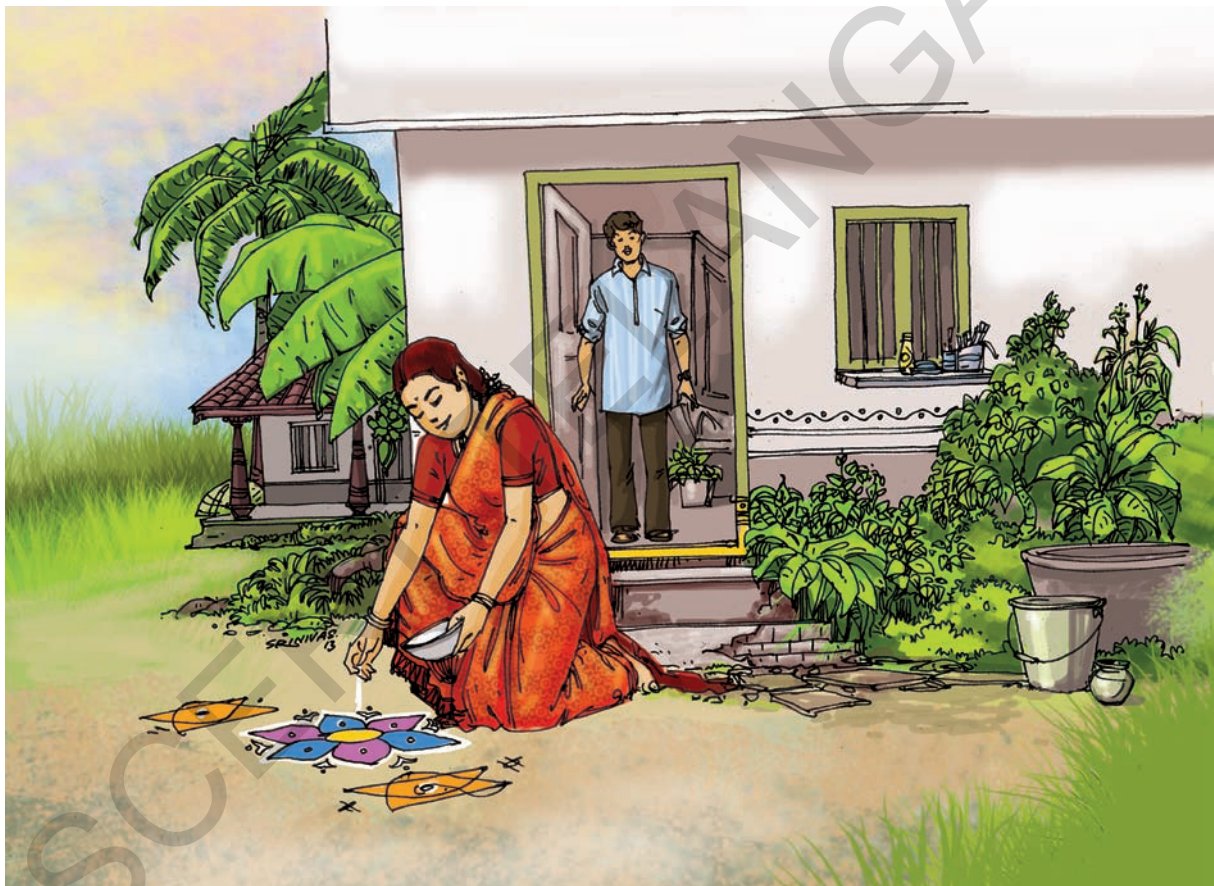


What Is My Name?

Have you noticed how your father calls your mother? Does he use her name or not? How do the neighbours address her? Does anyone address her by name? What about your grandmother? In this story, P. Sathyavathi describes how a woman forgets her own name since no one addresses her by name. How does a woman gain her identity—by name, by marriage, by motherhood, by education, by profession or by anything else? Read the story keeping these questions in mind.



A young woman, before being a housewife. A woman, educated and cultured, and intelligent, and capable, quick-witted, with a sense of humour and elegance.

Falling for her beauty and intelligence, as also the dowry which her father offered, a young man tied the three sacred knots around her neck, made her the housewife to a household and said to her, 'Look, *ammadu*, this is your home.' Then the housewife immediately pulled the end of her sari and tucked it in at the waist and swabbed the entire house and decorated

the floor with *muggulu* designs. The young man promptly praised her work. 'You are dexterous at swabbing the floor — even more dexterous in drawing the *muggulu*. *Sabash*, keep it up.' He said it in English, giving her a pat on the shoulder in appreciation. Overjoyed, the housewife began living with swabbing as the chief mission in her life. She scrubbed the house spotlessly clean at all times and beautifully decorated it with multi-coloured designs. That's how her life went on, with a sumptuous and ceaseless supply of swabbing cloths and *muggu* baskets.

But one day while scrubbing the floor, the housewife suddenly asked herself, 'What is my name?' The query shook her up. Leaving the mopping cloth and the *muggu* basket there itself, she stood near the window scratching her head, lost in thoughts. 'What is my name — what is my name?' The house across the road carried a name-board, *Mrs M Suhasini, M.A., Ph.D., Principal, 'X' College*. Yes, she too had a name as her neighbour did — 'How could I forget like that? In my scrubbing zeal I have forgotten my name — what shall I do now?' The housewife was perturbed. Her mind became totally restless. Somehow she finished her daubing for the day.

Meanwhile, the maidservant arrived. Hoping at least she would remember, the housewife asked her, 'Look, *amma*, do you know my name?'

'What is it, *amma*?' said the girl. 'What do we have to do with names of mistresses? You are only a mistress to us — the mistress of such and such a white-storeyed house, ground floor means you.'

'Yes, true, of course, how can you know, poor thing?' thought the housewife.

The children came home from school for lunch in the afternoon. 'At least the children might remember my name' — the housewife hoped.

'Look here, children, do you know my name?' she asked.

They were taken aback.

'You are *amma* — your name is *amma* only — ever since we were born we have known only this, the letters that come are only in father's name — because everyone calls him by his name we know his name — you never told us your name — you don't even get letters addressed to your name,' the children said plainly. 'Yes, who will write letters to me? Father and mother are there but they only make phone calls once in a month or two. Even my sisters are immersed with swabbing their houses. Even if they met me in some marriage or *kumkum* ceremony, they chatted away their time talking about new *muggulu* or new dishes to cook, but no letters!' The housewife was disappointed and grew more restless — the urge to know her own name somehow or the other grew stronger in her.

Now a neighbour came to invite her to a *kumkum* ceremony. The housewife asked her neighbour hoping she atleast would remember her name. Giggling, the lady said, 'Somehow or other I haven't asked your name nor have you told me. Right -hand side, white storeyed - house or there she is, that pharmaceutical company manager's wife, if not that, that fair and tall lady, that's how we refer to you, that's all.' That's all that the other housewife could say.

It's no use. What can even my children's friends say — they know me only as Kamala's mother or some aunty, now my respected husband — is the only hope — if anyone remembers it, it is only he.

During the night meal, she asked him, 'Look here, I have forgotten my name — if you remember it, will you please tell me?'

The respected husband burst out laughing and said, 'What is it, dear, never has it happened before, you are talking about your name today. Ever since we were married I have got used to calling you only as *yemoi*. You too never told me not to address you that way because you have a name of your own — what's happened now — Everyone calls you Mrs Murthy, don't they?'

'Not Mrs Murthy, I want my own name — what shall I do now?' she said in anguish.

'What's there, you choose a new name, some name or other,' the husband advised.

'Very nice — your name is Satyanarayana Murthy; will you keep quiet if I ask you to change your name to Siva Rao or Sundara Rao? I want my name only,' she said.

'It's all right, you are an educated woman — your name must be on the certificates — don't you have that much common sense — go and find out,' he advised her .

The housewife searched frantically for her certificates in the *almirah* — *pattu* saris, chiffon saris, handloom saris, voile saris, matching blouses, petticoats, bangles, beads, pearls, pins, *kumkum barinas*, silver plates, silver containers to keep sandalwood paste, ornaments all things arranged in an orderly fashion. Nowhere could she find her certificates. Yes — after marriage she had never bothered to carry those certificates here.

'Yes — I haven't brought them here — I shall go to my place, search for my certificates and enquire about my name, and return in a couple of days.' She asked for her husband's permission. 'Very nice! Must you go just for your name or what? If you go, who will scrub the house these two days?' said her lord. Yes, that was true — because she scrubbed better than the others. She had not allowed anyone else to do that job all these days. Everyone was busy with their own respective duties. He had his office — poor things, the children had

their studies to take care of. Why should they bother about this chore, and she had been doing it all along — they just didn't know how to do it, of course.

But still, how to live without knowing one's name? It was all right all these days since the question had not occurred to her; now it was really hard to live without a name.

'Just for two days you manage somehow or other — until and unless I go and get my name, I shall find it difficult to live,' she pleaded with her husband and managed to get out of the house.

'Why, dear daughter, have you come so suddenly? Are your children and husband all right? Why have you come alone?'

Behind affectionate enquiries of the father and the mother there was a strain of suspicion. Recollecting immediately the purpose of her visit, the housewife asked her mother most pitifully, '*Amma*, tell me, what is my name?'

'What is it *amma*, you are our elder daughter. We gave you education up to B.A. and got you married with fifty thousand rupees as dowry. We took care of your two deliveries — each time we alone bore the expenses of the maternity home. You have two children — your husband has a good job — a very nice person, too — your children are well-mannered.'

'It's not my history, *amma* — it's my name I want. At least tell me where my certificates are.'

'I don't know, child. Recently we cleaned out the *almirah* of old papers and files and arranged some glassware in their place. Some important files we kept in the attic — we shall search for them tomorrow. Now what is the hurry, don't worry about them — take a good bath and have your meal, child,' said the housewife's mother.

The housewife took a good bath and ate her meal, but she could not sleep. While scrubbing the house, humming happily, joyously, and making *muggulu*, she had never thought that she would have to face so many difficulties like this by forgetting her own name.

Dawn broke, but the search for the certificates among the files in the attic had not ended.

Now the wife asked everyone she met — she asked the trees — the anthills — the pond — the school where she had studied — the college. After all the shouting and the wailing, she met a friend — and succeeded in recovering her name.

That friend was also like her — married, and a housewife like her, but she had not made swabbing the sole purpose of her life; scrubbing was only a part of her life; she remembered her name and the names of her friends. This particular friend recognized our housewife.



'Sarada! My dear Sarada!' she shouted and embraced her. The housewife felt like a person — totally parched and dried up, about to die of thirst — getting a drink of cool water from the new earthen *kooja* poured into her mouth with a spoon and given thus a new life. The friend did indeed give her a new life — 'You are Sarada. You came first in our school in the tenth class. You came first in the music competition conducted by the college. You used to paint good pictures too. We were ten friends altogether — I meet all of them some time or other. We write letters to each other. Only you have gone out of our reach! Tell me why are you living incognito?' her friend confronted her.

'Yes, Pramila — what you say is true. Of course I'm Sarada — until you said it I could not remember it — all the shelves of my mind were taken up with only one thing — how well I can scrub the floors. I remembered nothing else. Had I not met you, I would have gone mad,' said the housewife named Sarada.

Sarada returned home, climbed the attic and fished out her certificates, the pictures she had drawn — old albums, everything she succeeded in getting out. She also searched further and managed to find the prizes she had received in school and college.

Overjoyed, she returned home.

'You have not been here — look at the state of the house — it's like a *choultry*. Oh what a relief you are here, now it is like a festival for us,' said Sarada's husband.

'Just scrubbing the floor does not make a festival. By the way, from now onwards don't call me *yemoi geemoi*. My name is Sarada — call me Sarada, understood?

Having said that, she went inside, humming joyously.

Sarada who had always cared so much for discipline, keeping an eye on every corner, checking if there was dust, making sure things were properly arranged each in its correct and respective order, now sat on the sofa which had not been dusted for the last two days. She sat there showing the children an album of her paintings that she had brought for them.

By P.Satyavathi

(Translated by Vadrewu Vijayalaxmi and Ranga Rao)



About the author

Smt P. Satyavathi is one of those writers who have brought feminism to the peak in Telugu literature. Though she is a retired English lecturer, she has great understanding of the Telugu accent and the idiom of the respective regions. She is adept in portraying human experience universally. The technique of appealing to the readers by weaving the story wonderfully with a philosophical touch and theological aspect is her forte. She has published four anthologies of short stories, five novels and a collection of essays. She has won a number of prestigious awards. This story “What Is My Name” is originally published as “*Illalakagaane Pandagouna*” in Telugu in 1990 and has been translated into almost all the south Indian languages and Hindi .

Glossary

swab (v) : clean

dexterous (adj) : skilful

sumptuous (adj): luxurious, splendid

mopping (v) : cleaning / washing

perturb (v) : bother / disturb / trouble

daubing (n) : the act of spreading a substance such as mud thickly

immerse (v) : absorb oneself in something

giggling (v) : laughing nervously

frantically (<i>adv</i>)	: worriedly / anxiously
maternity home (<i>n</i>)	: hospital for deliveries
parch (<i>v</i>)	: dehydrate
incognito (<i>adv</i>)	: having a concealed identity
fish (<i>v</i>)	: search

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions.

1. What made Mrs. Murthy so restless to know her name?
2. Do you notice any change in Mrs. Murthy in the first picture and Sarada in the second picture?
3. Do you find any similarities between Mrs. Murthy and the women in your family? If yes, list them.
4. Why do you think the writer decided to focus on the question of married women's identity?
5. Which part of the story shows that Mrs. Murthy feels her identity restored?
6. Dowry was given in Sarada's marriage. Is taking and giving Dowry an offence? What are your thoughts on people offering and demanding dowry?
7. Make a list of activities/ professions. Find out about women and men in varied professions. Is there any job that only a woman or only a man can do? Discuss.

Writing

I. Translation

Read the following news item in Telugu and compare it with its translation in English given after that.

పశ్చిమకనుమలపై కస్తూరి రంగన్ కమిటీ సిఫార్సులకు కేంద్రం ఆమోదం

న్యూఢిల్లీ: పశ్చిమ కనుమల పరిరక్షణపై కస్తూరిరంగన్ కమిటీ ఇచ్చిన నివేదికను కేంద్ర పర్యావరణ మంత్రిత్వశాఖ ఆమోదించింది. ఆరు రాష్ట్రాల పరిధిలో 80వేల చదరపు కిలోమీటర్ల మేర విస్తరించిన పశ్చిమ కనుమల్లో అభివృద్ధి కార్యకలాపాలను చేపట్టకూడదని కస్తూరిరంగన్ కమిటీ తన నివేదికలో స్పష్టం చేసింది. పశ్చిమ కనుమల్లోని అత్యంత అరుదైన పర్యావరణాన్ని కాపాడటానికి తీసుకోవల్సిన చర్యలపై కస్తూరిరంగన్ నేతృత్వంలో కేంద్రప్రభుత్వం గతంలో ఒక కమిటీని నియమించింది. ఈ కమిటీ ఈ ఏడాది ఏప్రిల్ 15న తన నివేదికను సమర్పించింది. దీనిపై ఆరురాష్ట్రాల అభిప్రాయాలూ, ప్రజల సూచనలు తీసుకున్న అనంతరం కేంద్ర పర్యావరణశాఖ ఆమోదం తెలిపింది. గుజరాత్, మహారాష్ట్ర, గోవా, కర్ణాటక, కేరళ, తమిళనాడు రాష్ట్రాల్లో పశ్చిమ కనుమలు విస్తరించి ఉన్నాయి.

The following is the translated version of the above Telugu news item.

Centre's Nod to Kasturi Rangan Committee Recommendations on Western Ghats

NEW DELHI : The Ministry of Environment has accepted the report made by the Kasturi Rangan Committee on the conservation of Western Ghats. The committee, in its recommendations, made it clear that no further development activities be undertaken in the Western Ghats spread across the 60 thousand square kilometers in six states. The committee was appointed by the Union Government and headed by Kasturi Rangan to suggest measures to conserve the rarest ecosystem of the Western Ghat forests. The committee submitted its Report on 15th of April. The Ministry of Environment, after taking opinions of the six state governments and the people of the states, accepted the recommendations. The Western Ghats extend in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu states.

Let's think of the following:

1. Do you think that translation is just translation of language ? Or does it also include translation of ideas ?
2. Which translation is better, true translation or free translation ?
3. Do you find any change in the order of the sentence? For e.g : We have Subject, Verb, Object in English but the order is Subject, Object, Verb in Telugu.
4. Do you think sometimes it creates problems in the choice of vocabulary while attempting to translate a text?
5. Is it possible to translate a poem from one language to the other?
6. Is it necessary to take cultural aspects into consideration?

Now, take a paragraph in Telugu from your text book/ magazine and translate it into English. List the difficulties while translating the text.

3. Translate the following extract into Telugu and compare it with the original story in Telugu. (Refer to teacher's handbook for Telugu version.)

'Sarada! My dear Sarada!' she shouted and embraced her. The housewife felt like a person — totally parched and dried up, about to die of thirst — getting a drink of cool water from the new earthen *kooja* poured into her mouth with a spoon and given thus a new life. The friend did indeed give her a new life — 'You are Sarada. You came first in our school in the tenth class. You came first in the music competition conducted by the college. You used to paint good pictures too. We were ten friends altogether — I meet all of them some time or other. We write letters to each other. Only you have gone out of our reach! Tell me why are you living incognito?' her friend confronted her.

This chapter talks about human rights from a different perspective. Let us now understand the rights of children to keep them safe through the following section:

Speak for Safety

Here is a conversation that Tony had with his mother.

- Mother : Tony, why are you so irritable these days? Even the next door aunty was telling me that you have stopped going over to help her as you usually do.
- Tony : It's nothing! I don't want to talk about it.
- Mother : No Tony, I feel you are worried about something. Talking about our troubles helps us feel better.
- Tony : (Hesitantly) I would like to. But I think it might upset you.
- Mother : (Sitting down next to him) It's not about me, Tony. We need to figure out what the problem is and find a solution.
- Tony : Well. It is about the aunty next door. I had gone to her house to give the clothes she had asked me to collect from the dhobi. She asked me to put the clothes in the top shelf of the inside cupboard. (Tony then stops...)
- Mother : (Gently) I see.
- Tony : Well... she was standing very close to me. It made me feel uncomfortable. And when I tried to move away, she held me back. I did not like it but she would not let go of me. I got away. But it has been bothering me ever since.
- Mother : Tony, it is really brave of you to tell me this. Aunty has behaved in an unsafe manner. I will talk to her about it this evening.
- Tony : What if she denies it and gets angry with us?
- Mother : I know you are telling the truth and I believe you.
- Tony : I am a big boy now, may be I should have done something to stop it. I feel ashamed.
- Mother : But it's not your fault! You did not break any rules. The person who breaks the rule is to be blamed. She is the one who needs to feel ashamed, not you. Our laws - like the POCSO Act, prescribe punishment for such offences.

Questions for discussion:

- 1. What makes this issue sensitive? What are the different ways to handle such issues?**
- 2. Always seek help. Do you think the boy was correct? How do you support?**

Project Work

Collect paper clippings that appeared in daily newspapers over a period of fifteen days or so that depict gender discrimination / violation of human rights / child rights. Paste them on a chart and display the chart in the class.

Work in groups and discuss what specific actions you can take to stop the violation of human rights/gender discrimination/child rights in school, home and in the locality where you live and present it before the classroom.

Self Assessment



How well have I understood this unit?

Read and tick (✓) in the appropriate box.

Indicators	Yes	Somewhat	No
Reading: I read and comprehended the text:			
A. Jamaican Fragment			
B. Once upon a Time			
C. What Is My Name?			
Vocabulary: I was able to			
• identify the correct meaning of the words.			
• pick out words from the lesson that describe the boys.			
• identify similes and metaphors in the passage.			
Writing: I was able to			
• write an essay on the violation of child rights in Indian society.			
• judge what kind of a translation it was.			
• translate the Telugu version into English and list the difficulties I faced.			
• Translate the given extract into Telugu			

Indicators	Yes	Somewhat	No
Listening and Speaking:			
I listened to the story of Maya and said whether the statements were true or false.			
I was able to draft a speech and deliver it in the class.			
Study Skills:			
I was able to prepare a brief report about how the <i>Dalits</i> are discriminated basing on the information			
Project Work:			
I was able to share my views on the responsibility of the students in order to prevent the violation of human rights / gender discrimination / child rights/ child abuse in school, home and in our locality.			

We also have ‘Personal Body Safety Rules’ to keep ourselves safe. They are:

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

If someone breaks ‘Personal Body safety Rules’, I can say

‘No’ to that person;

GO away from that person as and when I can;

TELL a safe adult about this person because he/she is doing something unsafe and has to be stopped.

I am a safe person if I follow Personal Body Safety Rules for myself and for others.
I do not touch or talk or behave in an unsafe way with others.