

**Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:**

"What can I do? What can I do?" Haralal repeated to himself, as he walked along like one dazed, the sun's heat pouring down upon him. At last his mind ceased to think at all about what could be done, but the mechanical walk went on without ceasing.

This city of Calcutta, which offered its shelter to thousands and thousands of men had become like a steel trap. He could see no way out. The whole body of people were conspiring to surround and hold him captive—this most insignificant of men, whom no one knew. Nobody had any special grudge against him, yet everybody was his enemy.

Then came the time when the offices were all about to close. Carriages started off in all directions, carrying people back to their homes. From today, Haralal had neither his work in the office, nor release from work in the evening. All the busy occupations of the city—the buildings—the horses and carriages—the incessant traffic—seemed, now at one time, to swell into dreadful reality, and at another time, to subside into the shadowy unreal.

Haralal had taken neither food, nor rest, nor shelter all that day. The street lamps were lighted and it seemed to him that a watchful darkness, like some demon, was guarding every movement. Through paroxysms of pain and dejection, only one thought came again and again to his mind — "Mother!"

He said to himself, "At the deep of night, when no one is awake to capture me—me, who am the least of all men,—I will silently creep to my mother's arms and fall asleep, and may I never wake again!"

Finally, unable to bear the weight of his own body, Haralal hailed a carriage and asked to be driven across the Maidan. Laying his throbbing head against the carriage window, a deep peace came over him. He felt delivered from pain and suffering. In the infinite sky, he felt the presence of his mother embracing him. All pain and fear dissolved.

The Cathedral clock struck one. The driver called out to him, but Haralal gave no answer.

And the answer was never received from Haralal, where he wanted to go.

Master Mashai. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/33525/33525-h/33525-h.htm>

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**(i) For each word given below, choose the correct meaning (as used in the passage): [2]**

1. **Dazed**

- (a) Tired
- (b) Bewildered and confused
- (c) Joyful
- (d) Hateful

2. **Dissolved**

- (a) Enslaved
- (b) Freed from restrictions
- (c) Disappeared
- (d) Surrounded

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**(ii) Which word in the passage is closest in meaning to the opposite of "captivity"? [1]**

- (a) Deliverance
- (b) Trap
- (c) Darkness
- (d) Traffic

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**(iii) Short Answer Questions: (about 30–40 words each) [8]**

3. What were Haralal's feelings as he moved through the city of Calcutta?
4. Why did Haralal hail a carriage and what did he hope to achieve?
5. What transformation occurred in Haralal's mind once he sat in the carriage?
6. How does the author contrast Haralal's inner peace with the external city life around him?

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**(iv) In not more than 50 words, narrate the sequence of Haralal's last actions leading to the final moment in the carriage. [8]**

## Answer Key

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### (i) Vocabulary Questions: [2]

1. Dazed — (b) Bewildered and confused

*(Haralal was walking like one dazed, unable to think clearly.)*

2. Dissolved — (c) disappeared

*(In the carriage, Haralal felt his pain disappear in his mother's embrace.)*

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### (ii) Antonym-Based Question: [1]

3. Word closest to the opposite of "captivity" — (a) Deliverance

*(Haralal felt a profound deliverance from his despair and suffering.)*

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### (iii) Short Answer Questions: [4 × 2 = 8]

4. What were Haralal's feelings as he moved through the city of Calcutta?

Haralal felt isolated, helpless, and trapped. Although the bustling city showed no personal hostility toward him, he imagined that everyone was conspiring against him, turning the city into a steel trap from which he could not escape.

5. Why did Haralal hail a carriage and what did he hope to achieve?

Haralal, exhausted and in despair, hailed a carriage not to reach any destination but to find temporary relief. He wished to drive across the Maidan to get fresh air, hoping it would calm his throbbing head and broken spirit.

6. What transformation occurred in Haralal's mind once he sat in the carriage?

As Haralal rested his head against the window, his pain and fear began to fade. He experienced a deep sense of peace, realizing that the day's despair was only an illusion, and that true freedom surrounded him in the infinite sky.

7. How does the author contrast Haralal's inner peace with the external city life around him?

While the city bustled with mechanical activity—carriages, traffic, busy clerks—Haralal, isolated in the carriage, found a profound inner peace. The chaotic outer world became irrelevant as he transcended pain and fear, embraced by an overwhelming sense of spiritual deliverance.

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### (iv) 50-Word Narrative Summary: [8]

Haralal wandered aimlessly through Calcutta, overwhelmed by despair and loneliness. Unable to endure further, he hired a carriage to drive across the Maidan. As he rested, peace replaced his suffering. Feeling embraced by his mother's presence, he slipped into eternal rest, never answering the driver's final call.

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