

Mehala Swaprasam.

GCE (OL)
ENGLISH LITERATURE

A Study Guide to
MARTIN WICKRAMASINGHE'S
MADOL DOOVA

by
A. K. HEWAGE



A DENUMA PUBLICATION

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யாருடையதும் பொருத்தம் நினைவாயும்
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PREFACE

The students who are learning English Literature for the GCE (OL) Examination are expected to study two novels out of the four prescribed. These notes in the form of questions and answers have been prepared to help those who are studying Martin Wickramasinghe's *Madol Doova* (the English Translation by Ashley Halpe). The suggestions made in "Learning About Literature at Ordinary Level" by Nirmala Hettiarachchi, Geetha Premaratne and Rajiva Wijesinghe have been followed closely. We are grateful to them for those valuable suggestions and Mr Thilak Ranasighe for editing the material.

A. K. Hewage

MADOL DOOVA

by Martin Wickramasinghe

Madol Doova is an adventure story originally written in Sinhala by Martin Wickramasinghe and was first published in 1947. It went into eighteen Sinhala editions by 1964. Madol Doova was translated into English by Ashley Halpe. It had also been translated into Russian, Chinese, Bulgarian, and Romanian languages. This novel is full of joyful escapades of rural boyhood. The episodes are what children dream of doing, and because of this children for over forty years have been reading this book with interest. Even though the situations described took place over a hundred years ago in the south of Sri Lanka, they are still within the imaginative world of children.

CHAPTER ONE

ROBBERS

1. Read Chapter One and relate the story in a few words.

The mother of a village boy had died when he was seven years old. About an year later his father got married again. The boy did not like his stepmother because she was different from his own mother in many ways. She did not care for the boy like his mother. She found fault with the servants even for small lapses. She was miserly and went to the kitchen after every meal to give out the servants food herself. If the rice and curry wasn't enough they had to ask her for a second helping. She scolded the servants very often and even quarrelled with them. She managed to save some of the house-keeping money and lent it to villagers on a very high rate of interest. When stepmother had a son, things became more difficult for him. He saw how much she loved her own son and this made him jealous and unhappy. As a result he started doing things that annoyed the stepmother. She reported his misdeeds

to his father when he came home in the evening and he was punished severely. The boy was about eleven years old by this time and the punishments made him more stubborn, and started causing more trouble at home.

When things were becoming sour for him at home he found relief in the company of his friends. Jinna, the boy who helped with the housework, was his closest friend and faithful follower in his escapades. One of the games they played was called Robbers. It wasn't a make-believe game, but a small scale house breaking. The boys disguised as robbers under the leadership of the narrator and attempted to break into a house in the village where there were only an old woman and two children. When the inmates of the house cried out and the villagers came running to their rescue, the boys ran away and hid in a nearby hiding place in a thicket. The pursuers could not catch them.

2. The story in the first Chapter can be divided into two parts. What can they be?

In the first part of this Chapter the home situation of the boy is described. We are told about the turning point in his life - arrival of a stepmother and how the boy's feelings changed and how he lost interest in attending school. We are also told how he got attracted to his friends.

In the second part the game they played called Robbers is described. The real character of the narrator (Upali) and Jinna are disclosed. "Robbers" was not a make-believe game that children play such as playing 'Shop', but a real housebreak even though it was by children who were under twelve years of age.

3. Who is Jinna? What role does he play?

Jinna is a poor relation who worked for Upali's family. He is three years older than Upali, the narrator. He hardly did any work in the house, but

Ob. 2

waited at the school gate until Upali came out after school and went with him on his escapades. He plays the role of a faithful companion to Upali and is always prepared to do whatever Upali says. For example, when he is asked to be the House-breaker in Robbers, he instantly disguises himself, applies oil on his body so that he may slip away if someone tries to catch him and goes through the act.

4. Relate the story of Robbers from the point of view of the boys.

We were tired of katti and wrestling and was looking for a new game. Upali suggested a new game called Robbers. Upali took the role of the Chief, the leader. We were asked to obey the leader. We accepted his orders. Jinna was given the role of the House-Breaker. He had to wear a loincloth and apply oil on his body so that if someone catches him, he may slip away. All of us disguised ourselves and went to the watchman's house on the other side of the woods to rob that house as a trial. Only an old woman and two children were there in the house. As we were breaking into the house, the old woman came out to see what was happening. So, we caught her and tied her up. Upali threatened to kill her if she shouted. In spite of that, she shouted and the villagers came running. So we withdrew to our hiding place in the thicket.

5. Why do you think that the boys enjoyed the company of the members of the gang rather than the company of the members of the family?

In the case of the narrator (Upali) and Jinna, they did not get the love and affection of their parents and other members of the family. They were on their own without any love, affection and acceptance from the family and found each other better company. Upali and Jinna became two good friends. The other boys of the village were attracted to Upali and Jinna because of their leadership. Upali was

the son of a mudalali in the village and commanded the respect of the other boys. The escapades that Upali organised were also interesting and satisfying to their love of adventure.

There is another reason for their enjoying the company of the members of the gang. All the boys were adolescents. It is an age between childhood and adulthood. They are neither children nor adults to receive recognition from the adults. But they longed to play the role of adults. The gang provided an opportunity to satisfy this natural tendency. It is a world of their own where members recognised one another for what they are, each member is given responsibilities and all of them took part in adventure. Because of this the members of the gang enjoyed the company of the members of the gang than the members of the family who were out only to find fault with them for whatever they did.

6. Can you say that the stepmother is a cruel woman?

The step^mother does not appear to be a cruel woman. She behaved just like any other woman in her capacity. Upali and Jinna were just two boys to her. She fed them and kept an eye on them to see that they don't fall into trouble. It was natural that she complained to her husband when the boys did something wrong. But Upali had some preconceived ideas about stepmothers and looked at her from that point of view. ^{what} Upali wanted most was love and affection which he did not receive from his father or from his stepmother. When the stepmother had a son of her own, Upali felt still more bad. He felt that the stepmother cared ^{for} her son more ^{for} than himself. The weak point in the stepmother is that she did not know how to look after a motherless child. There is nothing to say in the story that the stepmother was a cruel woman.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VEDDHA GAME

1. What was the outcome of the 'Robbers' game?

No one had been able to recognize the boys who had broken into the watchman's house. Some believed it was some boys from another village. Only watchman's mother said that two of the boys looked like Upali (the narrator) and Dangadasa. No one had recognized Jinna. The parents did not punish the boys because they did not know for sure that the boys had done it. However, after this the parents began to keep an eye on the boys and they had to limit their games to *kalli*, *pandu* and *katti*.

2. Describe briefly the game *kalli*.

Kalli needs two sticks, one about two feet long, and the other of about six inches. The small stick is kept in a hole lengthwise with one third of it projecting out. Then the projecting part is tapped with the long stick and when the short stick goes up it is hit with the long stick as hard as the player can. Then the distance between the hole and the place where the small stick falls is measured with the long stick. One who first reaches the agreed score wins the game. Those who lose will have to run holding their breath and saying *gudu, gudu.....* the distance the winner hits short stick.

3. Describe the Veddha episode.

One day the boys decided to play a new game called Veddhas. They rolled up their sarongs and tied them up like loin-cloths. They strung *burulla* leaves together and draped them round their waists. Headgear was made of *kos*-leaves. Upali had a big strong bow with arrows of pointed bamboo. The others had smaller bows and their arrows were made of *iratu*.

They slung their bows and arrows on their shoulders and went to the woods peering into the undergrowth. Now they are Veddhas on the alert for beasts.

Soon they came to the further part of the wood, near the spring - well to which everyone came for water. Three girls were at the well chatting and laughing. The Veddhas watched them, crouched in the thicket. The girls pushed each other and danced while some were clapping their hands. They imitated the walk of some women in the village. When the girls were about to depart with their pots full of water, Upali took aim at one of the girls and shot an arrow. She cried out 'Apoi amme' and slipped down to the ground holding on to the side of the well. Others shot four more arrows, two hit a girl and she fell on a slab.

Two of the girls ran away and the one who was injured held her bleeding leg and moaned. The boys rushed out and carried the girl into the thicket. The girl shrieked but no one heard her. She pleaded Upali to let her go saying "Please, I only mimicked your stepmother for a joke". She was quite frightened and began to cry "We've made a mistake". Upali the leader said "We were after deer, but we've shot a woman. We mistook these girls for deer". Then they treated her wound with some crushed herbs and in spite of her protests carried her back to the well. She lifted the pot to her hip and walked away quickly smiling.

4. Why was so much importance given to what happened at the well?

The girls who ran back to the village would have exaggerated what happened at the well. They did not know it was a game played by some boys. Some have identified Upali. Since he was only a boy, they have connected it up with the Headman's youngest son, who had a bad reputation in the village. Even though Lalitha told them that the children were

only playing a game ^{thing} (and there wasn't anyone else) ✓
they didn't believe her. They blamed her for allow-
ing the boys to carry her into the thicket and treat
her wound without shouting. She ^{They} was punished by
stopping her going to the spring-well for six months.
Upali was beaten mercilessly and locked up for three
days with one leg clamped onto a pillory.

An incident of this nature is looked down upon
by the villagers. Carrying a girl into a thicket by
force is something very serious. The fact that it
was only an innocent game was rejected.

5. What reasons can you find in the story for Upali
revolting against the dominating adults?

^{causing it}
^{on} Upali lost his mother when he was only seven
years old and his father married again about one
year later. That means Upali was left without
parental love and affection ^{in which} the way he used to
get them.

ii. ^{she} The stepmother, even though did not really ill-
treat Upali, was no good substitute for mother.
She was more interested in cutting down hou-
sehold expenditure and becoming rich quickly.

iii. Upali was a very energetic boy. He loved activi-
ties. The academic work at school was of ^{no} interest to him.

iv. Severe punishments given by father without
meeting his obligations ^{hardened} the boy.

The text says "Father spent all day in his shop
and got back late every evening. My stepmother
spent her time bathing, feeding and cuddling her
baby or seeing to things about the house. She didn't
forget to scold me and tell me to be a good boy".

Had the stepmother been an understanding per-
son and father ^{father} took some time to be with Upali he
would not have revolted in this manner.

6. How do you suppose Upali will fit into the household of Mr Dharmasingha?

"No one could even guess from my looks the sort of mischief I was capable of." This is Upali's own estimation of himself. Father told the headmaster "He's a terrible scamp". The headmaster replied "Every child is a bit of a scamp, after all. There are times when my own children seem to be getting out of hand. But I don't let them go too far. I'm sure that the boy will try not to get into mischief here". Upali was boarded at Mr Dharmasingha's place with this kind of understanding.

Both, the father and the headmaster do not seem to know that Upali is not made for academic education and his love of adventure will lead him far beyond they could ever think of.

Mr Dharmasingha's household is too sober for Upali. The orderly life is not for him. If Upali quarrels with Mr Dharmasingha, it will be not because he has anything against him, but because quiet sober life is not what he wants.

sober - not adventures.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW I WENT TO SEA

1. What effect does the title of this Chapter create in your mind?

The first title was Robbers. The second was The Veddha Game. In Robbers, the boys tried out a robbery. In the second game they went about with bows and arrows and shot at a girl and injured her even though slightly. So, they are not make-believe games, but miniature real activities. I would like to go to sea in a boat very much. Therefore I expect the boys to go to sea on their own. The title makes me impatient to read the Chapter. I want to know how it would be in a boat at sea.

2. What made the children dislike Mr and Mrs Dharmasingha?

Mr Dharmasingha does not understand that children live in a world of their own and in that world, children do not behave like adults. That is why it is different from the world of adults. That is why he always lays down ^{prohibitions} ~~prohibitions~~. "Don't do this, Don't do that" are the only things he tells children. But what children want to do is exactly what he does not want them to do, like climbing trees or mountains; playing in water; going about and discovering things by themselves etc. Mr Dharmasingha never came down to the level of children and ^{never took} ~~take~~ part in things that they like. The annoyance of children was displayed by ^{their} ~~doing~~ doing things that he did not want them to do. *Don't do this, Don't do that*

3. Why do you think it was difficult for Mr Dharmasingha to explain the third precept in the five precepts in Buddhism - I'll endeavour to refrain from unlawful sexual relationships.

Mr Dharmasingha could not explain the third precept probably because he did not really understand

it. Children do not understand what is meant by 'unlawful' or 'sexual relationship'. In other words, Mr Dharmasingha was trying to explain something he himself did not understand to children who did not know the meanings of the terms he used in his explanation. They will understand what he says if it is explained to them a few years later.

④ Relate the incident of frogs.

During the rainy season frogs come out from their hiding places to enjoy rain. The boys have lot of fun trying to collect frogs. So one day Upali and Gunadasa were collecting frogs when they got the idea to tease Somalatha by taking some frogs into the room. They took a few frogs in a coconut shell covered with another coconut shell into the room and let them go. Somalatha, shouting "Ee", ran out of the door. Then all three of them got together and took the frogs into the dining room, put them on the table, and covered them with a flat clay *hatti*. It was soon time for tea. There was a plate of *helapa* and a bunch of ripe plantains on a white plate and the *hatti* that the boys had kept up side down. The boys and Somalatha were watching with fear what would happen. Mr Dharmasingha lifted the *hatti* saying "What's under this?" Then he jumped away from the table dropping the *hatti*. It smashed on the floor. There were frogs all over the table.

⑤ How did Mr Dharmasingha take up the joke?

Mr Dharmasingha got very angry and slapped Somalatha who was laughing, enjoying the joke. She ran to her room crying. He dragged Gunadasa into the children's room, threw him in and locked the door. He caught Upali by the ear and put him in the other room. He locked the room and took the key. Mr Dharmasingha did not take it as a joke.

6. What do you think about the way Mr Dharmasingha reacted to the joke?

Mr Dharmasingha shouldn't have taken the joke so seriously. He could have given them a small punishment like cleaning up the room and putting the frogs back in the garden. He could have withdrawn their afternoon tea. The children ^{had} wouldn't have minded that at all because they ^{enjoyed} the incident.

7. Who is Porisadaya?

Porisadaya is the name of a devil that ate human flesh. He lived at the time of Lord Buddha. In the modern ^{context} any one who does not listen to advice and creates mischief is called a Porisadaya.

8. Describe what happened from the moment Upali ran away from the room when Mr Dharmasingha went to bring the cane upto when he was discovered in the boat by a fisherman.

Upali ran from the room and jumped over the back fence to escape from the headmaster. He did not return home that night and Mr Dharmasingha began to look for him with some men from the village. He ^{kept on} moving from one thicket to another without being seen by the men. When the men went out after dinner to look for him again, Upali went to the beach. The ^{moonlit} beach and the sky were beautiful. He watched fishermen going to fish in their canoes. He climbed into one of the big sea-going boats drawn up on the beach and lay in the stern, the back end of the boat. Soon he fell asleep. Hours later he was awakened by the ^{rocking} of the boat. The sun had risen. He heard a creaking and a sound of voices. All of a sudden he was discovered by a fisherman who worked in the boat. He shouted "Menna! There's a boy in the boat" and everyone was surprised to see him there.

9. Describe what happened after Upali was discovered in the boat at sea as if Upali is relating the story to Jinna.

lie - lay - laid lying
ආරක්ෂා
අරක්ෂා

rise - rose - risen

The fishermen were highly surprised when they discovered me in the boat. (By this time) they were far away from the shore and there was no time for them to take me back and get back to their fishing. So they decided to take me with them to hantenna, the balaya fishing ground.

When I heard their decision, I was thrilled. We were (out of sight of land.) I thought we must be in the middle of the ocean. I could see nothing but the sea (on all sides.)

There was a steady breeze and the (sail was unfurled.) The boat began to move fast with the help of the breeze. The fishermen were amazed to see me standing firm in the middle of the boat holding on to a pole. The helmsman was surprised at my fearlessness. The boat went hissing and when we reached hantenna, the men let down the stone anchor slowly.

Soon they were ready for fishing. They tied their sacks at their waist and took up their huge bamboo fishing rods. Two of them got out the bait of red-ingura and threw them into the sea as if he is sowing paddy in a paddy field. Hundreds of balaya came jumping and fighting for the bait, churning the water. The fishermen held their rods against their hips with one hand and their lines into the water with the other. Their sacks were ready tied to their waists. It was like a machine. As soon as the line fell into water they pulled it away and a balaya fell into the boat. I never saw anything like it. The sea around the boat was full of balaya and it did not take much time to catch a boatful. The fishermen too enjoyed it.

When the boat was full, they stopped fishing and sat for their meal. Each one of them had a packet of samba rice, balaya - ambul - thial and pol sambola. Each one gave me a handful and I had more than I could eat. I ate everything because I

didn't have anything to eat all night. Then I drank some water out of a coconut shell.

Our return journey too was interesting. They hauled in the anchor and the boat began to move landwards. For a long time I could not see anything but water all around me. After a while I saw the shore like little ^{smudges} in the sky far away. They ^{gradually} took shape as trees. We came ashore at about three o'clock in the afternoon.

9. "The Trip to Sea" is a fascinating incident that children will enjoy reading for a long time to come". What makes it fascinating.

The children, even those who live along the coast, rarely get a chance to go fishing in a balaya boat. Only experienced fishermen are taken. But children are familiar with stories about deep sea fishing and love to go fishing. The description of the fishing trip with Upali as the hero is nothing but a fulfilment of a fantasy. Meeting the challenge of being at sea like a veteran fisherman, watching the fascinating sight of catching balaya without even a bait to the hook, the balaya hitting the sack tied round the waist of the fisherman and falling into the boat without even the fisherman touching it, the boat filling up with fish quickly, the sight of balaya moving visibly around the boat and the sight of thrill ^{which} the fishermen get as they catch the balaya are certainly fascinating sights even to adults. The writer describes everything with all the details, the scene gets ingrained in the minds of children and remain with them for a long time. It also creates an interest in fishing and the children are provoked to find out more details about how fishing is done.

10. Describe the character of Mr Dharmasingha in Madol Doova. What did Upali think of him? (GCE (OL) Dec. 1992).

Mr Dharmasingha was a headmaster of a village school. He was a typical school teacher. Even at home he spoke as if he is speaking to a class of children, gesturing with his forefinger. He looked overworked and prematurely old. His black hair was greying already. He had a coalblack face which made his eyes look strangely brilliant. His teeth, too were milk white. He ended every sentence with "understand?" even when he was talking to adults. The headmaster smiled a little when he welcomed people, but his face soon took a weary and cheerless look.

The headmaster was a stern man, he wanted to discipline the children, including his own two children. However, the day the inspector visited the school, he behaved a little childish. The headmaster was so scared that he did not think it is below his dignity to seek the cooperation of the pupils to cheat the inspector of schools.

Upali had nothing against the headmaster. He doesn't say anything bad about him. His playing with frogs, pulling down the door, going to sea and fighting with children were just routine for him. His spirit of adventure drew him to do many things against the advice of the adults. Mr Dharmasingha was another adult who did not understand Upali.

Stern - strict - not lenient

hate - (C)
hated - (B)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIGHT

1. "The headmaster and his wife spent' their time joylessly" Why does the writer say so?

They had a set routine in their behaviour. They went to school, and came back daily, shouted at children all the time asking them not to do this and that. Hoarded money like termites building an ant-hill. They had no close friends and did not go anywhere. This made the headmaster and his wife a cheerless couple who did not enjoy life and did not allow other people also to enjoy.

2. Why do you think that the headmaster allowed Upali to go and play with his school friends after the 'frogs' incident?

The incident of keeping frogs under a hatti on the dinner table and the trip with fishermen gave the headmaster enough trouble. He was so fed up with Upali, that Upali's father was asked to take him away. However, at the request of the father, Upali was given time to stay back until the examination was over. The headmaster was afraid that Upali might cause more trouble if he was forced to stay in the house. So he let him go out but kept his two children at home.

3. Describe how the New Year meal was taken at that time.

The first meal for the New Year was taken at an auspicious time all seated on mats laid on the floor. Traditionally this meal is taken off plantain leaves. After the meal an invited guest was given kiribath and New Year foods. He rolled a little of the milk rice into a ball and put it into the oil lamp, and placed a one cent coin beside it. Then he gave coins wrapped in a betel leaf to each one in the family. They were expected to keep these until the next New Year.

4. Why was the examination so important to the headmaster?

The incident narrated in the story took place over one hundred years ago. At that time annual inspections of schools were made by a school inspector. In addition to other things he tested the children to find out whether the teachers had taught them well. The salary increments to the headmaster and the teachers were recommended on the basis of good performance by children. Because of this it was important to the headmaster and the teachers that the children do well at the examination.

5. Do you think that Mr Dharmasingha was a good teacher?

We know very little about Mr Dharmasingha's teaching, but Upali says that he was a good teacher because even a person like him who did not like to learn at school learnt a lot from him. But he could not understand children and was very dominant in his activities. It is difficult to understand how such a teacher can be a good teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONFIDENCE TRICK

1. Describe the relationship between the headmaster and Upali towards the latter part of his stay at the headmaster's house.

After Upali's adventure at sea the headmaster left him alone. He kept back Upali at his house only because his father pleaded with him to keep him until the examination was over. However, neither Upali nor the headmaster had any malice towards each other. In fact Upali admits that Mr Dharma-singha was a good teacher, but Upali's dislike for school is inborn. The headmaster rarely spoke to him and wanted to be left alone. Upali's conclusion that he left Welikanda to get rid of Upali without offending his father may be correct or it may be wrong. There is no evidence to support that conclusion.

2. Why was Suranchiya called a confidence trickster?

Suranchiya pretended that he has a spell which opened the doors of houses for him to steal valuable items. Since he was stealing things only from the rich, the villagers did not despise him. However, when he came to the village, he played some tricks on the villagers. Once he came with valuable presents for many people in the village, including the Headman and when he had gone back, they found he had taken all the valuable presents back with him and some money in addition to that.

The cleverest he played was the staging of Magadi Natakaya. He sold tickets to show a play in the village with well-known actors and actresses. On the day the play was to be staged, he and his friends faked a fight in the room behind the stage and got away without staging the play. He didn't return the value of tickets he sold.

3. What made Suranchiya attractive to children?

Suranchiya was a six footer. He wore a black shirt and a silk sarong. He had a black scarf tied round his waist. He made friends with children by telling them various stories that caught the interest of the children. The children knew the stories that were going round in the village and Suranchiya pretended them to be true. He also brought nice presents for children on his occasional visits to the village. All these made Suranchiya an important and an attractive figure in the eyes of the children.

4. Describe two confidence tricks played by Suranchiya.

Once when Suranchiya came to the village he gave the villagers presents of silver spoons and ivory-handled knives and gave the headman's son a watch. He gave the headman himself a dozen silver spoons and table knives. Before he left the village that time he managed to get back the watch and took twenty five rupees from the headman. The trick he had played was that he had first got the headman to lend him twenty-five rupees. Then he had told his son that police are coming to search the village for stolen goods and taken back the wrist watch to hide it until the search was over. Then he had disappeared.

In the second instance Suranchiya sold tickets to stage a play by well-known actors at that time. On the day the play was to be staged, Suranchiya and his friends from Colombo had started a bogus fight in the room behind the stage. When the people ran away, Suranchiya and his men had disappeared with the money they collected by selling the tickets.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RAID

1. How important is cadju during the New Year season?

The New Year season begins with the closing of schools towards the end of March. Fruit trees are full of ripe fruit during April and May. Mango and cadju are the most popular fruit among children. The children in the village are given the freedom to play and usually mango trees and cadju trees are at their disposal. The villagers let children pluck as much fruit as they want. Usually the children are well known in the village and most of them are related to one another. Cadju has another significance. Cadju Maluwa is considered an important item at the New Year feast. Children play a number of games for stakes of cadju and no one takes it as gambling.

2. Describe the Cadju Raid from the point of view of Upasakappu.

From the time cadju trees start bearing fruit, I guard them from the village boys. They strip bare all the cadju trees in the other gardens, but don't enter my garden when they see me around. One day I went to the near by town for an important matter and it did not take more than two or three hours for me to return. When I entered my garden, I saw some boys picking cadju and as soon as they saw me all of them ran away except the one on the tree. I got him to come down and held him by the collar and threatened to take him to the police. The other boys came back and wrestled with me to take away the boy I had caught. They overpowered me, tied my hands and left me there and ran into the wood with their accomplice.

3. Make a flow chart of the events upto Upali and Jinna going to occupy Madol Doova.
(1) Cadju Raid (2) Running away from home
(3) Finding work at a copra shed.

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (4) Finding work
in a hena and learn-
ing to use a gun | (5) Visiting
Madol
Doova | (6) Moving to
Madol Doova |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------|

4. How does the writer prepare Upali as a young man who can manage a farm on his own.

The writer makes Upali to demonstrate his qualities of leadership in the Cadju Raid. He conducts the raid satisfactorily and saves the companion who was caught. His running away from home and finding work puts him on an independent footing. He demonstrates his intelligence by the way he moves about doing short stretches of work without getting caught to his father. In the hena he gets some valuable experience in cultivation and also in using a gun to protect the plants from animals. He visits Madol Doova on his own, without even taking his faithful supporter Jinna with him. In spite of all kinds of fearful stories about the island he discovers that it was not as it was claimed to be. Then he gets the help of Podigamarala to find the tools for cultivating the land in Madol Doova. Thus the writer prepares the scene for the reader to believe that Upali, even though young, is capable of playing the role he is going to play in Madol Doova.

5. Why is this Chapter Six (The Raid) of special interest to children?

Chapter Six describes several incidents that are of special interest to children. The Cadju Raid, that is raiding a cadju plantation of a miser who did not allow children pluck some cadju from his trees, is a war against injustice in the minds of children. They punish a man with an evil reputation by tying him up with a rope and running away with his cadju. Then the running away of Upali and Jinna from home through fear of being caught by the police, finding work in a copra shed and living a secret life pretending to be two fatherless children from Welimada and then moving on when suspicions were

aroused are from the world of fantasy of many a child. Again the finding of work in a hena, learning to use a gun, shooting wild boar are things that children love to do. Then going to Madol Doova, the strange island, discovering that it is a good place to live and finally moving to the island with necessities to live there permanently satisfy the love of adventure. Because of these events that make children live in their dream world, this Chapter is of special interest to children.

6. What does "Author's emendation" mean on page 68 in Madol Doova?

"Author's emendation" means changes made in the text by the author to correct errors. In this case the age of Upali was given as twelve in the original edition. Here he has made it 'nearly fifteen' to give more authenticity to the story.

7. Describe what you have learnt about Madol Doova from this chapter.

Madol Doova is one of the islands in the Koggala river. This island had an evil reputation. People did not go to the island, but believed that it was densely forested and full of snakes. People from villages on either side of the river used it as a dumping ground for deadly serpents. They did not want to kill serpents, particularly snakes. So when a snake was found near a house they caught it in a mat bag and took it to Madol Doova and threw the bag ashore. People also believed that Madol Doova was haunted by various devils. Because of this even the fishermen avoided this island. There were tales to say that the island had been the home of bandits in the time of ancient kings and there are many caves where they lived those days. There were talks about a strange pool in the middle of the island. Everybody said that quite recently they saw a ghostly figure carrying a fire pot on its head walking in the island.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MADOL DOOVA

1. Who is Podi Gamarala? What is the attitude of the boys towards him?

Podi Gamara was the owner of a hena where Upali and Jinna worked for a short time. He was a villager who earned his living through cultivation. Even though he had two guns, he did not like to shoot animals. May be he used the guns to drive away the animals. Upali and Jinna liked and respected Podi Gamarala. Podi Gamarala taught Upali to use a gun and also to cultivate land. He was an elder as well as a friend to them. Podi Gamarala filled in a vacuum in the lives of these boys which neither their father nor the headmaster could fill. Podi Gamarala advised Upali not set foot on Madol Doova saying it was infested with snakes and also it was haunted, something that Podi gamarala believed. But when Upali returned from Madol Doova after his first trip to the island, he helped them to go and settle down there, with all his blessings.

2. What do you think of Upali now? Is he still the mischievous boy?

Now Upali is about fifteen years old. He has now outgrown his boyish mischief. His escapades with his school friends had given him lot of experience and maturity. Throughout he had leadership in him and now he wants to do something constructive. His desire to go and cultivate Madol Doova, the so called devil and serpent infested island, shows how fearless he is. The boy has become a matured man now.

3. "The way the boys set about occupying Madol Doova shows their pioneering spirit". Explain.

Upali and Jinna prepared themselves well before starting for the island. They got the canoe repaired.

Collected the tools they will need. Purchased the provisions to last for several days. When they landed on the island, they carried their things ashore and beached the canoe. Then they constructed a small pier to moor the boat.

Next important thing was to prepare some place to live. So they cleaned up the cave and put their mats, pillows and other stuff inside it. Then a footpath was made between the pier and the cave. When the night fell they prepared their dinner, ate it and slept on the mats in the cave. This was methodically done and nothing was left to chance. To go to a new place where there had been no people and make oneself comfortable needs lot of pioneering spirit.

4. What would have been the effect of "a light dipping and rising in a deserted place" on an ordinary villager?

Villagers believe in ghosts and evil spirits. Village children learn about these things when they are very young. Kattadiya plays an important part in the village life. They are superstitious as well. Gare-eli or "walking lights" are considered as evil things that made people sick. Therefore, an ordinary villager would have probably left the island on seeing this.

5. What makes the second part of Chapter Seven interesting reading?

There are three things that make this section interesting to read. In the first place Upali's first attempt at fishing, catching three fish and Jinna making a tasty curry with it for dinner is nothing but a materialisation of a dream that many young children have. Secondly, the investigation to find out about the "walking light" and their risky trip in the canoe to the other side of the island are full of adventure. Thirdly the inquisitiveness created by the introduction of somebody crossing the river in the night from the most dreaded part of the island to the village. Fishing, a boat ride with lots of risks and discovering something that puzzled them make this section quite interesting.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A STRANGE GUEST

1. What does the incident of cobra tell us about the character of Jinna and Upali?

Jinna was stung by a cobra, but he did not want Upali to kill the cobra. This tells us a lot about Jinna. Unlike Upali, Jinna did not go to school at all. He was living among the villagers throughout and was exposed to the beliefs, folklore and the values of the villagers. For example, villagers do not kill cobras. They think that the cobras could be the dead relatives. They also believe that cobras do not harm people in vain. To them cobra is a symbol of revenge and whole family will be killed if a cobra is killed by someone. It does not attack innocent people, Jinna believed all this. And also we come to know that Jinna comes from a family of Sarpa Vedaralas.

On the other hand Upali, even though he did not like to go to school, was kept at school. That exposed him to the attitudes and beliefs the school system cultivated. Therefore he does not believe all what Jinna believed. But it does not mean he is above all of it. For example, Jinna's claim that the cobra can be Upali's dead mother unsettled Upali. It made him angry because it was not something that he could just shrug away.

2. How significant is Upali's fishing trip immediately after the cobra incident?

Jinna's statement that the cobra could be Upali's mother reborn and comes to see him made Upali angry. He was not angry with Jinna or any one in particular, but this upset him. Maybe that Jinna getting stung by a cobra also unsettled him. Jinna was his best friend and companion. Going to the river gave him a chance to cool down. Again his success at catching two fairly big paratiya, a prize catch among fishermen, helped him to become normal again.

3. How important is the visit of the Galle lawyer and his family to Madol Doova?

The lawyer and his family visited Madol Doova in the company of Podi Gamarala, the elderly friend of Upali and Jinna. Both these facts are important. Podi Gamarala is a well wisher of the Madol Doova boys and he will not do anything that will harm the boys. The lawyer, his wife and the two children enjoyed their trip very much and appreciated what the boys were doing. Now Upali and Jinna have a powerful friend who can help them if necessary.

4. What light does the incident of the headman and the kachcheri official visiting Madol Doova throw on the behaviour of people? Does this apply to modern life as well?

The boys have cultivated the land in the island well and all those who visited it were happy. They all encouraged the boys. The boys were happy because they have done something that even the adults could not do, or dared to do. Into this pleasant situation comes the arm of the law, with its disguised vicious intention. The law is there alright, but the attempt to enforce at this point is caused by the desire of the headman to grab the land the boys have developed. If not for Podi Gamarala and the lawyer, the headman would have got the island by paying more money than the boys could afford to pay. This applies to modern life as well. When someone does something well and reaps the benefits of it, others become jealous about it and plan to grab it or to ruin the venture.

5. The headman of the village, a native, visited Madol Doova with a hidden intention to grab the land from the boys. But the Government Agent, most probably an Englishman, decides to give the land to the boys on a reasonable rent inspite of other bids. What does the writer want to impress on the reader by this?

During the colonial times, when Sri Lanka (Ceylon) was ruled by the British, minor officers such as Village Headman, Arachchi, were natives. High officers such as Government Agents, Magistrates, were Britishers. Most of the British Officers wanted to be fair by the natives. They upheld justice. But the native officers in this country as well as in other colonial countries such as India amassed wealth by using the government rules to their advantage. The writer brings this out very effectively by the incident of the headman visiting Madol Doova to grab it from the boys and the Government Agent at Galle (the ruler of the Southern Province at that time) doing justice by leasing out the land to the boys who have developed it, in spite of other applicants who were prepared to pay more.

CHAPTER NINE

THE FLOATING FLAME

1. What does the discussion about the past tell us about the character of the boys?

Jinna's suggestion to go back to the village was made probably because of his desire to let the others know about the success they have achieved. Now they are the legal owners of the island. This kind of lease is renewed once the fee is paid and after a number of years outright ownership can be obtained from the government. However Upali was not keen on going, may be because of his ambition to cultivate the whole island. The rest of the talk was mere reminiscences of the past.

2. Why do you think the writer has introduced another incident relating to serpents, i.e. python?

This is a story for children. Children are keenly interested in animal stories. This description of a python swallowing a hare is something that can be very interesting to children. Even though a python does not look big, they know that it can swallow even a deer if it can catch it. Most children are used to this kind of story. In the context the writer presents the description, it makes the story of special interest to children.

3. Describe what happens when the boys get to the other side of the island.

The boys went to the other side of the island to solve the mystery of the "walking fire". They got there with great difficulty and they were shot at by the man who occupied that part of the island, Balappu. It was because he mistook them for the police. When the man was overpowered, he told the boys why he was there. The mystery of the "walking fire" was also solved. It was Balappu who did it to scare the people so that they may

not come to that part of the island. Balappu became a friend of the boys and the boys promised not to talk about the murder that Balappu had committed.

4. What sort of a person was Balappu?

Balappu had been a cultivator of a hena where some other people also had the joint ownership of the land. Those owners lived in the town, but when the land was well cultivated they claimed a part of the produce. Balappu did not agree to this. When they came with some rowdies to get a share by force, and set upon him, he fought back and killed one of them. On the suggestion of his wife, he pretended to have gone to India and hid in Madol Doove. His wife had been bringing the provisions for him to prepare his meals. He too cultivated manioc and batala for his own consumption.

This shows that Balappu was a simple man who wanted to live a peaceful life. But the circumstances forced him to become a murderer. Since he had no idea about the law that prevailed, he ran away without facing the consequences in a court of law. The people, at the time of this incident took place had no idea of the British legal system. The courts of law worked in the English medium and what happened there was Greek to them, however good the British legal system was. And also it cost a lot to defend in a court of law and Balappu chose the easy way out, that was to hide.

This incident throws some light on another aspect of the story. Hadn't the lawyer from Galle got the lease of land in Madol Doova for Upali and Jinna probably they too would have been provoked to commit murder and make their lives a mess for no fault of their own.

5. Write a character sketch of Balappu's wife.

Balappu's wife, we came to know from what Balappu told the boys, was a strong tough woman

who did not mind doing anything that the situation demanded. She was called Kakulukari because she caught crabs. It is a tough job. She had to go in the night with small baited nets and lay them in the river. Handling live crabs is no fun. If a crab catches a finger between its pincers you will not be able to get away easily.

When she found that her husband had killed a man, immediately she rose to the occasion and set a plan so that he may live in hiding. Every week she came to the ill-reputed Madol Doova with provisions for her husband. She brought their child too with her so that the child and father may spend at least a few hours together. Balappu had a high regard for her. When the boys indicated their desire to meet his wife, he said that he will let them know after consulting her. She was a hard working woman doing the work of a man as well as a woman.

6. What does the episode of the skeleton tell us?

It proves that Upali and Jinna are now fearless young men. They observed the skeleton and inquired from Balappu as to how it came there. Carefully they analysed the circumstantial evidence and accepted what Balappu said.

It also tells us that the island had been inhabited by robbers in the past. The writer refers to some of the folklore stories about robbers down south. This provides a certain amount of authenticity to the story.

CHAPTER TEN

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

1. A prodigal is a wasteful person. Is this title appropriate to a story where Upali and Jinna are the main characters?

Upali and Jinna were not prodigals. They were courageous, resourceful, intelligent young men. With little luck, like meeting people like the lawyer from Galle and Podi Gamarala they made good. If the title is referring to these two boys, it does not seem appropriate. It is appropriate if it referred to Punchi Mahattaya, a lazy fellow who turned out to be a hardworking farmer under the influence of Upali and Jinna. But naming the last Chapter of this story giving prominence to a very minor character is not correct. Martin Wickramasinghe, a veteran novelist wouldn't have done it. May be the reference is to Upali from the point of view of his father. In this Chapter we see that Upali returns home to see his dying father and helps the family. He sets the mind of his father at ease by treating his stepmother and her son very kindly.

2. Describe Upali's visit home.

One evening the lawyer from Galle came to Madol Doova with Podi Gamarala and gave Upali a piece of newspaper where there was a request from his stepmother to come home because his father was very ill. Promptly Upali went home. He found his father ill. He consoled his stepmother by assuring her that his leaving home was not due to her but because he wanted to be independent. He brought a medical specialist from Galle to treat his father, but the sickness was not something that could be cured. But Upali's returning home was a great consolation to his father. Upali promised to look after the stepmother and her son well.

When Father died, he gave him a good funeral, settled all the affairs, and returned to Madol Doova.

3. Describe Upali's return to his village from the point of view of his stepmother.

It was a great consolation to me when Upali returned home that evening. Even though we put the notice in the newspaper, we did not have much hope of his coming. There were two things that gave me a lot of pain of mind. Everybody thought that he left home because of me. Even though I did not do any wrong to him knowingly, I too felt that I must have done something to make him leave. Father never blamed me, but he became a different man altogether when his search for his son did not fail. He lost heart in every thing. His business too failed and he developed a heart ailment. He wanted to see his son before he died. Therefore his coming home after a long time was a great consolation to all of us.

We did not know what he was doing. But soon I realised that he is now a very responsible, kind man. He never said a word to hurt my feelings. He consoled father and took charge of the situation. The next day he went to Galle and brought the Chief Physician of the Hospital to treat his father. Even though the doctor told us that nothing further could be done for father, his visit gave us lot of consolation.

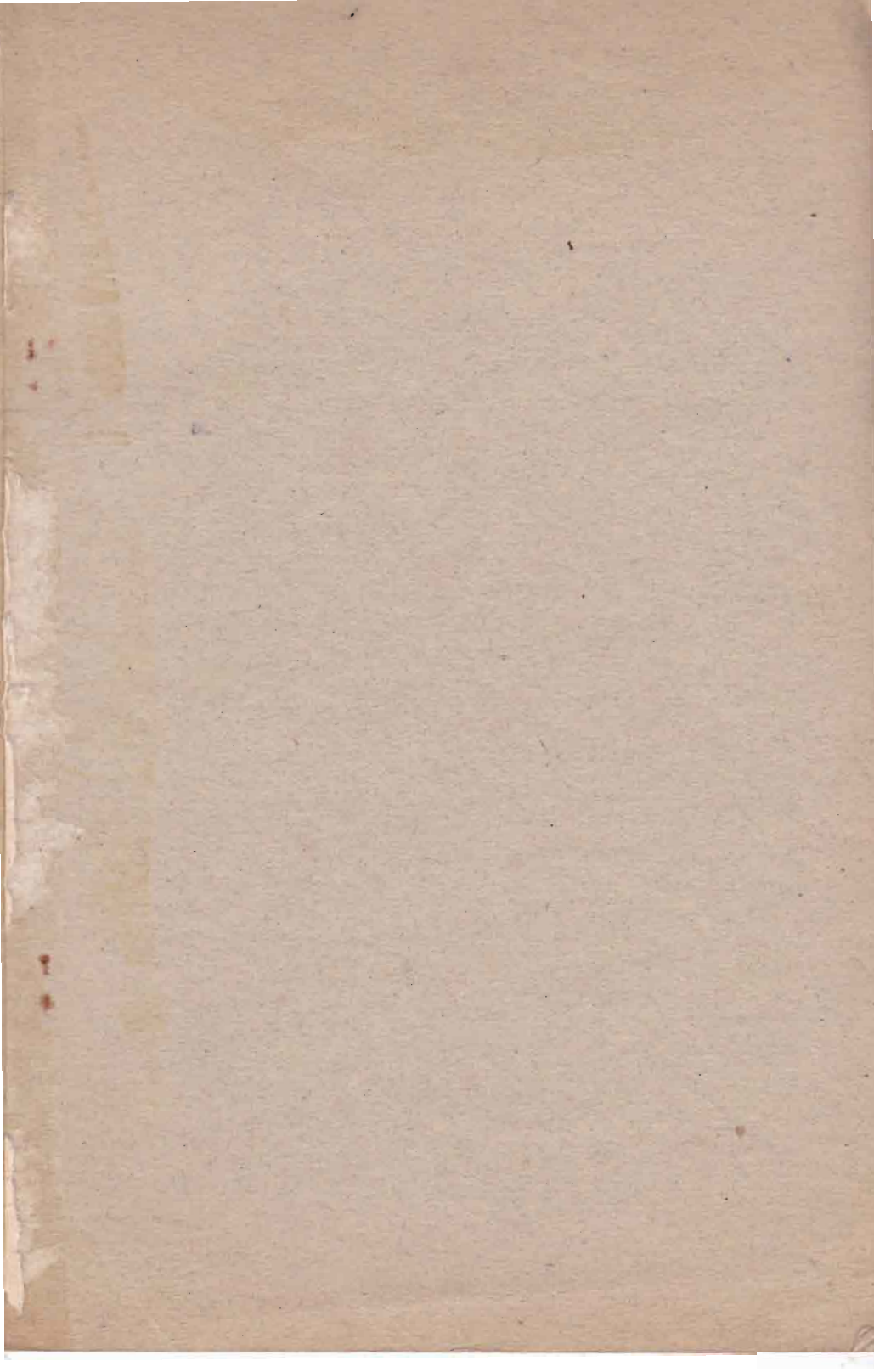
If not for Upali we wouldn't have given father even a proper burial. He and his friends gave him a good funeral. If not for his arrival, we would have been almost lost after father's death. Upali consoled us and promised to look after everything including the education of his halfbrother, my son. I never expected him to be so large hearted from the way he behaved as a child. Because of his return home, his father died with peace of mind, and we are confident that he will not fail in his promise to look

after us. I now feel as if he is one of my own sons and I always bless him.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. **Madol Doova** is a very interesting novel. Give your reasons for its popularity.
2. Describe how the writer builds up fear and suspense in Chapter Nine - The Floating Flame in **Madol Doova**.
3. Do you like Upali and Jinna in **Madol Doova**? Give your reasons for your answer.
4. Describe how Balappu happened to be in **Madol Doova** and the role his wife played in it.
5. Give your reasons for Upali and Jinna in **Madol Doova** getting away from the accustomed paths of the rural middle class.
6. Describe the importance of the role Podigamarala played in **Madol Doova**.
7. In '**Madol Doova**', describe the character of the headmaster, Mr Dharmasingha. What did Upali think of him? (OL/1992) Answer on page 13.
8. Describe the boys, adventure on **Madol Doova**. Would this kind of adventure appeal to teenagers of today? Give reasons. (OL/1993)





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