



Guests with Guns



In the middle of the last century, areas on the boundary of Maharashtra were full of thieves and **dacoits** (robbers). They used to **raid** (attack) the villages, terrify people and take away their valuables. The police could not **protect** (guard) the people. The villagers had to do something to save themselves.

One such dacoit was Makhkhansinh. He was dangerous and had a strong gang. He had now become very bold. He sent advance warning to the people about his raid. If anyone tried to play any trick, he gave them severe punishment. The villagers tried to **resist** (stop) the dacoits but they failed.

What would you have done if you were living in this village ?

One day a richman named Bapurao received a warning : "Your house would be attacked tonight." He also received a usual warning: 'Not to hide the valuables and not to inform the police.'

Bapurao became pale when he heard it. He had a big haveli and many servants. His cupboards were full of precious things. He

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was worried. But his wife Parvatibai was a brave and clever woman. When he told all this to her, she asked him, "What do you plan to do?"

"Surely I will not **surrender** (give up) to Makhkhansinh. I will fight with them with my men and servants. What do you think?"

"I think it is useless to give fight to the dacoits because they are more powerful."

"But what else can we do?" asked Bapurao.

"I think we should outwit the dacoits by some plan," said Parvati thoughtfully.

"But how! Should we hide your jewelbox somewhere... say in the dung-heap in the cattleshed?"

"Let me think," she said, "till then you do whatever you think proper. I will fight them in my own way. Don't worry."

Bapurao felt a little relaxed. He went to the town to search the men to help him, and Parvatibai sat for a long time thinking. Soon it was evening. Bapurao came back and told his wife : "I have collected about twenty-men. We will hide in the woods near the village border. We will attack the dacoits before they can enter the village."

It was now dark and the whole village was silent.

Parvatibai then called her servants and the two cooks. She ordered them to cook a royal meal for fifty people. "The meal should be ready by midnight." She said to the chief cook.

The servants were surprised but they started their work. She supervised the work. An arrangement was made for the meal. She put on a new sari. She arranged all the ornaments except the mangalsutra in a thali and stood waiting.

Guess : What can be her trick ?

When it was midnight, she heard some noise. Horses were coming. Soon the noise came closer. Suddenly there was a loud

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knock on the door. She was scared but the next moment she became calm. She quickly went to the door and opened it. A big man with a violent look and with a gun in his hand stood before her. Parvatibai was scared but with courage she said sweetly :

"Welcome, brother. Please, do come in."

Makhkhansinh was surprised to hear this. She further said:

"I have been waiting for you and all these brothers since this evening." The dacoits were surprised at this unusual welcome.

"Please, come in. Don't waste time. You must be tired. Wash your hands and feet. The supper is ready. Have a tasty meal and then do your work."

Makhkhansinh was still **hesitating** (not certain) but she asked them to sit. She ordered the servants to serve hot food. While they were eating, she personally took care of each one. When they finished their supper, she brought the thali full of valuables. She placed it in front of the dacoit chief. Then she told him : "Brother, this is all that I have, but I have kept back only one piece for myself." She showed her mangalsutra on her neck and said, "It is **sacred** (holy) symbol that I wear for the long life of my husband. I request you not to take it."

What will the dacoit chief do now ?

The dacoit chief could not control himself. With emotion in his voice he said :

"Of course, I will not take it. We have eaten your salt. And you have called me 'brother' and given me a brother's welcome. From today you are my sister and I will take care of you." Saying this he returned the thali of valuables to her. He also ordered his men to free her husband whom they had caught outside the village.

The villagers were surprised to hear this story next morning. Since then no dacoit attacked Parvatibai's house. Even today they narrate this story to the village children.

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Do it Yourself

Q.1 (A) Find the sentence from the lesson which has almost similar meaning to the sentence listed below :

1. I think we should defeat them with our wisdom.
2. Even today the villagers share this story to the children.
3. I guess, it is useless to fight with dacoits as they are stronger than we.
4. The villagers made an attempt to fight the dacoits but they were not successful.
5. She pointed to her Mangalsutra on her neck.

(B) Find the opposite words from the lesson :

(a) attack (b) useful (c) less (d) improper (e) tense (f) noisy.

Q.2 (A) Here is the list of sentences. Who might speak them ? Write in the bracket Parvatibai (PB) or Robber Chief (RC) :

1. I warned them not to take help of the police. ()
2. Let me think to defeat them by wit. ()
3. I worked smartly in the tense situation. ()
4. You have won my heart by the food and care : ()
5. From today I will look after your house. ()

(B) Answer these questions :

1. Why didn't Parvatibai agree to Bapurao's plan ?
2. How did Parvatibai save her husband and wealth ?
3. Suggest some other plans for Parvatibai to outwit the robber.
4. What was unusual in Parvatibai's welcome ?
5. What is the difference in Bapurao's and Parvatibai's nature ?
6. How would you praise Parvatibai if you happen to meet her ?
7. Recall a story where the brain defeats muscles.

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