

Class 11 – Snapshots

CH. 3 - RANGA'S MARRIAGE

By Masti Venkatesha Iyengar

Reading with Insight

1. Comment on the influence of English — the language and the way of life — on Indian life as reflected in the story. What is the narrator's attitude to English?

A. The story talks about the influence English language had decades ago in his village. Not many people in the village at that time could understand or talk in English. Only a few courageous people would send their children to study in cities like the village accountant sent Ranga to Bangalore. When Ranga came back to the village, everyone was keen on seeing how their culture had transformed him.

As far as cultural influence is concerned, the story mentions how Ranga wanted to marry a girl who was mature, someone who understands him and is compatible with him. This is completely in opposition to the arranged marriages that were widely prevalent in those times.

The narrator finds it disgraceful when people mix Kannada language with English. He recounts how one day a lady delivered firewood to Rama Rao's place and he told her to come the next morning because he had no "change". The lady did not know what "change" meant and left while muttering to herself. The narrator confesses that he too did not know what it meant until he asked Rama Rao.

2. Astrologers' perceptions are based more on hearsay and conjecture than what they learn from the study of the stars. Comment with reference to the story.

A. The story throws light upon how Shastri predicted what was going on in Ranga's mind. He did it using two sheets of paper, some cowries and a book of palmyra leaves in the form of his paraphernalia. He even revealed that Ranga has some girl on his mind whose name related to something that belonged to the ocean. All this made Ranga believe in the power of Astrology.

While in reality, it was our narrator Shyama, who had tutored Shastri to say so in a meeting prior to the one with Ranga. Shastri made it seem like no big deal when Ranga left and Shyama called it "his marvellous shastra". He said he could have guessed it with his numbers even if Shyama had not staged it for him.

Hence, the story portrays Astrologer's perceptions to be based more on hearsay and conjecture than what they learn from the stars.

3. Indian society has moved a long way from the way the marriage is arranged in the story. Discuss.

A. It is true that Indian society has moved a long way from the way the marriage is arranged in the story. Earlier, there was no concept of love marriage and only arranged marriages took place like the one being talked about in the story. Ranga's marriage was arranged by his uncle Shyama. In present times, the bride and the groom have a say in the matter unlike decades ago where even their consent was not considered important.

Our society has come a long way since then, especially when it comes to the rights of females. Earlier, the bride's families were pressurized into paying dowry which has been illegalised now. It is also against the law to marry individuals who have not yet attained a specific age; 18 in case of girls and 21 in case of boys.

4. What kind of a person do you think the narrator is?

A. The narrator is a man of his land as he introduces his village with such enthusiasm that every reader would want to visit it at least once. His hospitality can also be appreciated as he promises to take good care of his readers. He is someone who believes in maintaining the authenticity of his culture that is why, he thinks it's a disgrace to mix Kannada with English.

He is a man with good judgement of character. He knew what type of man Ranga was and that Rama Rao's niece Ratna would be a perfect partner for him. Shyama seemed like someone who knows how to make his own way. The whole set-up he staged with the village Shastri in order to get Ranga and Ratna married, pose as evidence for that. He is also funny by way of which he teased the village Shastri. Although clever, he seems to be a man with best intentions at heart.

Extra Questions And Answers

2 mark questions-

Q.1. What does the author have to say about the naming of the story?

~ The author has a unique way to justify the naming of the story where he puts a title with no fancy. He says he could have easily given a mouth-filling name like " Jagannatha Vijaya " or " Girija Kalyana " though he chose to give an uncomplicated and an unornamented title to the story. The author feels that it does require a straightforward name as it is about their own Ranga's marriage.

Q.2. How does the author mock Geographers and cartographers for not mentioning the name of his village?

~ Hosahalli is a village in Karnataka, located in the former Mysore state. The author in the story describes Hosahalli as a beautiful place with its mangoes as its main attractions. However, he is upset that the Indian cartographer and the British cartographer did not mark Hosahalli in the map when it was made years ago. He even mocks them by calling them a flock of sheep where one sheep walks into a pit and rest of them follow it blindly. He gives a reason that the Sahibs in England were probably not aware that such a place existed in India.

Q.3. Bring out the connection of Hosahalli, Mysore and Bharatvarsha to that of filling Karigadabu and Festival meal.

~ The narrator is very passionate about his village. He says that his village is not mentioned in any geography book because the geographers and the English men didn't know whether such a type place exists or not. but he says that his village had great importance as if the state Mysore is to Bharatvarsha, and the sweet Karigadabu is to the festival meal. Similarly, Hosahalli is as important to Mysore as the filling of Karigadabu is important for festival. He is very glowing and proud when he talks about his place.

Q.4.What did the author say about Gundabhatta?

~ As the author was describing the reason why his village was not in the map, he acquaints us with a doctor, Gundabhatta who is said to have agreed with the author. Gundabhatta is also said to have visited quite a few places though he has never been to England and answers he never wants to run around like a flea-pestered dog if he is asked about visiting England. He seems to be contented with the places he has visited in his lifetime.

Q.5. Tell us about the mango of the village that the author shared with the readers?

~ Apart from the two special produces of Hosahalli in Karigadabu and flowers, the author tells us about the mango of the village. He shares that the sourness of the raw mango's bite is sure to get straight to the brahmarandhra, i.e. the soft part in the head where skull bones join. Moreover, he narrates us another story where he had to suffer for raw ripe. It was until the doctor who advised him cough medicine and told him about the special quality of the mangoes.

Q.6.What did the author say about the pond and creeper of his village?

~ Masti Venkatesha adores his village and is proud of his village Hosahalli and believes his village is as important for Mysore, as Mysore itself is important for India. The readers get to know about a kind of creeper which grows in the pond of the village which has the clearest water. The flowers are a feast to behold, moreover, the author says that the leaves of the creeper can be used to serve meals which shows us how adorable his village is.

Q.7.What notions of English did the author reflect in those days?

~ The author makes the readers aware of the fact that we are losing local dialects in our journey of getting educated in English. The author tells that today every street of their village has English-speaking person unlike when they had no person who could speak English ten years ago. He gets upset when he finds people bringing English words in between of their local language. It is disgraceful for the author to find villagers forgetting their local accent and replacing those by English.

Q.8.What does the ‘change’ incident reflect the social status of English in the then days?

~ The villagers bring English words even while talking in Kannada. The narrator considers it disgraceful and illustrates his point of view by giving an example. A bundle of firewood was brought at Rama Rao’s house and his son asked the lady what was the price. When she said “Four pice”, the boy told her that he didn’t have any change and asked her to come the next day. The poor woman didn’t understand the word change and went away muttering to herself. Thus the use of English language before a native Kannada speaker caused confusion. This shows the influence of English in the way of life of modern young educated Indians which the narrator didn’t approve to.

Q.9.Why did the author bring the reference of “Black Hole of Calcutta”?

~ Since English the language was not so widespread in the village a decade ago, the homecoming of the accountant’s son Ranga was a great event in the village. A huge crowd went to his house to see Ranga and were surprised to see that he didn’t change a bit in six months. The narrator uses the expression ‘Black Hole of Calcutta’ to suggest the large number of people who had turned out to see Ranga just as hundreds of people were kept inside a room during the British rule.

Q.10.What special trait of Ranga is discussed in the story? How did Ranga do Namaskara?

~ Ranga was the son of an accountant and went to Bangalore for studies. He was well- educated and well-mannered boy. He was a traditional kid, quite different from other boys of his age. He was very generous and considerate about people. He was also fond of English language and customs. Ranga did a proper namaskara to him and the author was very much impressed with him. He not only folded his hands but also bend down to touch the feet and greeted the author in a very traditional way.

Q.11. Reflect on Ranga’s notion about marriage with his analysis and example.

~ Ranga believed he needed to find the right girl to get married. He believed if he would ever marry a girl, she would be mature, not a very young girl. Besides, he wanted to marry a girl whom he admired. He was not in favour of an arranged marriage. Ranga gave examples to make the author understand his thought-process of marrying late. His first example was of a thirty-year-old officer and a twenty-five-year-old lady and hoped that they would stay lovingly. He also told about Dushyanta falling in love with Shakuntala who was quite mature.

Q.12.How did people become that Ranga didn't change?

~ The crowds of villagers milled around his house to see whether he had changed or not. People were quite excited because Ranga had returned home after studying English at Bangalore. An old lady ran her hand over Ranga's chest. She looked into his eyes. She was satisfied to find the sacred thread on his body. She felt happy that he had not lost his caste. People disappeared from the scene, once they realised that Ranga had not undergone any material change. Ranga was able to win the heart of the villagers due to his humbleness. His education in the city does not bring any change in him. Being humble and modest helped him in winning the love of others.

Q.13. How did the narrator react to hearing Ranga's notion about marriage?

~ The *narrator* was distressed about *Ranga's* views about his *marriage* because he thought his views *were* beyond the views of the villagers. The narrator *was* sure Ranga who *did* not change and kept this individuality even after going to town for his studies won't *marry* a girl from outside his village. The narrator thought of Ratna who was the niece of Rama Rao and a pretty girl of eleven and thought that she way the most suitable bride for him.

Q.14.Who was Rama Rao's niece? Why did she come here in the village? How is she different from other village girls?

~ Ratna who was a pretty girl of eleven was the niece of Rama Rao. Both her parents have died, her uncle had brought her home. Being a girl from a big town, she knew how to play harmonium and veena. Moreover, she has a sweet voice. All these qualities in her differentiated her from other girls of the village and made her suitable for a young and learned man like Ranga.

Q.15.How did the narrator plot the meeting between Ranga and Ratna?

~ The narrator had arranged the meeting very systematically and let Ranga have a glimpse of Ratna. The narrator went to Ratna's uncle's home and told him to send Ratna to his home with buttermilk for him. Ratna was asked to sing by the narrator when she had come to give the buttermilk and in the meantime Ranga arrived at the door whom he had sent for. Ratna stopped singing abruptly at their unexpected encounter.

Q.16. When Ratna was singing, how did Ranga's presence interrupted the singing? How did the narrator compare this with a mango?

~ As soon as Ranga reached the door, he became curious of who was singing and peeped in. His presence blocked the light and Ratna stopped singing abruptly. Ranga felt disappointed when Ratna stopped singing. It was the narrator who compared this situation with a mango. He said Ranga had the same disappointment on his face as one would have when his juicy mango slips from his and falls on the ground as he would try to eat it as slowly as possible.

Q.17.Why did the narrator relate the story of the lion and he-goat? Elucidate.

~ As the Lion gets trapped by a he-goat and so narrator do with Ranga, so he compares Ranga to the lion. The narrator takes the help of the story in which a he-goat scares the lion by his cleverness. The narrator has used this comparison to convey the idea that he was the moderator, who had already got nine young men, like Ranga, married. It was now Ranga's turn to fall prey to his desire of having him married. Getting someone married by the narrator is equal to eating one lion by the he-goat.

Q.18.What did Ranga ask about the girl afterwards? Why did Ranga become disappointed with what the narrator said?

~ The narrator didn't give a straightforward reply as he casually said that it didn't matter who she was. Ranga expressed hope that she is unmarried. At first, the narrator told him that she was married to see how it affected Ranga and as expected, Ranga was disappointed on learning that she was married a year ago.

Q.19.How there had been a change in Ranga that afternoon? Where did the narrator take him? Why?

~ Full of hope, he asks if she isn't married yet to which the narrator replies that she is, probably a year ago. Ranga was disappointed and disheartened. It was clearly all over his face. He went away quoting some work. Our narrator, having staged certain liking in the mind of Ranga for Ratna, went on to complete his play. Narrator, very wittily, makes a remark that he went through the same feelings when he was seeing girls for himself and immediately mentions that it could not be the reason for Ranga. Furthermore, he suggested that they go see Shastri to see if the stars are in their favour.

Q.20.How did the narrator create an almost mess with the planning? How did the Shastri manage the situation?

~On seeing Shastri Ji, he implied not having seen the narrator in a long while, which is obviously not true as they had met before, the same morning. Here, the narrator reveals his pet name, Shyama as they called him in the village. The narrator felt that Shastri was lying because they saw each other that morning and thus he immediately responded. However, Shastri completed his sentence and saved the entire situation. Shyama realised what he was just about to do and took extra care from that moment. Shastri continued his role and acted surprised on seeing Ranga.

Q.21.Tell us about the Shastri's pretentious, preparations and words and acts as he tried to execute the plan hatched?

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seeing Shastri Ji, he implied not having seen the narrator in a long while, which is obviously not true as they had met before, the same morning. Here, the narrator reveals his pet name, Shyama as they called him in the village. The narrator felt that Shastri was lying because they saw each other that morning and thus he immediately responded. However, Shastri completed his sentence and saved the entire situation. Later on, Shastriji concluded the plan with a proper way and executed it by bringing the context of Ratna in Ranga's mind.

Q.22. How did Shastri with a hint reveal the truth?

~ The narrator asks the Shastri to take out all his tools to help solve whatever is going on in Ranga's mind with full authority. Shastri took out his essentials and told them that this is all ancient science but he won't recite it now because then they both would get bored but he does intend on telling it some other time. Shastri moved his lips while counting quickly and asked Ranga about his star which he did not know. Shyama posed the question to Shastri asking about the details of the girl. Shastri thought and thought and replied that the girl is likely to have a name of something found in the ocean. Their guesses include Kamala, Pachchi, moss, pearl and then suddenly Shastri said Ratna. All of it came together now to a girl named Ratna, who is the niece of Rama Rao. That's it, Ranga was thinking about her only. Ranga was both surprised and happy because Shastri's predictions were right. He immediately became disappointed when he recalled that she was married.

Q.23. How did Ranga, at last, accept the truth that he had fallen for the girl? What good news did the narrator bring for him?

~ Shastri said that he did not know all that and there might be another suitable girl. To make it look real, Shastri interfered in their name guessing game and told them that he only told what can be read. Both of them left and crossed Rama Rao's door where Shyama went to see Ratna for a minute and came back. When the narrator comes back, he announces that fortunately, Ratna is not married and someone might have wrongly conveyed it to him about that. The narrator expresses his amazement at the fact that he has been thinking about Ratna and asks him to swear upon the truth. To his surprise, Ranga told him the truth that whatever Shastri said is true. His belief in all the Shastras had strengthened.

Q.24. Comment on the ending of the story.

~The narrator takes us a few years forward where Ranga and Ratna are happily married, had a three-year-old son and Ratna was eight months pregnant. Ranga's sister had come over to help them. It was Shyama's birthday! Yes, the couple named their son after the narrator as it is a common foreign tradition to name your child after someone you truly admire. When the narrator went there for dinner, Shyama came running to him only to show his love by holding his leg. The narrator kissed him and gave him a ring. The narrator writes an ending note to all the readers hoping that they were not bored.

6 Mark Questions

Q.1.How far do you think the story caters to fun and humour?

~ 'Ranga's marriage' is a story narrated in a hilarious style. The narrator's pride in his native village provides a lot of fun. His thorough description of his village and his digression from the main topic is not at all boring but brings a smile to the lips of the reader. His description of the special mango of his village and the big leaf of a water plant, all strike a humorous cord. The narrator describes the crowd in the house of Ranga in a very funny way. He laughs at the culture of the modern English speaking generation and their inability to communicate with the common people of the village through the episode of the village woman mistaking her customer when he asks her for 'change'. When he starts his manipulation of Ranga, it is very hilarious at every stage. When he traps the modern Ranga into seeing Ratna and falling for her, the reader cannot do anything but laugh. The way the narrator manipulates the astrologer is again very humorous. The story offers a good laughter theory throughout its length.

Q.2. Reflect Ranga's notion of marriage to present social perspective.

~ Ranga was influenced by the English way of life in the matter of marriage. He was not in favour of arranged marriages of the time where the brides were quite young. He told the narrator that he was not getting married just then. He gave two reasons. First, he must find the right girl. She must be mature enough to understand his love-talk. A very young girl might take his words spoken in love as words spoken in anger. He gives examples of a thirty-year-old officer who married a twenty-five-year-old lady and that of king Dushyanta falling in love with Shakuntla. The second reason he gave was that one should marry a girl one loves. During the course of the story, we find a change in Ranga's ideas about marriage. Not only is he fascinated by Rama Rao's eleven-year-old niece Ratna, but he also marries her in the old traditional way of arranged marriages.

Q.3.Do you think that Ranga is a hypocrite? Give reasons for your answer.

~There is no way to access Ranga as a hypocrite. The narrator finds Ranga as generous and considerate. At first, Ranga seemed to be in favour of love marriage—marrying a girl of one's choice, whom one loved and who would be mature enough to understand love-talk and reciprocate it. The systematic steps were taken by the narrator to rope in Ranga to marry Ratna shows that the young man has a sensitive heart. Ranga's act of naming his golden boy 'Shyama' after the dark coloured narrator Shyama shows his adherence to the English custom of naming the child after someone you like. On the whole, Ranga appears as a smart but lovable fellow.

Q.4.How does the story reflect south-Indian social mindset and their approach to the English language?

~The story talks about the influence the English language had decades ago in his village. Not many people in the village at that time could understand or talk in English. Only a few courageous people would send their children to study in cities like the village accountant sent

Ranga to Bangalore. When Ranga came back to the village, everyone was keen on seeing how their culture had transformed him. As far as cultural influence is concerned, the story mentions how Ranga wanted to marry a girl who was mature, someone who understands him and is compatible with him. This is completely in opposition to the arranged marriages that were widely prevalent in those times. The narrator finds it disgraceful when people mix the Kannada language with English. He recounts how one day a lady delivered firewood to Rama Rao's place and he told her to come the next morning because he had no "change". The lady did not know what "change" meant and left while muttering to herself. The narrator confesses that he too did not know what it meant until he asked Rama Rao.

Q.5. Evaluate the narrator to be an efficient plot creator.

~ The narrator is a well-meaning gentleman who has the good of others in his heart. He learns of Ranga's views about marriage from Ranga himself. He is a good judge of human character. He thinks that Ranga would make a good husband. The narrator is a good strategist. He cleverly calls Ranga to his home when Ratna is singing a song. He notices Ranga's reaction and interest in her and arouses his curiosity by arranging a meeting with the astrologer. First, he says that Ratna is married, but when he finds Ranga deeply interested in her, he confesses that he was wrongly informed. In short, the narrator tries his utmost to get the marriage settled. The narrator loves fun and humour. He has the capacity to make others laugh at him. He employs a great style and gives many similes and metaphors to heighten the literary value of the story. The touches of local colour make the story full of ethnic colour and unique.

Q.6. Discuss the narrative technique of the author as we find in the story.

~ In the story 'Ranga's Marriage' we get to experience various types of narrative techniques that provide an account of connective events. These provide deeper meaning for the readers and help the reader use imagination to visualize situations. In the beginning, we see that the author tells the readers to think about why hasn't he put a mouth-filling title to the story. Moreover, a flashback is used when the narrator takes the story back in time, and the events go back and forth between the past and present when he brings out the comparison in the community which didn't know a bit of English and that turns out to have English speaking people in every street after ten years. We find the first-person point of view which allows the narrator to tell his own story as he continues to tell a few incidents of himself. The sufferings he got due to sourness of the mangoes along with some incidents which he narrated about himself are a few examples of the first-person point of view. He also brings a second-person point of view when he narrates the story of Ranga and Ratna. He also involves the readers directly by referring to 'you'. The third-person point of view has come in a limited form as he mentions the Shastri and the woman who didn't understand the meaning of change. Furthermore, the author engages the readers to story through the use of narrative techniques and creates a great impact on the audience.
