



THE SNAKE AND THE MIRROR

INTRODUCTION

This is an interesting story. It is about a doctor's encounter with a snake. The doctor lived in a small rented room full of rats. One night, he was reading a book. A kerosene lamp was burning on the table. There was also a large Mirror on the table. Suddenly something fell on the back of the chair. He turned to see what it was/He froze with fear when he saw that it was a big snake. The snake then coiled itself around the doctor's left arm. The doctor prayed to God. Then the snake looked into the mirror on the table. Luckily, the snake liked its own image in the mirror. It wanted to have a closer look at its image. So it uncoiled itself from the arm and came on the table. The doctor at once got and ran out of the room. He

spent the night at the house of one of his friends. The next morning he came back to his room. He was shocked to find that during the night some thief had taken away everything from his room.

(यह एक रोचक कहानी है। यह एक डॉक्टर की एक सांप के साथ सामने के बारे में है। डॉक्टर चूहों से भरे किराए के एक छोटे से कमरे में रहता था। एक रात, वह एक पुस्तक पढ़ रहा था। मेज़ पर मिट्टी के तेल का एक लैंप जल रहा था। वहाँ मेज़ पर एक बड़ा दर्पण भी था। अचानक कुर्सी की पीठ पर कुछ गिरा। वह यह देखने के लिए मुड़ा कि यह क्या था। वह तब डर के मारे जम गया जब उसने देखा कि यह एक बहुत बड़ा सांप है। तब सांप लेखक के बाईं बाजू से लिपट गया। डॉक्टर ने भगवान से प्रार्थना की। तब सांप ने मेज़ पर पड़े दर्पण में स्वयं की देखा। भाग्यवश सांप को दर्पण में अपना बिंब अच्छा लगा। यह अपना बिंब नज़दीक से देखना चाहता था। इसलिए इसने स्वयं को बाजू से अलग किया और मेज़ पर आ गया। डॉक्टर एकदम उठा और कमरे से बाहर भागा। उसने रात अपने एक मित्र के घर बिताई। अगली प्रातः वह अपने कमरे में वापस गया। उसे यह देखकर सदमा लगा कि रात के दौरान कोई चोर उसके कमरे में से हर वस्तु चुराकर ले गया था।)

THEME

The humorous anecdote revolves around the theme of human vanity and fears and how they affect people. The narrator is a homoeopath doctor who is struggling with his poverty and sluggish practice. Nonetheless, he is vain about his looks with or without his moustache and beard and has the ambition of looking more and more handsome. He also hopes to marry and lead a happy life. Sudden arrival of a snake on the scene turns him pale with fear, but somehow he

manages to keep his calm. Meanwhile, attracted by the mirror, the snake decides to ignore him. The narrator takes this opportunity to make good his escape. The snake appears to be almost as vain as the doctor himself. An allied theme in the story is how crises make people turn to God for help.

TITLE

The story is appropriately titled “The Snake and the Mirror”, for it relates an incident in which a snake is so enamoured with its image in the mirror that it spares the life of the narrator. The entire action of the story revolves around the snake and the mirror. The main narrator, who is at the centre of the narrative until the snake appears, turns into a marginal element who is affected by the action instead of affecting it. He has to be thankful for the mirror that the snake spared his life. Had the snake bitten him, he would have surely died of fear and poison, for there was no medicine in his room for snake-bite.

DETAILED SUMMARY

The narrator of the story is a doctor. He is telling this story to some of his friends. He tells the story of his encounter with a deadly snake. He is a homeopath. He says that he had just started his practice in those days when he was living in a rented room.

It was a hot summer night. The time was about ten o'clock. He had just returned home after taking his meals at a restaurant. He lighted the kerosene lamp, as his house was not electrified. After some time, he opened the two windows in the room. Then he sat down on the chair and took out a book to read. Apart from the lamp, there was a large mirror on the table. In those days, the doctor bothered much about his looks, as he was a bachelor. He picked up a comb and parted his hair. He looked at his reflection in the mirror and smiled at his own image. There were rats in the room which constantly made noises.

The doctor got up, lit a beedi and paced up and down the room. He decided that he would marry. He thought that he would marry a woman doctor who had plenty of money and good medical practice. He decided that he would marry a fat lady so that she would not be able to run after him if he wanted to run away. He resumed his seat in the chair in front of the table. There were no more sounds of rats. Suddenly something fell on the back of his chair with a thud. He was horrified to see that there was a large snake on the back of the

chair. Just then the snake came on his shoulder. Before the doctor could think and act, the snake coiled itself around his left arm. Its hood was spread and its head was hardly three or four inches from his face.

The doctor was turned to stone with fear. But his mind was active. He prayed to God to save him. It appeared as if God had heard his prayer. The snake turned its head and looked into the mirror. It appeared to like its own image. Then the snake unwound itself from the doctor's arm and fell into his lap. From there the

snake crept onto the table. It moved towards the mirror. Perhaps it wanted to see its image closely. Now the doctor acted quickly. Still holding his breath, he got up slowly from the chair. Then he ran out of the house. He went to the house of one of his friends and spent the night there. Next morning, he took his friend and one or two others to his room. He had decided to shift to some other house. He was shocked to find that there was nothing left in his room. Some thief had taken away most of his things. There was no sign of the snake either.

SUMMARY IN HINDI

कहानी का वर्णनकर्ता एक डॉक्टर है। वह अपने कुछ मित्रों को यह कहानी सुना रहा है। वह एक भयानक सांप के साथ अपने सामने की कहानी सुनाता है। वह होम्योपैथी का डॉक्टर है। वह कहता है कि उसने अपनी प्रैक्टिस उन्ही दिनों में आरंभ की थी जब वह एक किराए के कमरे में रह रहा था।

ग्रीष्म ऋतु की गर्म रात थी। समय लगभग दस बजे का था। वह एक रेस्तरां से भोजन करके अभी-अभी लौटा था। उसने मिट्टी के तेल का लैंप जलाया, क्योंकि उसके घर में बिजली नहीं थी। कुछ समय पश्चात् उसने अपने कमरे की दो खिड़कियाँ खोल दी। तब वह कुर्सी पर बैठ गया और पढ़ने के लिए एक पुस्तक निकाल ली। लैंप के अलावा मेज पर एक बड़ा दर्पण भी था। उन दिनों में डॉक्टर अपने रूप की बहुत परवाह करता था, क्योंकि वह कुंवारा था। उसने एक

कंधी उठाई और अपने बालों में फेरी। उसने दर्पण में स्वयं को देखा और अपने प्रतिबिंब पर मुस्कराया। कमरे में चूहे थे जो लगातार शोर मचा रहे थे।

डॉक्टर उठा, उसने बीड़ी सुलगाई और कमरे में इधर-उधर चहलकदमी करने लगा। उसने फैसला किया कि वह शादी करेगा। उसने फैसला किया वह एक लेडी डॉक्टर से शादी करेगा। जो बहुत अमीर होगी और जिसकी प्रैक्टिस अच्छी होगी। उसने फैसला किया कि वह एक मोटी औरत से शादी करेगा ताकि अगर वह भागना चाहे तो वह उसके पीछे न भाग सके। यह मेज के सामने कुर्सी में फिर से बैठ गया। चूहों की आवाजें आनी बंद हो गई। अचानक उसने सुना कि कोई चीज उसकी कुर्सी पर धम्म से गिरी है। वह यह देखकर भयभीत हो गया कि कुर्सी की पीठ पर एक बड़ा सांप था। उसी समय सांप डॉक्टर की पीठ पर आ गया। इससे पहले कि डॉक्टर सोच सकता या कुछ करता, सांप उसकी बाईं बाजू से लिपट गया। उसका फन फैला हुआ था और उसका सिर उसके चेहरे से मुश्किल से तीन या चार इंच दूर था।

डॉक्टर डर से पत्थर बन गया गया। मगर उसका दिमाग चुस्त था। उसने भगवान से प्रार्थना की कि वह उसे बचा ले। ऐसा लगा जैसे भगवान ने उसकी प्रार्थना सुन ली। सांप ने अपना सिर घुमाया और दर्पण में देखा। ऐसा लगा कि जैसे उसे अपना बिंब अच्छा लगा। तब सांप ने स्वयं को डॉक्टर की बाजू से अलग कर लिया और उसकी गोद में गिर राया। वहाँ से सांप रेंगकर मेज़ पर आ गया। वह दर्पण की ओर मुड़ा। शायद वह अपना बिंब नजदीक से देखना चाहता था। अब डॉक्टर ने शीघ्रता से कार्य किया। अपना सांस थामे-थामे वह कुर्सी से उठा। तब वह घर में से बाहर भागा। वह अपने एक मित्र के घर गया और रात वहाँ बिताई। अगली प्रातः उसने अपने मित्र एवं दो अन्य व्यक्तियों को अपने साथ लिया और अपने कमरे में आया। उसने किसी अन्य घर में जाने का निर्णय ले लिया था। मगर उसे यह देखकर धक्का लगा कि उसके कमरे में कुछ भी नहीं बचा था। कोई चोर उसकी अधिकतर वस्तुएं ले गया था। न ही वहाँ सांप का कोई चिह्न था।

MESSAGE

The story conveys the message that one should never be proud of one's beauty, strength or achievements. The fear of death makes a person realize how futile the worldly achievements are. It is faith in God and modesty in thoughts which make a person strong. The doctor in the story is cured of his arrogance after a close brush with death.

EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

(I)

I had my meal at the restaurant and returned to my room. I heard a noise from above as I opened the door. The sound was a familiar one.

(a) Who does 'I' refer to in this extract?

Ans: In this extract, 'I' refers to the homoeopath doctor who narrates his encounter with a snake.

(b) At what time did 'I' return to his room and from where?

Ans: The doctor returned to his room at ten o'clock at night after having a meal at a restaurant.

(c) When did 'I' hear a noise? What type of noise was it?

Ans: The doctor heard a noise when he entered his room. It was a familiar noise like that of the rats that lived in his room.

(d) Why does 'I' say that it was a familiar sound?

Ans: The doctor says that it was a familiar sound because there were many rats in his room and their constant squeaking had become familiar.

(II)

I went back into the room and sat down on the chair. I opened the box beneath the table and took out a book, the Materia Medica. I opened it at the table on which stood the lamp and a large mirror; a small comb lay beside the mirror.

(a) Who is the speaker here? Where was he before going back into the room?

Ans: The narrator, a homoeopathic doctor speaks these lines. He was in the veranda before coming back into the room.

(b) Why did he take out a book from the box?

Ans: He took out the book to while away some time reading it, as he could not sleep because it was hot and still, and there was no electricity in his room.

(c) What objects stood on the table?

Ans: A lamp and a large mirror stood on the table. A small comb lay beside the mirror.

(d) What did the speaker do after this? After this, the speaker looked into the mirror that stood on the table.

(III)

I was unmarried and I was a doctor. I felt I had to make my presence felt. I picked up the comb and ran it through my hair and adjusted the parting so that it looked straight and neat.

(a) Who is 'I' in this extract?

Ans: In this extract, 'I' is the homoeopathic doctor who recounts his encounter with a snake.

(b) Explain: 'make my presence felt'.

Ans: 'Make my presence felt' means to make a noticeable influence or effect.

(c) Why did 'I' feel that he had to make his presence felt?

Ans: The doctor felt that he had to make his presence felt because he belonged to the prestigious profession of a doctor and he was still unmarried.

(d) What did 'I' do in order to make his presence felt?

Ans: In order to make his presence felt, he combed his hair carefully and adjusted the parting.

(IV)

I got up, paced up and down the room. Then another lovely thought struck me. I would marry.

(a) Who is 'I' in these lines? Where did he get up from?

Ans: In these lines, 'I' is the homoeopathic doctor and he got up from his chair in his room.

(b) Which lovely thought struck him?

Ans: The lovely thought that struck him was that he should get married.

(c) When did this thought strike him?

Ans: This thought struck him when he looked at his reflection in the large mirror that stood on his table.

(d) What sort of lady did he wish to marry? He wished to marry a rich, fat lady-doctor.

(V)

There was no time to do any such thing. The snake slithered along my shoulder and coiled around my left arm above the elbow.

(a) Who is describing this experience?

Ans: The homoeopathic doctor is describing this experience that he had when he encountered a snake.

(b) What did the speaker have no time for?

Ans: The speaker did not have time to save himself from the snake that had coiled around his left arm above the elbow.

(c) Where had the snake come from?

Ans: The snake had fallen from the roof of the doctor's ill-equipped room.

(d) How did the speaker react to the snake's presence?

Ans: The speaker became motionless and did not jump, tremble or cry out when the snake came so close to him.

(VI)

There were no medicines in the room. I was but a poor, foolish and stupid doctor.
I forgot my danger and smiled feebly at myself.

(a) Who is 'I' in these lines? Why did he need medicines?

Ans: In these lines, 'I' is the homoeopathic doctor. He needed medicines in case the snake bit him and injected him with its poison.

(b) Why did 'I' feel poor and stupid?

Ans: The doctor felt poor and stupid because he realised that he was a doctor, still he did not have medicines for an emergency like this.

(c) Why did 'I' smile feebly at himself?

Ans: The doctor smiled feebly at himself because he felt weak and helpless on finding himself face to face with a snake.

(d) What danger does 'I' refer to?

Ans: The doctor refers to the danger posed by a deadly snake that had wrapped itself on his arm and was slowly crushing it with force.

(VII)

I was no mere image cut in granite. I was suddenly a man of flesh and blood. Still holding my breath I got up from the chair. I quietly went through the veranda. From there I leapt into the yard and ran for all I was worth.

(a) Who is 'I' in these lines? When had he felt like an "image cut in granite"?

Ans: 'I' in these lines is the homoeopathic doctor who narrates his encounter with the snake.

He felt that he was an 'image cut in granite' when he found a snake coiled strongly around his forearm with its taut hood barely three or four inches away from his face. Gripped in fear he could neither move nor breathe properly.

(b) What is the meaning of 'a man of flesh and blood'?

Ans: 'A man of flesh and blood' means a living person with human feelings, strengths and weaknesses.

(c) How was 'I' suddenly 'a man of flesh and blood'?

Ans: When the snake let go of its hold on his arm, the doctor was able to come out of the state of shock which had made him numb like a stone. He regained his senses and faculties of body and mind.

(d) What did 'I' do as 'a man of flesh and blood'?

Ans: When the doctor got over his numbing shock, he got up from his chair, quietly went through the veranda, leapt into the yard and ran with all his might.

(VIII)

The next morning at about eight-thirty I took my friend and one or two others to my room to move my things from there. But we found we had little to carry.

(a) Why did the doctor go back to his room in the morning?

Ans: The doctor went back to his room because the previous night he had to leave it suddenly because of a snake. He wanted to check whether everything in the room was intact and whether the snake had left.

(b) Why did the doctor want to move things from the room?

Ans: The doctor wanted to move things from the room because he was extremely terrified after his encounter with the snake. He could no longer live in a room that had no electricity, was infested with rats and visited by snakes.

(c) Why did the doctor and his friends go to his room the next day?

Ans: The doctor and his friends went to his room the next day to move his things from there.

(d) Why was there 'little to carry' from the room?

Ans: There was nothing left in the room except a dirty vest of the doctor. Everything had been stolen by someone. So, there was 'little to carry' from the room.

CHARACTER

The Doctor

In the story "The Snake and the Mirror," the homoeopath doctor has been portrayed as a person who can assess himself critically and humorously. He honestly admits that as a new practitioner of medicine, he could not earn much and had to rent a poor, rat-infested house without even the facility of electricity. He also admits with a funny intent that he wanted to marry a fat and rich lady-doctor as it would help him run away without getting caught when he would make some silly mistake. This witty side of the doctor is seen again at the end of the story when he remarks that the thief did not take away his dirty vest because he had a sense of cleanliness.

The doctor was quite vain about his appearance and his qualification. He often admired his reflection in the mirror and thought of ways to look more handsome. He was a bachelor and wanted to look handsome. However, his ability to admit his follies helped him to realise that to be alive was more important than to look good. His arrogance turned into modesty after his encounter with the snake. In addition, he had admirable patience and presence of mind. When the snake landed on him, he did not jump or cry. Keeping his cool, he remembered God and actively thought about the medicine he would require in case the snake bit him.

He also made the most of the opportunity when the snake was absorbed in its reflection in the mirror. Thus, the doctor is a candid person, a witty man, and an interesting character who relates his encounter with the snake in a lighter vein.

IMPORTANT PASSAGES FOR COMPREHENSION

PASSAGE 1

(Page 56) It was a hot summer night; about ten o'clock. I had my meal at the restaurant and returned to my room. I heard a noise from above as I opened the door. The sound was a familiar one. One could say that the rats and I shared the room. I took out my box of matches and lighted the kerosene lamp on the table.

The house was not electrified; it was a small rented room. I had just set up medical practice and my earnings were meagre. I had about sixty rupees in my suitcase. Along with some shirts and dhotis, I also possessed one solitary black coat which I was then wearing.

Questions

1. Where did the narrator have his meal?
2. What did he do after having his meal?

3. What time did he return to his room?
4. What kind of weather was it?
5. What happened as he opened the door?
6. What kind of sound did he hear?
7. What did he do after coming into the room?
8. Where did the narrator live?
9. Why had he to light a kerosene lamp?
10. How did the narrator earn his living?
11. How much money did he have with him?
12. What clothes did he have with him?

Answers

1. He had his meal at the restaurant.

2. He returned to his room.

3. It was at about 10 o'clock.

4. It was a hot summer night.

5. He heard a noise from above.

6. It was the familiar sound of rats.

7. He lighted the kerosene lamp.

8. He lived in a rented room.

9. Because the house was not electrified.

10. He was a medical practitioner.

11. He had only sixty rupees with him.

12. He had some shirts, dhotis and a black coat.

PASSAGE 2

(Page 56) I took off my black coat, white shirt and not-so-white vest and hung them up. I opened the two windows in the room. It was an outer room with one wall facing the open yard. It had a tiled roof with long supporting gables that rested on the beam over the wall. There was no ceiling. There was regular traffic of rats to and from the beam. I made my bed and pulled it closer to the wall. I lay down but I could not sleep. I got up and went out to the veranda for a little air, but the Wind God seemed to have taken time off.

Questions

1. What clothes did the narrator take off?
2. What did he do with the clothes he had taken off?
3. What does he say about the vest he was wearing?
4. How many windows were there in the room?
5. What kind of roof did the room have?
6. What supported the gables?
7. What 'regular' traffic does the narrator talk about?
8. Where did he put his bed?
9. Why do you think he could not sleep?
10. Why did he go out to the veranda?
11. Was it airy outside?

Answers

1. He took off his coat, his shirt and vest
2. He hung them up.
3. He says that it was not so white.
4. It had two windows.
5. It was a tiled roof with long gables.
6. A beam supported the gables.
7. It was the continuous movement of rats over the beam.

8. He put it close to the wall.

9. It was very close and hot

10. He went out to have a little air.

11. No, it was close outside also.

PASSAGE 3

(Page 57) One feels tempted to look into a mirror when it is near one. I took a look. In those days I was a great admirer of beauty and I believed in making myself look handsome. I was unmarried and I was a doctor. I felt I had to make my presence felt. I picked up the comb and ran it through my hair and adjusted the parting so that it looked straight and neat.

Questions

1. What is one tempted to do near a mirror?

2. What had the narrator been an admirer of?

3. How did he want to look?

4. Was the narrator then married?

5. What was his profession?

6. What did he do with the comb?

7. How did he adjust the parting through his hair?

8. Why do you think he wanted to make his presence felt?

9. Which word in the passage means 'attracted'?

Answers

1. One is tempted to look in the mirror.

2. He had been an admirer of beauty.

3. He wanted to look handsome.

4. No, he was unmarried.

5. He was a doctor.

6. He ran it through his hair.

7. He made it straight and neat.

8. Because he was unmarried and was looking for a good wife.

9. tempted = attracted.

PASSAGE 4

(Page 57) I took a close look at my face in the mirror. I made an important decision. I would shave daily and grow a thin moustache to look more handsome. I was after all a bachelor and a doctor! I looked in the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile. I made another shaking decision. I would always keep that attractive smile on my face to look more handsome. I was after all a bachelor, and a doctor too on top of it!

Questions

1. Who does 'I' in the passage refer to?
2. What did he look at in the mirror?
3. Was the narrator married?
4. What was his profession?
5. What was the first important decision he made
6. How did he feel about his smile?

7. What did he decide to do to look more handsome?

8. Why do you think he wanted to look handsome?

9. Which word or phrase in the passage means 'of great importance'?

Answers

1. It refers to the narrator who was a doctor.

2. He looked at his face.

3. No, he was a bachelor.

4. He was a doctor.

5. He decided to shave daily and grow a thin moustache.

6. He thought it was an attractive smile.

7. He decided to keep a smile on his face always.

8. He wanted to look handsome so that he could have a good wife.

9. earth-shaking = of great importance.

PASSAGE 5

(Page 57-58) Suddenly there came a dull thud as if a rubber tube had fallen to the ground ... surely nothing to worry about. Even so, I thought I would turn around and take a look. No sooner had I turned than a fat snake wriggled over the back of the chair and landed on my shoulder. The snake's landing on me and my turning were simultaneous. I didn't jump. I didn't tremble. I didn't cry out. There was no time to do any such thing. The snake slithered along my shoulder and coiled around my left arm above the elbow. The food was spread out and its head was hardly three or four inches from my face!

Questions

1. What kind of noise did the narrator hear?

2. What did he think at first about the noise he had heard?

3. What had actually happened?

4. What did the narrator see when he turned around

5. What has the snake been compared to?

6. Why did the narrator not jump or cry on seeing the snake?

7. What did the snake do after it had landed on the narrator's shoulder?

8. What did the snake have on its head?

9. How far was the snake's head from the narrator's arm?

10. Which word in the passage means 'a dull low sound'?

Answers

1. It was a dull thud like a rubber tube falling to the ground.
2. He thought there was nothing to worry about.
3. A snake had fallen on the back of his chair.
4. He saw a fat snake landed on his shoulder from the back of the chair.
5. It has been compared to a rubber tube.
6. There was no time to do any such thing.
7. It coiled itself around the narrator's left arm.
8. It had a hood on its head.
9. Hardly three or four inches.

10. thud = a dull low sound.

MCQ Based Questions-

Choose the correct answer.

1. Where did the narrator have his meal?

(A) At home.

(B) At his friend's house.

(C) At his uncle's house.

(D) At a restaurant.

2. What time did he come back to his room?

(A) At about ten in the morning.

(B) At about two in the afternoon.

(C) At about six in the evening.

(D) At about ten in the night.

3. What did the narrator do after coming into the room?

(A) He lighted a kerosene lamp.

(B) He switched on the light.

(C) He lighted a candle.

(D) He sat down in the dark.

4. What does the narrator say about the room where he lived?

(A) It was a small rented room.

(B) It was not electrified.

(C) There were too many rats in it.

(D) All the above.

5. Why did the narrator live in a small rented room?

(A) He was unmarried.

(B) His earnings were very small.

(C) There was no other room available.

(D) It was very close to his clinic.

6. Why could the writer not sleep?

(A) Because it was very hot.

(B) Because the rats were making a lot of noise.

(C) Both A and B.

(D) Neither A nor B.

7. What book did the narrator take out to read?

(A) 'The Life of a Doctor'.

(B) 'Living Alone in a Rented Room'.

(C) 'Materia Medica'.

(D) 'The History of Modern Surgery'.

8. What does the narrator say he was an admirer of?

(A) Art.

(B) Beauty.

(C) Nature.

(D) Classical music.

9. What big quality or qualities did the narrator think he had

(A) He was handsome.

(B) He was a bachelor.

(C) He was a doctor.

(D) All the above.

10. What did he do with the comb?

(A) He cleaned it with a brush.

(B) He ran it through his moustache.

(C) He threw it away into the dustbin.

(D) He ran it through his hair and adjusted the parting.

11. What important decision did he make?

(A) To grow a thin moustache.

(B) To keep an attractive smile on his face always.

(C) Both A and B.

(D) Neither A nor B.

12. What kind of woman did he want to have as his wife?

(A) A woman doctor with a good medical practice.

(B) A woman who had plenty of money.

(C) A woman too fat to run after him.

(D) All the above.

13. What sound did he hear while sitting on the chair?

(A) The squeak of a rat.

(B) The hiss of a snake.

(C) The dull thud of something falling to the ground.

(D) The sound of somebody coming into the room.

14. What was it that had fallen at the narrator's back?

(A) A rubber tube.

(B) A big rat.

(C) A fat snake.

(D) A dead mouse.

15. What happened when the narrator turned around to see what had fallen there?

(A) A fat snake landed on his shoulder.

(B) A fat snake fell on the back of his chair.

(C) A fat snake fell to the ground.

(D) A fat snake wriggled from his shoulder to the back of the chair.

16. How did the narrator react when he saw a fat snake on his shoulder?

(A) He did not jump.

(B) He did not tremble.

(C) He did not cry out.

(D) He neither jumped nor trembled nor cried out.

17. What happened when the narrator saw a snake landing on his shoulder?

(A) He cried in fear.

(B) He trembled in fear.

(C) He jumped up from the chair.

(D) He was turned to stone.

18. How did the narrator feel when the snake coiled around his left arm

(A) He felt as if a leaden rod was piercing his heart.

(B) He felt as if he was going to die.

(C) He felt as if God had come there to save him.

(D) He felt as if a rod of fire was crushing his arm.

Hints : 1.D 2.D 3.A 4.D 5.B 6.C 7.C 8.B 9.D
10.D

11. C 12. D 13. C 14. C 15. A 16. D 17. D 18. D.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1. What was the doctor's opinion about himself? How did this opinion change after his encounter with the snake? Or

How did the doctor lose his pride after the snake landed on his shoulder?

Ans: The doctor had a very high opinion of himself regarding both his appearance and profession. He was conscious of his looks and wanted to look even more handsome. He repeatedly looked at himself in the mirror to admire his handsomeness. He wanted to be attractive to women because he was an eligible bachelor. He was also proud of being a doctor and was arrogant because of his professional qualification.

But a short encounter with a snake, a full-blooded cobra, cured him of his pride. When the snake reached his shoulder and coiled itself around his arm, the doctor lost all arrogance and was reminded of the existence of God. Face to face with death, he realised what a weak and foolish man he was. When he recalled that

there were no medicines in his room to cure him of a snake-bite, he humbly and meekly regarded himself to be a stupid and helpless person.

Thus, the encounter with the snake transformed the doctor from a vain and foolish person into a humble and God-fearing man.

Q2. What kind of room was the doctor living in and why did he decide to leave that room?

Ans: The room that the doctor was living in was a small, poor, uncomfortable and unhygienic one. Since his medical practice was yet not well-established, he did not earn much and could not afford a better place. This room was without the facility of electricity and he had to depend on a kerosene lamp for studying. The room was on the outer side of the house and one of its walls opened into the yard. It had two windows; its roof was tiled and had long supporting gables which rested on a beam over the wall. The room did not have any ceiling and it was infested with rats that kept squeaking all the time.

The doctor's description of the room shows that he was not happy with this poor accommodation. But he decided to leave it only after his encounter with the snake. It was such a horrifying experience that he had to run to a friend's house to save his life. Therefore he decided not to live in the room any longer.

Q3. What kind of woman did the doctor want to marry? What does it show about his character? What kind of a wife did he eventually get?

Ans: The doctor took pride in his handsome looks and his medical profession. Therefore, he wanted to marry a rich lady-doctor with good medical practice. He also wanted his future wife to be a fat

woman. His reason behind this desire was rather funny. He said that if he made a silly mistake and had to run away, a fat wife would not be able to chase and catch him.

The doctor's ambition about his marriage shows that he was a status-conscious, money-minded person. He did not think much about the appearance and other qualities of his wife and thought only of her riches. His desire to marry a fat wife shows that he had a sense of humour and could laugh at himself.

However, the doctor's real wife was unlike what he had desired. It is not clear whether she was a doctor or not but she was certainly a thin woman with the physique of a sprinter.

Q4. What are the similarities between the behaviour of the doctor and of the snake?

Or

Do you think both the doctor and the snake had some common qualities?
Why/Why not?

Ans: The behaviour of the doctor and the snake did have certain similarities. Both of them were enamoured by their reflection in the mirror and stood looking longingly at it. However, the similarity ended at this aspect of their respective behaviour since the doctor could not ascertain confidently the reason behind the snake getting charmed by its own image. The doctor was certainly compelled by his vanity to repeatedly look at his image. So, when he notices the snake looking into the mirror, he thinks that perhaps it too was admiring its beauty or was trying to make some 'important' decisions just like him. But these two were as frivolous as the doctor's decision to shave daily and keep a thin moustache.

Just like the doctor's obsession with his looks landed him in trouble, the snake too seemed to be "taken with its beauty." It releases its victim to have a better look at itself in the mirror. Thus both the doctor and the snake display narcissistic tendency.

Q5. Why did the snake not strike the doctor although it was so near his face?

Or

Which qualities and values of the doctor saved his life?

Ans: The snake did not strike the doctor although it was so near his face because the doctor remained motionless even when his life was in danger. Displaying

great presence of mind, the doctor stayed still like a stone which assured the snake that there was no danger to it. Snakes strike only in self-defence and the doctor patiently let the snake go. He remained calm and didn't jump, or tremble or cry out.

He did not try to either catch the snake to throw it away or to loosen its hold on his arm. Fear had gripped him but he kept his cool. Thus the snake left the doctor unharmed and got busy admiring its image in the mirror.

The doctor's qualities of patience, the presence of mind, courage and calmness helped him ward off the danger posed by the deadly snake, and saved his life.

Q6. Write a note on the element of humour in the story.

Or

This story about a frightening incident is narrated in a humorous way. What makes it humorous?

Ans: Although the story “The Snake and the Mirror” by Vaikom Muhammad Basheer is the narration of a serious incident, it is not devoid of the element of humour. This humour is generated by way of contrasts employed by the writer. The doctor reveals his pride and arrogance by telling us how highly he rated his looks and his profession as a doctor. This pride and arrogance stand in contrast to his admittance that he felt feeble and foolish when encountered by the snake. Again, his desire to marry a fat and u wealthy lady-doctor who cannot run after him when he commits some silly mistake stands in contrast to the thin and agile lady, with the physique of a sprinter, whom he finally marries. Further, the doctor pokes fun at himself when he tells that the thief did not take away his dirty vest because he had a sense of cleanliness. His remark about the snake that perhaps it was making some decision about growing a moustache or using eyeshadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its head is also very witty and humorous.

Thus, even a serious incident is made interesting by the doctor’s witty treatment of a very dangerous situation.

Q7. “I looked into the mirror and smiled”, says the doctor. A little later he says, “I forgot my danger and smiled feebly at myself”. What is the doctor’s opinion about himself when he smiles first and then later? In what way do his thoughts change in between, and why ?

Ans: The doctor rated his looks quite high and smiled at his image whenever he looked into the large mirror on his table. He tells the listeners that the first time he looked into the mirror and smiled, his opinion about himself was marked by self-adulation. He thought that he was very handsome and deserved to stay well-groomed. However, these thoughts changed by the time he tells the listeners that he forgot his danger and smiled feebly at himself. On the second occasion, his

opinion about himself was marked by humility. By then he had realised that he had been vain, foolish and stupid. His encounter with the deadly snake had exposed his shortcomings to him. In spite of being a doctor, he did not have any medicines in his room even for an emergency like a snake-bite. His good looks became immaterial when he came face to face with death and the only thoughts that came to his mind then were about God. The feeble smile indicated his acceptance of the folly and vanity that had so far governed his life.

QUICK REVIEW

1. What were the author and his friends discussing in the story 'The Snake and the Mirror ?'

(A) ghosts

(B) lions

(C) snakes Ant

(D) leaders

Ans. (C) snakes

2. Who narrated the story of the 'The Snake and the Mirror'?

(A) a homoeopath (B) a teacher

(C) a lawyer

(D) a painter

Ans. (A) a homoeopath

3. The narrator of the story 'The Snake and the Mirror' lived in a

(A) a big own house

(B) small rented house

(C) government hostel

(D) temple

Ans. (B) small rented house

4. The sound was a familiar one. What sound does the narrator refer to?

(A) the noise made by rats

(B) the noise made by sparrows

(C) the noise made by the snakes

(D) none of these

Ans. (A) the noise made by rats

5. Who shared the room with the narrator?

(A) the snakes

(B) a friend of the narrator

(C) the rats

(D) his parents

Ans. (C) the rats

6. How would you describe the narrator's vest?

(A) a new one

(B) of superior quality

(C) a dirty one

(D) none of these

Ans. (C) a dirty one

7. Why did the narrator open the two windows?

(A) to see what was happening outside

(B) he was feeling hot

(C) to let the sunlight come in

(D) none of these

Ans. (B) he was feeling hot

8. Why could the narrator not sleep?

(A) because of hunger

(B) because of pain in the body

(C) because of heat (D) because of cold

Ans. (C) because of heat

9. Which book did the narrator begin to read?

(A) Material Media

(B) The Ramayana

(C) The Gita

(D) India of My Dreams

Ans. (A) Material Media

10. What was the narrator's first decision?

(A) to take bath daily

(B) to shave daily

(C) to clean his teeth daily

(D) to sleep in the open

Ans.. (B) to shave daily

11. Why did the narrator decide to grow a thin moustache?

(A) to get a job

(B) to work in films

(C) to look attractive and handsome

(D) none of these

Ans. (C) to look attractive and handsome

12. Of the following what was the narrator's earth-shaking decision?

(A) to shave daily

(B) to grow a thin moustache

(C) to bathe daily
attractive smile on his face

(D) to keep always an

Ans. (D) to keep always an attractive smile on his face

13. 'Again came to that noise from above' actually who was making that sound?

(A) the rats

(B) the snake

(C) the birds

(D) some insects

Ans. (B) the snake

14. Why was the narrator sitting holding his breath?

(A) a lion had entered his room
in his room

(B) there was a man with a gun

(C) a snake had coiled around his arm

(D) he was feeling sleepy

Ans (C) a snake had coiled around his arm

15. What did the snake seem admiring?

(A) the beauty of the room

(B) its own beauty

(C) the beauty of the minor whiskers

(D) the beauty of the narrator's

Ans. (B) its own beauty

16. Where did the narrator spend the night when he was free from the snake's grip?

(A) in his shop

(B) in his own room

(C) in a friend's house

(D) in a school building

Ans. (C) in a friend's house

17. Who entered the narrator's room in his absence?

(A) a thief

(B) a snake charmer

(C) the narrator's wife

(D) the narrator's son

Ans. (A) a thief

18. The thief had taken everything except one thing. What was it?

(A) the narrator's shoes
vest

(B) the narrator's dirty

(C) the narrator's shirt
spectacles

(D) the narrator's

Ans. (B) the narrator's dirty vest

19. Who is the author of the lesson 'The Snake and the Mirror'?

(A) A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Muhammad Basheer

(B) Vaikom

(C) Subramania Bharati
Wordsworth

(D) William

Ans. (B) Vaikom Muhammad Basheer

Additional Very Short Answer type Questions

1. What were V.M. Basheer and his friends discussing?

Ans. They were discussing snakes.

2. Who is the narrator of the story 'The Snake and the Mirror'?

Ans. A homoeopath is the narrator of this story.

3. Where did the narrator of the story 'The Snake and the Mirror' live?

Ans. He lived in a small rented room.

4. Who shared the room with the narrator in the story 'The Snake and the Mirror'?

Ans. The rats shared the room with him.

5. What was the homoeopath's first decision while sitting before the mirror?

Ans. He took the decision that he would shave daily and grow a thin moustache.

6. What was his second earth-shaking decision?

Ans. His second earth-shaking decision was that he would always keep an attracting smile on his face.

7. Who did the narrator decide to a marriage?

Ans. He decided to marry a woman doctor who had plenty of money and good medical practice.

8. How did the snake coil itself?

Ans. The snake coiled itself around the narrator's left arm above the elbow.

9. What happened when the snake looked in the mirror?

Ans. When the snake looked into the mirror it uncoiled itself and moved towards the mirror.

10. What did the snake seem admiring in the mirror?

Ans. It seemed admiring its own beauty.

11. Where did the narrator spend his night when he was free from the snake's grip?

Ans. He spent the night in a friend's house.

12. Who entered the narrator's room in his absence during the night?

Ans. A thief entered his room.

13. Name the author of the story 'The Snake and the Mirror'.

Ans. Vaikom Muhammad Basheer.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1. What made the doctor narrate his encounter with a snake?

Ans: The doctor, the narrator and some others happened to discuss snakes. The topic reminded the doctor of his own encounter with a snake and he narrated the incident.

Q2. When did the incident regarding the snake take place?

Ans: The incident took place after the doctor had taken his meal in a restaurant and had returned to his room at about ten o'clock in the night.

Q3. Why did the doctor have to light the kerosene lamp on reaching his room?

Ans: The doctor had to light the kerosene lamp because the room did not have electricity and the night was pitch dark. The doctor had limited money and as a result, he could not afford an any better place.

Q4.What kind of room did the doctor live in?

Ans: The doctor lived in a small, poorly furnished room which did not have any electricity. It was an outer room with one wall looking upon the open yard. The roof was tiled and supported by gables which rested on a beam. The room did not have a ceiling and it was infested with rats.

Q5. Why did the doctor live in a small, poor house?

Ans: The doctor lived in a small, poor house because he had just started his practice and he was not earning much. He could not afford to rent a better and more comfortable accommodation with his meagre earnings.

Q6. What were the doctor's possessions when he set up his medical practice?

Ans: The doctor had about sixty rupees in his suitcase when he set up his medical practice. In addition, he had some shirts, dhotis and one solitary black coat.

Q7. "The sound was a familiar one." What sound did the doctor hear? What did he think it was? How many times did he hear it? When and why did the sounds stop?

Ans: The doctor heard the sound made by a snake that was trying to reach the floor. He thought it was the squeaking sound made by the rats that infested his room. He heard this sound three times, after short intervals and it stopped when the snake fell down because it had reached the floor.

Q8. Why did the doctor look in the mirror again and again?

Ans: The doctor had developed an admiration for his looks and he wanted to appear even more handsome. Looking into the mirror gave him a chance to assess his looks again and again. He would comb his hair carefully, and his vanity would get a boost.

Q9. Which two 'important' and 'earth-shaking decisions did the doctor make as he looked at his image in the mirror?

Ans: The doctor made two decisions after looking at himself in the mirror. The first was that he would shave daily and grow a thin moustache in order to look more handsome as he was still unmarried and was in the reputed medical profession. The second decision was that he would marry a rich and fat lady-doctor.

Q10. What kind of woman did the doctor decide to marry? Why?

Ans: The doctor decided to marry a wealthy woman running a good medical practice. He also wanted her to be fat so that in case he made some stupid

mistake, he could run away without being chased and caught by her. However, this wish was made in a lighter vein and was not fulfilled.

Q11. What did the doctor do when the snake landed on his shoulder?

Or

How did the doctor react when he found the snake on his shoulder?

Or

'I was turned to stone'. When does the doctor say so? Why?

Ans: When the doctor found a snake on his shoulder, he did not shriek, jump, or tremble. He held his breath and became as still as a stone. He knew that the snake would strike him if he made any movement since the hood of the snake was only four inches away from his face.

Q12. When did the doctor feel like a foolish, weak person? Why?

Ans: The doctor felt like a foolish and weak person when, already in the grip of a frightful snake, he realised that there was no medicine in the room for the snake bite, which was a distinct possibility at that moment. He felt helpless and frightened. The vanity and pride he had moments ago had vanished. He smiled feebly at his stupidity and ill-luck.

Q13. How did the doctor feel when the snake coiled itself around his arm?

Ans: When the snake coiled itself around the arm of the doctor, he felt some pain as if his arm was being crushed strongly with a rod made of molten fire. His arm lost all strength and felt very weak.

Q14. What thoughts crossed the doctor's mind when he saw the snake looking into the mirror?

Ans: When the doctor saw the snake looking into the mirror, he thought that perhaps it too was admiring its beauty or was trying to make some important, actually frivolous decisions like growing a moustache, or using eyeshadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead.

Q15. How was the doctor relieved of the hold of the snake?

Ans: The snake happened to look at its reflection in the mirror on the table. It uncoiled itself from the arm of the doctor, slipped into his lap and then crawled towards the mirror. Perhaps, it too got fascinated by its looks as the doctor had a while ago.

Q16. What did the doctor do when the snake was absorbed in looking at the mirror?

Ans: As the snake was absorbed in looking at the mirror, the doctor at once availed of the opportunity and holding his breath, rose from the chair and quietly slipped out of the room. From there he passed through the veranda and the yard and ran to finally reach the house of a friend.

Q17. What did the doctor do as soon as he reached his friend's house? Why?

Ans: Immediately after reaching his friend's house, the doctor applied oil to his entire body, took a bath and put on fresh clothes. He did so because the snake had slithered over his back, shoulder and arm. He wanted to get rid of his Creepy feeling and any possible ill-effects of a snake's touch.

Q18. Why did the doctor decide to leave the room?

Ans: The doctor was already unhappy with the poor condition of his room that did not have electricity and was infested with rats. To top it, his encounter with the snake, that could have nearly killed him, made him decide to leave the room.

Q19. What did the doctor and his friends find when they went to remove things from the room?

Ans: The doctor and his friends found that there was nothing in the room except for a dirty vest. All the other things had been stolen away by some thief.

Q20. Did the doctor marry a fat woman as he had wished?

Ans: No, the doctor did not marry a fat woman. On the contrary, his wife was a thin and lean person who could run very fast like a sprinter.

Q21. Why does the doctor remark that the snake was “taken with its own beauty”?

Ans: The doctor remarks that the snake was “taken with its own beauty” because it kept looking into the mirror just like the doctor used to when he would admire his looks while in front of the mirror.