

Home Coming

Phatik Chakravarti was the **ringleader** (a leader of street boys) among the boys of his village. One day he planned for a new mischief. There was a heavy **log** (a piece of wood) lying on the bank of the river. Phatik's plan was to roll it away with the help of his friends. The owner of the log would be angry but they would all enjoy the fun. Everyone liked the idea.

But Phatik's younger brother, Makhan, sat down on the log. Phatik was very angry. "Makhan", he cried, "Get up just now. If you don't, I'll **thrash** (beat) you!"

Makhan didn't care. So, Phatik's friends pushed the log and Makhan fell down. The other boys began to laugh but Phatik was a little frightened. Makhan got up, attacked Phatik, beat him, kicked him and then went home crying.

What will happen at home ? What will crying Makhan tell her mother ?

Phatik wiped his face. He sat down on the log and began to **nibble** (small bites) a piece of grass. A boat stopped on the bank and a middle aged man came to the boy. He asked the boy where the Chakravartis lived.

"Go and find out," said Phatik and continued nibbling. Then a servant came to call Phatik at home. His mother blamed him for beating Makhan. Phatik refused. But Makhan complained again and again. Phatik couldn't bear this injustice and beat him for telling lies. Then Phatik cried.

But the mother took Makhan's side. She pulled Phatik away and beat him. At this moment that middle-aged man arrived and asked what had happened. Phatik looked ashamed.

Mother was surprised looking at the stranger. He was Bishamber, Phatik's maternal **uncle** (भाऊ) She welcomed him and touched his feet. Bishamber came to see his sister after many years.

The brother asked about the studies of the two boys. The sister said that Phatik was a **nuisance** (trouble) for her. He was disobedient and wild. But Makhan was very good and gentle and very fond of reading. Bishamber kindly offered to take Phatik to Kolkata and

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educate him there with his own children. The widowed mother agreed readily.

Phatik agreed to go to Kolkata joyfully. He was very eager for that. At night he lay awake most of the time. As a parting gift he gave Makhan his fishing-rod, his big kite and his marbles.

Phatik reached Kolkata with his uncle. He met his aunt for the first time. She was not happy seeing Phatik. Her own three boys were difficult to manage. Phatik soon realized that he was an unwelcome guest at his aunt's house. His cousins **mocked** (laughed) at him and his aunt always found fault with him.

Even in his new school, Phatik was the most **backward** (dull) boy. He stared and remained silent when the teacher asked him a questions. He was **caned** (beaten) almost daily. While the other boys were playing in the evening, he would think of his village home. He would stand sadly by the window, and **gaze** (keep looking) at the roofs of distant houses. His heart asked to go back to his villages.

Why did Phatik wish to go home ? What was he missing ?

One day he asked his uncle boldly, "Uncle, when can I go home?" His uncle answered, "Wait till the holidays come." But for that a long time to wait.....till October.

One day Phatik lost his lesson book. Even he couldn't do his lessons with the help of books. But now it became impossible. Day after day the teacher caned him cruelly. At last Phatik told his aunt that he had lost his book.

"You **country rude** (দেশের গালাগাতি)!" She cried in deep hatred.

"How can I buy you new books five times a month?"

That day, on his way back from school, Phatik had a bad headache. At night he had a **shivering fit** (sudden shaking). He felt that he was going to have fever.

The next morning Phatik was nowhere to be seen. It rained all night. Those who looked for the boy were wet. At last Bishamber informed the police.

At nightfall a police van stopped at the door of the house. It was still raining and the streets were flooded. two constables carried Phatik out in their arms and placed him before Bishamber. He was all wet covered with mud. He had fever and his limbs were trembling.

Bishamber took him inside the house. His wife exclaimed : "What a heap of trouble this boy has given us ! Better send him home!

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Phatik heard her words and sobbed aloud: "Uncle, I was just going home; but they dragged me back again."

The fever quickly increased. Bishamber brought in a doctor. Phatik opened his eyes. He looked up of the ceiling and said, "Uncle, haven't the holidays come yet?"

What will happen now : Phatik will become alright or he will die ? What do you wish ? Why ?

Bishamber wiped the tears from his eyes. He took Phatik's thin burning hands in his own. He sat by his side whole night. "Mother! don't beat me like that," the boy kept **muttering** (speaking in low voice). "Mother! I am telling the truth."

The next day for a short time Phatik became unconscious. His eyes wandered round the room to search somebody. Bishamber read the boy's thoughts. He bent down his head and whispered. "Phatik, I have sent for your mother."

The day passed on. According to the doctor the boy's condition was critical.

Late in the evening, Phatik's mother rushed into the room. She **flung** (threw) herself in Phatik's bed and cried, "Phatik, my darling, my darling!"

Phatik's hands stopped beating up and down. Very slowly his eyes opened. He could no longer see the people round his bed. At last he murmured; "Mother, the holidays have come."

Is Phatik alive or dead ? What does he mean by 'holidays have come' ?

Do it Yourself

Q.1 (A) Read these sentences. Put a ☺ in the box against the sentence in which the underlined word is correctly used :

Example :

1. ☺ ☐ A poet gazed at the colours of the cloud and wrote a poem.
- ☐ Kipra gazed a cricket match on the T.V.
2. ☐ Canning the students in the school is prohibited.
- ☐ Avoid canning the wild animals in the circus.

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