



**Learn English Through
Stories**
E Series

E24

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1. The Blind Dog

By R.K. Narayan

It was not a very impressive or high-class dog; it was one of those commonplace dogs one sees everywhere—colour of white and dust, tail mutilated at a young age by God knows whom, born in the street, and bred on the leavings and garbage of the marketplace. He had spotty eyes and undistinguished carriage and needless pugnacity. Before he was two years old he had earned the scars of a hundred fights on his body. When he needed rest on hot afternoons he lay curled up under the culvert at the eastern gate of the market. In the evenings he set out on his daily rounds, loafed in the surrounding streets and lanes, engaged himself in skirmishes, picked up edibles on the roadside and was back at the Market Gate by nightfall.

This life went on for three years. And then a change in his life occurred. A beggar, blind in both eyes, appeared at the Market Gate. An old woman led him up there early in the morning, seated him at the gate, and came up again at midday with some food, gathered his coins and took him home at night.

The dog was sleeping nearby. He was stirred by the smell of food. He got up, came out of his shelter and stood before the blind man, wagging his tail and gazing expectantly at the bowl, as he was eating his sparse meal. The blind man swept his arms about and asked, “Who is there?” at which the dog went up and licked his hand. The blind man stroked its coat gently tail to ear and said, “What a beauty you are. Come with me—” He threw a handful of food, which the dog ate gratefully. It was perhaps an auspicious moment for starting a friendship. They met every day there, and the dog cut off much of its rambling to sit up beside the blind man and watch him receive alms morning to evening. In course of time, observing him, the dog understood that the passers-by must give a coin, and whoever went away without dropping a coin was chased by the dog; he tugged the edge of their clothes by his teeth and pulled them back to the old man at the gate and let go only after something was dropped in his bowl. Among those who frequented this place was a village urchin, who had the mischief of a devil in him. He liked to tease the blind man by calling him names and by trying to pick up the coins in his bowl. The blind man helplessly shouted and cried and whirled his staff. On Thursdays this boy appeared at the gate, carrying on his head a basket loaded with cucumber or plantain. Every Thursday afternoon it was a crisis in the blind man’s life. A seller of bright-coloured but doubtful perfumes with his wares mounted on a wheeled platform, a man who spread out cheap storybooks on a gunnysack, another man who carried coloured ribbons on an elaborate frame—these were the people who usually gathered under the

same arch. On a Thursday when the young man appeared at the eastern gate one of them remarked, “Blind fellow! Here comes your scourge—”

“Oh, God, is this Thursday?” he wailed. He swept his arms about and called, “Dog, dog, come here, where are you?” He made the peculiar noise which brought the dog to his side. He stroked his head and muttered, “Don’t let that little rascal...” At this very moment the boy came up with a leer on his face.

“Blind man! Still pretending you have no eyes. If you are really blind, you should not know this either—” He stopped, his hand moving towards the bowl. The dog sprang on him and snapped his jaws on the boy’s wrist. The boy extricated his hand and ran for his life. The dog bounded up behind him and chased him out of the market.

“See the mongrel’s affection for this old fellow,” marvelled the perfume-vendor.

One evening at the usual time the old woman failed to turn up, and the blind man waited at the gate, worrying as the evening grew into night. As he sat fretting there, a neighbour came up and said, “Sami, don’t wait for the old woman. She will not come again. She died this afternoon—”

The blind man lost the only home he had, and the only person who cared for him in this world. The ribbon-vendor suggested, “Here, take this white tape”—he held a length of the white cord which he had been selling—“I will give this to you free of cost. Tie it to the dog and let him lead you about if he is really so fond of you—”

Life for the dog took a new turn now. He came to take the place of the old woman. He lost his freedom completely. His world came to be circumscribed by the limits of the white cord which the ribbon-vendor had spared. He had to forget wholesale all his old life—all his old haunts. He simply had to stay on forever at the end of that string. When he saw other dogs, friends or foes, instinctively he sprang up, tugging the string, and this invariably earned him a kick from his master. “Rascal, want to tumble me down—have sense...” In a few days the dog learnt to discipline his instinct and impulse. He ceased to take notice of other dogs, even if they came up and growled at his side. He lost his own orbit of movement and contact with his fellow-creatures.

To the extent of this loss his master gained. He moved about as he had never moved in his life. All day he was on his legs, led by the dog. With the staff in one hand and the dog-lead in the other, he moved out of his home—a corner in a *choultry* veranda a few yards off the market: he had moved in there after the old woman’s death. He started out early in the day. He found that he could treble his income by moving about instead of staying in one place. He

moved down the *Choultry Street*, and wherever he heard people's voices he stopped and held out his hands for alms. Shops, schools, hospitals, hotels—he left nothing out. He gave a tug when he wanted the dog to stop, and shouted like a bullock-driver when he wanted him to move on. The dog protected his feet from going into pits, or stumping against steps or stones, and took him up inch by inch on safe ground and steps. For this sight people gave coins and helped him. Children gathered round him and gave him things to eat. A dog is essentially an active creature who punctuates his hectic rounds with well-defined periods of rest. But now this dog (henceforth to be known as Tiger) had lost all rest. He had rest only when the old man sat down somewhere. At night the old man slept with the cord turned around his finger. "I can't take chances with you—" he said. A great desire to earn more money than ever before seized his master, so that he felt any resting a waste of opportunity, and the dog had to be continuously on his feet. Sometimes his legs refused to move. But if he slowed down even slightly his master goaded him on fiercely with his staff. The dog whined and groaned under this thrust. "Don't whine, you rascal. Don't I give you your food? You want to loaf, do you?" swore the blind man. The dog lumbered up and down and round and round the marketplace with slow steps, tied down to the blind tyrant. Long after the traffic at the market ceased, you could hear the night stabbed by the far-off wail of the tired dog. It lost its original appearance. As months rolled on, bones stuck up at his haunches and ribs were relieved through his fading coat.

The ribbon-seller, the novel-vendor and the perfumer observed it one evening when business was slack, and held a conference among themselves. "It rends my heart to see that poor dog slaving. Can't we do something?" The ribbon-seller remarked, "That rascal has started lending money for interest—I heard it from the fruit-seller—He is earning more than he needs. He has become a very devil for money..." At this point the perfumer's eyes caught the scissors dangling from the ribbon-rack. "Give it here," he said and moved on with the scissors in hand.

The blind man was passing in front of the eastern gate. The dog was straining the lead. There was a piece of bone lying on the way and the dog was straining to pick it up. The lead became taut and hurt the blind man's hand, and he tugged the string and kicked till the dog howled. It howled, but could not pass the bone lightly; it tried to make another dash for it. The blind man was heaping curses on it. The perfumer stepped up, applied the scissors and snipped the cord. The dog bounced off and picked up the bone. The blind man stopped dead where he stood, with the other half of the string dangling in his hand. "Tiger! Tiger! Where are you?" he cried. The perfumer moved away quietly, muttering, "You heartless devil! You will never get at him again! He

has his freedom!” The dog went off at top speed. He nosed about the ditches happily, hurled himself on other dogs and ran round and round the fountain in the Market Square barking, his eyes sparkling with joy. He returned to his favourite haunts and hung about the butcher’s shop, the tea-stall and the bakery.

The ribbon-vendor and his two friends stood at the Market Gate and enjoyed the sight immensely as the blind man struggled to find his way about. He stood rooted to the spot, waving his stick; he felt as if he were hanging in mid-air. He was wailing. “Oh, where is my dog? Where is my dog? Won’t someone give him back to me? I will murder it when I get at it again!” He groped about, tried to cross the road, came near being run over by a dozen vehicles at different points, tumbled and struggled and gasped. “He’d deserve it if he was run over, this heartless blackguard—” they said, observing him. However, the old man struggled through and with the help of someone found his way back to his corner in the *choultry* veranda and sank down on his gunnysack bed, half-faint with the strain of his journey.

He was not seen for ten days, fifteen days and twenty days. Nor was the dog seen anywhere. They commented among themselves: “The dog must be loafing over the whole earth, free and happy. The beggar is perhaps gone forever...” Hardly was this sentence uttered when they heard the familiar tap-tap of the blind man’s staff. They saw him again coming up the pavement—led by the dog. “Look! Look!” they cried. “He has again got at it and tied it up...” The ribbon-seller could not contain himself. He ran up and said, “Where have you been all these days?”

“Know what happened!” cried the blind man. “This dog ran away. I should have died in a day or two, confined to my corner, no food, not an anna to earn—imprisoned in my corner. I should have perished if it continued for another day—but this thing returned—”

“When? When?”

“Last night. At midnight as I slept in bed, he came and licked my face. I felt like murdering him. I gave him a blow which he will never forget again,” said the blind man. “I forgave him, after all a dog! He loafed as long as he could pick up some rubbish to eat on the road, but real hunger has driven him back to me, but he will not leave me again. See! I have got this—” and he shook the lead: it was a steel chain this time.

Once again there was the dead, despairing look in the dog’s eyes. “Go on, you fool,” cried the blind man, shouting like an ox-driver. He tugged the chain, poked with the stick, and the dog moved away on slow steps. They stood

listening to the tap-tap going away.

“Death alone can help that dog,” cried the ribbon-seller, looking after it with a sigh. “What can we do with a creature who returns to his doom with such a free heart?”

2. Grammar Page

am, is and are

The words **am**, **is** and **are** are the simple present forms of the verb **be**.

- Use **am** with the pronoun **I**.
- Use **is** with **singular nouns** like 'my dad' and 'the teacher', and with the pronouns **he**, **she** and **it**.
- Use **are** with **plural nouns** like 'my parents' and 'Jenny and Mary', and with the pronouns **we**, **you** and **they**.

I **am** twelve.

I **am** in the garden.

My mom **is** very tired today.

The teacher **is** tall.

She **is** also pretty.

Our dog **is** black.

The children **are** asleep.

Computers **are** very expensive.

My brother and I **are** upstairs.

We **are** in our bedrooms.

You **are** my best friend.

You and David **are** my best friends.

Here is a table to help you remember how to use **is**, **am** and **are**.

	singular	plural
first person	I am	we are
second person	you are	you are
third person	he is she is it is	they are they are they are

Notes

There are short ways of saying and writing **am**, **is** and **are** with pronouns. These short forms are called contractions.

full form	short form
I am	I'm
you are	you're
he is	he's
she is	she's
it is	it's
we are	we're
they are	they're

You can use these contractions to replace **am**, **is** and **are** when they are used with **not**:

full form	short form
I am not	I'm not
he is not	he isn't
she is not	she isn't
it is not	it isn't
we are not	we aren't
you are not	you aren't
they are not	they aren't