



Learn English Through  
Stories

H Series

H13

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# The Emperor's Ring: Part 11

## Eleven

It had already been decided that we would first go to Laxmanjhoola, spend most of the day there and stop at Hrishikesh on our way back. To tell the truth, I wasn't too keen on going to Hrishikesh, which I knew would be crowded and dirty like any other holy place. Only the river was likely to be a little different.

Bonobihari Babu was now singing the same Urdu song Feluda had been singing in the train:

*Jab chhor chaley Lucknow nigari; Kahen haal ke hum par kya guzri ...*

He stopped abruptly and asked, 'Have you heard of Jim Corbett?'

'Yes.'

'He killed man-eaters in these valleys, but like me, he understood animals and loved them. I have always admired him for that.' Bonobihari Babu started singing again.

Our car sped towards Laxmanjhoola through the hills. On our right, the river occasionally showed itself through stretches of dense jungle. The sky was clouding over. The breeze seemed to grow cooler each time the sun got blocked out by a cloud.

I began to think about the stolen ring again. I had learnt quite a few things in the last few days, but there was such a lot that still remained unexplained. Why did Mahabir think Pyarelal's death had not been a natural one? Why had Pyarelal screamed? Which spy had he tried to talk about? Was it someone we knew, or was it an outsider?

All these thoughts chased one another in my mind, as I glanced about idly. My eyes suddenly fell on the rear-view mirror. I saw Feluda in it, looking intently in front of him. I turned my head. He was staring at the driver. My eyes turned automatically in the same direction. Then my heart seemed to stand still. On the driver's neck, between his turban and shirt-collar, was a long scratch.

We had seen someone recently with an identical mark. It had been Ganesh Guha.

I looked at Feluda again. He was now gazing out of the window. I had never seen him look so grim. Sitting with us in the Kwaliti restaurant, Ganesh Guha had said he had left his job and was leaving for Calcutta the same day. Today he was dressed like a Sikh and taking us to Laxmanjhoola. What could it mean?

Then it occurred to me that this taxi had been arranged by Bonobihari Babu himself.

Oh God ... in that case ...?

I could think no more. My head began to reel. Where were we going? Was it Laxmanjhoola or was it somewhere else? What did Bonobihari Babu intend to do? He appeared calm enough and certainly did not look as though he had any ill-intent.

At this point, he startled me by speaking abruptly.

‘We shall now turn left. There is a path that goes through the jungle. Then we’ll come to a house where I expect to find the python. Let’s just have a look now, then we can collect it on our way back. All right, Felu Babu?’

‘Yes, fine,’ said Feluda with remarkable composure. But I couldn’t help ask, ‘Didn’t you say the python was in Laxmanjhoola?’

Bonobihari Babu burst out laughing.

‘And who,’ he asked, ‘told you this is not Laxmanjhoola? Howrah doesn’t simply mean the Howrah Bridge, does it? It means a whole region. Laxmanjhoola begins from here. The bridge over the Ganges is more than a mile from here.’

Our car took a left turn into the jungle. The path, covered with overgrown wild bushes, was virtually invisible.

I noticed that the driver didn’t even wait for instructions. He drove as though he knew where he was going.

‘How do you find this place, Felu Babu?’ Bonobihari Babu asked. His voice sounded different.

There appeared to be a suppressed excitement behind those simple words.

‘Beautiful!’ said Feluda and gently pressed my right hand with his left. I knew it was his way of saying—‘Don’t be afraid, I’m here.’

‘Have you brought a handkerchief, Topshe?’ asked Feluda. I wasn’t prepared for such a question at all. So I could only stammer, ‘H-h-andkerchief?’

‘Don’t you know what it is?’

‘Yes, of course. But ... I forgot to bring one.’

Bonobihari Babu said, ‘Are you worried about the dust? It’s not going to be all that dusty in here.’

'No, it's not the dust,' Feluda replied and stuffed a handkerchief into my pocket. I totally failed to see why he did this.

Bonobihari Babu's tape-recorder was lying on his lap. He now switched it on. A hyena started laughing amongst the trees.

The jungle was getting denser and darker. In any case, the sun was probably hiding behind clouds. I wondered where Baba's car might be. Could they have reached Laxmanjhoola already? If anything happened to us, they wouldn't even get to know. Was that why Bonobihari Babu had allowed them to go ahead?

I tried to muster all my courage. Although I had every faith in Feluda, something told me every bit of his own courage and presence of mind was about to be tested.

Our car was now crawling along in deep jungle. Bonobihari Babu had turned the recorder off; nor was he singing himself. All I could hear was a cricket and the crunch of leaves under the wheels.

After about ten minutes, through the tree trunks and other foliage, we saw a house. Who on earth could have built a house in a place like this? Then I remembered an uncle of mine who was a forest officer. He was supposed to live in a house in the middle of a forest, with just tigers and other wild animals for company. Perhaps this was a house like his?

As we went closer to the house, I realized it was made of wood and had been built on a raised platform. A wooden staircase went up to the front door. It was clearly very old and certainly didn't look as though anyone lived in it.

Our taxi stopped before this house. 'I don't think Pandeyji is at home,' said Bonobihari Babu, 'but let's go in and wait since we have travelled all this way. He may have stepped out only for a few minutes to gather firewood or something. He lives alone, you see, and has to do everything all by himself. But, like me, he's not afraid of animals. So come in, both of you. You've seen fake sannyasis, haven't you? Now you'll see a perfectly genuine one and perhaps learn something about how he lives.'

The three of us got out of the car. I cannot tell how I might have kept my nerve if it wasn't for Feluda's reassuring presence. In fact, his unruffled calm made me wonder if the whole thing wasn't just my imagination—what if the driver was an ordinary Sikh and Bonobihari Babu was telling the truth and this house did contain a sadhu called Pandeyji who had a twelve-foot python?

We walked towards the staircase, crunching dry leaves under our feet. Then we climbed up the steps and went in.

The room we walked into was not much larger than a railway compartment. There was another door that probably led to a second room, but it appeared to be locked from the other side. There were two small windows on the opposite wall, through which we could see the trees. The platform on which the house stood was no higher than a man of medium height.

Bonobihari Babu's tape-recorder was hanging from his shoulder. He put it down on the floor and said, 'You can see how simply he lives.'

There was a broken table, a bench with an arm missing and a tin chair. Feluda went across to the bench and sat down. I did the same.

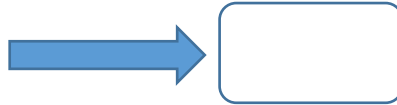
Bonobihari Babu started filling his pipe. Then he lit it, put the match out, threw it out of the window and sat down on the chair, after having tested its strength by pressing its seat. 'A-a-a-a-h!' he sighed with pleasure and began puffing at his pipe, filling the whole room with smoke.

'Well,' he said after a while, in a low but clear voice, 'Felu Babu—can I have my ring back, please?'

## 2. Grammar Page

### To/at/in and into

We say go/come/travel (etc.) to a place or event.



go to India; go back to England; return to London; go to work

go to the bank; go to a party; come to my house; drive to the airport

be taken to hospital.

When are your friends **going back to India**? (not going back in India)

Three people were injured in the accident and **taken to hospital**.

In the same way we say **Welcome to ...** , **a trip to ...** , **a visit to ...** , **on my way to ...** etc. :

**Welcome to our country!** (not **Welcome in**)

We had to cancel **our trip to Paris**.

**Compare to (for movement) and in/at (for position):**

They are **going to** France. but They live **in** France.

Can you **come to** the party? but I'll **see you at** the party.

We say '(I've) **been to**' a place or an event:

I've **been to** India four times, but I've never been to Jalandhar.

Gainda has never **been to a football match** in her life.

**get and arrive:** We say get to a place:

They **got to the hotel** at midnight. What time did you **get to the party**?

We say **arrive in ...** or **arrive at ...** (**not arrive to**).

We say **arrive in** a town or country:

They arrived **in London / in England** a week ago.

For other places (buildings etc.) or events, we say **arrive at**:

What time did you **arrive at the hotel / at the airport / at the party**

**home**

We say: **go home, come home, get home, arrive home, on the way home** etc. (no preposition).

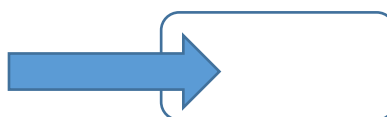
We do not say '**to home**':

What time did you **get home**? (not get to home)

I met Ritu **on my way home**. Not (**on my way to home**)

But: I met Ritu **on my way to the house**.

**into**



**go into, get into** ... etc. = enter (a room / a building / a car etc.):

I opened the door, **went into the room** and sat down.

A bird **flew into the kitchen** through the window.

Every month my salary is **paid** directly **into my bank account**.

With some verbs (especially **go/get/put**) we often use **in** (instead of **into**):

She **got in the car** and drove away. or She **got into the car** ...

I read the letter and put it back **in the envelope**.

The opposite of **into** is **out of**:

She **got out of** the car and **went into** a shop.

For buses, trains and planes, we usually say get on and get off:

She **got on the bus** and I never saw her again.

You need to **get off** (the train) at the next station.



## Exercise

Put in **to/at/in/into** where necessary. If no preposition is necessary, leave the space empty.

1. Three people were taken ..... hospital after the accident.
2. I'm tired. Let's go ..... home now.
3. We left our luggage ..... the station and went to find something to eat.
4. Shall we take a taxi ..... the station or shall we walk?
5. I have to go ..... the bank today. What time does it open?
6. The Amazon flows ..... the Atlantic Ocean.
7. I missed the bus, so I walked ..... home.
8. Have you ever been ..... Canada?
9. I lost my key, but I managed to climb ..... the house through a window.
10. We got stuck in a traffic jam on our way ..... the airport.
11. Did you enjoy your visit .... the zoo?
12. I did some shopping on my way ..... home.
13. Marcel is French. He has just returned ..... France after two years ....  
Brazil.
14. It took us four hours to get ..... the top of the mountain.
15. Welcome ..... the hotel. We hope you enjoy your stay here.

## Answers

1. Three people were taken **to** hospital after the accident.
2. I'm tired. Let's go home now. (no preposition)
3. We left our luggage **at** the station and went to find something to eat.
4. Shall we take a taxi **to** the station or shall we walk?
5. I have to go **to** the bank today. What time does it open?
6. The Amazon flows **into** the Atlantic Ocean.
7. I missed the bus, so I walked home. (no preposition)
8. Have you ever been **to** Canada?
9. I lost my key, but I managed to climb **into** the house through a window.
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13. Marcel is French. He has just returned **to** France after two years **in** Brazil.
14. It took us four hours to get **to** the top of the mountain.
15. Welcome **to** the hotel. We hope you enjoy your stay here.