

5 A HERO

For Swami events took an unexpected turn. Father looked over the newspaper he was reading under the hall lamp and said, ‘Swami, listen to this: “News is to hand of the bravery of a village lad who, while returning home by the jungle path, came face to face with a tiger” ‘The paragraph described the fight the boy had with the tiger and his flight up a tree where he stayed for half a day till some people came that way and killed the tiger.

After reading it through, father looked at Swami fixedly and asked. What do you say to that? Swami said, ‘I think he must have been a very strong and grown up person, not at all a boy. How could a boy fight a tiger?’

‘You think you are wiser than the newspaper?’ Father **sneered**. ‘A man may have the strength of an elephant and yet be a coward; whereas another may have the strength of a **consumptive**, but if he has courage he can do anything. Courage is everything, strength and age are not important.’

Swami disputed the theory. ‘How can it be, father? Suppose I have all the courage, what can I do if a tiger should attack me?’

‘Leave alone strength, can you prove you have courage? Let me see if you can sleep along tonight in my office room.’ A frightful proposition, Swami thought. He had always slept beside his **granny** in the passage and any change in this arrangement kept him trembling and awake all night. He hoped at first that his father was only joking. He **mumbled** weakly, ‘yes’, and tried to change the subject; he said very loudly and with a great deal of **enthusiasm**. ‘We are going to admit even elders in our cricket club hereafter. We are buying brand new bats and balls. Our captain has asked me to tell you’

‘We’ll see about it, later’ father cut in. ‘You must sleep along hereafter.’ Swami realised that the matter had gone beyond his control: from a challenge it had become a plain command, he knew his father’s **tenacity** at such moments.

‘From the first of next month I’ll sleep alone, father.’

‘No, you must do it now. It is disgraceful sleeping beside granny or mother like a baby. You are in the Second Form and ... I don't at all like the way you are being brought up,’ he said and looked at his wife, who was rocking the cradle. ‘Why do you look at me while you say it?’ she asked, ‘I hardly know anything about the boy’

‘No, no, I don't mean you,’ father said.

‘If you mean that your mother is spoiling him, tell her so, and don't look at me,’ she said and turned away.

Swami's father sat gloomily gazing at the newspaper on his lap. He prayed that his father might lift the newspaper once again to his face so that he might slip away to his bed and fall asleep before he could be called again. As if in answer to his prayer father rustled the newspaper, and held it up before his face. And Swami rose silently and **tiptoed** away to his bed in the passage. Granny was sitting up in her bed, and remarked. ‘Boy, are you already feeling sleepy? Don't you want a story?’ Swami made wild **gesticulations** to silence his granny, but that good lady saw nothing. So Swami threw himself on his bed and pulled the blanket over his face.

Granny said, ‘Don't cover your face. Are you really very sleepy?’ Swami leant over and **whispered**, ‘Please, please, shut up, granny. Don't talk to me, and don't let anyone call me even if the house is on fire. If I don't sleep at once I shall perhaps die.’ He turned over, curled, and **snored** under the blanket till he found his blanket pulled away.

Father was standing over him. ‘Swami, get up,’ he said. He looked like an **apparition** in the semi-darkness of the passage, which was lit by a cone of light reaching from the hall lamp. Swami stirred and groaned as if in sleep. Father said, ‘Get up, Swami.’ Granny pleaded, “Why do you disturb him?”

‘Get up, Swami’ he said for the fourth time and Swami got up. Father rolled up his bed, took it under his arm and said, ‘Come with me,’ Swami looked at granny, hesitated for a moment and followed his father into the office room. On the way he threw a look of appeal at his mother and she said, ‘Why do you take him to the office

room? He can sleep in the hall, I think.'

'I don't think so,' father said, and Swami **slunk** behind him with bowed head.

'Let me sleep in the hall, father, Swami pleaded. 'Your office room is very dusty and there may be scorpions behind your law books.'

'There are no scorpions, little fellow. Sleep on the bench if you like.'

'Can I have a lamp burning in the room?'

'No, you must learn not to be afraid of darkness. It is only a question of habit. You must cultivate good habits.'

'Will you at least leave the door open?'

'All right. But promise you will not roll up your bed and go to your granny's side at night. If you do it, mind you, I will make you the laughing-stock of your school.'

Swami felt cut off from humanity. He was pained and angry. He did not like the strain of cruelty he saw in his father's nature- He hated the newspaper for printing the tiger's story. He wished that the tiger hadn't spared the boy, who did not appear to be a boy after all but a monster.

As the night advanced and the silence in the house deepened, his heart beat faster. He remembered all the stories of devils and ghosts he had heard in his life. How often had his **chum**, Mani, seen the devil in the banyan tree at his street end? And what about poor; Munisami's father who spat out blood because the devil near the river's edge slapped his cheek when he was returning home late one night" And so on and on his thoughts continued. He was faint with fear. A ray of light from the street lamp strayed in and cast shadows on the wall. Through the stillness, all kinds of noises reached his ears-ticking of the clock, rustle of trees, snoring sounds, and some vague night insects humming. He covered himself with the blanket as if it were an armour, covered himself so completely that :he could hardly breathe Every moment he expected the devils to come up and clutch at his throat or carry him away, there was the instance of his old friend in the fourth class who suddenly disappeared and was said to have been carried off by a ghost to Siam or Nepal....

Swami hurriedly got up and spread his bed under the bench and **crouched**

there. It seemed to be a much safer place, more compact and reassuring. He shut his eyes tight and encased himself in his blanket once again and unknown to himself fell asleep and in sleep he was racked with nightmares. A tiger was chasing him. His feet stuck to the ground. He desperately tried to escape but his feet would not move; the tiger was at his back and he could hear its claws scratch the ground... scratch, scratch, and then a light **thud**... Swami tried to open his eyes, but his eye-lids would not open and the nightmare continued. It threatened to continue all his life... Swami groaned in despair. What an **inescapable** dream!

With a desperate effort he opened his eyes. He put his hand out to feel his granny's presence at his side, as was his habit, but he only touched the wooden leg of the bench. And his lonely state came back to him. He sweated with fright. And now what was this rustling? He moved to the edge of the bench and stared in the darkness, something was moving down. He lay gazing at it in horror. His end had come. He became desperate. He knew that the devil would presently pull him out and tear him to shreds, and so why should he wait? As it came nearer he crawled out from under the bench and **hugged** it with all his might, and used his teeth on it like a mortal weapon....

'Aiyo! Something has bitten me,' went for an agonised, thundering cry and was followed by a heavy **tumbling** and falling amidst furniture. In a moment father, cook and the servant came in, carrying light.

And all three of them fell on the **burglar** who lay amidst the furniture with a bleeding ankle....

CONGRATULATIONS came showering on Swami next day. His classmates looked at him with respect and his teacher patted his back. The headmaster said that he was a true scout. Swami had bitten into the flesh of one of the most **notorious** house-breakers of the district and the police was grateful to him for it.

The Inspector said, 'Why don't you join the police when you are grown up?' Swami said for the sake of politeness, 'Certainly, yes,' though he had quite made up his mind to be an engine driver, a railway guard. or a bus conductor, later in life.

When he returned home from the club that night, father asked,

Where is the boy?'

'He is asleep' 'Already!'

'He didn't have a wink of sleep the whole of last night.' said his mother.

'Where is he sleeping?'

'In his usual place,' mother said casually. 'He went to bed at seven-thirty.'

'Sleeping beside his granny again!' father said. 'No wonder he wanted to be asleep before I should return home-clever boy!'

Mother lost her temper. 'You let him sleep where he likes. You needn't risk his life again....' Father mumbled as he went in to change: 'All right, **mollycoddle** and spoil him as much as you like. Only don't blame me afterwards....'

Swami, following the whole conversation from under the blanket, felt tremendously relieved to hear that his father was giving him up.

R. K. Narayan

About the Author:

R. K. Narayan, born on 10 oct 1906 was a leading writer of Indian English Writing. Most of his works are set in the fictional south Indian town of Malgudi which was first introduced in *Swami and Friends*. His famous novel *The Guide* has been woven into the Hindi feature film 'Guide'. His works depict the social contexts and everyday life of his characters who are pre-eminently Indian. He is well known for his simplicity in prose style.

About the Text :

This is one of the most interesting stories from *Malgudi Days* written by R.K. Narayan. It is a story about a boy named Swami who is afraid of sleeping alone in darkness. He is mistaken to be a hero whose one desperate act leads to the imprisonment of the most notorious thief of the area. The boy's father compels him to sleep in a dark room alone in order to teach him a lesson of courage for his future life. The boy has a nightmare in which he is chased by a tiger and awakens only to find himself lonely and sees 'something moving down' which turns out to be a burglar.

GLOSSARY

sneered (v)	:	spoke in taunting way.
consumptive (n)	:	one who suffers from consumption of tuberculosis (T.B.)
granny (n)	:	also spelled 'grannie' i.e. grandmother or grandma,
mumbled (v)	:	spoke quietly, muttered
enthusiasm (n)	:	excitement, zeal, fervour
tenacity (n)	:	firmness, determination
tiptoed (v)	:	walked very quietly on toes
gesticulations (n)	:	gestures, expressing something by movements of hands and arms.
whispered (v)	:	spoke very quietly so that other people could not
under	:	stand, murmured
snored (v)	:	breathed in a very noisy way while sleeping
apparition (n)	:	ghost
slunk (v)	:	moved quietly without any other's notice
chum (n)	:	friend
crouched (v)	:	lay close to the ground by bending knees in fear.
thud (n)	:	a great frightening sound
inescapable (adj)	:	unavoidable
desperate (adj)	:	without any hope
hugged (v)	:	put the arms around and held tightly
tumbling (v)	:	falling
burglar (n)	:	a thief who breaks into house and steals things
notorious (adj)	:	infamous, well known for something which is undesirable or bad.
mollycoddle (n)	:	to protect someone too much from unpleasant experiences.

ACTIVITY 1: COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternatives:-

1. The Father wanted to test.....in Swami.
(a) courage (b) strength
(c) fear (d) bravery
2. Swami was instructed to sleep in.....by his father.
(a) passage (b) hall
(c) office room (d) bedroom
3. Every moment he expected theto come up and clutch at his throat or carry him away:-
(a) god (b) tiger
(c) devils (d) scorpions
4. Whom did Swami bit in the night?
(a) burglar (b) monster
(c) tiger (d) cook
5. This chapter is about
(a) a hero
(b) a boy who is afraid of loneliness and darkness
(c) a boy who fights with a tiger
(d) a dispute between a father and son.

B. Say whether the following statements are true or false. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false in brackets :

1. Courage is important than strength and age. []
2. Swami felt that his father was only joking. []
3. Swami went to his bed silently because he was sleepy. []
4. Father wanted to remove fear from the mind of his son. []
5. Swami had a sound sleep the whole of last night. []
6. His mother always supported Swami. []
7. Swami was really a hero. []

8. Swami bit the devil. []
9. Father pulled away Swami's blanket. []

C. Answer the following questions in not more than 30-40 words each:

1. What did the paragraph of the newspaper describe about?
2. Did Swami agree with the theory of courage given by the father?
3. What did Swami think of the boy who was reported in the newspaper to have fought with the tiger?
4. Why did Swami's father want him to sleep alone?
5. What did Swami do to avoid sleeping in his father's office room?
6. How did Swami's mother try to protect him from his father's anger?
7. What did Swami say to his father when he was taken to the office room for sleep?
8. What did Swami feel in the office room in the night?
9. What thoughts came into the mind of Swami when he was sleeping alone in the office room?
10. Why did Swami sleep under the bench?
11. What dream did Swami see in his sleep?
12. Why did Swami attack the burglar?
13. How did Swami's classmates and other people react to the news of his fighting with the burglar?
14. Do you think Swami's efforts made him fearless or courageous?
15. What indicates Swami's sleeping beside granny again?

D. Answer the following questions in about 60 words each:

1. What kind of a person Swami was and what the people took him to be? Do you agree with the theory?
2. Describe Swami's character on the basis of the story: 'A Hero'.
3. What impressions do you get of Swami's father?
4. Do you think the title 'A Hero' is appropriate in the light of Swami's character? Discuss

5. What have you come to know about the character of Swami's mother?

ACTIVITY 2: VOCABULARY

1. Convert the following verbs into nouns and frame one sentence on each:

Example :- Describe - Description : The description was very lively and touching.

arrange, admit, gesticulate, hesitate, expect, congratulate, converse

2. Convert the following nouns into adjectives and frame one sentence on each:

Example :- hero - heroic

His deeds are no doubt heroic.

darkness, courage, strength, bravery, fright, description, respect, enthusiasm, wisdom.

3. 'ly' is a suffix. It is used to form adverbs when added to adjectives. It gives the meaning of 'in the stated manner', example:-

brave + ly = bravely.

He fought very bravely.

silent + ly = silently

Swami rose silently and went to bed.

Find out at least seven other examples of adverbs formed this way from the text and use them in your own sentences.

4. Match the column 'A' with the Column 'B', finding their correct meanings :

A	B
1. a dull and heavy sound	slunk
2. to protect somebody too much	burglar
3. a friend	chum
4. moved quietly out of fear	mollycoddle
5. a person who steals away illegally	thud

ACTIVITY : 3 GRAMMAR

MODALS:

Look at the following sentences:

- (i) You must sleep alone hereafter.
- (ii) Can you prove you have courage?

The underlined words in both the sentences are examples of modal verbs. All auxiliary verbs except **be**, **do** and **have** are called modals. They are also called modal auxiliaries. They are helping verbs which are not affected by person or gender. These are, **will, would, shall, should, may, might, can, could, ought to, must dare, need, used to**. In most cases they express present or future time. The chief features of modals are:

- (i) They are never used alone; they always have a main verb with them. I can do it.
- (ii) Their forms remain unchanged whatever the person and number of subject is there: I can read; they can read, you can read,
- (iii) They do not have infinitives or past participle form.
We cannot write 'He can to go and can seen'.

Now we proceed to see how each modal is used:

1. Can

This modal verb is used to express four meanings which are: **ability, permission, request and possibility**.

(a) Ability

- (i) She can swim in a river,
- (ii) Ram can play a guitar.

'Ability' involves capacity to do some actions but with animate subject and dynamic verbs. With inanimate subjects the use of 'can' expresses their **potentiality**.

- (iii) The business of cabs can expand.
- (iv) This bike can run faster with this fuel.

(b) Permission

'can' is used to '**ask**' and '**give**' permission. It is used to seek permission in the circumstances where social authority is involved.

- (i) Boy: can I go now?
- (ii) Teacher: No, but you can go after this period.

(c) Request

- (i) Can you give me your pen? (to a friend)
- (ii) Can you bring me some more ice-cream? (in a hotel)

'Can' is used to make informal request. We often use it when we are talking to friends and also in shops, office, restaurants etc.

(d) Possibility

- (i) I am sure this problem can be solved.
- (ii) This road can be blocked. (a theoretical possibility)
- (iii) The fire can be dangerous.

Note: 'Can' indicates **theoretical possibility**.

2. Could (Past form of can')

- (a) To express **past ability or capacity**:
 - (i) I could swim across this river in my childhood.
- (b) In Indirect speech it is used as **past tense** of can.
 - (i) He said that he could run fast.
- (c) To express **polite request**:
Could you please lend me your pen?
Could you let me see your photo?
- (d) To express **permission**:
Could I use your cell phone?

Note: - to make requests and seek permission, 'could you' is more formal and polite. We often use it when we are talking to strangers, older people, teachers and bosses.

- (e) To express something remote in **likelihood**:
This road could be blocked.

3. May

- (a) Used for **asking and giving permission**.

May I come in, sir?

'Yes, you may'.

May I borrow your pen?

'Yes you may.'

'May not' is used to deny permission:

May I use the toilet?

'No, you may not.'

- (b) When **possibility** and **uncertainty** are mixed.

It may rain tomorrow.

That may, or may not, be true.

- (c) 'May' is also used for a **wish, faith** and **hope**.

May you live long!

May God bless you!

May India win the match!

- (d) 'May' is also used to indicate **purpose**

Children go to school so that they may learn things.

We eat so that we may live.

4. **Might:**

- (a) Used in reported speech for **past time**:

He said that Neeru might come.

- (b) To express **possibility** that is similar to 'may' but its use indicates the greater sense of doubt about this possibility than 'may':

I am afraid that if I ask him again, he might refuse.

She might win the prize.

- (c) To express **guess**:

That might be a thief.

- (d) 'Might' can also be used to express **permission** or to make **informal requests**.

May/might I borrow your pen for a minute?

Might I begin my lecture?

- (e) It is also used for **suggestion** in a statement form:

You might make a little less noise.

He might join the army.

5. **Must**

- (a) Used to express **compulsion** in affirmative sentences:

You must carry out my orders.

- (b) To express **necessity** in affirmative sentences:

We must get up early tomorrow.

- (c) To express **determination**.

They must complete this work by this evening.

- (d) To express **certainty / surety/ strong possibility**.

My sister has gone to bed early.

She must be tired.

Look at his life style. He must be rich.

- (e) To indicate **obligation or duty**:

You must do as you are told.

Candidates must answer at least five questions out of ten.

Note: - In the '**negative**' and to express '**prohibition** 'must not' is used that gives the meaning of 'Don't do this' :

We must not pluck the flowers.

Cars must not be parked here.

- (6) **Ought** (always followed by a 'to infinitive')

(a) To express **moral obligation, duty, probability** 'ought to' gives the meaning of should : but 'ought to' is used when a feeling of duty is involved based on external rules (social conventions, institutions etc.) and 'Should' when we have personal judgement of duty.

You ought to love your elders. (moral obligation)

I ought to help them. (moral duty)

The implementation of GST bill ought to enhance the government revenue
(probability)

(The negative form of ought to is ought not to.)

(7) Will

- (a) To indicate **simple future time** : (with II & III persons)

She will go to school.

You will accept that he was wrong.

- (b) To indicate/express **intentions, willingness, prediction and determination and request** :

I will go to Mumbai for a job. (intention)

I will sing at the concert tomorrow. (Willingness)

Many friends of mine will be in the party. (Prediction)

I will pass this examination. (Determination)

We will do or die. (Determination)

Will you do me a favour ? (request)

Will you please shut the door?(request)

Will you go with me there?(request)

Note: As compared to the use of 'Would' the use of 'will' shows a less polite request.

In negative its form changes to '**won't**'.

Won't you keep quiet?

I won't come to college.

Note:- Will is never used with I person in interrogative sentences.

(8) Would

- (a) Used as **past tense** of will in indirect speech:

He told me that he would play kabaddi.

(He said to me, "I will play Kabaddi.") Direct speech.

- (b) To express a **past habit**:

I would go up the hill daily in my childhood. (Here 'would' can be substituted

by 'used to')

Whenever I went there, I would see the shop closed.

- (c) To express **polite request** and offer:

Would you please sit down? (request)

Would you like a cup of tea? (offer)

Note: 'would' is more polite than 'will'.

- (d) To ask for something more politely:

I would like your support in this election.

I'd like to return this ticket, please.

- (e) To express one's **preference**:

I would prefer to stay at home instead of going with you.

He would rather study English than Mathematics.

(8) Shall

- (a) To indicate **future time** with I person :

I shall play tennis in the evening.

We shall go to Ajmer tomorrow.

Note: In present day English, however, there is a growing tendency to use 'will' in all persons.

- (b) To indicate a **command, promise or threat**:

You shall come here at once. (command)

She shall get a prize if she secures I Div. in Exam. (promise)

You shall be punished if you don't obey the rules. (threat)

- (c) We often use **shall I ?**, or **shall we ?**

when we are asking or suggesting what to do:

Shall I make a cup of tea for you?

Shall I buy this book?

Shall we go and see this movie?

(10) Should

- (a) Used as **past tense** of 'shall' in Indirect speech. He said, "I shall come

tomorrow." (Direct)

He said that he should come the next day. (Indirect)

- (b) To express **duty** or **obligation** :-

We should keep our word.

- (c) To express **suggestion**/ an **advice** or a thing to do :

You should take bath daily.

You should see the doctor.

We should obey our parents.

- (d) After '**lest**' (expressing fear) :

Work hard lest you should fail.

- (e) to express **probability** :

Demonetisation should prevent corruption in future.

EXERCISE

- A. Fill in the blanks correct modals choosing from the box given below:

could, will, can, must not, would, could not, may, should not, might, need not

1. I did not feel very well yesterday. I _____ eat anything.
2. If you work hard, you _____ have to repeat the course next year.
3. At the age of ten Sheela _____ play the piano beautifully.
4. _____ I take a photograph of you?
5. _____ you speak French? Only a few words.
6. We _____ eat so much chocolate. It is not good for us.
7. We have a lot of work tomorrow, you _____ be late.
8. I _____ be able to help you. But I am not sure.
9. _____ you do me a favour please?
10. You _____ worry about it, I have managed it.

- B. Complete the following conversation with suitable modals.

Amit _____ you help me revise? I am worried about the exam.

Nitin You _____ be able to pass the exam if you start revising now.

Amit _____ you lend your English dictionary?

Nitin You _____ borrow it but you cannot use it for exam.

Amit I know I _____ have left mine in library.

Nitin It _____ be in your desk drawer you could have left it there.

Amit I _____ to look for it when I get home.

Nitin You _____ not hurry, you can use mine for a few days.

C. Fill in the blanks with correct modals expressing the notions given in brackets:

1. When the National Anthem is played, all _____ stand in attention.
(command)
2. He said it _____ rain. (possibility)
3. _____ you give me your vehicle ? (request)
4. You _____ remain on leave tomorrow. (permission)
5. The clouds are low. It _____ rain. (probability)
6. She _____ be in the library. (weak possibility)
7. She _____ be in the library. (strong possibility)
8. The traitor _____ be immediately hanged. (command)
9. _____ I make a call from your mobile ? (request)
10. You _____ be there at 10 a.m. (obligation)
11. The new taxation policy _____ be in favour of the cottage industries.
(probability)
12. The office is going to be closed. Now you _____ go. (permission)
13. The students _____ attempt at least five questions in all. (obligation)
14. No soldier _____ apply for leave during war time. (command)
15. The water harvesting project _____ solve the problem of drinking water in rural areas. (probability)