

## Bonsai life

### Part II

From the very start *Akkayya* had been keen on studying. But *Nannagaru* didn't educate her. Because she was not adept at oral arithmetic, *Nannagaru* had said, "Ah 'she's a girl, how will studies get into her head?" and had made her discontinue her lessons concentrating only on *Annayya's* education. Because she was uneducated, she got married to a man from a village, had to look after the cattle, keep the stove clean, draw water from the well. . . *Amma* used to be very upset that *Akkayya* had to go through such drudgery. Realizing that *Akkayya* was upset thinking of the past, and in an attempt to divert her mind, I led her to the balcony saying, "Come, let's go and sit outside."

Looking at the plants in the flowerpots, *Akkayya* mentioned that all the cucumbers, drumsticks and *gongura* were from their own backyard. I asked her to send some *gongura* seeds the next time someone came this way...

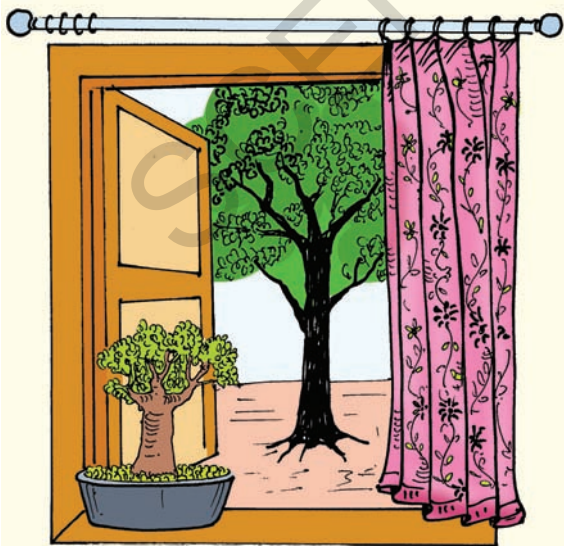
"But, *Ammalu*, what's this? Why have you planted the turayi and pomegranate trees in these flowerpots? See, how stunted they have become! If, like flower plants, you put these trees in pots instead of letting them grow freely in the backyard, how will they grow?" she asked, surprised, feeling sorry for the trees.

I burst into laughter. *Akkayya* was perplexed.

"I did it on purpose. It's a special method. It's called bonsai in Japan. You can grow

even a huge banyan tree in a flowerpot. You can grow it even with its roots hanging down from the branches. You have no idea how beautiful a pomegranate tree looks when you keep cutting its branches, changing the pot now and then, trimming it into a small-sized tree and making it bear fruit! Do you know how carefully you have to tend this small tree? Bonsai is a great art" I said.

But it seemed as if *Akkayya* didn't appreciate what I said. "I don't know. You have confined a turayi tree to a flowerpot when it could have grown to the height of a building," she sighed.



Feeling disheartened at being unable to impress *Akkayya* with my bonsai, I collapsed weakly into a chair. I was most distressed – as if the entire art I had learnt had come to nought. It was like throwing perfume into ash. Suddenly a dust storm began to rage. The sand hit our faces harshly. I caught hold of *Akkayya*'s shoulder and dragged her into the room. Then I closed the doors and windows in a hurry.

*Akkayya* was stunned.

“What’s all this? Everything was normal till now. Where did that dust and wind come from suddenly? You have tar roads too,” she said.

“This is how it is in the big city, my dear. Before we know what is happening, the storm brings all the sand from the Rajasathan desert and hits our face. . .” I had not completed my sentence when I could hear the rain beginning to fall. I opened the door and pulled the bonsai tree pots and flowerpots inside, under the canopy. *Akkayya* opened side window and looked at the streets to observe the weather in the Indian capital. “Look, *Ammalu*, look there,” she said. A new enthusiasm seemed to have crept into her voice. I looked eagerly through the window towards the street. I couldn’t understand what she meant. I looked at her and said, “What is it?”

“Look at that tree. . . look at how many people are standing under it without getting wet,” she said, as if it was something out of the ordinary. I saw nothing unusual in it. Realising that I had not understood what she was getting at, she said again, “Look how tall that turayi has grown. Out in the open, see how freely it has grown. However powerful the sand storm, it hasn’t bowed a little bit. Moreover, it has provided shelter to so many people, and is protecting them. Imagine how many would find respite from the hot sun under its shade!”

“What’s so surprising about that?” I asked.

“Not that it is surprising, *Ammalu*. Look at the bonsai you have tended so lovingly! It looks proper and sweet, like a housewife. But see how delicate it is. You have to tend it very carefully. It can’t even withstand a small dust storm or squall. When it is dependent on



someone, how can it provide shelter to anyone? Isn't it because of the difference in the way one brings up a boy and a girl, that a woman's life is like that of a bonsai?"

My heart was touched by Akkayya's words. Just as one frees a bird from a cage to let it fly, I felt the urge to free the bonsai trees from their flower pots.

**Original Title: *Bonsai Bratukulu* by Abburi Chayadevi.**

**Translated from Telugu by Alladi Uma and M. Sridhar.**

## About the author

**Abburi Chayadevi** is a well known feminist writer born in 1933. She has written many short stories and essays. She was awarded the Central Sahitya Akademi in 2005. In her works, she elucidates women's life and their feelings.



## Glossary

adept ( <i>adj</i> )	:	a natural ability to do something skilfully
drudgery ( <i>n</i> )	:	hard, boring work
perplex ( <i>v</i> )	:	confuse
nought ( <i>n</i> )	:	nothing / zero
rage ( <i>v</i> )	:	come with force
stunted ( <i>v</i> )	:	prevented from growth
canopy ( <i>n</i> )	:	a cover fixed over something for shelter
respite ( <i>n</i> )	:	a short period of rest
squall ( <i>n</i> )	:	a strong wind

## Comprehension

### I. Complete the statements giving more than one reason.

- Girls should be educated like boys because...
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

2. Fully grown trees are more useful because...
  - a) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Answer the following questions.**

1. Why was Akkayya perplexed?
2. How is a bonsai reared?
3. What similarities do you notice between the bonsai tree and the house wife?
4. What made the narrator feel the urge to free the bonsai?
5. What is the central theme of 'Bonsai Life'?

**III. Make a list of activities done by a homemaker and a working woman.**

Homemaker	Working Woman

**IV. Put a tick (✓) mark against the most appropriate meaning for the phrases given below.**

1. '... to keep the washerman's account' means
  - a) to take care of household work.
  - b) to count clothes.
  - c) to maintain the washerman's account.
2. '... uphill task' means
  - a) high quality work.
  - b) a difficult job.
  - c) working on a hill.
3. '..... grass is greener on the other side' means
  - a) the grass on this side is green.
  - b) others are as good as we are.
  - c) others are in a better position than us.

4. ‘...like a scorpion under a slipper’ means

- a) killing a scorpion with a slipper.
- b) being guided and controlled.
- c) feeling totally suppressed.



**Vocabulary**

**I. Look at the phrasal verb underlined in the following sentence.**

‘I feel like giving it up. (give up).

What does it mean?

‘Give’ is a verb and ‘up’ is a preposition. Such combinations are called phrasal verbs. A phrasal verb normally gives a meaning different from the meaning of its parts.

‘Give up’ means ‘to stop doing something’.

Refer to a dictionary and find out the meaning of some more phrasal verbs beginning with ‘give’ and ‘look’.

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| give in _____   | look after _____ |
| give out _____  | look up _____    |
| give away _____ | look into _____  |

**Use the above phrasal verbs in your own sentences.**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Look at the simile in the following sentence.**

Without it, she will have to live under her husband’s thumb ‘like a scorpion under a slipper’.

The life of a homemaker is compared to a scorpion under a slipper. When we compare two things, we often use the word ‘like’.

Here are a few more examples of similes.

1. He roars like a lion.
2. They eat like wolves.

**A. Look at the following similes.**

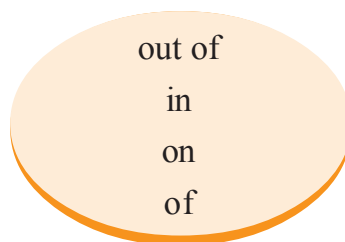
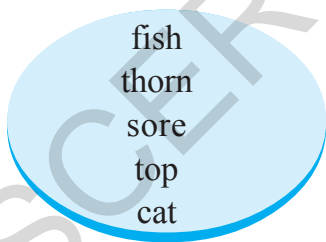
- a) bright like a full moon
- b) sleep like a log
- c) eat like a bird
- d) beautiful like a rose
- e) sweet like honey

**Now write five sentences using the above similes.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Make some idioms from the words in the circles and use them in your own sentences, one is done for you.**

*An idiom is a phrase similar to the phrasal verbs you have learnt in previous class. It is difficult to guess the meaning of an idiom by looking at the individual words.*



**Idiom**

**Sentence**

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. fish out of water | When he was away from home, he felt like a fish out of water. |
| 2. _____             | _____   |
| 3. _____             | _____   |
| 4. _____             | _____   |
| 5. _____             | _____   |



## Grammar

### I. Read the sentences.

1. Akkayya grew accustomed to village life.
2. I went into the kitchen.

The words in circles are subjects. The words underlined are predicates.

### II. Circle the subjects and underline the predicates.

1. The girls danced.
2. The dark clouds filled the sky.
3. Shiva drove a silver Toyota.

### III. Identify subjects and predicates in each of the sentences in the following paragraph.

The narrator felt very happy to receive her sister and brother-in-law, who came to stay with them. They brought many things with them. *Akkaya* made special dishes for her sister's husband, which he liked very much. She praised her sister for being employed and making her living. She was very sorry about her position at home. One day the narrator showed her Bonsai plants and explained how they are grown but she did not like it. On a rainy day many people gathered under a tree to take shelter. Showing this, *Akkaya* made the narrator understand the importance of freedom in one's life.



## Writing

Look at the following poster.

## Handicrafts Exhibition Cum Sale

Innovative and original products by the crafts women from all over Telangana.



From 15th to 25th October

<b>Inauguration:</b>	By Hon'ble Home Minister.
<b>Time:</b>	4 p.m. on 15th October
<b>Venue:</b>	People's Plaza, Necklace Road, Hyderabad.

**NO ENTRY FEE**

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

**T.S. DWACRA, Arunodaya building, Nampally, Hyderabad.**

**List the features of this poster.**

e.g. Who has issued the poster? What is it about?

The date, time, place of the event, layout and nature of the sentences.

**I. Now, make a poster based on the information given below.**

1. **Issuing authority :** Telangana Arts and Crafts Society , Nizamabad.
2. **Event :** Dance performance by Aarthi.
3. **Date :** November 14.
4. **Chief Guest :** Honourable Chief Minister of Telangana.
5. **Venue :** Rajiv Gandhi Auditorium, Khaleelwadi, Nizamabad.



**Listening**

**Listen to the debate on the topic ‘Education of the Girl Child Is a Burden’.**

Now, complete the table based on the information you’ve just listened to:

Arguments		
	For	Against
Speaker 1		
Speaker 2		
Speaker 1		
Speaker 2		
Speaker 1		
Speaker 2		