# Chapter 3: Gopal and the Hilsa Fish

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## Exercise 3.1 — Working with the Text

**Q1** Why did the king want no more talk about the hilsa-fish?

SOLUTION

It was the season for hilsa-fish, and everyone — fishermen, fishmongers, householders and even the courtiers in the palace — could talk about nothing but hilsa-fish.

The king was tired and irritated by hearing about the fish everywhere, all the time, so he wanted the endless talk to stop.

Answer: Because it was the hilsa-fish season and absolutely everyone — fishermen, sellers, householders and even his courtiers — kept talking about nothing but hilsa-fish. The king grew tired and annoyed by this constant chatter, so he wanted no more of it.

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**Q2** What did the king ask Gopal to do to prove that he was clever?

SOLUTION

A courtier said not even Gopal could stop people from talking about hilsa-fish, even for five minutes.

The king then set Gopal a challenge to test his cleverness.

Answer: The king challenged Gopal to buy a huge hilsa-fish from the market and bring it all the way to the palace without anyone asking him even a single word about it.

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**Q3** What three things did Gopal do before he went to buy his hilsa-fish?

SOLUTION

Before setting out, Gopal changed his appearance completely so that people would notice HIM rather than the fish.

He half-shaved his face, smeared himself with ash, and dressed in disgraceful, torn rags.

Answer: Before going to buy the hilsa-fish, Gopal (1) shaved only half of his face, (2) smeared his body with ash, and (3) put on dirty, disgraceful, torn rags so that he looked strange and mad.

Q4 How did Gopal get inside the palace to see the king after he had bought the fish?

SOLUTION

At the court the guards refused to let him in, telling him to get away.
So Gopal began to dance and sing loudly, and word reached the king that a crazy man wanted to see him.
The king, curious, ordered the guards to bring that man before him, and Gopal was brought inside.

Answer: When the guards refused to let him in, Gopal began to dance and sing loudly outside the court. His mad behaviour created such a commotion that the king heard of it and ordered the guards to bring the man before him — and that is how Gopal got inside to see the king.

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Q5 Explain why no one seemed to be interested in talking about the hilsa-fish which Gopal had bought.

SOLUTION

Gopal had disguised himself as a madman — half-shaven face, body smeared with ash, and torn rags.
Everyone from the market to the palace was so busy staring at and talking about the strange, comical man that they completely forgot about the fish he was carrying.
People wondered whether he was a madman or a mystic, so their attention was fixed on Gopal, not the hilsa.

Answer: Gopal had made himself look like a mad or mystical man — half his face shaved, his body smeared with ash and dressed in torn rags. From the market to the court, everyone was so amused and puzzled by his strange appearance that they only stared at and talked about HIM, and no one paid any attention to the hilsa-fish he was carrying.

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Q6 Write ‘True’ or ‘False’ against each of the following sentences. (i) The king lost his temper easily. (ii) Gopal was a madman. (iii) Gopal was a clever man. (iv) Gopal was too poor to afford decent clothes. (v) The king got angry when he was shown to be wrong.

SOLUTION

(i) True — the king lost his temper with the courtier and shouted ‘Stop it!’, then admitted ‘I’m sorry I lost my temper.’
(ii) False — Gopal only pretended to be mad by disguising himself; he was actually very clever.
(iii) True — he cleverly met the king’s challenge by disguising himself.
(iv) False — he wore the torn rags on purpose as a disguise, not out of poverty.
(v) False — the king laughed ‘Ha! Ha!’ and congratulated Gopal for achieving the impossible again.

Answer: (i) True (ii) False (iii) True (iv) False (v) False

## Exercise 3.2 — Working with Language

Q1 Notice how in a comic book, there are no speech marks when characters talk. Instead what they say is put in a speech 'bubble'. However, if we wish to repeat or 'report' what they say, we must put it into reported speech. Change the following sentences in the story to reported speech. The first one has been done for you. (i) How much did you pay for that hilsa? [The woman asked the man how much he had paid for that hilsa.] (ii) Why is your face half-shaven? (Gopal's wife asked him …) (iii) I accept the challenge, Your Majesty. (Gopal told the king …) (iv) I want to see the king. (Gopal told the guards …) (v) Bring the man to me at once. (The king ordered the guard …)

SOLUTION

(i) is solved as the example: The woman asked the man how much he had paid for that hilsa.
(ii) A 'why' question becomes an indirect question: Gopal's wife asked him why his face was half-shaven.
(iii) A statement becomes a 'that' clause: Gopal told the king that he accepted the challenge.
(iv) 'I want' changes to 'he wanted': Gopal told the guards that he wanted to see the king.
(v) A command becomes 'ordered … to': The king ordered the guard to bring the man to him at once.

Answer: (ii) Gopal's wife asked him why his face was half-shaven. (iii) Gopal told the king that he accepted the challenge. (iv) Gopal told the guards that he wanted to see the king. (v) The king ordered the guard to bring the man to him at once.