



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G18

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1. Little Master's Return

By Rabindernath Tagore

1

Raicharan was twelve when he first came to work in the house. He was from Jessore district and had long hair and large eyes — a slender boy with gleaming dark skin. His employers' caste was the same as his. His main duty was to help with looking after their one-year-old son — who in time progressed from Raicharan's arms to school, from school to college, and from college to being officer in the local court. Raicharan had remained his servant. But now there was a mistress as well as a master in the household, and most of the rights that Raicharan had hitherto had over Anukul Babu passed to her.

Although his former responsibilities were diminished by her presence, she largely replaced them with a new one. A son to Anukul was soon born, and was won over completely by the sheer force of Raicharan's devotion. He swung him about with such enthusiasm, tossed him in the air with such **dexterity**, cooed and shook his head in his face so vigorously, chanted so many meaningless random questions for which there could be no reply and the very sight of Raicharan sent the little master into **raptures**.

When the boy learnt to crawl **stealthily** over a door-sill, giggling with **merriment** if anyone tried to catch him, and speedily making for somewhere safe to hide, Raicharan was **entranced** by such uncommon skill and quickness of decision. He would go to the child's mother and say admiringly, "Mā, your son will be a judge when he grows up; he'll earn a fortune." That there were other children in the world who could at this young age **dart** over a door-sill was beyond Raicharan's imagination; only future judges could perform such **feats**. His first faltering steps were amazing too, and when he began to call his mother 'Ma', his *pisimā* 'Pishi', and Raicharan 'Channa', Raicharan proclaimed these **staggering** achievements to everyone he met. How astonishing it was that he should not only call his mother 'Ma', his aunt 'Pishi', but also Raicharan 'Channa'! Really, it was hard to understand where such intelligence had **sprung from**. Certainly no adult could ever show such extraordinary intelligence, and people would be unsure of his fitness to be a judge even if he could.

Before long, Raicharan had to put a string round his neck and pretend to be a horse; or he had to be a wrestler and fight with the boy — and if he failed to let himself be defeated and thrown to the ground, there would be **hell to pay**. By now, Anukul had been transferred to a Padma river district. He had brought a push-chair from Calcutta for his son.

Raicharan would dress him in a satin shirt, gold-embroidered cap, golden

bangles and a pair of anklets, and take the young prince out in his push-chair twice a day for some air.

The rainy season came. The Padma began to swallow up gardens, villages and fields in great hungry gulps. Thickets and bushes disappeared from the sandbanks. The menacing gurgle of water was all around, and the splashing of crumbling banks; and swirling, rushing foam showed how fierce the river's current had become.

One afternoon, when it was cloudy but did not look like rain, Raicharan's **capricious** young master refused to stay at home. He climbed into his push-chair, and Raicharan **gingerly** pushed it to the river-bank beyond the paddy-fields. There were no boats on the river, no people working in the fields. Through gaps in the clouds, the sun could be seen preparing with silent fiery ceremony to set behind the deserted sandbanks across the river. Suddenly peace was broken by the boy pointing and calling, "Fowers, Channa, fowers!" A little way off there was a huge *kadamba* tree on a wet, muddy stretch of land, with some flowers on its upper branches. These were what had caught the boy's attention. (A few days previously, Raicharan had strung some flowers on to sticks and made him a '*kadamba*-cart'; he had had such fun pulling it along with a string that Raicharan did not have to put on reins that day – an instant promotion from a horse to a groom.)

'Channa' was not very willing to **squelch** through the mud to pick the flowers. He quickly pointed in the other direction and said, "Look, look at that bird – flying – now it's gone. Come, bird, come!" He pushed the chair forward fast, **burbling on** in this way. But it was **futile** to try to distract by so simple a device a boy who would one day become a judge especially as there was nothing particular to attract his attention anywhere, and imaginary birds would not work for very long. "All right," said Raicharan, "you sit in the chair and I'll get you the flowers. Be good now, don't go near the water." Tucking his dhoti up above his knees, he headed for the *kadamba* tree.

But the fact that he had been forbidden to go near the water immediately attracted the boy's mind away from the *kadamba*-flowers and towards the water. He saw it gurgling and swirling along, as if a thousand wavelets were naughtily, merrily escaping to a forbidden place beyond the reach of some mighty Raicharan. The boy was thrilled by their mischievous example. He gently stepped down from his chair, and edged his way to the water. Picking a long **reed**, he leant forward, pretending the reed was a fishing-rod: the romping gurgling wavelets seemed to be murmuring an invitation to the boy to come and join their game.

There was a single plopping sound, but on the bank of the Padma river in

monsoon spate many such sounds can be heard. Raicharan had filled the fold of his dhoti with *kadamba*-flowers. Climbing down from the tree, he made his way back towards the push-chair, smiling – but then he saw that the child was not there. Looking all around, he saw no sign of him anywhere. His blood froze: the universe was suddenly unreal pale and murky as smoke. A single desperate cry burst from his breaking heart: “Master, little master, my sweet, good little master!” But no one called out ‘Channa’ in reply, no childish mischievous laugh came back. The Padma went on rushing and swirling and gurgling as before, as if it knew nothing and had no time to attend to the world’s minor occurrences.

As evening fell the boy’s mother grew anxious and sent people out to search with lanterns. When they reached the river-bank, they found Raicharan wandering over the fields like a midnight storm-wind, sobbing, “Master, my little master!” At last he returned home and threw himself at his mistress’s feet, crying in reply to all her questions, “I don’t know, *Mā*, I don’t know.”

Although everyone knew in their hearts that the Padma was the culprit, suspicion fell on a group of gypsies encamped at the edge of the village. The mistress of the house even began to suspect that Raicharan had stolen the boy – so much so that she called him and entreated, “Bring back my child! I’ll give you whatever money you want.” But Raicharan could only beat his brow, and she ordered him from her sight. Anukul Babu tried to dispel his wife’s unfounded suspicion: what motive could Raicharan have had for so **vile** an act? “What do you mean?” said his wife. “The boy had gold ornaments on him.”

II

Raicharan went back to his home village. His wife had not borne him a child, and he had long ceased to hope for one. But it so happened that before the year had ended his ageing wife gave birth to a son – and then soon afterwards died.

At first Raicharan had nothing but hatred for the newly born child, who he felt had somehow taken the little master’s place by deceit. It seemed a deadly sin to delight in his own son after allowing his master’s only son to be washed away. If his widowed sister had not been there, the child would not have breathed Earth’s air for long.

Amazing it was, but after a few months the child began to crawl over the door-sill and show a merry ability to evade all sorts of restrictions. He chuckled and wailed just as the little master had done. Sometimes when

Raicharan heard him cry his heart missed a beat; it was just as if the little master were crying somewhere for his lost Raicharan. Phelna – that was what Raicharan’s sister called the boy – began in due course to call her ‘Pishi’. When Raicharan heard that familiar name one day, he suddenly thought, “The little master cannot do without my love; he has been born again in my house.”

There were several convincing proofs in favour of this belief. First, there was the short interval between the death and the birth. Second, his wife could not, at so advanced an age, have conceived a son merely through her own **fecundity**. Third, the child crawled, toddled and called his aunt ‘Pishi’ just as the little master had done. There was much to indicate that he too would grow up to become a judge. Raicharan then remembered the strong suspicions the mistress of the house had had, and he realized with astonishment that her maternal instinct had rightly told her that someone had stolen her son. He now felt deeply ashamed of the way he had neglected the child — devotion took hold of him again. From now on he brought him up like a rich man’s son. He bought him satin shirts and a gold-embroidered cap. His dead wife’s ornaments were melted down to make bangles and bracelets for him. He forbade him from playing with the local children; all day long he himself was the child’s sole playmate. Whenever they got the chance, the local boys would mock Phelna for being a ‘prince’, and the villagers marvelled at Raicharan’s odd behaviour.

When Phelna was old enough to go to school, Raicharan sold his land and took the boy to Calcutta. With great difficulty he found a job, and sent Phelna to a high-class school. He skimped and scraped to get the boy good food and clothing and a decent education, saying to himself, “If it was love for me that brought you into my house, dear child, then you must have nothing but the best.”

Twelve years passed in this way. The boy did well at his studies and was fine to behold — sturdily built, with a dark, glossy complexion. He took great trouble over his hair; his tastes were refined and cultured. He could never think of his father quite as his father, because Raicharan treated him with a father’s affection but a servant’s devotion. To his discredit, Phelna never told anyone that Raicharan was his father. The students in the hostel where Phelna lived were always making fun of the rustic Raicharan; and it cannot be denied that when his father was not present Phelna joined in the fun. But everyone was fond of the mild, doting Raicharan, and Phelna also loved him — but (to repeat) not quite as his father - affection was mixed with condescension.

Raicharan grew old. His employer was perpetually finding fault with him. His health was deteriorating, and he could not concentrate on his work. He was also getting forgetful. But no employer who pays full wages will accept old age as an excuse. Moreover, the cash that Raicharan had raised by selling off his possessions was nearly at an end. Phelna was always complaining now that he was short of proper clothes and luxuries.

III

One day Raicharan suddenly resigned from his job, and giving Phelna some money and said, "Something has happened – I need to go back to the village for a few days." He then set off for Barasat, where Anukul Babu was now munsiff.

Anukul had had no other child. His wife still grieved for her son.

One evening Anukul was resting after returning from the court, while his wife, at great expense, purchased from a *sannyāsī* a holy root and a blessing that would bring her a child. A voice was heard in the yard: "Greetings, *Mā*."

"Who's there?" said Anukul Babu.

Raicharan appeared. "I am Raicharan," he said, taking the dust of his former master's feet.

Anukul's heart melted at the sight of the old man. He asked him numerous questions about his present circumstances, and invited him to work for him again.

Raicharan smiled weakly and said, "Let me pay my respects to *Māthākrun*."

Anukul Babu took him through to the inner rooms of the house. His wife was not nearly so pleased to see Raicharan, but Raicharan took no notice of this and said with clasped hands, "Master, *Mā*, it was I who stole your son. It was not the Padma, it was no one else, and it was I, ungrateful wretch that I am."

"What are you saying?" said Anukul. "Where is he?"

"He lives with me," said Raicharan. "I'll bring him the day after tomorrow."

That was Sunday, and the courts were closed. Husband and wife watched the road anxiously from dawn. At ten o'clock, Raicharan arrived with Phelna.

Anukul's wife without thought or question drew him on to her lap, touched him, sniffed him, eyed his face intently, cried and laughed nervously. Truly, the boy was fine to look at – nothing in his looks or dress suggested a poor background. There was a very loving, modest, bashful expression in his face. At the sight of him, Anukul's heart too swelled with love. But keeping his

composure, he asked, "What proof do you have?"

"How can such an act be proved?" said Raicharan. "Only God knows that I stole your son; no one else in the world knows."

Anukul thought the matter over and decided that since his wife had embraced the boy as her own with such fervour it would not be appropriate to search for proof now; whatever the truth might be, it was best to believe. In any case, how could Raicharan have acquired such a boy? And why should the old servant wish to mislead them now?

Questioning the boy, he learnt that he had lived with Raicharan from an early age and had called him Father, but that Raicharan had never behaved towards him like a father – he had been more like a servant.

Driving all doubt from his mind, Anukul said, "But, Raicharan, you must not darken our door again now."

With clasped hands and quavering voice Raicharan replied, "I am old now, master. Where shall I go?"

"Let him stay," said the mistress of the house. "I have forgiven him. Let our son be blessed."

"He cannot be forgiven for what he has done," said the righteous Anukul.

"I didn't do it," cried Raicharan, embracing his master's feet. "God did it."

Even angrier now that Raicharan should lay the blame for his own sin on to God, Anukul said, "One should not place trust in someone who has betrayed trust so **heinously**."

Rising from Anukul's feet, Raicharan said, "It was not I, Master." "Then who was it?"

"It was my Fate."

No educated man could be satisfied by such an explanation. "I have no one else in the world," said Raicharan.

Phelna was certainly rather annoyed that Raicharan had stolen him – a munsiff's son – and dishonourably claimed him as his own. But he said generously to Anukul, "Father, please pardon him. If you won't let him stay in the house, then give him a monthly allowance."

Raicharan, saying nothing, looked once at his son and made an obeisance to all; then he went out through the door and disappeared into the world's multitude. At the end of the month, when Anukul sent a small sum to Raicharan at his village address, the money came back. No one of that name

was known there.

Vocabulary

1. **Dexterity:** skillfulness — skill in using your hands or your mind — you need good manual dexterity to be a dentist.
2. **Raptures:** delight — feeling of extreme pleasure and happiness
3. **Stealthily:** secretly
4. **Merriment:** happiness
5. **Entranced:** amazed or enthralled
6. **Dart:** rush or go quickly
7. **Feats:** deeds
8. **Staggering:** astonishing
9. **Sprung from:** came from
10. **Hell to pay:** a lot of trouble
11. **Capricious:** impulsive or unpredictable
12. **Gingerly:** cautiously
13. **Squelch:** Walk on wet surface
14. **Burbling on:** talking fast
15. **Futile:** useless
16. **Reed:** a stick
17. **Fecundity:** fertility
18. **Heinously:** in an evil manner

2. Hawa Mahal

Hawa Mahal (English translation: "Palace of Winds" or "Palace of the Breeze") is a palace in Jaipur, India. It is constructed of red and pink sandstone. The palace sits on the edge of the City Palace, Jaipur, and extends to the zenana, or women's chambers.

The structure was built in 1799 by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh. He was so intimidated and inspired by the unique structure of Khetri Mahal and he built the grand and historical Hawa Mahal. It was designed by Lal Chand Ustad. Its unique five-storey exterior is akin to the honeycomb of a beehive with its 953 small windows called Jharokhas decorated with intricate latticework. The original intention of the lattice was to allow royal ladies to observe everyday life and festivals celebrated in the street below without being seen, since they had to obey strict 'purdah' (face cover). The lattice also allows cool air from the Venturi effect (doctor breeze) through the intricate pattern, air conditioning the whole area during the high temperatures in summer. Many people see the hawa mahal from the street view and think it is the front of the palace, but in reality it is the back of that structure.

In 2006, restoration and renovation works on the Mahal were undertaken, after a gap of 50 years, to give a face lift to the monument at an estimated cost of Rs 4568 million. The corporate sector lent a hand to preserve the historical monuments of Jaipur and the Unit Trust of India has adopted Hawa Mahal to maintain it. The palace is an extended part of a huge complex. The stone-carved screens, small casements and arched roofs are some of the features of this popular tourist spot. The monument also has delicately modelled hanging cornices. Like several other monuments of Jaipur, the palace is also constructed using sandstone.

The palace is located to the south of Jaipur city, at the main road intersection called the Badi Chaupad (big four square). Jaipur city is well connected by road, rail and air with the rest of the country. The Sanganer International Airport is at a distance of 13 kilometres (8.1 mi) from the city. Entry to the Hawa Mahal is not from the front but from a side road to the rear end.

It is particularly striking when viewed early in the morning, lit with the golden light of sunrise. Hawa Mahal is considered an excellent example of Rajputana architecture. It is visited by a large number of visitors from all parts of India and abroad.

3. Grammar Page

Unit
18

used to (do)

A Study this example situation:

a few years ago



these days

Nicola doesn't travel much these days.
She prefers to stay at home.

But she **used to travel** a lot.
She **used to go** away two or three times a year.

She **used to travel** a lot = she travelled often in the past, but she doesn't do this any more.



B I **used to** do something = I did it often in the past, but not any more:

- I **used to play** tennis a lot, but I don't play very much now.
- David **used to spend** a lot of money on clothes. These days he can't afford it.
- 'Do you go to the cinema much?' 'Not now, but I **used to.**' (= I used to go)

We also use **used to** ... for things that were true, but are not true any more:

- This building is now a furniture shop. It **used to be** a cinema.
- I **used to think** Mark was unfriendly, but now I realise he's a very nice person.
- I've started drinking coffee recently. I never **used to like** it before.
- Lisa **used to have** very long hair when she was a child.

C 'I **used to** do something' is past. There is no present. You cannot say 'I use to do'.
To talk about the present, we use the present simple (I **do**).

Compare:

<i>past</i>	he used to play	we used to live	there used to be
<i>present</i>	he plays	we live	there is

- We **used to live** in a small village, but now we **live** in a city.
- There **used to be** four cinemas in the town. Now there **is** only one.

D The normal question form is **did** (you) **use to** ... ? :

- Did you use to eat** a lot of sweets when you were a child? (= did you do this often?)

The negative form is **didn't use to** ... (**used not to** ... is also possible):

- I **didn't use to like** him. (or I **used not to like** him.)

E Compare I **used to do** and I **was doing**:

- I **used to watch** TV a lot. (= I watched TV often in the past, but I don't do this any more)
- I **was watching** TV when Rob called. (= I was in the middle of watching TV)

F Do not confuse I **used to do** and I **am used to doing** (see Unit 61). The structures and meanings are different:

- I **used to live** alone. (= I lived alone in the past, but I no longer live alone.)
- I **am used to living** alone. (= I live alone, and it's not a problem for me because I've lived alone for some time.)