



Learn English Through Stories

D Series

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# 1. The Best Friend

Keshava was a lonely washerman. His only friend was his donkey. They worked together the whole day, and often Keshava would talk to the donkey and pour out his heart to it.

One day, Keshava had many clothes to wash. He was walking home with the donkey when suddenly he felt very tired. He tied the donkey to a tree and sat down to rest for a while. Nearby, there was a school. The window of a classroom was open, and through it, the noise the children were making could be heard. Then came the voice of the teacher. He was scolding the students. 'Here I am, trying to turn you donkeys into human beings, but you just won't study.'

As soon as Keshava heard these words, his ears pricked up. What! Here was a man who could actually turn donkeys into humans! This was the answer to his prayers. Impatiently, he waited for school to be over for the day. Then, when all the children had gone home, and only the teacher remained behind to check some papers, Keshava entered the classroom.

'What do you want, Keshava?' asked the teacher, who knew him well.

Keshava scratched his head and said, 'I heard what you said to the children. Please take my donkey and make him into a human being. I am very lonely, and this donkey is my only friend. If it became a human, we could have such good times together.'

The teacher realized Keshava was a simpleton and decided to fool him. He pretended to think for a while, then he said, 'It will take some time. Give me six months. Oh yes, and it is an expensive request. It will cost you a thousand rupees.' The foolish washerman agreed and rushed home to get the money. He left the donkey with the teacher and settled down to wait.

Exactly six months later, Keshava appeared at the teacher's door. Now, the teacher had been using the donkey for his own work and had found it most useful. Not wanting to give it up, he said, 'Oh, your donkey became so clever that it ran away.'

'Where is he now?' asked Keshava.

'He is the headman of the next village,' said the cunning teacher and slammed his door shut.

Keshava trotted off to the next village. There the village elders were sitting under a tree, discussing some serious problems. How surprised they were when Keshava marched up to the headman, huffing and puffing, grabbed his hand and said, 'How dare you? You think you are so clever that you can run away? I spent a thousand rupees to make you a human from a donkey. Come home at once!'

The headman understood someone had played a trick on Keshava. 'I am not your donkey!' he said. 'Go to the sage sitting in the forest. He will explain everything to you.'

Sadly, Keshava went to find the sage. He found him sitting under a tree, deep in meditation. He crept up and quickly grabbed the sage's beard. 'Come back now!' he shouted. 'Enough of this!'

The startled sage stood up and somehow calmed Keshava. When he finally heard what had happened, he had a good laugh. Then he told the washerman, 'The teacher made a fool of you. Your donkey must be still with him. Go and take it back from him. And then try to make some real friends, who will talk with you and share your troubles with you. A donkey will never be able to do that!'

## 2. Good Luck Gopal

Gopal was a good-natured but very dull boy. His father was a learned man and despaired for his son. 'You must study hard, Gopal,' he would tell his son. 'Without learning, you will remain a frog in the well.'

Poor Gopal tried very hard, but he was rather stupid and could not progress much with his studies. Some years later, his father died. By then Gopal was married and had a family to look after. But no one would give him a job, he was so silly. One day, there was no food in the house and Gopal's wife said to him, 'I have heard that our king is very fond of good literature. Why don't you write him a nice poem? Perhaps he will like it and give you a reward.'

Gopal had no choice but to agree, and he set off to have a bath in the pond before sitting down to write his verse. At the pond he saw a pig, covered in mud, rubbing its back against a tree trunk. The pig was rubbing so hard that Gopal was afraid its skin would come off. So he said, 'Don't rub so hard. It is not good for you. It will put your life in danger.' Then, unable to think of anything else to write, he put down these words on a palm leaf and made his way to the palace.

By the time he reached there, it was evening and the palace gates were shut. The guard refused to let him in. 'Please,' Gopal pleaded. 'I have an important document for the king.' One of the guards took pity on him and agreed to leave the palm leaf where the king would see it in the morning.

Gopal handed over the palm leaf and went to rest in a dormitory. The royal guard placed the palm leaf on the king's table for him to see when he woke up. The next morning, the royal barber came to trim the king's hair and was sharpening his knife against a stone, while the king waited for his haircut. Just then, the king's eyes fell on the palm leaf and he read aloud what was written on it: 'Don't rub so hard. It is not good for you. It will put your life in danger.'

The barber had been sharpening his knife because he planned to use it to kill the king. An evil minister had made him agree to take on the job. When he heard the king's words, he was scared out of his wits. The king knew his plan! He fell at the king's feet and begged for forgiveness. He also told the king about the minister and how he had made the barber agree to carry out the killing.

The king got the minister arrested and threw him into prison. Then he realized the words on the palm leaf had saved his life and he wanted to know who had written them. An astonished Gopal was dragged out of bed and presented before the king, who showered him with rewards and appointed him as the court astrologer.

A few days later, the queen could not find her favourite necklace. The whole palace was in a turmoil. Even the king was worried. If the queen did not get the necklace soon, he would have to face the consequences. So he summoned Gopal. 'You saved my life with your divine powers. Now help us find this necklace,' he commanded.

Poor Gopal, he did not know what to do. Trembling, he said, 'I can look at the past and predict the future only when I am alone. Please let me go to my room. I will come to you shortly with the whereabouts of the necklace.' Then he rushed to his room, bolted the door and lamented to himself loudly, cursing his wife for the situation, 'O lady, your desires have doomed your husband. Because of you your husband is in trouble, and you may be a widow soon. Your husband escaped once, but this time there is no escape for him.' On the other side of the door, a maidservant heard these words and started trembling. She had stolen an earring once with the help of her husband, who was the palace gardener, and this time, the two had got greedy and stolen the queen's precious necklace. Hearing Gopal's words, she thought he was talking to her and knocked on his door. As soon as he opened it, she fell at his feet and begged forgiveness. Then she told him where the necklace and the earring were kept. Gopal happily went and told this to the king and once again everyone marvelled at Gopal's divine powers.

A few weeks went by peacefully. Then one day, a messenger arrived from the neighbouring king. In his hand he held a wooden box, its lid shut tight. The message from the king said: 'We have heard much about the new astrologer in your court and his powers. Here is a test. Can he tell what is in this box?'

The court now turned towards Gopal. The kingdom's reputation was hanging on his words. Gopal, who of course had no idea what was in the box, muttered his father's words to himself, 'Oh frog, your life is indeed becoming very difficult.'

No one understood what he meant, but the messenger looked amazed. He opened the lid and out hopped a frog!

By now the king was very impressed with Gopal and showered him with gold coins. But Gopal had had enough. 'I was told I would be able to predict only three things correctly,' he told the king. 'I have finished making all three prophecies. Now please let me return to my wife.' Sadly, the king agreed and sent Gopal home, but not before plying him with many more gifts. Gopal and his wife lived the rest of their lives in happiness and comfort.

### **3. Nakul's First Lesson**

Bhaskar was a wealthy, worldly-wise merchant. He had one son, Nakul. One day, Bhaskar fell ill and realized he was going to die. So he called Nakul to him and gave him some advice. 'When you do business and travel to foreign lands, make sure you know the local culture well. Try to gain as much information as you can before you go there, as only your knowledge and presence of mind will come to your help in an unknown land.'

Nakul listened to his father's words carefully. Bhaskar died soon after and Nakul began to look after the business. Once, he had to sail to a faraway country on work. There, he stayed in an inn. He got talking to its owner and, without realizing, ended up telling the man all about his life, the business and his father.

Next day, he went to the market, and was amazed when a one-armed man rushed up to him and said, 'Your father took one of my arms as a loan. You must return it to me.' Not knowing what to do, Nakul asked for a day to think about this. Then, a woman came up to him and said, 'Your father married me. He used to send me money every month. Now that he is dead, you must give me money.' Again Nakul asked for a day's respite and walked on. He stopped at another inn and ate some breakfast. When he went to make his payment, the owner said, 'I only want you to make me happy.' Though he had to pay only two coins, Nakul gave the man five, but still he said he was unhappy. Puzzled, Nakul walked on.

A man invited him to a game of dice. Poor Nakul did not know that they were playing with a trick dice. He lost all the games. But the man who won set an unusual condition. 'You must drink all the water in the sea, or else give me all the goods in your ship.' Poor Nakul again said he would be back the next day with his answer.

That night, as he lay in his bed, he remembered his father's words, 'In a foreign land only your wits will come to your aid.'

The next morning, as soon as he went to the market the one-armed man appeared before him. Nakul greeted him with a big smile and said, 'You were right. My father took many hands like yours and our house is full of hands. Give me your other hand. I will find the matching one and send it to you.' The man ran away in fright.

Then he found the woman who claimed to have been married to his father. 'Mother!' he shouted. 'My father was wrong not to have told us about you. Now you are like a second mother to me. Come home with me and help my mother in the fields.' The woman too made a quick getaway when she heard this.

Next he went to the hotel. The owner was standing outside. Nakul shouted to him, 'Hail the king! Your king is the best in the world!' The man had no choice but to answer, 'You are right. I am happy you think so.'

'If you are happy, I have paid for my meal,' said Nakul and went to find the man with the dice. When he found him, he said, 'I have thought over the challenge. I will drink all the water in the sea. But you have to bring me the water in jugs.' That man too ran away when he heard this.

Nakul went on to do a lot of business in that country and returned home richer—in wisdom too!



## 4. Golden Silence

Somesh was a boy of ten. He was a chatterbox and loved to talk with anyone who had the time to listen to him. Sometimes he would talk so much that his parents would have to tell him to stop and rest his tongue awhile!

Every night, he would lie down to sleep with his father, who would tell him a story. At that time Somesh was all ears. He would listen to his father's story attentively and then drift off to sleep. One day, he listened to his father's story as usual. The next morning when he woke up, his parents were shocked. There was pin-drop silence in the house. Somesh had stopped talking! At first they were relieved, thinking he was playing a game. But when he did not talk even after many days, they got worried. They took him to the best medicine men in the country, to all the sages and holy men they could find, but no one found anything wrong with him. Neither did any of their treatments have any effect on the boy.

Years passed and Somesh grew into a young man. His parents and everyone who knew him now thought him to be dumb. One day, he was travelling with his father's friend Lokesh to another village. They sat down to rest under a huge banyan tree. A crow was cawing loudly on one of the branches. Lokesh was telling Somesh a very funny story involving a milkman, his cow and the village goonda and was mighty irritated to have the crow cawing loudly overhead as he spoke. Finally he could take it no longer. The crow was spoiling a perfect story! He first tried to shoo it away, but it paid him no heed. Then he picked up a stone and threw it at the crow, thinking that would make it fly away. Instead, the stone hit the crow and it fell dead.

Lokesh was horrified. He had not meant to kill the bird at all. As he stood staring at the dead figure lying under the tree, he did not realize when Somesh had come up behind him. He was stunned when he heard a voice behind him say, 'Foolish crow, if only you had kept your mouth shut and been silent, you would not have met this end.'

Lokesh forgot all about the crow and turned to stare at Somesh. The boy had spoken! 'Say it again, Somesh!' he begged. But Somesh just smiled mysteriously and refused to utter one more word. Lokesh hurried back to the village and told Somesh's father the story. Now Somesh's parents begged him again and again, 'Speak once more, son. For the sake of your dear old parents.'

But it seemed as if Somesh did not know how to talk, and everyone put the incident down to Lokesh's imagination.

After that day, Somesh's father and Lokesh, who had been business partners and friends for many years, stopped speaking to each other. They took on other partners in business and suffered losses. They were miserable as they had no one to share their deepest sorrows and joys with. Somesh saw all this, and one day, as he sat down to eat with his father, he noticed his father was just toying with his food. His mind was clearly elsewhere. Suddenly Somesh spoke again, 'If Lokesh Uncle had remained silent, he would have been your friend still. You were right, Father, silence is golden and speech is silver.'

His father nearly fainted when he heard this. Suddenly he remembered the bedtime story he had told his ten-year-old son. It was about a king who lost his kingdom because he was too busy talking to prepare for war. And his final words before his son had drifted off to sleep were: Silence is golden, speech is silver.

He hugged his son and explained, 'That was just a saying. How I have longed to hear you talk again. Please do not do this again. I will never complain about your chattering again.'

From that day on, Somesh spoke again, but he remembered to think carefully before he opened his mouth!

## 5. Grammar page

### The Simple Past Tense

Use the **simple past tense** to talk about things that happened in the past. The simple past tense is also used to talk about things that happened in stories.



The wicked Queen **gave** Snow White a poisoned apple.



Pinocchio's nose **grew** longer every time he told a lie.



Dinosaurs **lived** millions of years ago.

I **bought** a new camera last week.

Joe **learned** to play the guitar very quickly.

We **drove** to the safari park last weekend.

The giant panda **gave** birth to a cub last night.

Yesterday Dad **took** me to the carnival.

The plane **landed** a few minutes ago.

The children **visited** a farm during the holidays.

Who **invented** the computer?

Jack and Jill **went** up the hill.

Little Red Riding Hood **decided** to visit her grandmother.

The Three Bears **found** Goldilocks asleep in their house.