

Part 3

Questions 19 to 26 are based on the following passage.

Read the passage carefully and choose the best answer A, B, C or D. For each question mark your answer on the answer sheet.

Soon after his appointment, the postmaster was sent for duty to the village of Ulapur. It was an ordinary village. Being from the city of Kolkata, our postmaster found himself like a fish out of water in his new rustic surrounding. His office was in a dingy cabin house, adjacent to a slimy pond filled with water hyacinths and surrounded by bushy trees on all four sides. The employees of the factory had no free time to associate with this gentleman.

The urban-bred young man was also lacking in social skills. Whenever he went to a new place, he looked either confused or arrogant, and could barely interact with the villagers. On the other hand, he didn't have much work at office, either. Occasionally he wrote poetry expressing a romantic sentiment of happiness at the sight of floating clouds and fluttering shrubs. The postmaster worked on a meagre salary, so he had to cook his own meals. He was assisted in his housework by a destitute orphan girl, in return for a little food.

The girl's name was Ratan.

In the evenings, standing in one corner of the house, the postmaster would light a dim lamp and call out, "Ratan." **She would be sitting on the doorstep and waiting for that call, but she never came into the house immediately.** Instead, she would reply, "Sir, do you need any help?"

"What are you doing?" the postmaster would ask.

"I am lighting the fireplace. I have work in the kitchen," Ratan would reply.

"Your kitchen work can wait. Can you first get me the tobacco pipe?"

Soon Ratan would step into the house with cheeks inflated, blowing persistently into a lighted tobacco bowl. Taking it from her hand, the postmaster would ask her abruptly, "Ratan, do you still remember your mother?" That was a long story, some of which she could recall and some of which she couldn't, but her father loved her more than her mother did and she still remembered her father faintly. After a long day, her father would return in the evening, and scattered images of some of those evenings were somehow still firmly fixed in her mind. In the midst of their idle talk, Ratan would gradually settle down on the clay floor of the house, next to the postmaster's feet. She remembered that she had a little brother, and long ago, the two of them had played together, fishing in a nearby pond using broken twigs of trees as fishing rods. More than any of the serious incidents, this particular memory cropped up in her mind often.

Sometimes they would continue to chat late into the night and the postmaster would feel too lazy to cook by then, so the two of them would finish their dinner with the stale curry from the morning and a few baked breads that Ratan prepared by making a quick fire.

On some evenings, sitting in his office chair at one corner of the cabin house, the postmaster would recall memories of his own family – his mother, little brother and elder sister. Those fond memories filled his lonely heart, away from home, with pain. The agonising thoughts, which he could never share with the employees of the indigo factory, recurred in his mind and he unrolled them freely to this little illiterate girl without ever considering it inappropriate. Eventually, it so happened that during their conversations, the girl started calling his family members in his own fashion, addressing them as "ma" (mother), "didi" (elder sister), "dada" (elder brother), as if she had known them forever. In her little heart, the girl even pictured the imaginary faces of these people.

It was the rainy season and a warm gentle wind was blowing softly on a sunny afternoon. The postmaster was relatively free that day. The postmaster observed that sight attentively and wondered what if he had someone he loved close by then, someone whose heart was tied with his and who was the light of his soul. No one knew it, or even suspected that the heart of the postmaster of that little village, living on a meagre salary, was filled with such thoughts of anguish and yearning on silent afternoons, especially during the festive holidays.

(The story is by Rabindranath Tagore)

- 19 In paragraph 1, why was the postmaster uncomfortable in Ulapur?
- A He was a city boy who was unused to village life.
 - B The villagers were aggressive and unkind.
 - C There was no entertainment.
 - D His office was gloomy.
- 20 In paragraph 1, how did the factory workers react to the postmaster?
- A They felt obligated to speak to him during and after work.
 - B They ignored the postmaster because he was unfriendly.
 - C They had no time to interact with the postmaster.
 - D They were very arrogant towards him.
- 21 In paragraph 2, why did the postmaster appear to be arrogant?
- A He felt that he was highly educated compared to the villagers.
 - B He could not understand the lifestyle led by the village people.
 - C He simply lacked the social skills to interact freely with the villagers.
 - D He was extremely unhappy being a postmaster and wanted to be transferred out.
- 22 “She would be sitting on the doorstep and waiting for that call, but she never came into the house immediately.”
What can be said about Ratan’s action?
- A She did not do any work without being told.
 - B She sat by the doorstep idly to annoy her employer.
 - C She did not like to be too friendly with her employer.
 - D She sat awaiting her employer’s summons to help him.
- 23 Why did the postmaster not cook on some evenings?
- A He preferred to eat the leftovers with his servant.
 - B He tried to finish his work that could not be done at the office.
 - C He did not have the time nor the inclination to cook for himself.
 - D He would be too tired to cook after spending the time exchanging stories with his maid.
- 24 Why did the postmaster only share his stories with Ratan?
- A They both came from big cities.
 - B They had similar family backgrounds.
 - C He was most comfortable talking to Ratan.
 - D Ratan had fallen in love with the postmaster.
- 25 What does the expression, **agonising thoughts** refer to?
- A The difficult job he had as a village postmaster.
 - B His girlfriend whom he had left behind in the city.
 - C The happy memories of his friends and colleagues in Kolkata.
 - D The longing and loving memories of his family members not with him.
- 26 What does the writer emphasise in the last paragraph?
- A Loneliness can be very painful and heart-wrenching.
 - B The need for peace and quiet in life can be attained in villages.
 - C Having great expectations of one’s job is fruitful and encouraged.
 - D Living in a village helps one to overcome loneliness and one’s sense of longing.