

# 5

PROSE





# The Tale of Melon City

–Vikram Seth



The poet, Vikram Seth makes fun of the government system in this chapter. Through the depiction of the melon city, he mocks any nation whose laws are based on superstitions and outdated beliefs. The king in the poem is satirically been portrayed as 'just and placid' but eventually, it is revealed how false that assertion is. The king wants to establish peace by executing anyone who commits mistake. He orders the execution of innocent people, but himself ends up getting executed.

## Topic Notes

-  Characters in Brief
-  Chapter in Detail
-  Significant Morals
-  Dictionary





## Characters in Brief

**The King-** He has been mockingly portrayed as just and quiet. But in reality, he is a foolish person who lacks good sense of judgement and intelligence. Because of his foolishness, he ends up losing his life.

**The Architect-** He is a smart person who is able to fool the king. When the king orders his execution, he points out something which puts the king in a tricky situation.

**The Wisest Man-** He is very old. He is chosen by the council of ministers and is called to the court to give a sensible advice to the king. Unfortunately, the suggestion given by him is not wise at all.

**The Idiot-** He is a man of low intelligence and does not act rationally. He is asked to choose the next king. Without thinking, he says a melon should be made the king, as he is fond of melons.



## Chapter in Detail

### The King Orders an Arch to be Built

This tale is about a city which was ruled by a lawful and calm king. One day, He ordered for an arch (a curved structure) to be built, which would become a symbol of his triumphs and accomplishments. The arch would be constructed on the main road of the town, and it would motivate the people who would see it. As per the orders of the king, the arch was built. The king went to the thoroughfare to inspire the spectators.



#### Character's Mood

↳ Serious

### The King Loses his Crown and Gets Angry

The arch was built too low. Hence, the arch struck the king's head and his crown fell down. It was a disgrace for him. He ordered for the chief of builders to be hanged for this mistake. Ropes and gallows were arranged for the same. The chief of builders was brought to be executed.



#### Character's Mood

↳ Angry

#### Example 1. Extract Based:

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

*The workmen went and built the thing.*

*They did so since he was the King.*

*The King rode down the thoroughfare*

*To edify the spectators there.*

(A) Fill in the blank.

In the above extract, 'the thing' refers to .....

(B) Why did the workmen build the arch?

- (a) It would make them popular.
- (b) The king had asked them to do so.

(c) They were being highly paid.

(d) The king would be impressed.

(C) State whether the given statement is TRUE or FALSE.

The arch was constructed to entertain the spectators.

(D) What happened when the king "rode down the thoroughfare"?

(E) Pick the option that uses the same literary device as stated in the line 'The workmen went and built the thing.'

(a) Sleepless nights

(b) Time is a thief

(c) Melancholic mood

(d) Deafening silence

Ans. (A) *an arch*

**Explanation:** In the given statement, 'the thing' refers to an arch. The king had ordered an arch to be constructed to inspire and motivate the onlookers.

(B) (b) *The king had asked them to do so.*

**Explanation:** The workmen had built the arch because the king had asked them to do so. Hence, (b) is correct.

(C) The above statement is true. The king had ordered all the workmen to build an arch to enlighten the viewers. He wanted the spectators to feel inspired and motivated after seeing the arch. To mark the arch's inauguration, the king went down the road.

(D) The king rode down the thoroughfare to edify the spectators present there. Since the arch was built too low, it hit the king's head, and his crown fell down. The king was left feeling mortified and angry.

(E) (c) *Melancholic mood*

**Explanation:** The literary device used in the given line is alliteration. It means the use of the same letter or sound at the beginning of words. Example- 'workmen went' and 'melancholic mood'. Hence, (c) is correct.

## The Blame Game Begins

The chief of builders shouted that it was not his mistake; it was rather the workmen's fault. After listening to him, the king immediately called off the execution of the chief builder, and announced that the workmen must be hanged instead. The workmen claimed that it was not their fault but the bricks used were not of the right size. Now, the masons were called. They were trembling with fear in front of the king. The masons, in turn, blamed the architect for the wrong design.

### Example 2. Extract Based:

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

*Have all the workmen hanged instead  
The workmen looked surprised, and said  
O' king, you do not realise  
The bricks were made of the wrong size.  
'Summon the masons!' Said the king.  
The mason is stood there quivering.*

- (A) What reason did the workmen give to the king?
- (a) Instructions given were wrong.
  - (b) Less time was given to construct the arch.
  - (c) The bricks were of wrong size.
  - (d) Changes were made at the last point.
- (B) Fill in the blank with an appropriate answer.  
The word which means the same as 'shaking' is .....
- (C) Why were the masons quivering?
- (a) Because they were afraid of king's anger.
  - (b) Because they had placed the wrong bricks intentionally.
  - (c) The weather was chilly and frosty.
  - (d) None of the above.
- (D) On the basis of your reading the extract, what opinion can you form about the king?
- (E) What did the king order to be constructed?

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans. (A)** (c) *The bricks were of wrong size.*

**Explanation:** When the workmen were called to be hanged by the king, they claimed that it was not their fault. The bricks were of wrong size. The blame was shifted to the masons. Hence, (c) is correct.

(B) *quivering*

**Explanation:** The word from the passage which means the same as shaking is 'quivering'. The masons were quivering with fear.

(C) (a) *Because they were afraid of king's anger.*

**Explanation:** The workmen had placed the wrong bricks by mistake. They were afraid

of the king's anger and of being hanged. Therefore, when the king called all the workmen and declared their execution, they started shaking with fear. Hence, (a) is correct.

- (D) One can form an opinion that the king was not guided by logic and reason. He had ironically been portrayed as 'just' and 'placid'. He is unable to establish justice and turns into a puppet in the hands of the people he is supposed to lead.
- (E) The king ordered an arch to be constructed across the major thoroughfare of the city as a symbol of triumph.

## The King Gets Stuck in a Tricky Situation

The architect was now called. The king told him he that must be hanged. Instantly, the architect reminded the king that he himself had changed the architect's initial plan the arch when it was shown to him sometime back.

The king realised that the blame was now on him. It was a tricky situation. The king became furious but since he was known for being calm and lawful, he thought it would be best to consult a wise person. Thus, he asked for the wisest man alive. The wisest man was finally found but he had to be carried to the Royal court as he was very old.

He could not walk or see properly. The wisest man spoke in a shaking voice that the culprit should be punished. He announced that it was the arch that banged against the crown. Thus, the arch must be hanged.

**Example 3.** What was the criteria for choosing "the wisest man." What was his verdict?

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**Ans.** The wisest man was chosen on the criteria that he should be very old. With old age, comes great understanding and intelligence. The wisest man shared an opinion and the king was not guilty, but it was the arch's mistake. Having knocked the king's crown, the arch should be hanged. The king agreed with the words of the wisest man and announced that the arch must be hanged.

## The Nation Wants an Execution

After considering the wise man's opinion, the arch was taken for public execution when suddenly, one of the ministers of the Royal court objected that the arch actually touched the royal head with respect. The king agreed, but the crowd was getting restless. They wanted the one at fault to be killed. Perceiving the situation, the king ordered that someone be hanged, guilty or not.

A loop of rope was set up quite high, and the one to fit in it would be hanged. Each person was called and measured one by one. The only man tall enough to reach it was the king himself. Hence, the king was hanged by Royal Decree. The ministers of the Royal court heaved a sigh of relief that someone was hanged for the faulty arch, or else the crowd might have turned against the crown.



### Character's Mood

↳ *Serious*

### The Dilemma

The ministers now faced the dilemma that the country had no king. They followed their old custom and sent out messengers to proclaim that the next person who passed the city gate would choose the next king. After some time, an idiot passed the gate, and the guards stopped him.

When they asked him to name their next king, the idiot answered 'a melon'. This was his fixed answer to all the questions as he was fond of melons.



### Character's Mood

↳ *Confused, frustrated*

### The Melon King

After the answer given by the idiot, a melon was made king of the city. The ministers respectfully carried the melon to the throne and declared him their 'King'.

This happened long ago. If you now ask the people why their king appears to be a melon, they call it a "customary choice". It makes no difference to them if their king is a melon. They are happy because the king doesn't interfere in their lives. They live in peace and harmony.



### Significant Morals

- (1) The poem is a satire on people in power.
- (2) It does not matter to people who the king, ruler, or head of state is, with the understanding that he lets them live in peace, liberty, and leniency.
- (3) One should always use his insight and intelligence to survive.



### Dictionary

Word	Meaning	Synonym	Antonym
<i>Placid</i>	calm	peaceful	impatient
<i>Proclaimed</i>	to make something known officially	announce	conceal
<i>Edify</i>	improve morally	educate	mislead
<i>Spectators</i>	a person who watches an event	observer	participant
<i>Frown</i>	a facial expression of dislike	scowl	smile
<i>Disgrace</i>	not being respected	dishonor	respected
<i>Quivering</i>	to shake slightly	tremble	still
<i>Culprit</i>	a person who has done something wrong	criminal	victim
<i>Perceive</i>	to notice something	discern	ignore
<i>Reverently</i>	with deep or solemn respect	admiringly	disapprovingly
<i>liberty</i>	complete freedom	independence	dependence

## OBJECTIVE Type Questions

[ 1 mark ]

### Multiple Choice Questions

1. What was the purpose of the construction ordered by the king?

- (a) To continue a legacy.
- (b) To solidify the king's rule.
- (c) To improve viewers moral.
- (d) To carry out a ritual.

**Ans.** (d) *To carry out a ritual*

**Explanation:** The king ordered the construction of an arch because the arch was a symbol of victory or triumph. He wanted the people to see the arch and understand that the kingdom was proud of its victory. Hence, (d) is correct.

**2. The description of the king as 'just and placid' indicates that:**

- (a) the king was patient.
- (b) the king must ensure safety, equality and justice.
- (c) the king was the wisest judge.
- (d) the king was noble and superior.

**Ans.** (b) *the king must ensure safety, equality, and justice.*

**Explanation:** 'Just and placid' here refers to the qualities of the king. He was called 'just' as he didn't deny anyone justice, no matter what or at whose expense. He was called placid (which means calm) as he tried to remain calm even in tough situations. Hence, (b) is correct.

**3. What is the disgrace referred to here?**

- (a) Poorly built arch.
- (b) Unenthusiastic crowd.
- (c) Crown being stroked.
- (d) Not punishing the guilty.

**Ans.** (a) *Poorly built arch.*

**Explanation:** A poorly built arch is a disgrace referred in the extract. Hence, (a) is correct.

**4. How will you describe the situation that the king faced while pointing out the guilty?**

- (a) Witty
- (b) Illogical
- (c) Confusing
- (d) Humorous

**Ans.** (b) *Illogical*

**Explanation:** The situation faced by the king while pointing out the guilty was irrational because no one was willing to own up for their own mistake. The blame game began, leaving the king feeling helpless. Hence, (b) is correct.

**5. The considerations and discussions had to be done as early as possible because the crowd was getting:**

- (a) amused
- (b) horrified
- (c) restless
- (d) bored

**Ans.** (c) *restless*

**Explanation:** The considerations and discussions had to be done as early as possible because the crowd was getting restless. They had been watching the drama of people blaming others for their own mistake for long. They wanted someone to be hanged immediately. Hence, (c) is correct.

**6. Listening about his own hanging, who did the King call for?**

- (a) The oldest man in the country.
- (b) The wisest man in the country.
- (c) The wisest minister in his administration.
- (d) All the people. [Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** (b) *The wisest man in the country.*

**Explanation:** When the blame was shifted on the king, he came furious. But since he was known for being calm and lawful, he thought it would be best to consult a wise person. He called for the wisest man in the country. Hence, (b) is correct.

**7. Why was it shameful to hang the arch?**

- (a) Because it was innocent.
- (b) Because it was non-living.
- (c) Because it was newly built.
- (d) Because it had touched the King's head.

**Ans.** (d) *Because it had touched the King's head.*

**Explanation:** One of the ministers of the Royal court raised an objection that it would be disgraceful to hang the arch as it had touched the mighty king's head. Hence, (d) is correct.

## Extract Based Questions

**8. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:**

*By now the crowd,*

*Restless, was muttering aloud.*

*The King perceived their mood and trembled*

*And said to all who were assembled —*

*'Let us postpone consideration  
Of finer points like guilt The nation.*

*Wants a hanging. Hanged must be.*

*Someone, and that immediately.'*

*The noose was set up somewhat high.*

*Each man was measured by and by.*

*But only one man was so tall*

*He fitted. One man. That was all*

**(A) What do the given lines tell us about the crowd?**

- (a) They were waiting for the show.
- (b) They wanted justice.
- (c) They wanted to avenge their king's dishonour.
- (d) They wanted peace and happiness.

**(B) "The King perceived their mood and trembled". What does this indicate about the king?**

**(C) What, according to you, is the tone of the poem?**

(D) Fill in the blank.

The rhyme scheme of the above extract is .....

Ans. (A) (b) They wanted justice

**Explanation:** The given lines indicate that the crowd wanted justice. They were turning irritated and restless seeing the drama of people blaming others for the disgrace of the king. They wanted someone to be hanged immediately. Hence, (b) is correct.

(B) This gives us an indication that the king, who was ironically portrayed as 'just and placid', was actually a foolish king. He was unable to make the right decision. He became a puppet in the hands of the people he was intended to control.

(C) The tone of the poem is ironic. The king, who has been described as calm and lawful, is in reality a powerless king who has no control over his decisions. The poem has been humorously presented since the beginning. The poet has amusingly presented the idea that it doesn't matter to the people who their king is. They are just concerned about their happiness and peace.

(D) aabbccdeffgg.

9. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

*Well, architect,' said His Majesty,  
'I do ordain that you shall be  
Hanged.' Said the architect, 'O King,  
You have forgotten one small thing.*

*You made certain amendments to  
The plans when I showed them to you.'  
The King heard this.*

(A) Whom did the architect blame for the mistake?

- (a) The brick-maker
- (b) The ministers
- (c) The people
- (d) The king

(B) State whether the given statement is TRUE or FALSE.

The king was blamed by the architect because he had hired inefficient people.

(C) Complete the sentence appropriately.

The word 'ordain' in the given extract means .....

(D) Identify the literary device used in the following line.

"I do ordain that you shall be Hanged."

Ans. (A) (d) The king

**Explanation:** The architect put the blame at the king's door as he had amended his original plan. Hence, (d) is correct.

(B) The given statement is False. When the architect was called to the royal court to be executed, he mentioned that it was the king who had made changes to the architect's initial plan.

(C) The word to order something officially.

(D) The literary device used in the given line is Enjambment. It means to continue a sentence or phrase from one line of poetry to the next.

## SHORT ANSWER Type Questions (SA)

[ 2 marks ]

Answer the following questions in about 40 - 50 words:

10. Many people are mentioned in the poem. Who do you find the most humorous other than the king?

Ans. The poem is quite satirical and humorous. The wisest man who ordered the arch to be hanged was the most stupid or humorous. The readers anticipated that he would make the most sensible decision because knowledge and intelligence comes with age and experience. However, he spoke foolishly, saying that the arch that struck off the king's crown must be hanged.

11. What did the workmen say in their defence when the king ordered them to be hanged?

Ans. When the king ordered that the workmen must be hanged, they were surprised. They told that it was not their fault but the bricks were of incorrect size. They blamed the masons for the wrong size of the bricks.

12. Why did the king order that the chief of builders to be hanged?

Ans. The king ordered the chief of builders to be hanged because the arch was built low. The king's crown got knocked off as he passed under the arch. The arch was so low that it struck against the crown and it fell off. He considered it a moment of dishonor. He held the chief of builders responsible for this and ordered him to be hanged.



**13. Who did the chief of builders blame?**

**Ans.** The chief of builders blamed the workmen. The chief of builders shouted and exclaimed that it was the workmen's fault. The fair king declared that the workmen must be hanged. But the workmen blamed the masons for the wrong size of the bricks.

**14. Explain how the blame for the arch was transferred from person to person.**

**Ans.** The chief of builders blamed the workmen. The workmen blamed the masons. The masons blamed the architect. The architect said the king himself had made changes in his initial plan. The king sought a wise man's counsel. He held the arch guilty and suggested it to be hanged.

**15. Who was the wisest man? What did he say?**

**Ans.** The oldest man of the city was considered to be the wisest. He said that the arch should be executed. The wisest man was called to guide the king to solve the tricky issue. The old man replied in a trembling tone, "the culprit must be punished". Truly, it was the arch that banged the crown off.

**16. Why did the King succumb to public demand? What was the criteria for choosing the man to be hanged? Who was found fit?**

**Ans.** The king wanted to hang someone because his crown had hit the arch and fallen down. But nobody wanted to accept responsibility for making a mistake, and hours passed. The crowd was becoming restless and angry so the king declared that a man has to be executed immediately would be hanged. The king was hanged because he had perfectly fit in the noose.

**17. Why did the king order that someone must be hanged immediately?**

**Ans.** The king ordered that someone must be hanged immediately because the crowd was becoming restless and angry. The king judged their mood. He trembled thinking of the consequences if the spectators were deprived of the fun of watching someone being hanged. So, in order to save his reputation, he ordered that someone must be hanged without any delay.

**18. Why did the Idiot say "a melon"? What was the consequence?**

**Ans.** An idiot was asked who should be the king. 'A melon' was the idiot's standard answer to all questions asked. As a consequence, a melon was crowned king of the city. The melon was crowned and carried to the throne.

**19. Why were the people happy with their melon king?**

**Ans.** The people were happy because the king did not really rule. He allowed the people to do what they wanted to do. Therefore they enjoyed peace and liberty and were happy, which is what a proper king should do instead of issuing foolish orders to maintain the city's law.

**20. Give instances of humour from the poem 'The Tale of Melon City'.**

**Ans.** There are several instances in the story that create a humorous effect. Firstly, The king ordered an arch to be constructed to inspire and motivate the people. Secondly, the wise man suggested that the arch should be hanged. Next, The idiot gave an advise that a melon should become the king.

**21. How did the common people feel about a melon king?**

**Ans.** The commoners were satisfied with the melon king. They were happy because the king did not interfere in their lives. The people showed little interest in this matter. It made no difference if their king was a man or a melon.

**22. Vikram Seth has made brilliant use of irony in "The Tale of Melon City". Give three examples of it.**

**Ans.** 'The Tale of Melon City' is full of irony. The king has been described as 'just and placid,' but he himself becomes the victim of his own sense of justice in the end. Secondly, even when the king is dead, the ministers make proclamations in his name. Lastly, the citizens decide to choose their new king, and a melon ends up becoming their new king. Nobody is even bothered by it.

**23. Justify the title 'The Tale of Melon City'.**

**Ans.** The title is well justified because it narrates the part of the history when a melon was chosen to sit on the throne. That is how the city got its name. It is the story about a foolish king whose quality of making inappropriate decisions leads to his own death. A melon becomes the next king. The title is satirical but appropriate.

**24. What is the principle of 'Laissez - faire'? How is it established in the poem 'The Tale of Melon City'?**

**Ans.** 'Laissez - faire' is a french word which means 'to leave alone' or the policy of leaving things without interfering. It is the principle regarding governance. The government should not interfere in the lives of ordinary people, as they also need some space of their own. The government should let people live their own lives the way they want to, as that is very

important for the well being of the people. This principle was well- established in 'Melon City' as the new king was a lifeless object. Hence, it didn't interfere in the lives of people. The citizens were utmost happy and living in peace.

**25. How was the new ruler selected?**

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**Ans.** After the king was executed, the ministers sent the messengers to proclaim that the next man to pass the city gate would choose the ruler of their state. An idiot happened to pass the gate. His standard answer to all the questions was 'a melon'. So when he was asked to decide who would be the king, he replied, 'a melon' The Ministers declared that a melon would be their new ruler.

**26. Did you enjoy reading the poem? Write about any two points that contributed to your enjoyment.**

**Ans.** Yes, certainly, the poem is enjoyable and an interesting read. The passing of blame and the selection of a new king are important points of interest. These instances make the story more interesting.

**27. What message does the poet give through the use of irony and humour in the poem?**

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** Through the use of irony and humour in the poem, the poet intends to give the readers the message that knowledge and observation plays an important role in survival. The poem also gives a hint that the king may have been meddling excessively in the lives of commoners and abusing his position of authority, which is why, the citizens became curious to see the king's execution.

**28. Comment on the verse form used for narration in the poem 'The Tale of Melon City'.**

**Ans.** 'The Tale of Melon City' has been narrated in a verse form where every second line rhymes with the first line, as known as rhyming couplets. This is a unique style which lends extra charm to an ancient tale. This writing

style gives the poem the impression of prose in the form of narrative - style story-telling.

**29. How has the king been described in the poem? What did he proclaim?**

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**Ans.** The king of the state was, 'just and placid'. He was known for being fair - minded and calm in his affairs. He had proclaimed that an arch should be constructed which would extend across the major thoroughfare.

**30. Why did the king order the construction of an arch? Does it tell you something about the tone of the poem?**

**Ans.** It is clear from the lines that the tone of the poem is satirical. The king had ordered the construction of an arch for edification or improvement of the mind and morals of people, as that was a major concern for the king. He wanted the spectators to feel inspired and motivated after looking at the arch.

**31. Why did the king ride down the thoroughfare and what was the result?**

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** The king rode down the thoroughfare to edify the spectators present there. When the king passed under the arch, his crown struck the arch and fell. The arch was constructed too low. The king felt dishonored.

**32. How was the new king chosen?**

**Ans.** The ministers of the Royal court sent out the official messengers to declare that their next ruler will be chosen by the one who passes the City Gate next. The one chosen by him will be declared 'King' with due ceremony as was the custom.

**33. Do you think the king was really 'just and placid'? Why/Why not? [Delhi Gov. QB 2022]**

**Ans.** The king has been satirically portrayed as 'just and placid'. In reality, he was just a foolish king who didn't know how to exercise his power in the right way. He was unable to comprehend the situation in front of him, and instead, kept relying on the words of the people at fault to make a decision. He ended up being executed.

## LONG ANSWER Type Questions (LA)

[ 5 marks ]

*Answer the following questions in about 120 - 150 words:*

**34. How has the poet made fun of the system of governance by using the phrase 'just and placid' for the king? [Delhi Gov. QB 2022]**

**Ans.** In the poem, 'The Tale of Melon City', Vikram Seth has satirically depicted the king as 'just and placid'. In reality, the king was foolish in nature with poor decision - making skills. A ruler must have both common sense and intelligence to comprehend a situation well.



There may be several complicated situations that a ruler might encounter. Such situations require an immediate and suitable solution. However, in the poem, the king is so foolish that he is not able to see through the excuses of others and pays dearly by losing his life. The members of the royal court and the other citizens were far more knowledgeable and shrewd than the king which is why they could easily trap him in an inevitable circumstance. Real - world leaders must be able to rationalize a situation well otherwise people will take their advantage.

**35. Discuss 'The Tale of Melon City' as a humorous as well as an ironical poem with the help of examples from the poem.**

**Ans.** 'The Tale of Melon City' is truly a humorous as well as an ironical poem. It is humorous that the arch was constructed to 'edify' the spectators. The oldest man in the city was thought to be the wisest, which is both ironic and humorous. Another funny instance is of ordering that whoever would fit in the noose shall die. Then, it is absurd and unbelievable that the king himself was executed because he was held responsible.

Both the selection of a melon as the new king and the imposition of the death penalty for a relatively minor offence are hilariously ironic. The King himself was so indecisive. Then, the process of selecting the new king adds both humour and irony. In the end, it was evident that people were living happily under a king who did not govern. The whole poem revolves around fun and laughter.

**36. How was the city named 'Melon City'? Describe the events that led to its naming.**

**Ans.** The king ordered an arch to be constructed which, on completion, was found to be built too low. When the king rode beneath the arch, his crown fell off due to the arch's low height.

The king ordered the chief of builders to be hanged but the latter pointed out that it was someone else's fault. This blame game went on until it was found that the king himself had to be hanged. The city was without a king after the king's execution.

The ministers decided that the next man to pass the city gate would be their king. As it happened, the next man to pass was an idiot. He said that 'a melon' should be king. He said so because he was very fond of melons. The ministers put a melon on the throne. Thereafter, the city was known as 'Melon City'.

**37. A leader should have common sense and sound judgement to make the right choice. Comment in the context of the poem, 'The Tale of Melon City'.**

**Ans.** It is unquestionably true that a leader must have common sense and discretion to make the right choice. Lack of intelligence and the ability to differentiate between right and wrong can have disastrous consequences. This is well expressed in the poem 'The Tale of Melon City'. In the poem, the king is so callous that he cannot look past others' justifications and turns into a puppet of the people he is supposed to lead. He pays heavily for his incorrect decisions and ends up losing his life. He depends on other people's statements, who keep shifting the blame onto the other person. The king is not able to realise until the end that somehow his foolish nature is being taken advantage of. He finds himself in an inescapable predicament. For a leader, it is essential to make the right choice at the right time; otherwise, he can be caught in a challenging scenario from which it can be impossible to escape.

**38. 'The Tale of Melon City' tells the story of a king who either does not rule at all or governs poorly.**

**Do you think the poem echoes the misgovernance prevailing in modern India? Write an essay in 120 - 150 words giving your suggestions for the actions that the people and the government should take to set the nation on the path of development.**

**Ans.** Does the 'Melon City' really represent the state of the Indian nation? Is there no concern for justice or welfare of people?

A majority of people would have a "Yes" response. It's been decades that the free India has rarely seen bright marks of good governance. The negative effects of misgovernance are present everywhere. Corruption, inflation, crime, a deteriorating economy, exploitation of natural resources are the various faces of poor governance. But not anymore. People have had enough. Everyone desire a change. In a democracy, people get an opportunity to elect new lawmakers or rulers every five years.

The honest public servant gets the support of the common people. The judicial system defends what is right and proper. Media also plays a powerful role in spreading awareness among people. No crime can be hidden for too long, and every criminal has to face the consequences of his actions.

Citizens do not wish to be governed by a 'Melon king' anymore. In order to set the country on

the path of development, it is important to spread education. An educated person is able to comprehend a difficult situation well, and doesn't get influenced by other's opinions. By empowering women and equalizing academic opportunity, countries can increase incomes by an average of 23 percent. They can do this by establishing many schools especially in rural areas. People should be informed about their rights and responsibilities.

**39. Imagine yourself as an outsider who is observing everything happening in 'Melon city'. You are shocked to know that a melon sits on the throne. Share your experiences in your diary.**

**Ans.** 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2011

Monday

Dear Diary,

I am at the melon city right now. I am utterly startled by the state of affairs in this city. Guess what? The king of this city is a lifeless object,

a melon! Isn't it unbelievable? The citizens are so happy and satisfied because they are not subject to any form of government. Obviously, an object cannot make decisions. Going out at night is unsafe for the girls. The city also lacks schools. I'm deeply moved and I feel bad for these people. I wish someone can inform them and instill in them some common sense that the city is nothing without a just and placid king who can actually speak for real and take mindful decisions. The last king was executed for his foolishness. It's high time that something be done in this city before it is too late.

This lifeless object must be replaced by someone who can act as the next monarch. The living monarch must ensure that no crimes are committed in this city and must make significant decisions when necessary. New rules and regulations must be established for these people.

ABC

