

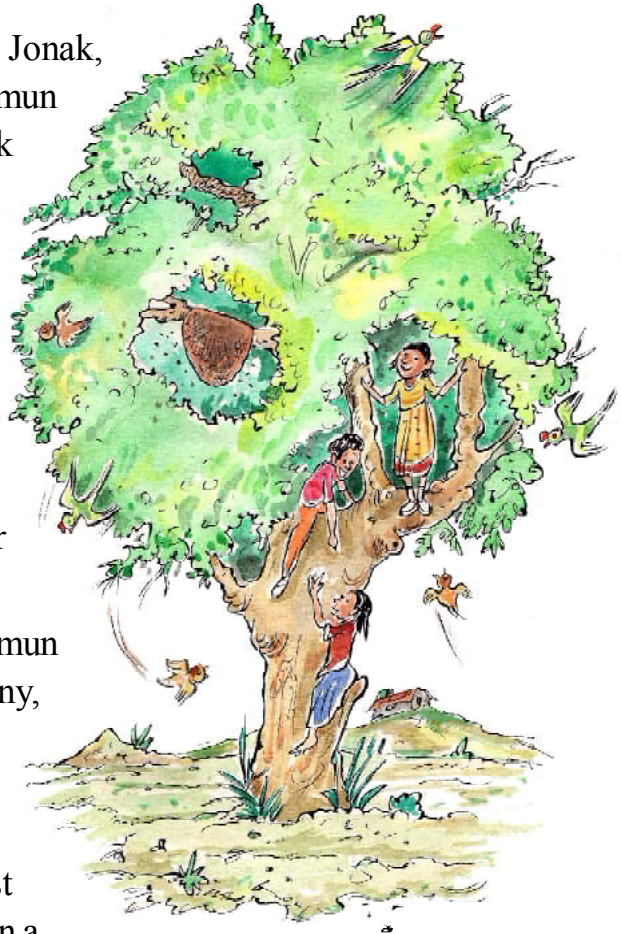
## The Jamun Tree


In the backyard of the house where Ricky, Jonak, Monpi and Tinky lived, stood a lovely Jamun tree. It was a tall and stately tree, with dark green leaves and twirling branches that clawed into the sky.

The Jamun tree was a source of joy to the children. They loved to climb its knotty, gnarled branches and play hide and seek among the foliage. During the sweltering summer months, hot and tired after playing in the backyard, the children took rest under its welcome shade.

During summer too, the fruits of the Jamun tree ripened. At first these appeared in tiny, unripe green clusters which gradually swelled into juicy, purple-coloured fruits. The branches of the tree drooped with the weight of their luscious burden. Their greatest joy was to eat the ripe Jamuns while sitting on a long, sturdy branch of the tree. The tree bore so much fruit that children from the neighbourhood dropped in too and ate as many Jamuns as they could. The backyard always resounded with the shrill cries of happy children.

The syrupy sweetness of the Jamuns invited other visitors too. A pair of squirrels, who lived in a nearby bamboo grove, came regularly to nibble at the fruits. Scores of beautiful bluebottles flitted around the tree settling every now and then to drink nectar from the fruits. Honeybees, who seemed to be forever busy, filled the air with their urgent buzzing. Ants arrived in great numbers, marching in straight lines to carry off the fruits which had fallen onto the ground. The children would spend hours watching the





ants. They marvelled at the discipline with which these hardy little creatures toiled, carrying loads many times their own weight.

But the visitors that the children loved most were the birds—squabbling magpies, chirping sparrows and squawking parrots being the commonest. Ricky and Jonak built a bird bath and their sisters, Monpi and Tinky filled it with water. The birds enjoyed splashing about in the cool waters.

The month was January. The Bihu festival was fast approaching. There would be much feasting and merriment during the festival. Each household would build a *mejhi* - a pile of firewood stacked neatly together in their backyard. On the first morning of the festival the *mejhi* would be set alight invoking the blessings of Agni, the god of fire.

“Let’s build a champion *mejhi* this year.” Ricky suggested a few days before the festival.

Jonak, Monpi and Tinky warmed to the idea. Monpi, the most practical one, saw the difficulties ahead. “But where will we get so much wood from? Father might buy some firewood but that’ll be just enough for a tiny *mejhi*.”

“True,” agreed Tinky. “Mother uses a gas stove in the kitchen. There’s no firewood in the house.”

For a while the children pondered over the problem. Then Ricky’s gaze fell on the Jamun tree and his eyes lit up.

“We can chop down some of the biggest branches of the Jamun tree!” he exclaimed. “It’ll provide us with so much firewood, that we can easily build a giant *mejhi*.”

Jonak clapped Ricky on the back. “Good idea!” he said approvingly. “Our *mejhi* would be the envy of all our friends in the neighbourhood.”

Monpi and Tinky were equally enthusiastic. How could they cut down those enormous branches? If their parents knew they would surely be angry. And even if they were four of them, cutting down a tree so large would take them at least two days!

But the chance came just one day before the festival. Their grandmother had fallen ill in Calcutta and she wanted their parents with her. Before they left, their mother gave them very clear last minute instructions.

“Don’t forget to get the milk in the morning. And remember to do your homework every day. And if you have time, go to the woods and pick up twigs and sticks that have fallen on the ground. You can add that to the wood we will buy for the *mejhi*.”

The following day, happily for the children, was a Saturday. Borrowing an extra axe from their neighbours, they divided up the duties. Ricky and Jonak, being older, took on the heavy job of cutting the branches. Monpi and Tinky were to stock the wood in neat piles on the ground.

Ricky climbed to one of the top branches. It wasn't easy getting there but he managed it. When he had tucked himself between the huge trunk and the thick branch, he looked around. What a magnificent view! There in the distance the deep, placid river flowed past the temple. A train went toot-toot, leaving a trail of ash-grey smoke. In the Jamun tree itself birds twittered happily. But he was forgetting the *mejhi*! Picking up the axe, he began a systematic chop-chop close to his body.

Suddenly he could hear a shrill, high-pitched scream. It was the hawk-kite that used to nest in the tree. He could only see one—did that mean the other had gone off to hunt for food for fledglings? Were there little ones in the nest?

Curious, he climbed a little further. And sure enough—there were two nearly full-grown chicks. In fact, they were so big, that they looked almost like their parents, only lighter in colour.

“Hey, Jonak!”, cried Ricky climbing down. “There is a nest with two young hawk-kites here!”

“And look, Ricky—there! There's an enormous beehive. Must be two years at least!”

Sitting astride two branches they wondered what was to be done now.

“Obviously, we can't cut that side of the tree down. What will happen to the chicks?”

“Nor this side. And think of all the effort that's gone into the making of that beehive!”

“And there must be many other nests that are used regularly by the birds. See, that's the hole that the barbet uses.”


“And look—this hole is obviously a squirrel's home! I can see peanuts inside!”

They climbed down slowly.

Down below Monpi and Tinky were gathering whatever sticks and twigs they could find. They were surprised to see the brothers down so soon.

“What happened?”, they asked.





Somewhat embarrassed, Ricky explained, “You see, this tree is a home for so many creatures that we couldn’t bring ourselves to cut it down.”

“Oh, that’s not fair!”, cried the youngsters together. “What’ll happen to our *mejhi*?”

“Well, let’s think,” said Jonak. “We can’t cut the tree, that’s obvious. How would we feel if someone burnt our house down?”

“Hmmm ...” said Monpi, looking thoughtful.

The four of them sat in the shade of the tree, leaning against the gnarled trunk.

Finally Ricky spoke. “I think we have to forget our plans for a big *mejhi* this year. Maybe next year ...?”

Jonak had an idea. “Look, in our class we have a social forestry project. They are giving us subabul saplings to plant in February-March. I think I’ll ask them for some. These trees are specially grown to be cut so that older trees can be saved.”

Ricky said, “What a good idea, Jonak! Get some saplings. We’ll plant them along the boundary wall. In two years’ time, when they are grown, we can cut them down and have a grand *mejhi*!”

When their parents returned, Monpi and Tinky told them about how the Jamun tree had nearly become a *mejhi*.

Father smiled. “I’m glad you didn’t cut it down. Think what would have happened. You and your friends climb the tree, eat its fruit, play in its shade. If it weren’t there our courtyard would be silent.”

He stopped for a while, then continued. “It takes years and years for a tree to grow, mature, bear flowers and fruits. To cut one down takes just a few hours.”

Then he smiled and said, “Come, I’ve brought each of you a gift. They are lying in the backyard.”

The four youngsters rushed to the back of the house. To their delight, four saplings—one each of Jamun, mango, guava and jackfruit—were propped up in polythene bags against the bamboo fencing.

The children lost little time in digging four holes in the four corners of the backyard and planting the saplings. They promised to water the plants morning and evening. It would take some time for the saplings to grow up into trees. And these, they decided, they wouldn’t cut down. They would grow into big, tall trees. The eucalyptus and subabul, they could be cut.

That night as the children got ready to go to bed, Jonak said, “We may have a small *mejhi* this year but I’m glad we didn’t cut the Jamun tree.” The others nodded happily.

*Arup Kumar Dutta*

## About the author



**Arup Kumar Dutta** (born on 2 July, 1946) is an English writer from the state of Assam in India. He made a permanent place in the hearts of children with his very first book, *Kaziranga Trail*, published in the year 1978. The book won many prestigious awards and it was translated into many languages, both Indian and foreign, including Japanese, German, Russian, Czech, Hungarian and Italian. His *other award-winning books* are *The Blind Witness*, *Smack*, *Revenge*, *The Lure of Zangrila* (which won a National Award), *The Brahmaputra*, and many

others. Two of his books have been included in Literature of the World Series by the Asahi Shimbun. He is also a freelance columnist and journalist and his short stories and articles have appeared in many of India's leading journals and newspapers.

## Meanings in context

clawed	:	trying to hold
sturdy	:	strong
Bihu	:	a popular festival in Assam
knotty	:	full of knots
gnarled	:	swollen
sweltering	:	extremely and uncomfortably hot in summer
luscious	:	juicy
<i>mejhi</i>	:	a bon-fire, a pile, or stack of wood like Holika celebrated in north and central India
pondered	:	thought
fledglings	:	little ones of birds who have not yet learnt to fly
embarrassed	:	felt guilty
placid	:	still, calm
flitted	:	moved about quickly and lightly
astride	:	with a leg on each side

## Comprehension

### I. Answer the following questions.

1. Describe the Jamun tree in at least five sentences.
2. What options did Ricky, Jonak, Monpi and Tinky find out for getting wood for *mejhi*?
3. What changed Ricky's enthusiasm for cutting the Jamun tree?
4. What are the good things they had been getting from the Jamun tree?
5. Why did Ricky, Jonak, Monpi and Tinky want to have a big *mejhi*?
6. What arrangements did the children make for the birds that visited the Jamun tree?
7. Do you think it is good to cut a tree for the sake of a festival? Give reason (s) for your opinion.

### II. Complete the following table.

Visitors to the Jamun tree	Names	Description of Activities
Animals		
Birds		
Insects		

### III. Work in groups and discuss these questions and then write your answer individually.

1. Give reasons for not cutting a tree.

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2. Give reasons why trees are cut.

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3. Do you think the trees that do not give fruits should be cut?

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4. Do human beings alone have rights over the trees? Discuss.

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## Vocabulary

Tick (✓) the most appropriate meaning for each of the following words in bold.

1. Monpi and Tinky were **enthusiastic** about cutting the Jamun tree.

- a. fascinated
- b. excited
- c. crazy
- d. delighted

2. They **marvelled** at the discipline with which ants toiled.

- a. were curious
- b. became thoughtful
- c. mocked
- d. wondered

3. Jonak said it is **obvious** that we cannot cut the tree.

- a. true
- b. well known
- c. clear
- d. possible

## Grammar

### I. Subject and predicate

Read the sentences.

- a. **A pair of squirrels** came regularly to nibble at the fruits.
- b. **Honeybees** filled the air with their buzzing.

The part of the sentence which is in bold is the subject of the sentence and the part which is underlined is the predicate of the sentence. As you can see, the subject can consist of one or more than one word and it is the doer of the action. It generally precedes the predicate. The predicate consists of more than one word. It tells about the subject.

#### A. Identify the subject and predicate in each of the following sentences given in the passage and write them in the table below.

The syrupy sweetness of the Jamuns invited other visitors too. A pair of squirrels, who lived in a nearby bamboo grove, came regularly to nibble at the fruits. Scores of beautiful bluebottles flitted around the tree settling every now and then to drink nectar from the fruits. Honeybees, who seemed to be forever busy, filled the air with their urgent buzzing. Ants arrived in great numbers, marching in straight lines to carry off the fruit which had fallen onto the ground. The children would spend hours watching the ants.

S.No.	Subject	Predicate
1.	The syrupy sweetness of the Jamun	invited the visitors too.
2.	A pair squirrels who lived in a near by bamboo grove.	
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		



**B. Complete the following sentences with appropriate subjects or predicates.**

1. The people living in the remote area of Chhattisgarh \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is unknown to me.
3. Chhattisgarh \_\_\_\_\_
4. The Bihu festival \_\_\_\_\_
5. In democracy, \_\_\_\_\_ elect the government.

**II. One and Ones**

**Read these sentences.**

- a. Were there little ones in the nest?
- b. It takes years and years for a tree to grow but to cut one down takes just a few hours.

We use 'one' (singular) and 'ones' (plural) to avoid unnecessary repetition. They are therefore generally pronouns.

We also use 'one' and 'ones' after *which* in questions.

**Examples**

You can recite a poem. Which *one* do you choose?

There are many books here. Which *ones* are yours?

**Complete the dialogues given below:**

Q: How old are your children?

A: The younger \_\_\_\_\_ is four and the older \_\_\_\_\_ is seven.

Q: Would you like a new model of mobile?

A: Certainly. The new mobiles are much lighter than the old \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: What type of car do you want?

A: I don't mind what kind of car it is. I just want \_\_\_\_\_ that gets me to office.

Q: What do you want to buy?

A: I need some new colour pencils. The \_\_\_\_\_ I have at the moment are broken.

### III. Use of 'There'

#### Introductory 'There'

**There** is a nest with two young hawk-kites here.

**There** is no firewood in the house.

“No firewood in the house” or “a nest with two young hawk-kites here” are phrases. So, when we make sentences we add 'There' in the beginning. This is known as an *Introductory There*. For example:

'There would be much feasting and merriment during the festival'

Introductory 'There' can be used when the subject is not defined and the verb phrase contains *be*. Here are some examples.

There *were* peanuts in the squirrel's home.

There *is* no water in the well.

#### Introductory There goes with:

##### 1. Singular or Plural verbs

There is no place like home.

There are no players in this feat.

##### 2. Quantitative statements

There are lots of questions to be answered.

There is a postoffice and a small church in the corner.

##### 3. Collective phrases

There is a whole crowd of participants.

#### 'There' as an adverb of place.

Find out such sentences in the story. You will also notice another kind of 'there' in the story, which is an adverb of place, as in the following sentence.

It wasn't easy getting there, but he managed it.

The underlined 'there' is an adverb and it indicates location.

**A. Indicate which function of ‘There’ occurs in the sentences below: ‘Adverb of place’ or ‘Introductory’.**

Sentences	Adverb of place	Introductory
<p>a. There is always someone who is naughty in the class.</p> <p>b. There is the postman. Let me see if he has anything for me.</p> <p>c. There were two of them, two full grown little fledglings.</p> <p>d. There was once a little girl called Alice.</p> <p>e. We went there on foot.</p> <p>f. I saw him standing there.</p> <p>g. There was a long silence after the speech.</p> <p>h. Put your books on the table there.</p>		

**B. Rewrite the sentences with the introductory ‘There’.**

Original sentences	Using introductory ‘There’
a. A lady is waiting to see the Principal.	
b. No body was in the room.	
c. Squirrels are in the other tree.	
d. Payal’s car is in the garage.	
e. Your dinner is on the table.	

## Writing

I. Ricky, Jonak, Monpy and Tinky are children in the story ‘The Jamun Tree’.

The month is January. The Bihu festival is fast approaching. They are talking about making a *mejhi*. As you have read the story, dramatize their conversation into a play. The beginning has been given here.

Ricky: Let us build a champion *mejhi* this year.

Jonak: Yes, yes. A big *mejhi*.

Tinky: The biggest in our neighbourhood.

Monpi: Where will we get so much wood? Father will buy some but that will be just enough for a tiny *mejhi*.

Tinky: That's true, mother\_\_\_\_\_

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II. That night as the children got ready to go to bed, Jonak said, "We may have a small *mejhi* this year but I'm glad we didn't cut the Jamun tree." The others nodded happily.

That night Ricky dreamt that he had already chopped down the trunk of the Jamun tree.

**Imagine yourself as Ricky and write a letter to your grandmother, who lives in Kolkata, telling her how sorry you were for what had happened. You may begin your letter as below.**

Dear Granny,

I woke up suddenly last night because I dreamt I had cut down the Jamun tree. I had chopped only once, and the big branch was hanging down. How I wish I could put it back again!

Dearly yours

Ricky

## Listening

Listen to the story describing the stages that waste paper passes through before it acquires a new shape. However, the stages are not listed in the order in which they appear. Number them in the order in which they appear. For instance, you may write 1 for the first stage, 2 for the second and so on in the boxes.

Big dumpster	
The crusher	
Massive crusher	
The truck	
A recycled logo	
Trash can	1
A conveyer	
The slicer	

## Speaking

Organise a speech competition in your class. Prepare a few topics related to environment. Divide the class into five groups. Ask a representative from each group to come and pick a topic from the box. Now take it back to the group, discuss and speak before the class on the topic.

Here are some suggested topics :

- If there were no trees with fruits
- Friends of the environment
- Why rivers don't like garbage thrown into them
- The tree we like most
- Advantage of trees in your backyard
- Water crisis in your neighbourhood
- Are mountains and valleys useful?

## Study Skills

Study the following table, which shows district-wise variations of forest coverage, types of forests, and percentage of forest cover in relation to the total Geographical Area (G.A.).

**District-wise Forest Cover (Sq. km.): Year 2011**

District	Geographic Area	2011 Assesment			Total	Percent of G.A. (Forest Cover)	Change*	Scrub
		Very Dense Forest	Mod. Dense Forest	Open Forest				
Baster	14,974	1,349	4,333	2,329	8,011	53.50	0	11
Bilaspur	8,270	338	1,623	533	2,494	30.16	0	6
Dantewada	17,634	1,082	6,167	4,079	11,328	64.24	0	22
Durg	8,549	44	521	202	767	8.97	0	4
Janjgir-Champa	3,852	4	26	125	155	4.02	0	2
Jashpur	5,838	111	1,485	568	2,164	37.07	0	11
Kanker	6,506	215	2,044	835	3,094	47.56	0	2
Kawardha	4,223	70	1,126	389	1,585	37.53	0	4
Korba	6,599	203	2,306	840	3,349	50.75	0	6
Koriya	6,604	79	2,605	1,423	4,107	62.19	0	3
Mahasamund	4,789	4	534	422	960	20.05	-1	8
Raigarh	7,086	126	1,697	723	2,546	35.93	-2	13
Raipur & Dhamtari	16,468	189	3,837	1,435	5,461	33.16	0	7
Rajnandgoan	8,068	29	1,771	720	2,520	31.23	-1	4
Sarguja	15,731	320	4,836	1,977	7,133	45.34	0	16
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>135,191</b>	<b>4,163</b>	<b>34,911</b>	<b>16,600</b>	<b>55,674</b>	<b>41.18</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>119</b>

(Source: FSI Published report year 2011)

\*Change figure are based on comparison of 2011 assessment with that of 2009 after incorporating interpretational changes)

### Study the table and answer the following questions.

1. What is the total forest cover area?
2. What is the total dense forest area?
3. What is the moderate forest area?
4. What is the open forest area?
5. What is the non-forest cover area?
6. Which district has the highest forest cover area?
7. Which district has the lowest forest cover area?
8. Which district has the highest scrub area (an area with low trees & bushes with very little rain)?
9. What does the negative change indicate?

10. Why do Durg and Janjgir Champa have the lowest and Dantewara and Koriya have the highest percentage of forest cover with respect to G.A.?
11. How many districts have a percentage of forest cover with respect to G.A. above and below the Grand Total?

## Project Work

**Identify a tree, which may be either connected to a festival or is often seen in your locality and collect the following details.**

1. Name of the tree in Hindi, local language and English.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the features of the tree?
  - a. Average height of the tree (in feet)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Shape of the leaves.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Do its leaves fall? If yes, name the month in which the leaves fall.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Does the tree give fruit? What is the taste of the fruit?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. What are the uses of the tree?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Name the animals and birds you regularly see in it.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the tree connected to any festival? If yes, name the festival.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Have you ever seen people cutting the tree? If yes, find out why people cut it?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Now prepare a report, using the above information.**

### Hints :

Introduction

Types of trees around you.

Value and utility of the trees.

Public awareness and concern about the trees.

The message we want to be delivered.