

Chapter – 8

Jalebis

Comprehension Check

Q1. Why didn't he pay the school fees on the day he brought money to school?

Answer. He did not pay the school fees on the day he brought money to school because Master Ghulam Mohammed (the teacher who collected the fees) was on leave, and it would be collected the next day.

Q2. (i) What were the coins 'saying' to him?

(ii) Do you think they were misguiding him?

Answer. (i) The coins were asking him to buy the jalebis. They said that those fresh, hot jalebis were not coming out for nothing. Jalebis were meant to be eaten, and only those with money in their pocket could eat them. They also said that money was meant to be spent, and only those who liked jalebis spent it.

(ii) Yes, they were misguiding him. Even though the money was for the payment of fees, they urged him to spend all on jalebis.

Q3. Why didn't he take the coins' advice? Give two or three reasons.

Answer. He did not take the coins' advice because he was a good boy. He knew that the coins were misguiding him. He said he got so much at home that he considered even looking at something in the market a sin. Besides, the coins were his fees. If he spent them that day, he would not be able to show his face to Master Ghulam Mohammed the next day at school, and after that to God. He also said that when Master Ghulam Muhammad got angry, he made students stand on the bench till the last bell would ring. Therefore, he decided not to take the coins' advice.

Q4. (i) What did the oldest coin tell him?

(ii) Did he follow his advice? If not, why not?

Answer. (i) The oldest coin said that they were trying to tell him something for his own good. It said that he would get the scholarship money the next day, and with that money he could pay his fees. Hence, he could very well buy the jalebis with the fees money.

(ii) No, he did not follow its advice. Even though his mouth watered, he remembered the fact that he was among the most promising students at school. In the fourth standard exams, he had even won a scholarship of four rupees a month. Also, he came from a particularly well-to-do family and enjoyed considerable prestige. He had never once

been beaten. On the contrary, his teacher had got him to beat the other boys. He thought that for a child of such status, standing in the middle of the market and eating jalebis was inappropriate. Giving these reasons, he returned home.

Q5. He reached home with the coins in his pocket. What happened then?

Answer. When he reached home, the coins began to speak again. When he went inside to have lunch, they began to shriek. He was so thoroughly fed up that he rushed out of the house barefoot and ran towards the market. Although he was terrified, he quickly asked for a whole rupee worth of jalebis. The halwai opened up a whole newspaper and heaped a pile of jalebis on it.

Q6. (i) Why didn't he eat all the jalebis he had bought?

(ii) What did he do with the remaining jalebis?

Answer. (i) He did not eat all the jalebis he had bought because he had eaten so many of them that if anybody pressed his stomach a little, jalebis would have popped out of his ears and nostrils.

(ii) He distributed the remaining jalebis to the children who had assembled in the gali where he was eating the jalebis.

Q7. "The fear was killing me." What was the fear?

Answer. The fear was of getting caught and his parents finding out that he had eaten so many jalebis. He burped with every breath. With every burp, there was the danger of bringing out a jalebi or two. This fear was killing him.

Q8. "Children's stomachs are like digestion machines." What do you understand by that? Do you agree?

Answer. This means that children have a very good digestive system. They can eat as much as they can, and their stomach digests the food easily.

Q9. How did he plan to pay the fees the next day?

Answer. He planned to pay the fees with the previous month's scholarship that he would get the next day.

Q10. When it is time to pay the fees, what does he do? How is he disobeying the elders by doing so?

Answer. When it was time to pay the fees, he tucked his bag under his arm and left the school. He kept walking, praying for some miracle to happen which would save him that one time. He reached the Kamalapur railway station. The elders had warned him to

never cross the railway tracks. They had also warned him that one must never eat sweets with one's fees money. However, he had disobeyed them by doing so.

Q11. What was the consequence of buying jalebis with the fees money?

Answer. The consequence of buying jalebis with the fees money was that for the first time in his life he was absent from his school.

Q12. His prayer to God is like a lawyer's defence of a bad case. Does he argue his case well? What are the points he makes?

Answer. He did not argue well. He was mostly trying to impress God and make promises. He said that he had memorised the entire namaaz. He even knew the last ten surats of the Quran by heart. He said that he was a devoted servant of God and needed the fees money. He admitted his mistake. However, in his defence, he also said that he did not eat all the jalebis. He shared them with other children. He promised that he would never eat sweets with fees money again and if he did, then he would deserve a thief's punishment. He said that there was no shortage of anything in God's treasury. Even the chaprasi got a lot of money for his work. He finally said that he was the nephew of a big officer and therefore, God should give him the money as he had asked for only four rupees.

Q13. He offers to play a game with Allah Miyan. What is the game?

Answer. The game was that he would go from where he was standing to the signal. Then, God would secretly place four rupees under a big rock. Meanwhile, he would touch the signal and come back. Then, when he would lift the rock and find the four rupees underneath.

Q14. Did he get four rupees by playing the game? What did he get to see under the rock?

Answer. No, he did not get four rupees by playing the game. When he lifted the rock, he saw a big hairy worm curling, twisting and wriggling towards him.

Q15. If God had granted his wish that day, what harm would it have caused him in later life?

Answer. If God had granted his wish that day, he would never have learnt from his mistake. He would have continued doing such wrong deeds, believing that God would save him after his persuasion.

Exercise

Q1. Select and read sentences that show

- (i) that the boy is tempted to eat jalebis**
- (ii) that he is feeling guilty.**
- (iii) that he is justifying a wrong deed**

Answer. This question requires you to use your own perspective as well as your analytical skills. The answer to the question would vary from one person to another. It is suggested that you read the text carefully and try attempting it on your own.

Q2. Discuss the following points.

(i) Is the boy intelligent? If so, what is the evidence of it?

(ii) Does his outlook on the jalebis episode change after class VIII? Does he see that episode in a new light?

(iii) Why are coins made to 'talk' in this story? What purpose does it serve?

Answer. (i) Yes, the boy was intelligent. In school, he was among the most promising students. In his fourth standard exam, he had won a scholarship of four rupees a month. He was also going to get the previous month's scholarship on the day he had to pay his fees. Also, he had never been absent from school.

(ii) Up to class VIII, he kept wondering what harm it could have possibly caused anyone if God had sent him four rupees that day. However, later, he came to the conclusion that if God were to provide all for the asking, then man would still be living in nests such as vultures and crows, and would not have learnt the art of making jalebis. By this he meant that man would not make any efforts at all if God gave him everything he wished for.

(iii) Coins are made to 'talk' in the story to show the greedy nature of the boy. His good nature, which prevented him from spending money on jalebis, comes out in the form of the words spoken by him. His greed, which was pushing him to get the jalebis and devour them, is brought out in the words uttered by the coins.