

LESSON 8



IDGAH

Have you ever given alms to the poor ? Have you ever helped your mother in her work ? Have you ever helped an elderly person to cross the street ? How do you feel when you help a person in need or when you offer help to a needy person ? Read this story and feel inspired !

Thirty days of fasting for the month of Ramjan ended and the festival of Id arrived. What a beautiful morning! The trees covered with green leaves, the green fields and the bright blue sky – everything looked beautiful and joyous. The loving and mellow sun seemed to make everyone happy. Many were getting ready. The children were the happiest lot. They were also making hectic last-minute preparations for the festival.

Hamid looked very cheerful. He was a slim boy of four or five years. His father died of cholera last year. After that, his mother became thinner and paler day by day, and one day she also died all of a sudden. Now the orphan had no one to turn to except his old grandmother Amina, who became almost a mother to him and the only shelter for him in the wide world.

Grandmother Amina pondered over the matter with anguish. The children of the village were going to the celebrations with their fathers. Hamid had no one except his grandmother. How could Amina

allow the small boy to go alone to the village fair ? Suppose, he got lost in the crowd! What would be done then ? He is just a child. Trying to cover a distance of six miles to the fair, the tender feet would get blistered. Then, what about the joy and eagerness of her grand-son preparing for it ? Money also was a serious problem.



Collecting all the coins in her possession, she had only three paise for the boy. Hamid came in and said, “Amma, don’t worry. I shall return ahead of my friends. Don’t worry at all.” Saying these words, Hamid left for the fair. He went along with other children. At times, the children ran ahead of the crowd. They also stopped at certain places to wait for their friends to catch up.

Soon, they could see the Idgah. They also saw the tamarind trees and their shade below. They could also see the smooth concrete floor. Here, people gathered to offer prayers. It was so crowded that there was no space left in the front. Here, there was no distinction between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the underprivileged. Thousands knelt and bowed. After the prayers, the multitude stood up together. Then, they knelt down together again for the last time. The sight resembled electric bulbs going off at a single stroke when the current went off. It was a wonderful sight. All the people became united by a single thread of brotherly love and affection.

The men started embracing each other. The young and the old rejoiced. Their happiness knew no bounds. The shops selling sweets and toys were surrounded by groups of people. Varieties of toys were on sale. Among the toys were figures of soldiers, criminals, kings, lawyers and water-carriers. How beautiful the toys looked ! It appeared as if they would start talking immediately. Mahmood bought the soldier. It was dressed in Khaki with a red turban on its head. It had a gun on its shoulder. Mohsin wanted the water-carrier.

It was slightly bent because of the bag of water on its back. Since Nure wanted to become a lawyer, he bought the lawyer. It was dressed in a black robe and a white shirt. There were books

of law in its hands. All these toys cost two paise each. Hamid had just three paise in his pocket. How could he buy such costly toys ?

After the toy-shops came the sweet-shops. One of the children bought a candy, while another bought *gulab jamuns*. They ate the sweets heartily.

After the sweet-shops came shops selling household wares. These shops sold nothing that the children liked. They went ahead hastily. However, Hamid stopped in front of one of these shops. He saw some tongs. He suddenly remembered, “Grandmother does not have a pair of tongs. Her fingers always get burnt while taking out the *rotis* from the pan. How happy she’ll be if I buy a pair of tongs for her ! Her fingers won’t get burnt ! What is the use of buying toys? Toys will make me happy for a short while! Many of the toys bought by my friends will get broken by the time we reach home !”

Hamid’s friends had gone ahead. They stopped to drink fruit juice. Hamid thought, “How selfish they are! They have sweets in their hand but they haven’t shared even one with me! Later on, they will ask me to play with them. Let them have all the sweets to themselves. Their teeth will get rotten; their bodies will be scarred with scabies and their tongues will get blisters! Why should I spoil my tongue eating sweets! I will buy a pair of tongs. My grandmother will be pleased. She will shower blessings on me! Who’ll bless them for the toys that they have bought! Mahmood and Mohsin are proud because I have little money in my pocket. They’ll laugh at me for buying a pair of tongs. Let them laugh at me! I don’t care!”

He asked the shopkeeper, “How much does this pair of tongs cost ?” The shopkeeper replied that it cost six paise. Hearing the price, Hamid felt very disheartened.

“Please tell me the truth,” he spoke softly.

“I’m telling the truth. It will cost five paise. Take it or leave it!” replied the shopkeeper.

Hamid mustered courage and said, “Can you give it for three paise.” Without waiting for a reply, he left the shop immediately. He was afraid that the shopkeeper might scold him. However, the shopkeeper called him back and gave him the pair of tongs for three paise. He felt very proud. He walked upto his friends. Seeing the pair of tongs in his hands, Mohsin laughed at him, “Hamid, you are crazy! Why have you bought it?” Hamid replied slowly, “What have you bought ? Is it this ordinary toy made of clay ? The moment it slips from your hands, it will break into pieces! On our way back, if a tiger appears your water-carrier will run away because of sheer fright. The soldier will also hide inside the robe. However, my tong will fight the tiger. Like a strong wrestler, it will hold its neck and pierce its eyes!”

The children did not have a reply to Hamid’s clever answer. They had spent their money on these useless things. They felt sad. Hamid had opened their eyes. They realised the truth in his words. However, they showed their toys to him. He praised their toys while they praised his tongs.

Around eleven in the morning there was a lot of noise in the whole village. The people who had gone to see the fair were coming back home. As soon as Mohsin reached his house, his little sister came out and snatched the toy. As she jumped with joy, the water-carrier fell on the ground and broke into pieces. Nure managed to fix a small plank on the walls with nails. He placed his toy on the plank. Then, he started fanning it. Whether it was the wind from the fan or the fan itself, the toy lawyer fell down and broke into pieces.

The last toy remaining intact was Mahmood's toy-soldier. In a small basket, he had put some clothes and laid the toy. His brother ran up to him shouting, "Wake up! Soldier! Wake-up!" Mahmood stumbled and fell. The toy popped out of the basket and fell on the ground. It broke into pieces.

Let's hear about Hamid now. Hearing her grandson coming back, Amina came out and took the child lovingly on her lap. Suddenly, she saw the pair of tongs in his hands. She was surprised.

"Where did you get it ?" She asked.

"I bought it," replied Hamid.

"How much money did it cost ?" asked Amina.

"Three paise," replied the boy meekly.

Amina was angry – "It's almost evening and you haven't eaten anything. I gave you three paise for the fair. Instead of buying something to eat, you have bought this pair of tongs !"



Like a guilty person, Hamid replied slowly, “Yes, grandmother! when you make *rotis*, your fingers often get burnt while taking out the *rotis* from the pan. I bought it so that your fingers won’t get burnt anymore !”

Hearing these words, Amina’s anger melted. She thought to herself, “How selfless and considerate my grandson is! His friends bought sweets and snacks to eat. They bought toys also! But he kept thinking of me even at the fair.” She could no longer hold herself back. Tears rolled down her cheeks. Spreading her *chadar*, she showered blessings on her grandson. Hiding his face, Hamid lay blissfully on the lap of his grandmother.

— *Munshi Premchand’s short story abridged
and rendered into English*

Glossary

mellow	– soft
hectic	– busy and excited
pondered	– thought deeply
anguish	– severe mental pain
blistered	– swollen

multitude	– great number
tongs	– implement consisting of two limbs used for grasping and lifting things
chadar	– scarf-like piece of cloth used by woman in India

Comprehension

1. Answer the following questions :

- (i) When did the festival of Id arrive ?
- (ii) Who were the happiest lot ?
- (iii) Why was Amina worried ?
- (iv) What happened at the Idgah ?
- (v) What were the toys bought by Hamid's friends ?
- (vi) What did Hamid buy ?
- (vii) Why didn't Hamid buy a toy ?
- (viii) What happened to the toys bought by Hamid's friends ?
- (ix) Describe Amina's reaction when she realised Hamid's act.

EXERCISE IN LANGUAGE

2. Choose the correct words from the pairs given in the brackets to fill in the blanks in the following sentences :

- (i) She was happy that I help her. (can/could)
- (ii) The teacher said that the earth round. (is/was)
- (iii) Hamid..... his grandmother more than
himself. (love/loves)
- (iv) He told me that he help me. (will/would)
- (v) Tom says that he not guilty. (is/ was)
- (vi) Mohan said that the sun in the east. (rose/rises)
- (vii) We start early lest wemiss the train.
(would/should).
- (viii) When I called at his house he gone away.
(have/had)
- (ix) The bus started before we reached the station.
(had/has)
- (x) Amina thought that Hamid come in
time. (will/would)

