



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G13

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1. Love for the World and Patriotism

By Premchand

1

Mazzini, the legendary Italian patriot, is sitting silently in an old and decrepit hotel situated in a seedy part of London. No sooner does dusk fall than the hotel is plunged in darkness. Noticeably, the members of the scrupulous gentry keep themselves away from this area, a place infamous for gambling, drunken revelries and other hideously evil activities. His attractive face looks pale and drawn, and eyes deeply thoughtful. His lips dry and clothes crumpled and dirty, he looks dishevelled, as if without having showered and shaved for months.

Anybody not acquainted with Mazzini would certainly believe him to be from among those frustrated, unfortunate men who, slave to their desires, come to the hotel to drown their sorrows and indulge in morally repugnant pastimes.

Lost in deep thought, Mazzini contemplates the pathetic plight of his fellow countrymen. 'O unfortunate and oppressed nation! Won't you ever see prosperous days? Won't the sacrifices of your beloved sons be crowned with success? Will the cries and sufferings of thousands of your sons living in forced exile go in vain? O beloved country! Have you been condemned forever to live in humiliation, slavery and subjugation while putting up with oppression? You still haven't been able to generate the power and ability to achieve freedom and stand independent. It seems that you are destined to suffer more humiliation. O freedom! I lost many of my devoted and dedicated friends for you. Countless mothers and wives not only mourn the loss of their young promising sons and husbands who laid down their lives while upholding the self-respect and dignity of their country, but also spout heaps of curses on Mazzini, himself afflicted with torments. Won't the sacrifices of the lion-hearted, brave and heroic sons of the country who never took to their heels, be enough to win the freedom? O freedom! Are you such an elusive precious gem? Then why do I continue to live? Am I fated to live and see my country be crushed and trampled under the feet of the ruthlessly treacherous and tyrannical enemies? I am not able to live any longer to see afflictions and tyrannies preying on my brothers, my fellow country people who have fallen to the might of the enemies.'

Mazzini is jolted out of his thoughts by the entry of Raffeti, his friend, who is also suffering in exile. He enters the cell with a piece of biscuit. A few years younger than Mazzini, Raffeti looks a fine gentleman, perhaps of a noble stock. He shakes Mazzini by the shoulder and says, "Joseph, take. Eat it." Mazzini raises his head with a start and says, "From where did you get it? You had no money."

"First, eat it and then ask questions. You haven't had anything since yesterday

evening.”

“First, tell me from where you got it. I can also see a packet of tobacco in your pocket. Where did you get this money from?”

“What is the use of asking these questions? I mortgaged the new coat my mother had sent me.”

Mazzini heaves a deep sigh amid tears trickling down his cheeks. Then sucking in his breath, he says with tears in his eyes, “Why did you do it? Christmas is at hand. What will you wear? Will the only son of a millionaire Italian father be dressed in the same tattered coat on that occasion as well?”

“Won’t we be able to make some money by the time Christmas comes? We will surely have new suits and wear them to celebrate the occasion of the much cherished independence of our motherland.”

“There is no means of earning any money. The articles sent for publication in the monthly journals have already been returned. The money we receive from our homes has already run out. What other source is there?”

“Christmas is still a week away. Why bother now? After all, it won’t make any difference if we have to wear the same old coats. Remember, you had also sold the ring gifted to you by Magdalene in order to pay the doctor’s fee during my illness. I am going to write about it to her soon. She will deal with you strictly.”

It is Christmas Day. Everyone, young and old, poor and rich, is enjoying the warmth and gaiety of the festival. The people, suitably clad for the occasion, are heading towards churches. No one looks dejected or forlorn. But Mazzini and Raffeti are confined to their narrow and gloomy dungeon, their heads hung low. A sigh of anguish escapes Mazzini's lips, while Raffeti gets fidgety. He paces from the corner of the cell to the door. To obliterate the depressing thoughts of his poverty-stricken days, he looks out of the window, staring fixedly at the boozers staggering drunkenly to their feet and indulging in mindless activities. Alas! The chief of Italy whose call was once readily responded to by thousands of people willing to lay down their lives was now consigned to chilling penury. He has nothing to eat, not even a cigar to puff on. Though tobacco was the only thing which he could not deny himself, unfortunately, it is not available to him. Actually, he is least bothered about himself now. His deepest worries are for Raffeti, a young handsome and promising man who comes from a prosperous family. He asks himself, "What right do I have to force Raffeti to undergo these hardships while he can buy himself the world's luxuries and comforts?"

At that point of time, the postman arrives and asks loudly whether Joseph Mazzini lives somewhere there, announcing that there is a letter for him. Raffeti takes the letter and jumps for joy before he hands it to Mazzini, telling him that his beloved Magdalene has sent it.

Mazzini grabs hold of the letter and opens it with great eagerness. A strand of loose hair, sent as a Christmas gift to him, drops on the ground. He picks it, kisses keenly and thrusts it into his pocket patched on the breast of the shirt. The letter says:

My dear Joseph,

Accept this poor gift from me. May God grant you such a long life that you may be blessed to celebrate a hundred Christmases! Hold my memento dear to you. Do not ever forget your poor Magdalene. It is quite difficult for me to write something more. Overwhelming emotions well up in my heart leaping to my mouth. Joseph, my darling master, tell me how long you will go on making me suffer the pangs of separation. I can no longer persevere with these trials. I am fighting back my tears that have already welled up. Believe me, I am prepared to undergo every type of suffering in your company. But I am not able to put up with the tortures inflicted on me by your separation. You are sworn by your faith, by the love of your country and also by me. Come to me. I am dying for you. Tell me when I will be able to meet you. Christmas is very near. But it is useless for me. I am yours till my last breath.

Yours,

Magdalene

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Switzerland is Magdalene's home. The daughter of a prosperous merchant, she is comely and extremely beautiful; and her inner beauty is equally radiant.

Several nobles and rich men wished to woo and win her but she does not give anyone the time of day. Mazzini had taken asylum in Switzerland where he met Magdalene, the innocent, young maiden. She had already heard the stories of daring and resolute courage of Mazzini. Later she began visiting him off and on with her mother. Her visits provided her with opportunities to be well acquainted with his impressive qualities. With the passage of time, she fell for him. One day, as if losing her inhibitions, she pleaded with Mazzini to accept her.

Then Mazzini was in the prime of his youth and his patriotic fervour had still not subdued his youthful emotions. He could also feel the surge of youthful passion in his heart. But, at the same time, he had sincerely vowed to sacrifice his life for the sake of his country and his compatriots. He tenaciously stuck to his guns. In fact, none but Mazzini, a man of solemn commitment, could decline a proposal from Magdalene, an epitome of beauty, who entreated him so dearly with her captivating charms and graces.

She emerged from this encounter with her eyes moist. Mazzini's cold response could not dampen her heart; rather it stoked the fire of her love for him. Several years have passed since Mazzini left Switzerland but Magdalene's love for him remains etched in her memory. In fact, it deepens into a more faithful love with the passing of every year.

A sigh escapes Mazzini's lips as he finishes the letter. "Do you know what Magdalene says?" Mazzini asks.

"I know the pangs of parting will kill her," replies Raffeti.

Engrossed in his thoughts, Mazzini mutters under his breath, "Magdalene, you are young, beautiful and rich. Why should you ruin your life after a poor wretch like me? How could a man like me, who is so deeply frustrated and whose life is fraught with hardships and difficulties, be able to keep you happy? No, I am not going to be that selfish, for there are so many happy and prosperous men in this world who may not only keep you happy but also adore and worship you. Why don't you choose someone from among them as your life partner? I value your selfless love so much but I have dedicated myself solely to the service of my country and its people. Now I can have no soft spot for you as your lover. But I can accept you as my beloved and empathizing sister. Would you like to tell me what is so special about me that an epitome of beauty like you has been undergoing so much hardship for me? O Mazzini, the hapless one! You belong to

none and to nowhere. Those for whom you made sacrifices have grown apathetic to you. And those who are sympathetic with you think you are lost in a reverie, on a wild goose chase.” Prostrate with these vexing thoughts, Mazzini took up a pen and paper and began writing his reply to Magdalene.

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Dear Magdalene,

I received your letter along with the priceless gift. I must express my sincere thanks to you for your priceless gift. I owe you a special gratitude that you hold a helpless and hapless man like me to be worthy of this honour. I will treasure your gift as a memento of our true and imperishable love. I will make a will before I am laid to rest that it should also be buried with my mortal remains. It is hard for me to gauge the depth of your belief in me and in the honesty and sincerity of my intention, that too when so many ungrounded and baseless rumours about me have been circulated and charges levelled against me. What a great consolation that there is at least an angel-like woman who still reposes faith in me and regards me free of everything that is morally and ethically vile. It is probably this faith that has helped me persevere through the adversities and tribulations of life.

However, my dear sister, rest assured that I am assailed by no sorrows. Do not let your solicitude for me sadden your heart. I am quite fine here. I have your everlasting love and affection to soothe my heart in troubled hours. It would be ungrateful of me if I still complain about my physical discomfort.

I have learnt that your health is deteriorating day by day. I eagerly wish to meet you. If only I were free! Would that I had a lively heart and I had been vivacious! This distraught and forlorn heart of mine is of no use to you.

Magdalene, for God’s sake, take care of your health. Nothing will pain me more than to hear that you are making yourself unhappy because of your concern for me. Your innocent face stares right into my eyes now. Do not get cross with me. I do not deserve you. I am no match for you. It is Christmas today. I do not know what to send you as a gift. May God always favour you with His choicest blessings! Remember me to your mother. I dearly crave to see you all. Let us see when this wish of mine is fulfilled.

Yours,

Joseph Mazzini

Several years pass since all this happened. Joseph Mazzini returns to Italy. Rome is declared a republic for the first time. A three-member presidium, including Mazzini as a member, is set up. Due to heavy debt and the betrayal of the king of Piedmont the republic is dissolved and the administration dismissed. The members and advisors flee. Thus, Mazzini is once again back on the streets in Rome. All the dreams and ambitions of making Rome the centre of democracy vanishes into thin air due to the betrayal of his trusted friends and confidants.

One noon Mazzini was taking shelter from the scorching sun under a tree. He saw a lady coming towards him. Apparently in her early thirties, she looked pale and drawn and was dressed in simple white clothes. Mazzini was in a ruminative mood when the woman rushed up to him and folded him in her embrace.

Mazzini woke up with a start blurting out, "Ah, it is you dear Magdalene!" He spoke these words with moist eyes.

Sucking in her choked breath and gulping back her tears, she uttered a word, "Joseph" and fell silent.

Both of them sat silently, tears trickling down their faces. Mazzini asked her, "When did you come here?"

Magdalene replied, "I have been here for several months but I failed to find a lucky way to meet you. Seeing you deeply immersed in the affairs of the state, I thought that you would hardly need the sympathy of a poor woman like me.

Hence, I saw little point in meeting. Tell me, Joseph, why most people speak ill of you. Are they benighted?"

"Maga, perhaps they are right. I do not possess those virtues which I claim to have just for the reasons of pride and arrogance. You see these virtues in me because you are an innocent and deeply honest person. I learn a new failing of mine every day."

"Mazzini, this is precisely the reason why I adore and worship you. Blessed is a self-effacing man! Joseph, for God's sake do not make me suffer the pangs of separation. I am yours. I believe you are innocent and as flawlessly perfect as Jesus. This has been my strong conviction. I know I faltered a bit but your conversation with me has dispelled all lingering doubts. You are an angel. I wonder why people are so myopic and prejudiced. It pains me to think that even those whom I held in high esteem and believed to be above human failings are no exceptions. Raffeti, Remarie, Barnabas are your friends. You regard them as your friends but they are inimical to you. They are all ill-disposed towards you and have told me hundreds of things about you which I will never believe in my

life. They talk nonsense. My dear Joseph is as I believe him to be or rather much better than I can imagine him to be. Isn't it your especial merit that you regard your enemies as your friends?"

Joseph could no longer control his strong emotions. He kissed her pale hands and replied, "My dear Maga, my friends are not to blame. I am to blame."

He narrated amid sobs, "They have been saying those things that I asked them to say. I played a deception on you. I did it purposely. My darling sister, I wanted you to consign me to oblivion so that you could enjoy your youthful days. I feel ashamed that I failed to fathom and appreciate the depth of your emotions, attachment and love for me. But this has backfired on me. I beg your pardon."

Apologetically, Magdalene said, "No, Joseph, do not apologize to me. You are the finest, the most righteous, the most truthful and worthiest man in the world. Of course, you were mistaken as you always misunderstood me. I wonder how you could turn so stone-hearted."

"Maga, only God knows how much heart-wrenching pain I experienced when I tutored Raffeti to say all those things about me to you. I have always valued good reputation above all in this world and have duly refuted every attack of my rivals, allowing none of their personal attacks on me to go unanswered. Now imagine how constricted I must have felt while urging my friends to spread all sorts of bad things about me. I did it all for your sake, for your well-being so that you could consign me to oblivion."

In fact, Mazzini had resorted to it in view of Magdalene's obsession and infatuation with him. He knew it very well that there were more handsome, richer and much better men courting her. But she did not give a damn about them, for she was enamoured with his virtues, high ideals and the values he upheld. He thought that she would forget him if his friends spoke ill of him as it would demolish her belief in him as well as in his friends. Initially, his friends had flatly refused to obey him. At last, they agreed, though reluctantly. They agreed, lest Maga kill herself due to her obsession with Mazzini. God forbid, if it happened Mazzini would never forgive them. So they went to Switzerland. They floated several shameful stories about their friend, scandalizing most of the people there. But they failed to convince Maga who was strongly infatuated with Mazzini.

Restless as she had grown, Magdalene left for Rome and hired a room in a local inn. She began to follow Joseph every day, scrupulously avoiding his gaze.

Seeing him content with his success she did not want to distract him. It was only when he again met failures and was left stranded that Magdalene came to stand by him.

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Mazzini again went to England from Rome and stayed there for a long time. He received the news of the popular revolt in Sicily, and also came to know that the people of Sicily desperately needed someone to lead them. Immediately, he left for Sicily. But by the time he reached, the royal forces had already squashed the uprising. On landing there, Mazzini was immediately put under arrest and whisked off to a prison cell. Since he was old and decrepit, he was let off. The authorities feared blame lest he should die in prison. Crestfallen, Mazzini left for Switzerland. His hopes were shattered to pieces.

Doubtlessly, Italy now stood on the threshold of unification but its condition was no better than it had been under the reign of Austria or Naples - the only difference was that earlier the country groaned under foreign occupation and now under the oppression of its own rulers.

In view of the consecutive failures, Mazzini had reached the conclusion that the people of Italy were not trained and educated enough to lay the foundation stone of a democratic republic. He, thus, planned to move to Switzerland and launch a newspaper to carry out his campaign of propagating the concept of nationalism. This kind of propaganda campaign was strictly prohibited in his own country. Mazzini spent a night in Rome under a false name. Then he went to Genoa, his hometown. Before leaving for Switzerland, he laid a wreath at the grave of his virtuous mother. In Switzerland he launched his newspaper with the help of some of his confidants. But the life of constant stress, strain and worry preyed on him and sapped him of his physical strength, reducing him to a skeleton. In view of his deteriorating health, he left for England in 1870. On his way, he fell ill with pneumonia somewhere in the tranquil surroundings of the Alps. He breathed his last with his heart full of longing and with the word 'Italy' on his lips. Thousands of mourners attended his funeral. He was laid to rest at a serene corner on the banks of a freshwater stream.

It had been three days since Mazzini's burial. It was evening time, the setting sun shedding its pale parting rays on his grave. A middle-aged woman, attired in a beautiful dress, came to the area. This was Magdalene, looking distraught and forlorn. It looked as if she was listless and a pall of despair had descended on her. Sitting at the head of the grave, she took out flowers and laid them down.

She knelt in prayer for the peace of his soul in solemn earnestness. When the area was enveloped in deep darkness and it began to snow, she rose to her feet silently and headed for a nearby village to pass the night there. Early in the morning she left for home.

After the death of her mother a long time ago, she became the owner of the house. She founded a convent in memory of Mazzini and lived there like a nun. The name Mazzini sounded to her like a strain of soulful and poignant music.

Her house was home to all admirers and supporters. For her, Mazzini's letters were as holy as the Gospel and his name the object of her worship. Many poor children and women could eke out a living because of the name Mazzini.

Magdalene survived for three years. In accordance with her last will, she was buried in her monastery. Her love was not ordinary infatuation. Selfless and sacred, it was reminiscent of the lovelorn *gopis* who roamed the streets of Vrindavan in love of Krishna and who suffered the pangs of separation even in the company of their beloved. Mazzini's monastery still stands there. The poor visit and leave with their minds filled with peace and tranquility, comfort and solace.

2. Importance of Art

Art is an expression of thought. It stirs our emotions. Many people conceive that art provide us with meaning and purpose and for them, life is unfulfilling without art. While others feel that it has no real value in our life and it hinders our progress. I appreciate the importance of Art but have my own doubts. What is art?

Art comes in two forms: visual and performance. Painting and sculpture are the visual, and music, poetry, story-telling, etc. come under performance. Throughout human history, art has been part of our lives. Art distinguishes us from the world of animals. We express our thoughts and emotions through art. As humans we are attracted to beauty; apart from sculptures and paintings, we see it in everyday objects: kitchen utensils, wall papers, pattern on clothes etc. Art gives us an opportunity to think outside the box and create our own interpretation to whatever we see. It awakens our intuition and makes us appreciate the world around us. Art helps us to relax and give repose to our mind.

When we are reading poetry, listening to music, or watching a movie; we forget the outside world and live in the moment, and enjoy life. However, there are times when you should be getting along with real world activities rather than wasting your time unproductively. It often happens with students and they get distracted from their exam revision - procrastination.

All said and done: life can be dull and boring without art because art adds happiness and colours to our lives as long as we are conscientious and are doing things in moderation.

3. Jokes

Paper Communication

Once a couple had one of their usual quarrels; as a consequence of which, all conversation between them stopped. Unfortunately the husband was to attend his office very early the next morning. So he wrote on a piece of paper, "Please wake me up at 6 a.m. tomorrow morning," and kept it beside his wife's pillow. His wife read it and went to sleep.

He woke up very late the next morning and got very angry. He looked ferociously at his wife, but she calmly pointed towards his pillow. Under his pillow he found a piece of paper. On it was written:

"Please wake up, it is 6 o'clock now."

Neighbours

Two Sardarjis lived in a multi-storeyed building, one on the first floor and the second on the eighth floor. But there was great enmity between the two. Once, the Sardarji on the eighth floor tried to fool the Sardarji living on the first floor by calling him for dinner. When the Sardarji reached the eighth floor for dinner he saw that the house of his neighbour was locked and a board was hanging on the door, on which was written: "Kaisa ulloo banaya" (How have I fooled you!)

The Sardarji felt embarrassed and turning the board to the other side, wrote: "Main to yahan aayaa hee nahin tha" (I had never come here)."

4. Grammar Page

Unit
13

Present perfect and past 1 (I have done and I did)

A Study this example situation:



Tom is looking for his *key*. He can't find it.

He **has lost** his key. (*present perfect*)

This means that he *doesn't have his key now*.

Ten minutes later:



Now Tom **has found** his key. He has it now.

Has he lost his key? No, he **has found** it.
Did he lose his key? Yes, he **did**.

He **lost** his key (*past simple*)
but now he **has found** it. (*present perfect*)

The *present perfect* (something **has happened**) is a *present* tense. It tells us about the situation *now*. 'Tom **has lost** his key' = he *doesn't have his key now* (see Unit 7).

The *past simple* (something **happened**) tells us only about the *past*. If somebody says 'Tom **lost** his key', we don't know whether he has the *key* now or not. We know only that he lost it at some time in the past.

Compare *present perfect* and *past simple*:

- They've **gone** away. They'll be back on Friday. (*they are away now*)
- They **went** away, but I think they're back at home now. (*not They've gone away*)
- It **has stopped** raining now, so we don't need the umbrella. (*It isn't raining now*)
- It **stopped** raining for a while, but now it's raining again. (*not it has stopped*)

B You can use the present perfect for new or recent happenings:

- I've **repaired** the washing machine. It's working OK now.
- 'Hannah **has had** a baby! It's a boy.' 'That's great news.'

Usually, you can also use the past simple:

- I **repaired** the washing machine. It's working OK now.

Use the past simple (*not the present perfect*) for things that are not recent or new:

- Mozart **was** a composer. He **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music.
(*not has been ... has written*)
- My mother **grew** up in Italy. (*not has grown*)

Compare:

Somebody **has invented** a new type of washing machine.
Who **invented** the telephone? (*not has invented*)

C We use the present perfect to give new information (see Unit 7). But if we continue to talk about it, we normally use the past simple:

- A: Ow! I've **burnt** myself.
B: How **did** you **do** that? (*not have you done*)
A: I **picked** up a hot dish. (*not have picked*)
- A: Look! Somebody **has spilt** something on the sofa.
B: Well, it **wasn't** me. I **didn't do** it. (*not hasn't been ... haven't done*)