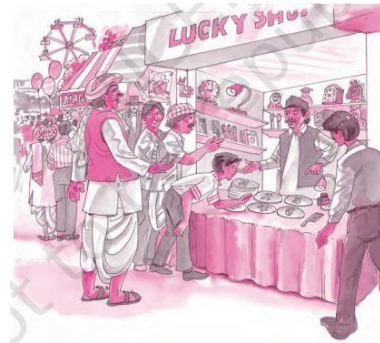


A Game of Chance

EVERY year on the occasion of Eid, there was a **fair** in our village. Eid was celebrated only one day but the fair **lasted** many days. **Tradesmen** from **far-and-wide** came there with all kinds of goods to sell. You could buy anything from a small pin to a big buffalo.

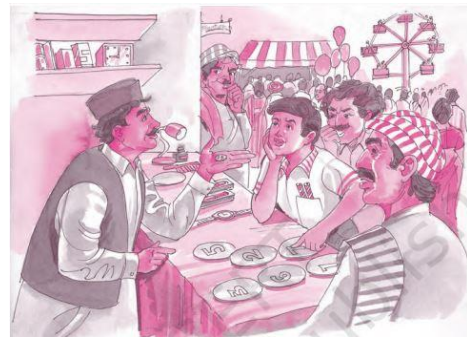
Uncle took me to the fair. Bhaiya, who worked for us at home, came with us. There was a big crowd at the fair. Uncle was leading us through the crowd when he met a few of his friends. They wanted him to spend some time with them.



Uncle asked me whether I would like to **look-around** the fair with Bhaiya till he came back. I was happy to do that. Uncle warned me neither to buy anything nor to go too far out while he was away. I promised that I would wait for him.

Bhaiya and I went from shop to shop. There were many things I would have liked to buy, but I waited for Uncle to return. Then we came to what was called the Lucky Shop. The shopkeeper was neither young nor old. He was a middleaged man. He seemed neither too smart nor too lazy. He wanted everybody to **try their luck**. There were **discs** on the table with numbers from one to ten facing down. All you had to do was to pay 50 paise, pick up any six discs, add up the numbers on the discs and find the total. The article marked with that number was yours.

An old man paid 50 paise and selected six discs. He added up the numbers on them and found the total was 15. He was given the article marked 15, which was a beautiful clock. But the old man did not want a clock. The shopkeeper **obliged** him by buying it back for 15 rupees. The old man went away very **pleased**.



Then a boy, a little older than I, tried his luck. He got a **comb** worth 25 paise. The shopkeeper looked neither happy nor sad. He bought the comb from the boy for 25 paise. The boy tried his luck again. He now got a fountain-pen worth three rupees. Then he tried a third time and got a wrist watch worth 25 rupees. When he tried again he got a table lamp worth more than 10 rupees. The boy was happy and went away with a smile and **a good deal of** cash.

I wanted to try my luck too. I looked at Bhaiya. He encouraged me. I paid 50 paise and took six discs. My luck was not too good. I got two pencils. The shopkeeper bought them from me for 25

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paise. I tried again. This time I got a bottle of ink, also of little value. The shopkeeper bought that too for 25 paise. I **took a chance** for the third time. Still luck was not with me.

I had hopes of winning a big prize and continued to try my luck again and again, paying 50 paise each time. But every time I got a **trifle**. At last I was left with only 25 paise. Again the shopkeeper showed his **kindness**. He said I could either play once more with 25 paise or settle the account then and there. I played again and the last 25 paise also disappeared.

People were looking at me. Some were laughing at my bad luck, but none showed any sympathy. Bhaiya and I went to the place where Uncle had left us and waited for him to return. Presently he came. He looked at me and said, “Rasheed, you look upset. What is the matter?”

I did not say anything. Bhaiya told him what had happened. Uncle was neither angry nor sad. He smiled and **patted** me. He took me to a shop and bought me a beautiful umbrella, biscuits and sweets and some other little gifts. Then we returned home.

Back home, Uncle told me that the Lucky Shop man had **made a fool of me**.

“No, Uncle,” I said, “it was just my bad luck.”

“No, my boy,” said Uncle, “it was neither good luck nor bad luck.”

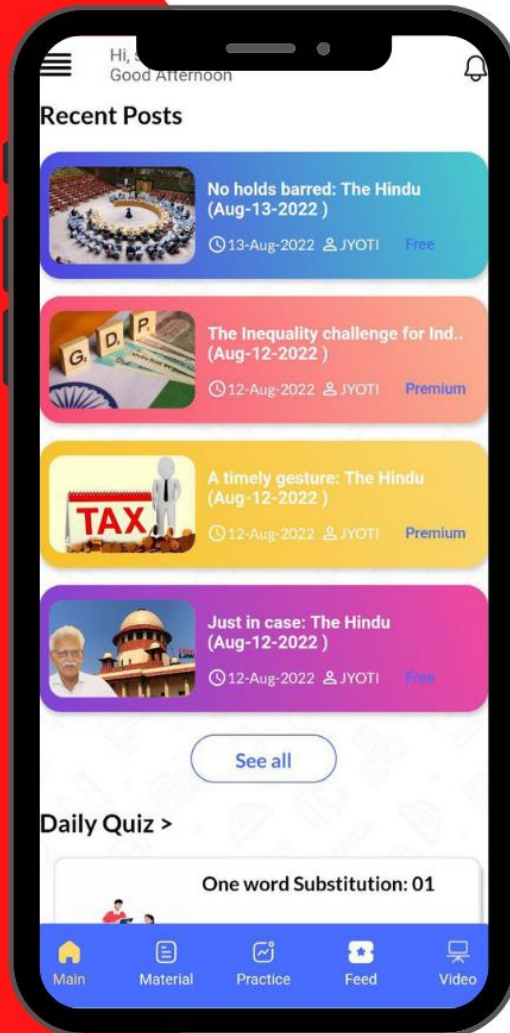
“But, Uncle,” I said, “I saw an old man getting a clock and a boy getting two or three costly things.”

“You don’t know, child,” Uncle said, “they were all friends of the shopkeeper. They were playing tricks to **tempt** you to try your luck. They wanted your money and they got it. Now forget about it, and don’t tell anybody of your bad luck or your **foolishness**.”

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Vocabulary

1. **A game of chance** (phrase) – activity depending on luck, not skill.
2. **Fair** (noun) – festival, carnival, funfair; exhibition, display मेला
3. **Last** (verb) – continue, go on, carry on, keep on बना रहना
4. **Tradesman** (noun) – shopkeeper, retailer, vendor, merchant, शिल्पकार
5. **Far and wide** (phrase) – everywhere, here, there, and everywhere हर जगह
6. **Look around** (phrase) – Move around a place or building in order to view whatever it might contain that is of interest. चारों ओर देखना
7. **Try one's luck** (Phrase) – Do something that involves risk or luck, hoping to succeed. किस्मत आजमाना
8. **Disc** (noun) – circle, round, saucer, discus, ring डिस्क, चक्र
9. **Oblige** (verb) – do someone a favour, help, assist, serve उपकृत करना
10. **Pleased** (adjective) – happy, glad, delighted, gratified, grateful प्रसन्न
11. **Comb** (noun) – A strip of plastic, metal, or wood with a row of narrow teeth, used for untangling or arranging the hair. कंघा
12. **A good deal of** (phrase) – A large amount. बहुत
13. **Take a chance** (Phrase) – risk, gamble, hazard, venture, speculation जोखिम उठाना
14. **Trifle** (noun) – a thing of little value or importance. तुच्छ वस्तु
15. **Kindness** (noun) – kind act, good deed, act of kindness, good turn, favour, दयालुता, मेहरबानी
16. **Pat** (verb) – Touch quickly and gently with the flat of the hand. थपथपाना
17. **Make a fool of someone** (phrase) – Trick or deceive (someone) so that they look foolish. मूर्ख बनाना
18. **Tempt** (verb) – entice, persuade, convince, inveigle, allure, attract लुभाना
19. **Foolishness** (noun) – folly, foolhardiness, stupidity, idiocy, imbecility बेवकूफी



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