

# Unit 1



Reading A : The Tattered Blanket

Reading B : My Mother (Poem)

Reading C : Letter to a Friend



# Family

Look at the pictures and answer the questions that follow.



1. What do you observe in the pictures?
2. What type of families do we find in our present society? Why?
3. Which family do you like? Why?

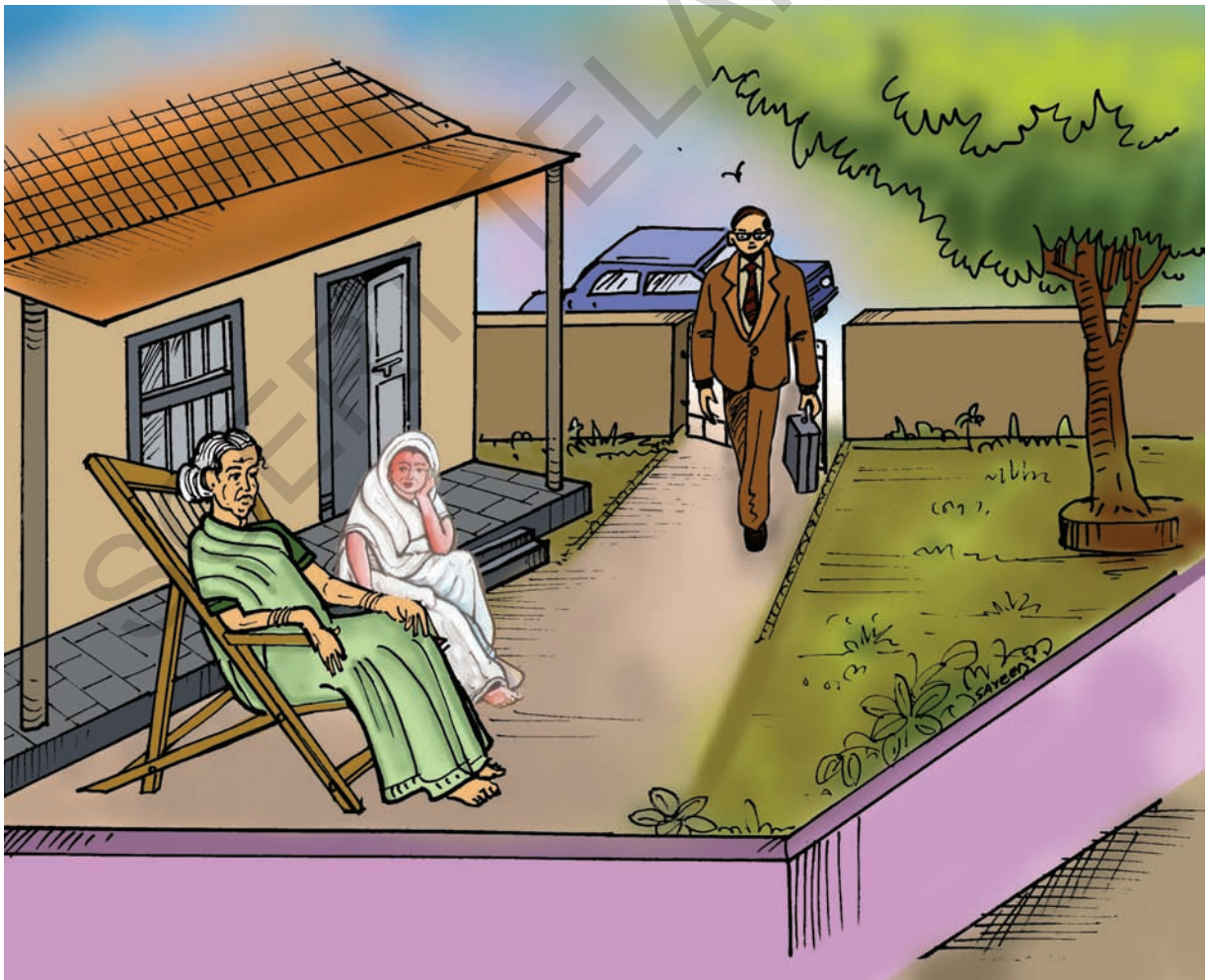
**Oral Discourse: Debate** - “Small families are happy families”.

## The Tattered Blanket

When he arrived unexpectedly at his home in the countryside in his office car and got down at the gate, his mother, who was lying in an armchair on the veranda, made a futile attempt to get up.

‘Kamala, there is somebody at the gate,’ she said, ‘somebody is in a car.’

Kamala, her eldest daughter, a widow, who was sitting huddled up on the *thinna* on the *veranda*, her head and ears covered with a thin bath towel, got up reluctantly, walked slowly to the gate and screwing up her eyes peered into the darkness.



She saw a bald, fat, middle-aged man walking in through the gate.

‘Oh, Gopi!’ She said in her grating voice. ‘Why this sudden unexpected visit?’

‘Kamala, who is it?’ Her mother asked loudly from the *veranda*.

‘Gopi,’ the man said. ‘There was a meeting in Thiruvananthapuram. I just dropped in on my way back.’

‘Who? Kamala, who is it?’ There was a note of alarm in *Amma’s* voice.

‘*Amma*, why are you so scared?’ Kamala, Gopi’s eldest sister, asked her a little awkwardly. ‘As if you are seeing Gopi for the first time!’

‘*Amma*, it’s me, Gopi,’ he said again.

He bent down and brought his face close to her wrinkled cheeks. ‘*Amma*, it’s me.’

‘Gopi? Kamala, I can’t believe it! Has his school closed for vacation?’

‘*Amma* is often like this these days. She doesn’t recognize anybody,’ Gopi’s sister explained. ‘But sometimes her memory is quite sharp. Then she asks me if you have sent any letter. I tell her everything is fine with you, Vimala and the kids. What is the point of telling her that you haven’t written for a year? Poor thing! I wouldn’t dream of making her unhappy.’

‘I got a promotion last year. After that I am always on my toes. And there are tours quite often. I don’t get any time to write letters.’

‘Why don’t you ask Vimala to write, or doesn’t she get any time too?’

‘What are you mumbling over there?’ *Amma* said loudly.

‘I heard somebody coming in a car. Who is it?’

‘I told you, it’s Gopi.’

‘But Gopi is in Delhi, isn’t he?’

‘Yes, *Amma*, it’s me. I’ve come from Delhi.’

‘Who did Gopi marry?’ *Amma* said, suddenly lowering her voice. ‘I mean, what’s his wife’s name?’

‘Don’t say you’ve forgotten her name too. Don’t you remember, Vimala, District Collector Nambiar’s eldest daughter?’ Gopi’s sister said.

‘Oh, I forgot the name. Was there a letter from Gopi today?’

‘There was. He writes every day.’

‘I’m terribly upset if I don’t get a letter from him every day.’

‘He knows it. That’s why he writes every day.’

‘Look at the way she talks,’ Gopi’s sister turned to him. ‘Just as I told you. You know nothing about what’s going on here, do you?’

‘Who is that?’ *Amma* said again. ‘Who is that in a car?’

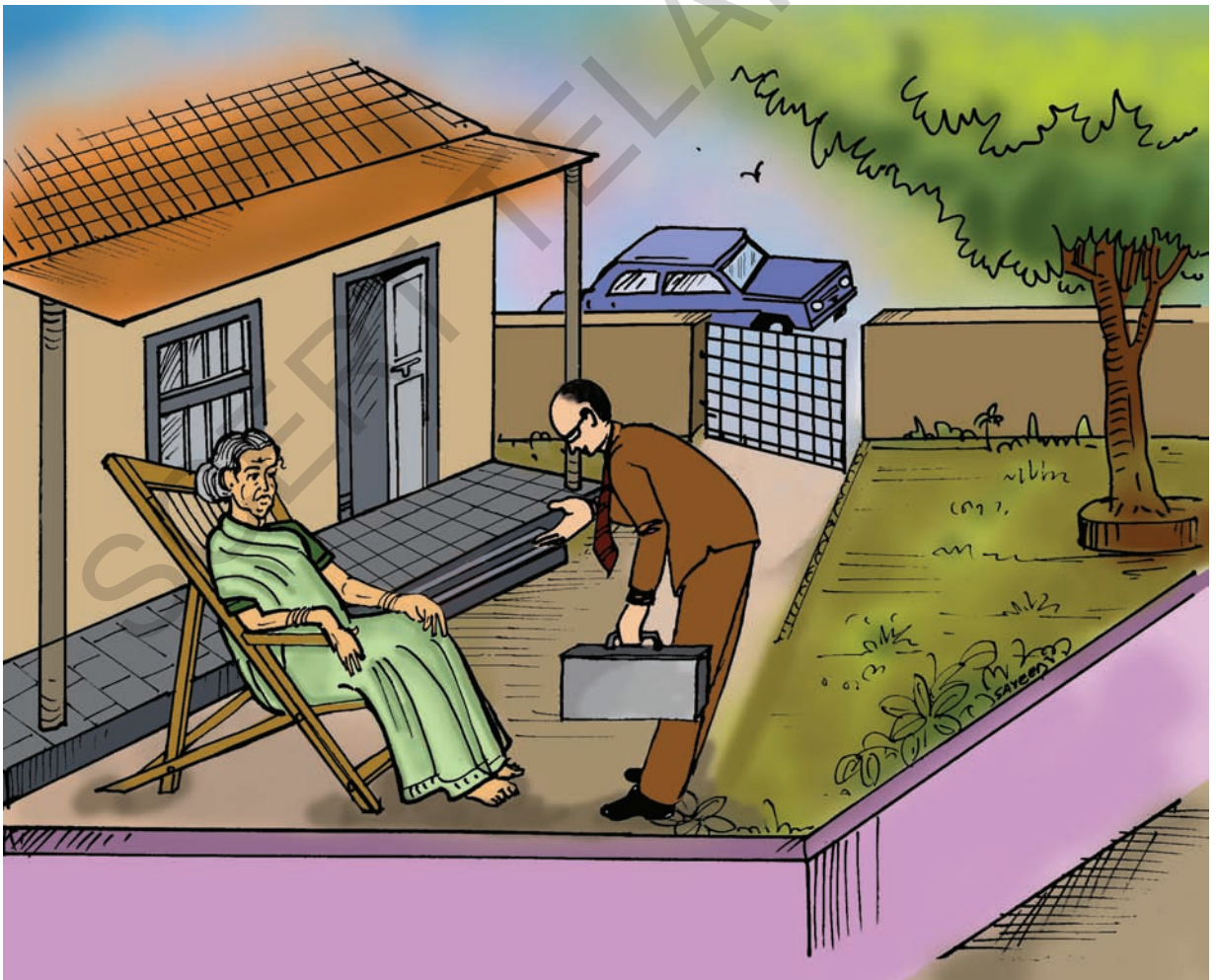
‘It’s me,’ Gopi said. ‘I had to come to Thiruvananthapuram. I thought I should drop in to see you, *Amma*.’

‘Who is your *Amma*? What is her name? Where does she live? Is it far from here?’

‘No, it is quite near.’

‘I don’t know how I can bring back her memory’, Gopi’s sister said to him exasperatedly.

Gopi placed his briefcase on the *thinna*. He opened it and pulled out the contents. Clothes, files, a shaving set....



‘Do you know my son, Gopi?’ *Amma* asked him. ‘He is in Delhi... a Government Officer. He has *Kesariyogam*.... He draws a salary of two thousand five hundred rupees. Do you know him?’

‘Yes, I know him.’

‘Tell him to send me a blanket. There is a cold mist in the mornings. If I catch cold it doesn’t leave me for a long time. Tell him to send a blanket, won’t you? A red one. I had a blanket, the one he brought for me when he was studying in Madras. It is all tattered now, just a ball of knotted yarn. Tell him to send me a red blanket, will you?’

‘I’ll tell him,’ he nodded.

‘Please don’t forget to tell him. The mist is not good for me. I think I’ll stretch myself out for a bit. I have been sitting too long in the armchair. I have a pain in the neck.

Gopi’s sister put *Amma* to bed and came back to the *veranda*.

‘You didn’t come to see *Amma*, did you?’

‘Delhi is too expensive. You know I have four children to look after now. I can’t make both ends meet with my salary. And one has to keep up one’s status. It will be a great help if I can raise some money by selling my share of the family property. I came to talk it over with you.’

‘You’ll sell your land and go away with the money. I know you won’t come here anymore after that.’

‘Don’t say that. I’ll come when I get time.’

‘Your time!’

He saw the irritation on his sister’s face.

‘It took you more than five years to find time to come here. *Amma* is eighty three now. I don’t think she will pull on much longer. It took you so long to visit her after the last time.’

‘But *Amma* can’t remember who I am’, he said smiling feebly.

‘But do you remember your *Amma*?’

**- Written by Kamala Das (Madhavi Kutty)**

**(Translated from Malayalam by K.M.Sherrif)**

## About the author

**Kamla Das** (1932-2009) is the daughter of the famous Malayalam poet– Balamani Amma and V.M. Nair. She is an internationally known poet, short story writer and novelist who writes effortlessly both in English and Malayalam. She has received many awards for her literary work. Some of them are Asian Poetry Prize, Kent Award for English Writing from Asian Countries, Asian World Prize, Sahitya Academy Award and Vayalar Rama Varma Sahitya Award .



## Glossary

thinna (n)	:	sit out (elevated place on the veranda)
futile ( <i>adj</i> )	:	unsuccessful
huddled ( <i>v</i> )	:	held arms and legs close because of fear or cold
reluctantly ( <i>adv</i> )	:	not willing to do something
screwing up eyes ( <i>v</i> )	:	narrowing the eyes to look more carefully
on toes ( <i>idm</i> )	:	busy, ready to work
mumbling ( <i>v</i> )	:	speaking unclearly and quietly
exasperatedly ( <i>adv</i> )	:	very annoyed
kesariyogam ( <i>n</i> )	:	well settled (in Malayalam)
tattered ( <i>adj</i> )	:	torn
irritation ( <i>n</i> )	:	annoyance

## Comprehension

**Answer the following questions.**

1. Why didn't the mother recognise Gopi? How did he feel?
2. Why do you think Gopi didn't get anything for his mother?
3. The mother could not remember Gopi. Do you think Gopi remembered his mother? What does it suggest?
4. What is meant by the expression 'the tattered blanket'?
5. Why didn't Gopi answer his sister's question, 'Do you remember your Amma'?
6. If you were Gopi's sister, how would you respond to his behaviour?



## Vocabulary

### I. Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate words.

irritation	huddled	awkwardly	futile
vacation	reluctantly	exasperatedly	mumbling

- All my attempts to make him happy proved \_\_\_\_\_.
- It was very cold. So, I \_\_\_\_\_ in a corner.
- Forced by her parents, Sita \_\_\_\_\_ took the diploma course.
- What are you \_\_\_\_\_? I can't hear you.
- The news that he was denied promotion caused \_\_\_\_\_ to him.

### II. Tick (✓) the words that are similar in meaning to the underlined words.

- His mother made a futile attempt to get up.
  - barren
  - limited
  - useless
  - empty
- It's all tattered now.
  - spoiled
  - old
  - dirty
  - torn
- There is a cold mist in the mornings.
  - ice
  - snow
  - fog
  - win
- It's just like a ball of knotted yarn.
  - very small
  - rounded tightly
  - joined
  - tied.
- I can't make both ends meet with my salary.
  - earn a lot of money
  - spend a lot of money
  - earn just enough money
  - give all that one has



## Grammar

### Phrases and Noun Phrases.

#### I. Look at the following sentence from the text and observe the underlined part.

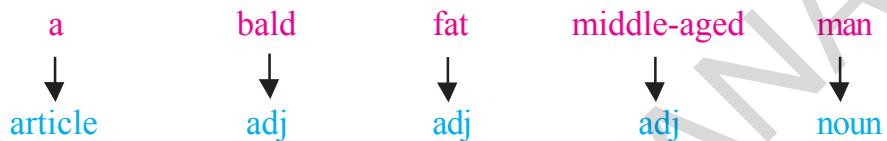
She saw a bald, fat, middle – aged man.

## Discussion :

Which word in the underlined part is important ?

The underlined part in the above sentence has more than one word. It is called **a phrase**.

The underlined part 'a bald, fat middle – aged man' functions as a Noun Phrase. Here the word 'man' is important and all other words add more information to that word. So it is called **a Noun Phrase**.



Identify some more noun phrases from the story and write them below.

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the sentences with noun phrases using the words given in brackets.

1. I bought \_\_\_\_\_ (beautiful/a/umbrella/red).
2. We saw \_\_\_\_\_ in the zoo. (baby/a/elephants/of/couple).
3. Our grandfather lives in \_\_\_\_\_ (big/house/a/stone-built).
4. Ramya has \_\_\_\_\_ (nice/a/sari/silk).



## Writing

Read the following paragraph, taken from the story.

Delhi is too expensive. You know I have four children to look after now. I can't make both ends meet with my salary. And one has to keep up one's status. It will be a great help if I can raise some money by selling my share of the family property. I came to talk it over with you.

Now, write a short essay on how to keep up family ties despite economic pressures (You may use the hints given below).

- Impact of economic pressures
- Lack of time to spend with the family
- Lack of love and affection
- Absence of healthy human relationships



## Listening

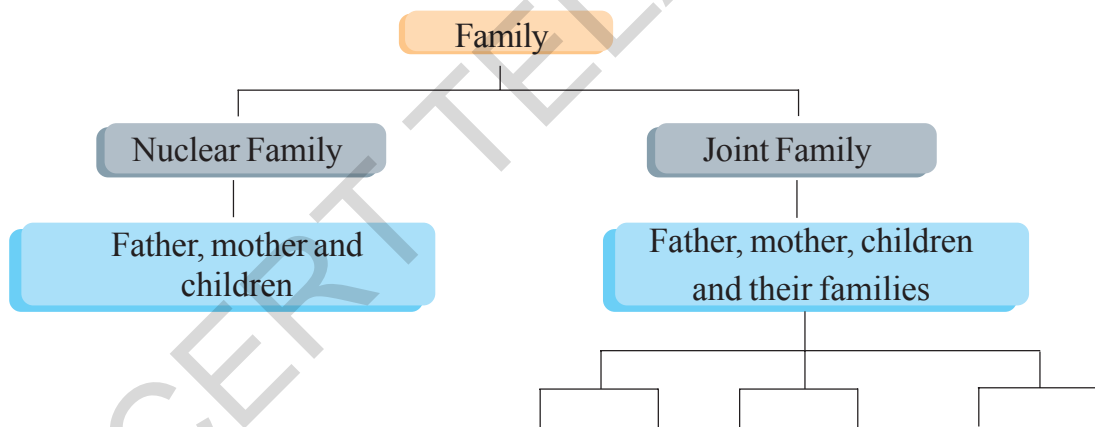
Listen to your teacher making an announcement and answer the following questions.

1. What is the announcement about?
2. What are the features of Prashanth?
3. Where do you generally listen to such announcements?
4. Think of some announcements you may make or listen at school.
5. What are the other ways to trace the missing persons or things?



## Study Skills

Family related information.



Is yours a nuclear or joint family ?

Now write a paragraph describing the types of families using the information given in the above tree diagram.

Which type of family do you prefer and why?

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