**THE LAST STONE MASON**

* **SIGRUN SRIVASTAV**

**Value: “Heritage and culture are not just about the past – they are a part of our identity, and it’s important to preserve them for future generation.’’**

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:**

1. **Gopal did not agree with his father’s views. Explain.**

ANS: Gopal disagreed with his father’s views, believing that the traditional stonemasonry work of carving sculptures for temples was not financially rewarding. He wanted the family to shift to mass-producing items like ashtrays for better prot, re­flecting a clash between the old man’s traditional values and the son’s differing perspective on the family’s legacy.

 **2. The father and son were living on meagre means. Justify with evidence from the text.**

Ans: The text describes a small, congested dark room with slabs of stone and marble stacked up in one corner. The cot is covered with heaps of used clothes and the paint of the whitewashed walls has come off. Additionally, Gopal points out the lack of financial prosperity, highlighting the challenging circumstances they face. These details collectively support the assertion that the father and son were living on meager means.

**3. What was the father’s apprehension about the future of sculptors like him?**

Ans: The father feared the decline of traditional stonemasonry, worrying that changing times and modern preferences would lead to the decline of the traditional art form, leaving him as one of the last stonemasons practising the age-old tradition. His concern went beyond financial aspects, re­flecting a deep worry about preserving cultural and artistic heritage.

**4. Who was Salim? How did he comfort the mason?**

Ans: Salim was a servant boy. He comforted the mason by offering him tea and expressing concern about his well-being and at last, helping him by carving the sculpture. Salim also provided emotional solace to the mason by acknowledging the difficulties and showing compassion towards him in times of distress.

**5. How did the father become unwell?**

Ans: The father became unwell when he worked continuously on the sculpture without taking any rest. He was also emotionally burdened by the absence of his son, Gopal, and his unwavering dedication to completing the artwork. The prolonged exertion, coupled with emotional turmoil, ultimately led to his physical collapse.

**6. What surprised the father? When he regained consciousness**?

Ans: Upon regaining consciousness, the father was surprised to hear hammer blows on the chisel. Expecting his son Gopal, he was astonished to find that it was Salim, his servant, who had taken up the task. This moment marked a shift in the father’s emotions, evolving from surprise to admiration, realising that his legacy could continue through Salim.

**7. There is nothing I can teach you, my son. Go ahead, you have it in your heart. I know you will be one of the best stone masons India will ever have. Why did the old man say this? What did he mean? Do you think he was right in thinking so? Why?**

Ans: The old man said this to Salim when he realised Salim’s innate passion and dedication to stonemasonry. By expressing that there was nothing more to teach, the old man acknowledged Salim’s talent and commitment to the craft. The old man believed that Salim had the essential qualities and love for sculpting in his heart, making him capable of becoming one of the best stonemasons in India. Whether the old man was right depends on Salim’s future journey and development as a stonemason, but the sentiment behind the statement emphasises the importance of passion and commitment in preserving artistic legacy.

 **8. Whose views do you agree more with–the father’s or Gopal’s? Why?**

Ans: Both characters present valid perspectives rooted in their beliefs and experiences. The father emphasises cultural and artistic value of stonemasonry for temples, which is rooted in centuries-old tradition.

 On the other hand, Gopal prioritises mass production for economic gain. The decision ultimately depends on whether one values tradition and artistic legacy or prioritises adapting to contemporary economic demands. The story prompts re­flection on the significance of each perspective in the context of cultural heritage and economic reality.

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