



7

## THE SHOESHINE

There are many educated young people who very often have to wait for sometime before they get jobs of their liking. Is there anything they could do in this period.

Suppose you are one of such unemployed persons, what kind of a job would prefer to take up?

Tick (✓) your choice

- shoeshine
- labour
- a rickshaw puller
- a newspaper vendor
- a door-to-door salesperson
- anything else

**Let us read** the story to find out what an educated unemployed young man chose to do in such a trying situation.



### OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson you will be able to

- explain the theme of the story;
- infer that no work is below one's dignity;



## Notes

- correlate the role of cooperation, team work and interdependence to success;
- recognise a positive attitude and creative thinking as characteristics of a successful person;
- develop the quality of taking initiative and adapting to the unforeseen situations;
- suggest an appropriate path after considering different consequences; suggest why ego hassles and status consciousness would not lead to success and happiness;
- discuss the role of communication as an effective tool to convince others;
- discriminate between a subordinate clause and a principal clause, and identify their functions, and
- enrich vocabulary.



## 7.1 LET US READ THE TEXT

*(Imagine you are a college student and have come to a big city like Delhi. You cannot get a job and have got only about five rupee note in your hand. What would you like to do? Read what Sasthi Brata, a well-known writer, did in a similar situation.)*

I was standing outside the Tea House in Connaught Circus, idly watching the traffic. I wondered if I could afford a cup of coffee and a plate of potato chips, when a shoeshine walked up and put down his box in front of me. “Cream and polish sir?” he asked.

“Your shoes do need a polish, sir”, the boy persisted.

“Yes I know,” I said, smiling, “but I can’t afford it.”

“Can’t afford it?” the shoeshine replied joining me with a smile. ‘Only four annas, sir.’”

“I haven’t got four annas for a shoe polish”, I said walking away. But there was a puzzled and hurt expression on his face, as if I was making fun of him, “You see, I am looking for a job.”

The boy picked up his box and started walking with me. “Can’t get a job with dirty shoes like that, sir. The boss sahibs won’t like it.”

“The boss sahibs don’t seem to like me in any case”, I answered beginning to get



Fig. 7.1

persiste: continue to say or do something

## The Shoeshine

irritated. “Polished shoes won’t make things any better.” I wanted to get rid of the boy, but he persisted in walking with me.

“You don’t live in Delhi”, he said after a while.

“No”, I replied firmly. “I come from Calcutta and I don’t want my shoes polished.”

“I have an uncle who works in Calcutta”, he went on. “Earns a lot of money in the house of a Bengali Babu.”

Instantly the thought seized me. “And how much money do you earn?” I questioned.

“Oh, it all depends. On a bad day about three rupees, on a good day when there are lots of tourists, about five. Sometimes more.”

I did a spot of quick calculation in my mind. The answer sent a shiver through me. The shoeshine earned more than Ram Singh, a clerk in a Government office. Here at last was a solution

“Do you think I could...?” I asked hesitantly.

“What sir?”

“Polish shoes? Like you, I mean?”

“Polish shoes? The boy asked stopping dead. “On the pavement, like me?” I didn’t expect the loud laugh that followed.

It took me a lot of persuading. Shovan Lal, for that was his name, refused to believe that I wasn’t making fun of him. He had to leave school two years before his matriculation, why should I want to do his job when I had been to university? If he could speak English he certainly wouldn’t be polishing other people’s shoes. He would sit in an office and be a sahib himself, earning a regular monthly salary. But he hadn’t been born under a lucky star; his father had died of small pox about three years ago. No, shoe shinning was no job for an educated man like myself. What would my friends say?

I explained that I had no friends in Delhi, that I had left home without sitting through my exams. And most important, that even if I did apply for a clerk’s job, I would be earning less than him.



## Notes



Fig. 7.2

Calcutta: now  
Kolkatta

hesitatingly: in  
an unsure  
manner

stopping dead:  
shocked

persuading:  
convincing

status: position  
in society



## Notes

“But think of the status of working in an office with an electric fan over your head” Shovan Lal argued.

“There is that, I suppose, I replied smiling, “but I have to get a job straightaway.”

“Well” my friend said, reluctantly giving in, “if you really want to. . . . I mean I don’t know how the others will take it. There is a Shoeshines’ Union, you know. And Connaught Circus is a profitable place. If there’s an extra shoeshine, it means that everyone else earns a little bit less.”

I hadn’t thought of it like that and Shovan Lal has opened up a whole new world for me. For the moment I lost the feeling of hopelessness and despair which had possessed me ever since I arrived in Delhi. To work as a shoeshine became the most important goal in my life.

“But if I can persuade the others”, Shovan Lal said, breaking into my thoughts, “You will need to get all the stuff. A box like this one, brushes, cream and polish and some rags”.

“Yes, of course,” I replied, drawn back to reality once again, “and how much will all that cost?”

“About ten or twelve rupees, Shovan Lal answered should’nt be much more than that.”

“Really”, I said and started laughing.

“Why, what’s the matter? Don’t you believe me?”

“Of course I believe you. But the simple fact is that I only have five rupees and some loose change.”

This time Shovan Lal was really shocked. His mouth fell open and his eyes shot up in surprise. “You mean, you really mean. . . .?”

“I’m afraid I do,” I replied. “You see, I could never have an electric fan over my head.”

He closed his eyes and his face became thoughtful while he put his hand inside the pockets of his half-pants several times.

“Well,” he said, “we shall have to find a way.” It was nearly six o’clock and we walked a few yards in silence towards the Rivoli Cinema where a show had just ended. Shovan Lal



Fig. 7.3

reluctantly:  
unwillingly

despair: feeling of  
losing hope

## The Shoeshine

quicken his steps. I must work now. But you come to see me at eleven o'clock after the last show. Then, I shall talk with my friends, and see what they say."

"All right", I nodded, as I watched him walk away.

"And don't worry," he shouted just before he turned the corner, "if they let you work there, we'll find the money somehow,"

I walked along the streets of Delhi. I wondered what the history of my country meant to me. Here was a land where man had achieved greatness on every plane—astronomy, algebra, architecture, even poetry, music and art. Yet in this very city, where seven empires had come and gone, where Akbar and Ashoka ruled, I could not get a job, and a boy like Shovan Lal had not been able to finish his schooling.

By eleven o'clock I had walked eight miles. When I met Shovan Lal, Connaught Circus was nearly deserted.

"Hullo", Shovan Lal said, greeting me in Hindi.

"Hullo", I replied as a few men around him moved aside to let me come to him.

"These are my friends", Shovan Lal added waving his hand over the group.

"What do they have to say about my working with them here in Connaught Circus?"

"Well", Shovan Lal replied, pulling a face.

Just then one of the younger men started speaking very fast in a strange dialect I could not easily follow. This was taken up by an older man and in a few minutes four others joined in. When they stopped talking, Shovan Lal, who had been quiet all this time, translated for me.

The Union was having trouble with the authorities. They had refused to grant a license to the Shoeshines, although hawkers could apply for one. So in effect, polishing shoes on the pavement was illegal, like begging, and one had to depend on the goodwill of the policeman. The head of the Shoeshines' Union knew some English but obviously someone with better knowledge of the language would be of great help. So, though most of group was against letting me in, they had reluctantly agreed to give me a chance provided I helped out with the correspondence.

I literally jumped for joy and gave Shovan Lal a close hug.

"They also say," he added, "that we take a collection for you to buy the box and the rest of the materials. So you can keep the five rupees to buy food and other things till you begin to earn a little. And after a few weeks you can pay back the money for the box."

A toffee tin was passed around and a little over seven rupees was collected that evening.



### Notes

deserted: with no people

goodwill: helpful feeling toward others

correspondence: letters



Notes

“We will get more tomorrow, “Shovan Lal said, “when the rest are here. You know there are thirty of us who work in Connaught circus.”

The group dispersed and I went home with Shovan Lal that night.

– Sasthi Brata  
(an adaptation)



LET US DO 7.1

Contact 10 educated boys and girls and find out what profession will they choose if they are faced with a financial crisis. Provide a list of professions normally chosen by young educated unemployed people.

You may refer to some of the choices of suggested professions as under. However, you are free to change the choice of profession to the ones that are more common in your area–

- a salesperson
- volunteer at an exhibition
- a trainee in an office
- a shoeshine
- any other

Compile the information gathered in the given format. Analyse the information gathered from the target group and draw conclusion. What kind of options do the educated unemployed young people think about.

S. No.	Names	Sex	Qualification	Choice of profession

7.2 LET US UNDERSTAND THE TEXT

7.2.1 PART 1

*I was standing outside ..... we'll find money somehow.*

Paras 1 to 3 of the story deal with the narrator’s meeting Shovan Lal, the Shoeshine boy and realising that he makes more money than a government clerk by polishing shoes.

## The Shoeshine

Both exchange details of their lives and the narrator too wants to take up this job. Shovan Lal promises to help him.



Notes



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.1

Answer these questions in about 30-40 words each:

- i) Why could the youngman not afford to buy even a plate of potato chips and a cup of coffee?
- ii) Why did the youngman refuse to get his shoes polished?
- iii) *'Instantly the thought seized me'*. To what thought does the speaker refer to?
- iv) What does the expression *'he read it'* in this context mean?
- v) Had you been in such a situation - 'no job,' 'no money in the pocket' ! What would have been your reaction?
- vi) How much money did the author have in this pocket? Pick out the words which help you to find the answer
- vii) "There was a puzzled and hurt expression on his face". Why was the shoeshine puzzled and hurt?
- viii) The shoeshine suggested that the author should get his shoes polished. What reason did he give?
- ix) "But if I can persuade the others", Shovan Lal said, breaking into my thoughts
  - (i) Who were the 'others'?
  - (ii) What thoughts of the narrator are being hinted?



### LET US LEARN NEW WORDS 7.1

1. Find out the difference between unemployment and underemployment.
2. Select suitable phrases from the ones given and complete the following sentences one of them is additional.

make fun of                      pull a long face  
makes a living                gave another chance                      pulled down

- (i) (a) Rani's sister has lost her husband. She \_\_\_\_\_ by giving music lessons.
- (b) We should not \_\_\_\_\_ people who stammer.



## Notes

- (ii) (a) Ahmad had broken a glass vase, when his mother scolded him he \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) Amit was strong and healthy. Last month he had influenza. He looks \_\_\_\_\_ now..

## 7.2.2 PART 2

*I walked along the streets ..... Shovan Lal that night*

The narrator wanders on the roads thinking about the City's glorious past and its sad present state. These paragraphs highlight the problems of shoeshine boys. The narrator is accepted into the union because of his knowledge of English. It would come in handy for their correspondence with the authorities. This section highlights the value of interdependence and empathy.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2

Answer the following questions in about 30-40 words each:

- (i) Why did Shovan Lal initially show his reluctance to accept the youngman's proposal?
- (ii) (a) Why was polishing shoes on the pavement treated like begging?  
 (b) What trouble was the Shoeshine Union having with the authorities?  
 (c) How did Shovan Lal and his friends help the author?
- (iii) What quality of Shovan Lal's character is evident in his efforts?
- (iv) What solutions was offered by Shovan Lal and others to solve the problem?



## LET US LEARN NEW WORDS 7.2

Complete the following sentences by using the following phrases appropriately:

had come and gone, letting in, taken up,  
 reluctantly agreed, jumped with joy, pay back, .

- When Rita saw her lost puppy in her father's arms she \_\_\_\_\_.
- Mother didn't want me to spend the night at my friend's house but when my friend's mother called her and assured her she \_\_\_\_\_.
- I am awaiting my results but in the meantime I have \_\_\_\_\_ a temporary job.



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4. My friend lent me some money and I promised to \_\_\_\_\_ by the next month.
5. The old man was sitting at the same table in the coffee house since morning many people \_\_\_\_\_ but his son did not show up.
6. The security at the bank has been tightened. They are not \_\_\_\_\_ anyone without an ID Proof.



Notes



### 7.3 LET US LEARN GRAMMAR

#### Clauses

1. Read the following sentences
  1. Garima told her sister that her classmates were planning to visit the Lotus Temple.
  2. My father gave me the book which has been published by NIOS.
  3. Gaurav will attend the meeting though he is unwell these days.

Each sentence can be split in two parts such as

- |            |      |  |
|------------|------|--|
| Sentence 1 | (i)  | Garima told her sister                                       |
|            | (ii) | that her classmates were planning to visit the Lotus Temple. |
| Sentence 2 | (i)  | My father gave me the book                                   |
|            | (ii) | which has been published by NIOS.                            |
| Sentence 3 | (i)  | Gaurav would attend the meeting                              |
|            | (ii) | though he is unwell these days.                              |

#### Each part is called a CLAUSE

Each clause has a subject, verb, and may be with or without an object.

Each clause looks like a sentence. But each clause is not independent.

Each sentence with more than one clause has

- (i) a main (Principal) clause and
- (ii) a subordinate clause
  - One of the clauses, though linked, yet is independent. Such a clause is called Principal or Main clause.



## Notes

The other clause is a dependent clause (Subordinate)

- It is linked with a subordinate sentence connector (that, which, though)

Each subordinate clause has a function to perform. Subordinate clause functions as a noun clause or an adjective clause or an adverb clause.

Let us analyse each sentence.

- Garima told *her sister*
  - that* her classmates, *were planning to visit the Lotus Temple.*
- My father *gave me a book*
  - which* has been published by NIOS.
- Gaurav will attend the meeting
  - though* he is unwell these days.

Now look at the following table.

S.No	Principal Clause	Connector	Subordinate Clause	Function
1.	Garima told her sister. (Independent though linked)	that	her classmates were planning to visit the Lotus Temple.	Noun clause
2.	My father gave me a book (Independent though linked)	which	(book) has been published by NIOS.	Adjective clause
3.	Gaurav will attend the meeting (Independent though linked)	though	he is unwell these days.	Adverb clause

- Separate the clauses in the given sentences and say whether it is a Principal clause or a subordinate clause.
  - Rajesh informed the visitor that the admission notice has been published in the Hindustan Times dated 8<sup>th</sup> August.
  - My friend, who was coming from Mumbai, has postponed his visit.
  - Yogesh cannot take the final exam because he is unwell.

No.	Principal Clause	Subordinate Clause	Functions of the clause



### 7.4 LET US WRITE

Imagine you are the youngman. Write a letter to your brother back in Kolkatta describing your experiences in Delhi.

- i) Based on the text write why the Youngman decided to work as a shoeshine. Use appropriate sentence connectors.
- ii) Shovan Lal wanted the young man not to take up the work of a shoe shine. What arguments did he give to dissuade the young man?



### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

The story highlights that positive attitude and the ability to think creatively are steps towards achieving success. It emphasizes that no work is small, and dignity of labour must be respected. Those who earn their living through hard work should be honoured. It also draws our attention towards the fact that everyone is intelligent and if given the opportunity can rise in life.



### TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- A. Answer the following question in your own words.
1. How did Shovan Lal react to the young man's proposal to start as a shoeshine?
  2. Describe the first meeting of the youngman and Shovan Lal, the Shoeshine boy.
  3. What objections did the member of the Shoeshine Association have in accepting the youngman as a member? How far do you agree to their objections? Give reason (s).
  4. Had you been in place of the young man, what would have been your choice of profession? Give reasons.
  5. Do you think the youngman will continue to work as a shoeshine? Give reason for your answer.
  6. Shovan Lal, though poor, was large-hearted. Give at least one example in support of your answer.
- B. Think and write your answers
1. The narrator 'literally jumped with joy' when he was allowed to become a shoeshine. What does this mean?
  2. Did the narrator look down upon the work of a Shoeshine? Give reasons.



Notes



## Notes

3. It is, what kind of people we are—that is more important than the way we earn our living. How is this exemplified in the story.
4. Imagine you are the youngman. Write a page in your diary recording your reaction to the cooperative gesture of the members of the Shoeshine Association.
5. Write how Shovan Lal had convinced the members of the Shoeshine Association about the rationale behind his suggestion to include the youngman as a Shoeshine.
6. Suppose you are the young educated man. Your father has come to know about your new profession and is unhappy at your decision. Write a letter to convince your father that your decision was the best option in these circumstances.
7. Write a paragraph on “PROFESSION OF MY CHOICE”.



## ANSWERS

## 7.2.1 PART 1

## INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.1

## (A)

- (i) He was unemployed and had just five rupees in his pocket.
- (ii) He didn't have sufficient money to pay for a cup of coffee and a plate of potato chips, even though he was hungry. Getting his shoes polished was not important for him.
- (iii) That he should start polishing shoes and work as a shoeshine to earn his livelihood.
- (iv) He should understand what he meant.
- (v) Personal and individual responses.
- (vi) Just five rupees. 'But the simple fact is that I only have five rupees and some loose change'.
- (vii) That an educated man would think of polishing shoes was beyond his imagination. He was hurt at such an idea from an educated man.
- (viii) An unemployed educated man can impress the officer in the office and that might help him to get a job.
- (ix) (i) Other Shoeshine boys working in Connaught Circus.  
(ii) To work as a Shoeshine became his goal.

## LET US LEARN NEW WORDS 7.1

1. (i) (a) \_\_\_\_\_ makes her living.  
(b) \_\_\_\_\_ make fun of \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Shoeshine

- (ii) (a) pulled a long face.
- (iii) he looks pulled down now.

### 7.2.2 PART 2

#### INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2

##### A.

- (i) He feared his other friends (shoe-shine boys) would not approve of the inclusion of the youngman for possible loss of their earning to some extent as one more shoe-shine would reduce each shoe-shine boy's earning.
- (ii) (a) they (shoeshine boys) didn't have any establishment as other business men had.
  - (b) They (authorities) didn't grant recognition to the Shoe-Shine Association. They (Shoeshine boys) were treated as beggars and their profession equivalent to begging.
  - (c) They collected money to buy the kit for the youngman to start as Shoe Shine.
- (iii) (a) Cooperative gesture, large heartedness
  - (b) empathy.
- (iv) That the youngman will help the members of the Shoeshine Association in their correspondence with the authorities as others were not good at drafting in English.

#### LET US LEARN NEW WORDS 7.2

1. jumped with joy
2. reluctantly agreed
3. taken up
4. pay back
5. had come and gone
6. letting in

#### 7.3 LET US LEARN GRAMMAR

S.No	Principal clause	Subordinate clause	Function
(a)	Rajesh informed the visitors	that the admission notice has been published in the Hindusthan Times dated 8 <sup>th</sup> August.	Noun clause functioning as an object.
(b)	My friend has postponed his visit	who was coming from Mumbai	Adjective clause defines the noun 'friend' in principal clause
(c)	Yogesh cannot take	because he is unwell. the exam	Adverb clause - showing reasons



Notes



## Notes

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS****A.**

1. Shovan Lal was shocked, surprised, and hurt and didn't believe that an educated man didn't have money enough to get his shoes polished.
2. Shovan Lal insists on getting the Youngman shoes polished..
  - The young man explains his problem and offers to work as a Shoeshine. It surprises Shovan Lal but he understands the problem involved in the offer.
  - Ultimately they are agreed to accept him as member of the Shoeshine Association on the condition that he would help the Association in undertaking correspondence with the authority.
3. Other members were initially reluctant. Their income would be reduced and thus they will be suffering due to financial loss.
4. Individual responses and varied reasons.
5. Individual responses and varied reasons.
6. Individual responses and varied reason.

**B. Think and write answers**

1. He was excited at the acceptance.
2. No. offered to be a Shoeshine himself though he was an educated young man.
3. Example of Shovan Lal and his friend's helping the narraotr proves their human values. Attitude to work counts.