



06

I was in the fifth standard at the government school. One day, I went to school with four rupees in my pocket to pay the school fees. When I got there I found that the teacher who collected the fees, Master Ghulam Mohammed, was on leave and so the fees would be collected the next day. All through the day the coins simply sat in my pocket, but once school got over and I was on my way, they began to speak.

All right. Coins don't talk. They **jingle** or go **khanak-khanak** (sound of jingling of coins). But that day they actually spoke! One coin said, "What are you thinking about those fresh, hot *jalebis* ? *Jalebis* are meant to be eaten and only those with money in their pocket can eat them".

**What will be your answer to these coins ?**

"Look here, you four rupees". I said to them. "I am a good boy. Don't misguide me or it won't be good for you. Besides, you are my fees money. If I spend you today, then how shall I show my face to Master Ghulam Mohammed in school tomorrow ?"

|| **Jalebis are not always sweet** ||





The coins disliked what I'd said. All of them began to speak at the same time. There was such a **clamour** (loud unpleasant noise) that passersby in the *bazaar* stared at me and my pocket. I **grabbed** (caught tightly) all four of them and held them tight in my **fist** (ਝੁੱਲ) and then they were silent. But after taking a few steps, I **loosened** (released) my grip. Immediately, the oldest coin said, "Tell me honestly now, don't you feel like eating those hot, hot *jalebis*? And then, if you spend us for today, won't you get the scholarship money tomorrow? Sweets with the fees money, fees with the scholarship money".

"What you're saying isn't right." I replied, "but it isn't that wrong either. Listen, I am not a common **sort** (type) of boy." The coins argued, "But then, those *jalebis* are no common sort of *jalebis* either. They're crisp, fresh and full of sweet syrup."

The coins were so keen on being spent that day, they kept up their attempts. Finally I rushed to the shop. Terrified I was, but quickly I told the **halwai** to weigh a whole rupee worth of *jalebis*. The *halwai* opened up a whole newspaper and heaped a pile of *jalebis* on it.

**Do you feel happy about this boy's decision to eat jalebis? Why?**

I clutched the *jalebis* to my chest and ran into a *gali*. When I reached a safe corner, I began to **devour** (eat greedily, consume) the *jalebis*. I ate so many... so many *jalebis* that if anyone pressed my stomach a little, *jalebis* would have **popped out of** (came off) my ears and nostrils.

Very quickly, boys from the entire neighbourhood **assembled** (gathered) in the *gali*. By that time I was so pleased with my stomach full of *jalebis* that I got into the mood for some fun. I started handing out *jalebis* to the children around. I **dashed** (rushed) to the *halwai* and bought one more rupee worth of *jalebis*, came back and stood on the chabutara of one of the houses, liberally distributing *jalebis* to the children. By now there was a huge **mob** (crowd) of children around me. The beggars too **launched an assault** (attacked)! I bought *jalebis* for the remaining two rupees as well and distributed them. Then I washed my hands and mouth at the public tap and returned home, putting on such an innocent face, as if I hadn't even seen the hint of a *jalebi* all my life. Digesting *jalebis* became another matter. At night I had to eat my dinner as well.

|| **Jalebis are not always sweet** ||  
ਭਲੇਕ ਆਕ ਖੋਰਥਾ-੧੦-(੪)



The result was that all night I lay, coiled up like a *jalebi*, suffering a stomach ache. Thank God I didn't have to eat all four rupees worth of *jalebis* by myself. In the morning, just like any other day, I went to school. I knew I would get the previous month's scholarship that day and once I'd paid the fees with that amount, the *jalebis* would be completely digested. But when I got to school, I found out that the scholarship was going to be paid the following month. My head started to spin.

**What would be your advice to this boy, now ?**

Master Ghulam Mohammed announced that the fees would be taken during the recess. When the recess bell rang, I left the school and walked on and on. Finally, I reached the railway station. I started praying to *Allah miyan*. "Just this once save me. Order a *farishta* to pass by and drop just four rupees in my pocket. I promise I will use them only to pay my fees and not to eat *jalebis*."

There was a shade-giving tree beside the railway tracks. Earlier the entire matter seemed so simple : *jalebis* with the fees money and the fees with the scholarship money. I had known that I would get the scholarship the next month, I would have **postponed** (delayed) my *jalebi* eating programme to the next month as well. Now for the crime of eating a few *jalebis*, for the first time in my life I was absent from school. Sitting there under the tree, at first I felt like crying. Then I felt like laughing when it **struck** (suddenly became clear) me that the tears I was shedding were not tears but drops of *jalebi* syrup.

I got up from there and walked to the *bazaar* and waited for the school bell to ring, so that when the children came out, I too would walk home with them as if I had come straight from school

The next day I did the same thing. I got dressed and left home, went up to the school gate and then turned off to the railway station. Under the same tree I sat and began to say the same prayers. I repeatedly **pleaded** (begged) "*Allah miyan!* At least give it to me today. Today is the second day." Then I said, "All right come, let's play a game. I will go from here to that signal. You secretly place four rupees under this big stone. I will touch the signal and come back."

I went up to the signal and returned, smiling.

Finally after saying *Bismillah*, when I lifted up the rock, a big hairy worm got up. I screamed and ran away.

|| *Jalebis are not always sweet* ||



I was caught. The report of my absence had reached home. It's useless to describe what happened after that.

**What might have happened at home and school after this ?**

Well, whatever happened, happened. But up to the seventh or eighth standard I kept wondering, if *Allah miyan* had sent me four rupees that day, what harm could it have possibly caused anyone? It was only later that I came to the conclusion that if *Allah miyan* were to provide all we asked for, then even today, man would be living in nests like crows and he would not have learnt the art of making *jalebis*!

### Do it Yourself

**Q.1 (A) Fill in the blanks with appropriate words given in the bracket.**

(grabbed, escape, launched an assault, dashed, mob, clamour)

My house is located near a factory. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the machines does not let us have a sound sleep even at the night. Once, with a huge \_\_\_\_\_, I \_\_\_\_\_ to the owner and made a complaint. His guards \_\_\_\_\_. I was thrown out. I filed a case against the owner. He tried to give bribe to the police but luckily the policeman was an honest man. The owner could not \_\_\_\_\_. Police \_\_\_\_\_ the owner and punished him.

**(B) With what these words are connected ? Classify them according to headings in the table.**

grip, temptation, devour, stare, heap, rush, shriek, sweet syrup, clamour, assault, pop off, digestion, jingle, pocket.

| Coins | Jalebis | Feelings | Actions |
|-------|---------|----------|---------|
|       |         |          |         |

|| Jalebis are not always sweet ||



**Q.2 (A) Find out sentences from the lesson which show that :**

- The boy is tempted to eat jalebis.
- The boy is feeling guilty.
- He did something wrong but he is trying to prove it true.

**(B) Answer these questions.**

1. Why didn't he pay the school fees on the day he brought money to school ?
2. Do you think the coins were misguiding him ?
3. Why didn't he take the coins in advance ? Give two reasons.
4. Why didn't he eat all the jalebis he had bought ?
5. How did he plan to pay the fees the next day ?
6. What was the result of buying jalebis with the fees money ?
7. What game did he offer to play with Allah Miyan ?
8. What did he see under the stone ?
9. If god had granted his wish that day, what harm would it have caused to mankind ?
10. List 5 humorous (रमूञ्ज) sentences from the lesson.

**Q.3 Do you agree with these statements ? Write Yes or No.**

1. The boy is intelligent. ☐
2. His prayer to God is like a lawyer's defence to a bad case.  
☐
3. God helps everyone. ☐
4. There is more comedy than tragedy in this boy's story. ☐

|| Jalebis are not always sweet ||