



**Reading A : The Snake and the Mirror**

**Reading B : The Duck and the Kangaroo (Poem)**

**Reading C : Little Bobby**



# Humour

Look at the picture and answer the questions that follow.



1. What would have prompted the monkey to look at its own reflection in the mirror?
2. What could be the monkey thinking at this point?

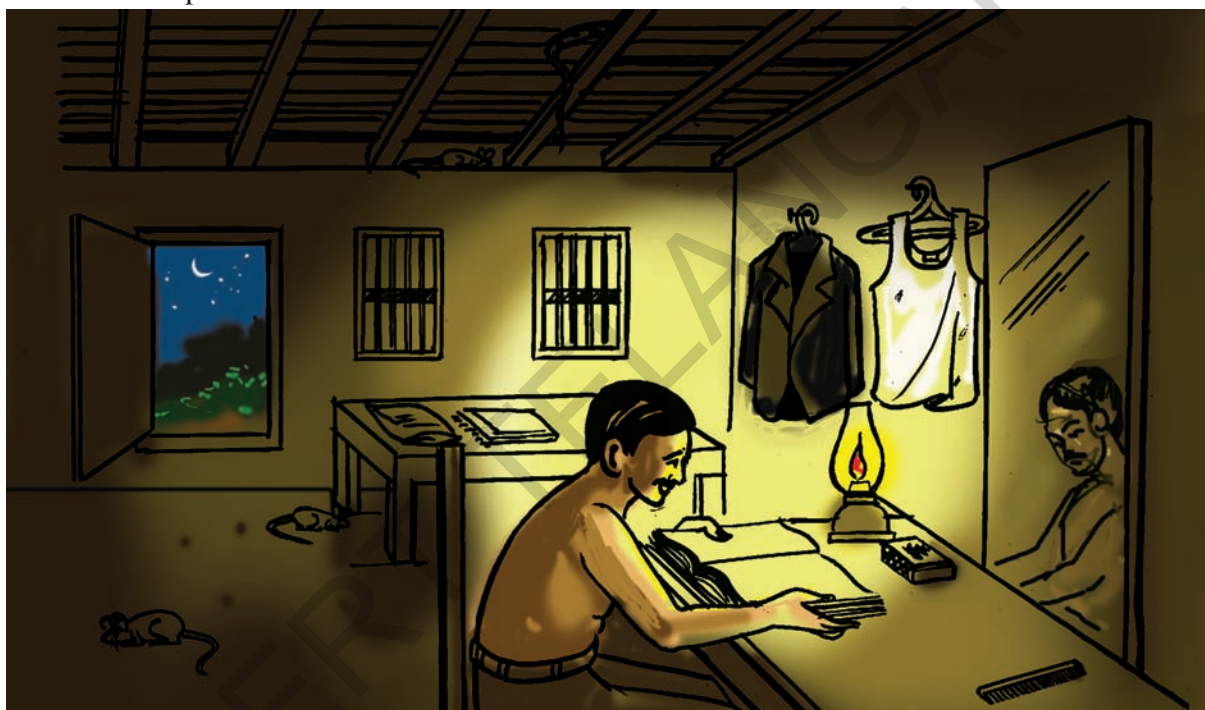
**Oral Discourse:** Speech - “Role of humour in our life.”

Now read the story, in which a doctor describes a snake that looks into a mirror.

## The Snake and the Mirror

“Has a snake ever coiled itself round any part of your body? A full-blooded cobra?” All of us fell silent. The question came from the homeopath. The topic came up when we were discussing snakes. We listened attentively as the doctor continued with the tale.

“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 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.

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 a regular traffic of rats to and from the beam. I made my bed and pulled it close 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.

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.

One feels tempted to look into a mirror when it is near. 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 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. Again I heard that sound from above.

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 doctor!

I looked into the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile. I made another earth-shaking decision. I would always keep that attractive smile on my face . . . to look more handsome. I was after all a bachelor, and doctor too on top of it!

Again came that noise from above.

I got up, lit a *beedi* and paced up and down the room. Then another lovely thought struck me. I would marry. I would get married to a woman doctor who had plenty of money and a good medical practice. She had to be fat; for a valid reason. If I made some silly mistake and needed to run away, she should not be able to run after me and catch me!

With such thoughts in my mind I resumed my seat in the chair in front of the table. There were no more sounds from above. 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 hood was spread out and its head was hardly three or four inches from my face!

It would not be correct to say merely that I sat there holding my breath. I was turned to stone. But my mind was very active. The door opened into darkness. The room was surrounded by darkness. In the light of the lamp, I sat there like a stone image in the flesh.

I felt then the great presence of the Creator of this world and this universe. God was there. Suppose I said something and he did not like it. I tried in my imagination to write in bright letters outside my little heart the words 'O God!'.

There was some pain in my left arm. It was as if a thick leaden rod – no, a rod made of molten fire – was slowly but powerfully crushing my arm. The arm was beginning to be drained of all strength. What could I do?

At my slightest movement the snake would strike me! Death lurked four inches away. Suppose it struck, what was the medicine I had to take? 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.

It seemed as if God appreciated that. The snake turned its head. It looked into the mirror and saw its reflection. I do not claim that it was the first snake that had ever looked into a mirror. But it was certain that the snake was looking into the mirror. Was it admiring its own beauty? Was it trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eye shadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead?



I did not know anything for certain. What sex was the snake, was it male or female? I will never know; for the snake unwound itself from my arm and slowly slithered into my lap. From there it crept onto the table and moved towards the mirror. Perhaps it wanted to enjoy its reflection at closer quarters.

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 out through the door into the veranda. From there I leapt into the yard and ran for all I was worth."

"Phew!" Each of us heaved a sigh of relief. All of us lit *beedis*. Somebody asked, "Doctor, is your wife very fat?"

"No," the doctor said. "God willed otherwise. My life companion is a thin reedy person with the gift of a sprinter."

Someone else asked, "Doctor, when you ran, did the snake follow you?"

The doctor replied, "I ran and ran till I reached a friend's house. Immediately I smeared oil all over myself and took a bath. I changed into fresh clothes. 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. Some thief had removed most of my things. The room had been cleaned out! But not really, the thief had left behind one thing as a final insult!"

"What was that?" I asked.

The doctor said, "My vest, the dirty one. The fellow had such a sense of cleanliness . . . ! The rascal could have taken it and used it after washing it with soap and water."

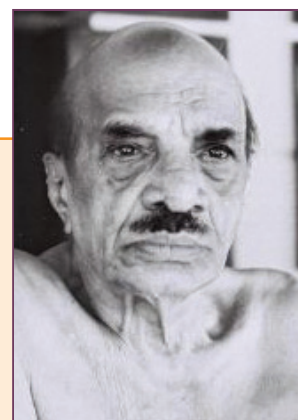
"Did you see the snake the next day, doctor?"

The doctor laughed, "I've never seen it since. It was a snake which was taken with its own beauty!"

- **Vaikom Muhammad Basheer**  
(Translated by V. Abdulla)

## About the author

**Vaikom Muhammad Basheer** (21 January 1908 – 5 July 1994) was a Malayalam fiction writer from the state of Kerala in India. He was a humanist, freedom fighter, novelist and short story writer. He is noted for his down-to-earth style of writing that made him equally popular among literary critics as well as the common man. He is regarded as one of the most successful and outstanding writers from India. Translations of his works into other languages have won him worldwide acclaim. The story '*The Snake and the Mirror*' was translated into English. His notable works include *Baalyakaalasakhi*, *Shabdangal*, *Mathilukal*, and *Anarga Nimisham*. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1982. He is fondly remembered as the Beypore Sultan.





## Glossary

|                                  |   |                                                                 |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| full-blooded ( <i>adj</i> )      | : | strong                                                          |
| meagre ( <i>adj</i> )            | : | small in quantity                                               |
| solitary ( <i>adj</i> )          | : | single                                                          |
| vest ( <i>n</i> )                | : | a garment worn under a shirt / a piece of underwear             |
| gable ( <i>n</i> )               | : | upper part of a wall below a sloping roof                       |
| parting ( <i>n</i> )             | : | a line on a person's head where the hair is divided with a comb |
| pace ( <i>v</i> )                | : | to walk up and down many times                                  |
| thud ( <i>n</i> )                | : | (here) a dull sound made when a heavy object falls              |
| wriggled ( <i>v</i> )            | : | moved by twisting and turning                                   |
| slithered ( <i>v</i> )           | : | moved / glided                                                  |
| quarters ( <i>n</i> )            | : | parts of the body                                               |
| hood ( <i>n</i> )                | : | an expanded part of a snake's head                              |
| molten ( <i>adj</i> )            | : | heated to a very high temperature                               |
| lurk(ed) ( <i>v</i> )            | : | be about / lie in wait                                          |
| mascara ( <i>n</i> )             | : | a substance put on eyelashes to make them look dark and thick   |
| vermilion ( <i>adj</i> )         | : | bright red in colour                                            |
| I was no image cut<br>in granite | : | the doctor no longer stood there like a statue                  |
| a man of flesh<br>and blood      | : | a normal man (The doctor became normal.)                        |
| reedy ( <i>adj</i> )             | : | not pleasant                                                    |
| sprinter ( <i>n</i> )            | : | a fast runner                                                   |
| taken with ( <i>phr.v</i> )      | : | attracted by                                                    |

### I. Answer the following questions.

1. The doctor heard a sound coming from above three times. What was it?
2. Why did the doctor sit like a stone?

3. What made the doctor forget his fears and have a sense of relief?
4. Did the snake admire its beauty? Yes or no? Pick the lines from the passage in support of your answer.
5. Why did the doctor want to marry a doctor? What kind of woman doctor would he like to marry?
6. In those days, I was a great admirer of beauty. Do you think looks are more important than skills and behavior? Why?
7. What did the doctor think about the snake when it looked into the mirror?
8. Why did the doctor run to his friend's house? Did the snake want to harm the doctor? Why or why not?

**II. Here is a list of sentences from the story. Tick (✓) the sentences that tell you that the doctor was afraid of the snake.**

| Sl. No. | Sentence                                                                      | Boxes for Ticking |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1.      | I didn't tremble. I didn't cry out.                                           |                   |
| 2.      | I sat there holding my breath.                                                |                   |
| 3.      | I forgot my danger and smiled feebly at myself.                               |                   |
| 4.      | Holding my breath I got up from the chair.                                    |                   |
| 5.      | I leapt into the yard and ran for all I was worth.                            |                   |
| 6.      | I don't claim that it was the first snake that had ever looked into a mirror. |                   |



## Vocabulary

**I. Tick (✓) the correct meaning of the words underlined below.**

1. The house was not electrified.
  - a. There was no electricity in the house.
  - b. The house was not away from the electricity board.
  - c. The house was not lit up.

2. The earnings were meagre.
  - a. very high
  - b. very small
  - c. nil
3. I also possessed one solitary black coat.
  - a. single
  - b. unique
  - c. expensive
4. I made another earth-shaking decision.
  - a. valuable
  - b. dangerous
  - c. important
5. The room was surrounded by darkness.
  - a. full of
  - b. covered
  - c. encircled
6. Some thief had removed most of my things.
  - a. damaged
  - b. destroyed
  - c. stolen

**II. Read the following sentence from the text and notice the underlined word.**

Suddenly there came a dull thud as if a rubber tube had fallen to the ground.

**‘Thud’** means *a low dull sound*.

**Here is a list of words related to sounds. Say what these words mean. Refer to a dictionary.**

| Word  | Meaning |
|-------|---------|
| bang  |         |
| clang |         |
| buzz  |         |
| ring  |         |

### III. Use the linkers given in the box to complete the story. A linker may be used more than once.

A young doctor lived in a village. The doctor told his friends an interesting story about himself and a cobra. It was a hot summer night. \_\_\_\_\_ he opened the door, he heard a sound \_\_\_\_\_ was well known to him. He and rats shared the same room. There was no electricity in the house, \_\_\_\_\_ he took out a box of matches and lit a kerosene lamp. He took off his clothes and lay down \_\_\_\_\_ he could not sleep. He got up from the bed and started reading a story-book. Near the table there was a mirror, \_\_\_\_\_ tempted him to look into at himself. He was unmarried \_\_\_\_\_ he was particular about his handsomeness. He wanted to marry a woman doctor \_\_\_\_\_ had plenty of money and should be fat. \_\_\_\_\_ he was having such thoughts, suddenly he felt \_\_\_\_\_ a rubber tube had fallen to the ground \_\_\_\_\_ a snake landed on his shoulder. At that time the only thing he could do was to pray to God. The snake would bite him at any moment \_\_\_\_\_ suddenly it turned its head and started admiring its beauty in the mirror. The doctor was thus saved.

as if, but, who, when, which, so, while



## Grammar

### I. Read the following sentences from the story.

We found we had little to carry. Some thief had removed most of my things.

*In the above two sentences, the first one is in the simple past (found, had) and the second is in the past perfect tense (had removed).*

*As you can see, the action which occurred earlier, is expressed in the past perfect tense, whereas the action which occurred later, is expressed in the simple past tense.*

**Here are a few more examples.**

1. Sujatha had arrived at the station before the train came.

2. The doctor arrived after the patient had died.
3. I bought the ticket as soon as I boarded the bus.

*When two actions occur nearly simultaneously in the past, both are expressed in the simple past tense.*

***Now combine the following pairs of sentences using the past perfect and the simple past.***

(use ***after***, ***before*** or ***when*** as linkers)

*The first one has been done for you.*

1. I brushed my teeth. I took my breakfast.

**A.** *After I had brushed my teeth, I took my breakfast.*

***or***

*I had brushed my teeth before I took my breakfast.*

2. She started to go to market. It rained heavily.

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

3. He completed his homework. He went to bed.

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

4. I finished my dinner. My father came.

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

5. I fell seriously ill. I met my family doctor.

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

6. I locked the door. I went out to meet my friend at a restaurant.

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

## **II. Phrasal Verbs**

**Look at the following phrasal verbs and their meanings.**

1. take out - to remove something from inside
2. set up - to arrange for something to happen / to start
3. take off - to remove
4. lie down - to take rest
5. take time off - to take some time for something
6. look into - to observe keenly

7. look at - to have a look at something
8. get up - to wake up
9. change into - to turn into
10. leave behind - to leave something as a token of memory or gift

*As you can see, a phrasal verb is a unit of a verb and one or more particles / a preposition. It cannot be understood on the basis of the meanings of the individual parts in isolation, but rather it must be taken as a whole.*

**Use the above phrasal verbs in the blanks. Make necessary changes in the verb forms.**

Venkata Rao was a rich man. He wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ some business in the town. So he \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of money from the bank. On an auspicious day he started his medical business, which prospered by leaps and bounds. He became so busy that he could not \_\_\_\_\_ for any rest. He used to \_\_\_\_\_ very early in the morning and go to his office. In the afternoon he would \_\_\_\_\_ his shirt and \_\_\_\_\_ on his couch in the office. After a nap he would put on his shirt. Then he would \_\_\_\_\_ the mirror and \_\_\_\_\_ himself admiringly. Anyhow he \_\_\_\_\_ some fame in the town even when he went abroad. Everybody believed that he \_\_\_\_\_ a new man.



## Writing

### I. Write a descriptive essay on any unusual or humorous incident you might have witnessed or experienced.

#### Features:

- Title
- Providing main ideas / details
- Sequencing of ideas
- Introduction / thesis statement
- Providing supporting ideas / details
- Giving appropriate conclusion

### II. Preparation of a Poster

Tell the names of some important events / happenings. If you want to publicise the matter, what will you do?

Look at the poster given below.

# THE HYDERABAD LAUGHING CLUB

Nampally, Hyderabad

ANNOUNCES

## THE RAJABABU PRIZE



For the best write-up on

### THE ROLE OF COMEDY IN HUMAN LIFE

The Award Annually Honours  
One Print Media Journalist  
in each of the following three  
categories:

Best Write-up in

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Each Award  
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**₹ 5000**

Deadline for Entries

**JULY 27**

( Give your contact  
details)

**For Further  
information and  
submission of  
published entries  
CONTACT:**

President,

**The Hyderabad  
Laughing Club**

Public Gardens, Nampally,

Hyderabad - 500 001

Contact No: 9xxxxxxx

[www.hlc.org/awards](http://www.hlc.org/awards)

**Now reflect on the following questions.**

What are the elements of an effective poster? (colour, size, layout, font size, language etc.)

- Who issued the poster?
- What is the purpose of the poster?
- What is the deadline?
- What are the other details highlighted?
- What should be highlighted in a poster?
- Who are the targetted audience of the poster?

**Now prepare a poster using the information given below by arranging it in a proper sequence.**

| Highlights      | Information                                                          |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theme           | Humour                                                               |
| Occasion        | The Laughter Day                                                     |
| Category        | Stories, Songs, Poems, Essays, Articles and Cartoons                 |
| Award           | Best Comic Writer Award                                              |
| Prize Amount    | ₹ 10,000                                                             |
| Contact No.     | 98XXXXXX49                                                           |
| Deadline        | 9th August                                                           |
| Issued by       | ABC Laughing Club, Dhannur,<br>Adilabad Dist. - 504 304              |
| Target Audience | Writers, Journalists, Poets,<br>Essayists, Cartoonists and Lyricists |



## Study Skills

Here is a short narration. Read it carefully and make a list of important points., especially with regard to what are facts and what are superstitions. Suggest a suitable title for it.

The young doctor married an intelligent and kind girl. He told her the episode of ‘The Snake and the Mirror’. She laughed heartily. He went on talking about cobras and some funny facts (associated) related to them. He said to her, “Cobras are the most poisonous, active and dangerous snakes. But, surprisingly, most Hindus worship them. It is funny to know that some women drop eggs and pour milk into the ant hills where cobras usually reside.

It is funny to know that some people believe cobras dance to the tunes of charmers. In fact, they have no ears. It is equally humorous to be aware of the fact that most cobra victims go to the charmers instead of the doctors. The charmers enchant some so-called *mantras* taking some neem leaves into their hands. The cobra victim dies and they say the victim came late to them. It is funnier to know that some farmers cremate cobras and perform funeral rites as if one of the members of their family died.” “Are there any other funny stories related to cobras?” the young wife enquired. “Yes. There are so many stories to tell but I will tell them tomorrow. The patients may be waiting for me at hospital,” the doctor said and left for hospital in a hurry.



## Listening

**I. Your teacher will tell you the story, ‘Master of the Game.’ Listen to it carefully and answer the following questions.**

1. What made the old man talk to the boys?
2. Why did the boys stop playing cricket in the night outside the old man’s house?