to live under her husband’s thumb ‘like a scorpion under a slipper’.

The life of a homemaker is compared to a scorpion under a slipper. When we compare two things, we often use the word ‘like’.

Here are a few more examples of similes.

1. He roars like a lion.
2. They eat like wolves.

A. Look at the following similes.

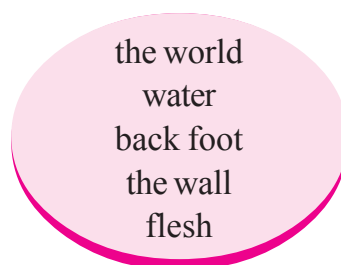
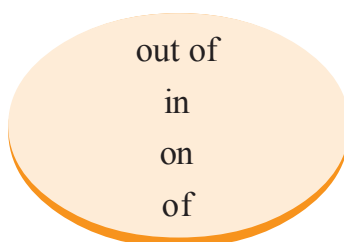
- a) bright like a full moon
- b) sleep like a log
- c) eat like a bird
- d) beautiful like a rose
- e) sweet like honey

Now write five sentences using the above similes.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

III. Make some idioms from the words in the circles and use them in your own sentences, one is done for you.

An idiom is a phrase similar to the phrasal verbs you have learnt in previous class. It is difficult to guess the meaning of an idiom by looking at the individual words.



Idiom

Sentence

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. fish out of water | When he was away from home, he felt like a fish out of water. |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |



Grammar

I. Read the sentences.

1. Akkayya grew accustomed to village life.
2. I went into the kitchen.

The words in circles are subjects. The words underlined are predicates.

II. Circle the subjects and underline the predicates.

1. The girls danced.
2. The dark clouds filled the sky.
3. Shiva drove a silver Toyota.

III. Identify subjects and predicates in each of the sentences in the following paragraph.

The narrator felt very happy to receive her sister and brother-in-law, who came to stay with them. They brought many things with them. *Akkaya* made special dishes for her sister's husband, which he liked very much. She praised her sister for being employed and making her living. She was very sorry about her position at home. One day the narrator showed her Bonsai plants and explained how they are grown but she did not like it. On a rainy day many people gathered under a tree to take shelter. Showing this, *Akkaya* made the narrator understand the importance of freedom in one's life.




Writing

Look at the following poster.

Handicrafts Exhibition Cum Sale

Innovative and original products by the crafts women from all over Telangana.



From 15th to 25th October

Inauguration:	By Hon'ble Home Minister.
Time:	4 p.m. on 15th October
Venue:	People's Plaza, Necklace Road, Hyderabad.

NO ENTRY FEE

ALL ARE WELCOME

T.S. DWACRA, Arunodaya building, Nampally, Hyderabad.

List the features of this poster.

e.g. Who has issued the poster? What is it about?

The date, time, place of the event, layout and nature of the sentences.

I. Now, make a poster based on the information given below.

1. **Issuing authority :** Telangana Arts and Crafts Society , Nizamabad.
2. **Event :** Dance performance by Aarthi.
3. **Date :** November 14.
4. **Chief Guest :** Honourable Chief Minister of Telangana.
5. **Venue :** Rajiv Gandhi Auditorium, Khaleelwadi, Nizamabad.



Listening

Listen to the debate on the topic ‘Education of the Girl Child Is a Burden’.

Now, complete the table based on the information you’ve just listened to:

Arguments		
	For	Against
Speaker 1		
Speaker 2		
Speaker 1		
Speaker 2		
Speaker 1		
Speaker 2		

I Can Take Care of Myself

Once upon a time, there was a mother rat who wanted to get her young daughter married as soon as possible, to the most powerful being that she could find. 'Who is the most powerful being on earth?' she asked herself. She saw the bright sun god travelling across the sky, and thought, 'Surely, all beings depend on the sun. The sun god is the most powerful being on this earth.' She asked the sun god, 'Are you the most powerful being on this earth?' He smiled, 'No, there is someone greater than me to help the creatures - it is the rain. Without the rain, no crop or tree would grow. There would be no water on earth.'

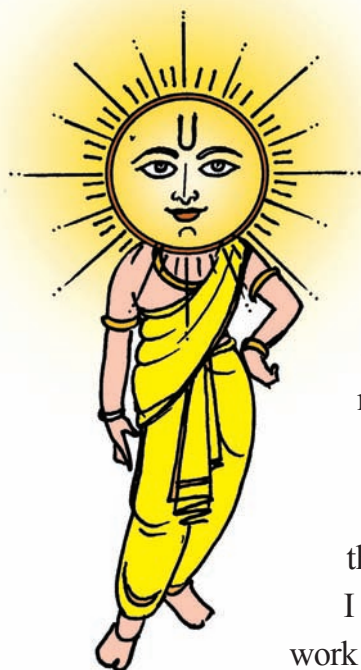


Just then, it began to rain. She thought, "How wonderful the rain is! It makes the whole land green. It makes the rivers flow. Surely, the rain god is the most powerful being on this earth. She asked the rain god, 'Are you the most powerful being on this earth?' He smiled, 'No, there is someone greater than me to help the creatures- it is the mountain. Without the mountain, there would be no protection for the creatures of this earth. The mountain blocks the clouds, and lets the water flow safely for the people and all life in the valleys.'

She looked around, and saw the beautiful blue mountain. She thought, "How big and strong the mountain is! It withstands all winds

and storms. It protects the earth and its creatures. Surely, the mountain god is the most powerful being on this earth. 'She asked the mountain god, 'Are you the most powerful being on this earth?' He smiled, 'No, there is someone greater than me to help the creatures-it is the worm. Without the worm, the earth would be hard and nothing would grow in the soil. The earthworm is the greatest friend that living beings can have.'





Just then, she saw her daughter coming towards her. She asked her mother, 'What are you doing?'

'I am trying to find out who the most powerful being on earth is', said the mother.

'Why?' asked her daughter. 'I want you to marry him and be safe,' said the mother.

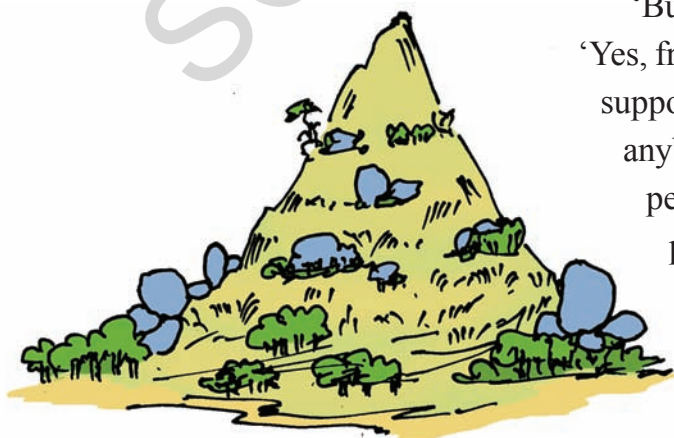
'Why would I need to marry to be safe?' asked the daughter. 'To be safe, I need to know how to take care of myself.'

'You are small. You need protection', said the mother rat.

'The best protection is to be able to protect oneself,' said the daughter. 'To protect myself, I need to learn to be strong and work hard.'

'But why would you need to work? If you marry someone rich and powerful, he will support you', said the mother rat. 'Who is rich and powerful, *amma*?' asked the daughter. 'The truly powerful being is one who can take care of oneself and those she loves. One is truly rich, if one is rich in love. I want to be powerful myself, so that I can take care of myself and those that I love.'

The mother rat was confused. 'What will you do?' she asked. 'I will learn to stand on my own feet. I will find work to do that supports me, and my family. For that, I need to learn more about the world, and learn to live in it as a good creature. Let me first learn to take care of myself.'



'But don't you need help?' asked the mother rat. 'Yes, from you, *amma*!' said the daughter. 'Help me support myself. I am not interested in marrying anybody, rich or powerful. Depending on another person's power, position or prosperity does not promise peace and security in the long run. One has to depend on the power within oneself to seek the target in one's life.'



Comprehension

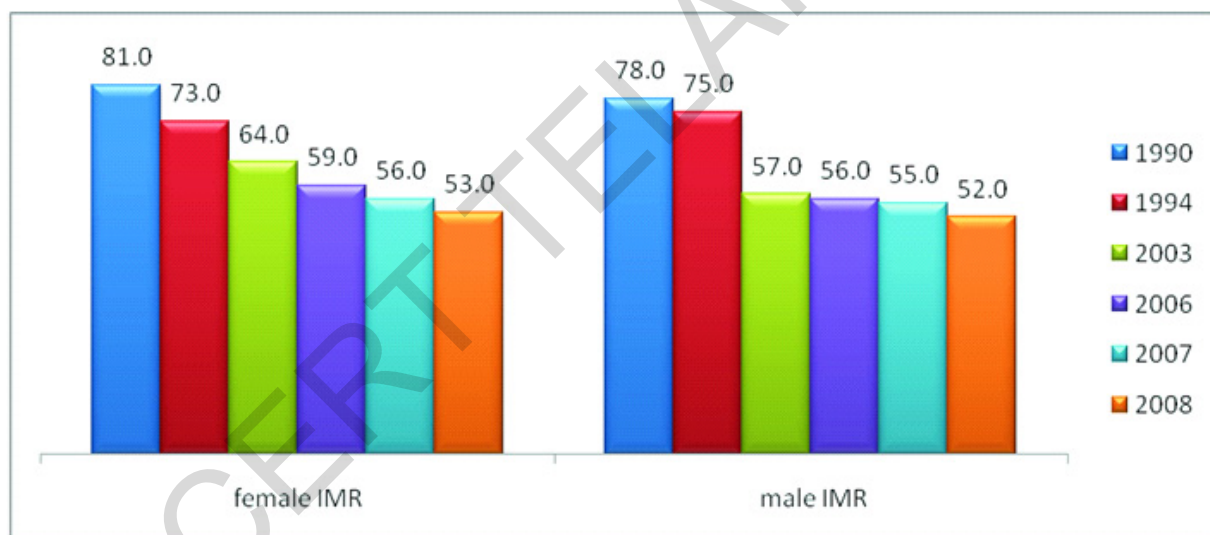
Answer the following questions.

1. What do you think is the most important thing to learn to live well ?
2. What are the skills or qualities that would help you to be independent in your life?
3. Do you agree/ disagree with the daughter of the mother rat? Give reasons for your response.



Study Skills

- I. Observe the data given in the bar diagrams related to male and female infant mortality rates (IMR) in India over the years 1990 to 2008 and answer the questions given.**



(Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation National Statistical Organisation - Website: www.mospi.gov.in)

1. In which year is the difference in infant mortality rates between male and female the highest?
2. In which case and in which year do we find a sudden decrease in the IMR?
3. What will happen if there is a wide gap in IMR between male and female?
4. What, according to you, may the reasons be for the female IMR being higher than the male IMR?
5. What may the reasons be for the decrease in IMR over the years?

6. Do you think there could be a further decrease in the IMR after 5 years?
7. What, according to you, may the reasons be for the death of more than half of both male and female infants?

II. Group work.

Discuss the above questions in your group and write an analytical report on the Infant Mortality Rates in India.



Oral Activity

A. Debate on the following proposition.

“Reservation in education, employment and legislature will empower the women.”

B. Given below are 4 different statements. Give your opinion and discuss with your classmates.

1. Interest in music, dance and sports distract from studies.
2. One should not be punished for telling the truth.
3. When an older person says something, we should blindly obey.
4. It is wrong for actors to model for cigarettes and fairness creams.



Project Work

A. Interview some female members in your family and neighbourhood with the following questions.

Would you like the girls in the family to take up a job after they have received education?

If yes, give some reasons.

If no, give some reasons.

B. Work on the following items.

Note down whether the woman you have interviewed is educated or uneducated; working / not working; married / unmarried.

Sl.No.	Name	Working		Not working		Opinion

C. Based on the above information write a report on ‘Woman Empowerment’ and present it to the class.

Self Assessment

How well have I understood this unit?



Read and tick (✓) in the appropriate box.

Indicators	Yes	Somewhat	No
I read and understood the text:			
A. Bonsai Life			
B. Bonsai Life			
C. I can Take Care of Myself			
I was able to understand and use the phrasal verbs given under 'Vocabulary'.			
I was able to frame idioms given under 'Vocabulary'.			
I was able to understand and identify subject and predicate given under 'Grammar'.			
I was able to write a poster given under 'Writing'.			
I was able to understand the debate given under 'Listening'.			
I listened to and understood “Education of the Girl Child is a Burden” and answered the questions given under 'Listening'.			
I was able to participate in a debate given under 'Oral Activity'.			
I was able to interview the neighbourhood women given under 'Project Work'.			

Our qualities and intelligences help us live well. ‘Personal Body Safety’ Rules help us be safe. These are:

- 1. Clothing rules - We keep private parts covered in front of others. Though we don’t cover our mouth, it is private too.
- 2. Touching rules – We don’t touch private parts in front of others.
- 3. Talking rules – We talk about private parts with Safe Adults.

If someone breaks ‘Personal Body safety Rules’, I can say ‘No’ to that person; GO away from that person as and when I can; TELL a safe adult about this person because he/she is doing something unsafe and has to be stopped.

I am a safe person if I follow Personal Body Safety Rules for myself and for others. Sometimes people may trouble us by breaking these rules. We may feel ashamed and find it difficult to speak about it to others. Remember that shame and blame are not in the body. Those who trouble us are the ones to be blamed and need to feel ashamed of their behaviour. Our laws (example POCSO Act 2012) prescribe punishment for such offenders.