



Learn English Through Stories

D Series

D49

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1. The Case of the Missing Necklace

Princess Chandravati was very beautiful. She loved all kinds of jewellery and always wanted to wear the most precious, most lovely jewels. Once, a jeweller came to the palace and gifted the king a wonderful diamond necklace. It glittered with small and big diamonds. It was certainly a very expensive necklace. The princess fell in love with it as soon as she saw it, so the king presented it to her.

After that, the princess always wore the necklace, wherever she went. One day, she was walking in the palace garden when she felt like taking a dip in the pond. She took off the necklace and put it in the hands of her oldest and most trusted servant. 'Hold this,' she said, 'and be careful. This is the most precious necklace in the whole world.'

The servant, an old woman, settled down under a tree, holding tightly on to the ornament. But it was a hot summer afternoon and they had been walking for a while . . . Slowly the woman's eyes started closing and soon she was snoring gently. Just as she was drifting off into a wonderful dream, she felt someone tugging the necklace from her hands. She woke up with a start and looked around. There was no one, and the necklace was gone! Scared out of her wits, she started screaming. The royal guards rushed up and she pointed in the direction she thought the thief may have taken. The guards ran off that way.

Now who should be walking on that road, but a poor and slightly stupid farmer. As soon as he saw a platoon of the king's palace guards rushing down the road, thundering towards him, he thought they wanted to catch him and started running. But he was not a very strong man and could not outrun the hefty guards. They caught him in no time.

'Where is it?' they demanded, shaking him.

'Where is what?' he stammered back.

'The necklace you stole!' the guards shouted, giving him a few more shakes.

The farmer had no idea what they were talking about. He only understood something was lost and he was supposed to have it. 'I don't know where it is now,' he said quickly. 'I gave it to my landlord.'

The guards now ran to the landlord's house. 'Give us the necklace!' they demanded of the fat landlord as he sat balancing his account books.

'Necklace!' The landlord was startled. 'I don't have any.'

'Then tell us quickly who does!'

The landlord saw the priest walking by the house. He pointed a chubby finger at him. 'He does! That man has it.' The guards now caught hold of the priest who was walking to the temple, thinking about the creamy payasam his wife had made for lunch. He was stunned when a pack of burly guards jumped on him and demanded a necklace. He remembered the minister Bhupati, who was at the temple now, praying to the goddess. He took the guards to the temple and pointed at the praying minister. 'I gave it to him.'

Bhupati too was caught and all four men were thrown into jail. Now, the chief minister of the kingdom knew Bhupati well. He was a good and honest man who had served the king faithfully for many years, so the chief minister was puzzled. Why had Bhupati suddenly stolen the princess's favourite ornament?

He decided to find out and asked one of his spies to listen to the men as they sat talking in the jail.

First Bhupati asked the priest, 'Why did you say you gave me a necklace? I was praying quietly in the temple, and you have landed me in jail.'

The priest scratched his head and pointed to the landlord. 'I didn't know what else to do. But he set the guards on me. I was only walking by his house.'

The landlord looked sheepish. Then he turned burning eyes on the farmer. 'You lazy good-for-nothing! Why did you say I had the necklace?'

The farmer, trembling under the angry gaze of the three men, said, 'The guards jumped on me so suddenly, I did not know what to say . . . '

When the spy reported this conversation to the chief minister, he understood that none of these men was the thief. So who was it? He ordered a thorough search of the palace garden, especially where the servant had sat dozing. The soldiers searched high and low, till they saw something glinting in the tree. There sat a huge monkey. And around its neck was the most beautiful, most precious necklace in the whole world!

Of course, it took a lot of coaxing and a huge bunch of bananas, before the monkey agreed to have the necklace removed from around its neck. And the princess decided the world's most expensive diamond necklace was best worn indoors!

2. A Question of Maths

Srimukha was a clever but poor farmer. One day, he learnt that the king was passing through the village and would be stopping there for a night. He decided to give the king a gift and perhaps earn a small reward. He took his best cock to the king and presented it to him.

The king was very pleased to get such a fine bird. Then he saw the intelligent look on Srimukha's face and decided to test him. 'In my family, I have a wife, two sons and two daughters, and you are my guest today. Tell me, how can I divide this one cock among seven people?'

Srimukha thought for a while and said, 'It is easy. You are the head of the family, so you should get the head. Your wife will get the cock's back as she is the backbone of the family. Your daughters will one day get married and go away, so they should get the two wings, and your sons will follow the path you show them, so they should get the legs.'

'And what about you?'

'I am the guest, so I should get whatever is left over.'

The king was pleased by this clever answer and presented Srimukha with a gold coin. Now Srimukha had a foolish neighbour, Sripati, who became very jealous when he heard about the reward. He decided to present the king with five cocks and earn five pieces of gold.

When he appeared before the king with the five cocks, the king asked him the same question. 'How can five cocks be divided between seven people?'

Sripati was dumbstruck. Who knew the king would ask such a difficult question? As he stood trying to calculate, the king sent for Srimukha. The farmer heard the question and quickly worked out the answer. 'We will divide everyone into groups of three,' he said. 'Your Majesty and the queen and one cock will be one group. So the king and queen will get one cock. The two princesses and one cock will be another group. The two princes and one cock will form the third group. I will form the last group with the remaining two cocks, so I will get two cocks.'

The king smiled delightedly at this answer. He presented Srimukha with some more gold coins and turned to Sripati who stood there open-mouthed, still counting on his fingers. 'The coins are rewards for Srimukha's intelligence, not the cocks,' he explained gently.

3. The Clever Brothers

Once upon a time, there were three brothers. They were all very clever and one day decided to make their fortune using their powers of reasoning and logic.

As they walked to the nearest big city to look for work, they saw some footprints on the dirt road. As they stood looking at the marks, a merchant came rushing up to them. 'Did you see anything go by on this road?' he asked in a panic. The first brother looked closely at the prints and said, 'Yes, a large camel.' The second said, 'It was a one-eyed camel.' The third, who had been looking further down the road, said, 'It was carrying a woman and a child on its back.'

Now the merchant was furious and shouted, 'You have kidnapped my wife and child. Come with me to the king.'

The three brothers could not get him to see reason and the four men ended up in the king's court. 'Hmm,' the king said, after he had heard the entire story. 'If you three claim to be so clever, let me set a task for you. I will place before you a wooden box which will be locked. You will have to tell me what contains it without looking inside.'

The three brothers agreed, and soon the king's men placed before them a stout wooden box, firmly shut. The first brother said immediately, 'It has something round inside.'

The second said, 'It is a pomegranate.'

'An unripe pomegranate,' added the third.

The box was opened and indeed, inside there was an unripe pomegranate.

The king now asked them for an explanation. The first man said, 'When your servant was bringing the box, I heard something rolling inside. That meant there was a round object in it.' The second man said, 'I saw your servant coming from the pomegranate orchard, so I knew he had placed a pomegranate in the box.'

'And this is not the season for pomegranates, so it had to be an unripe one,' piped up the last brother.

The king now had proof of the brothers' powers of observation and asked them how they knew about the merchant's wife and child being on camel's back.

'The footprints we saw were large ones, so I deduced it was a big camel that

had gone that way,' said the first brother.

'The camel had grazed on only one side of the road,' said the second, 'so I knew it was one-eyed.'

'And I saw the footprints of a woman and a child where the camel had sat down to rest,' said the third. 'Which meant they were on the camel's back.'

The king, now convinced of their cleverness, appointed the three brothers as ministers in his court.

4. The Lucky Purse

Mallika was the daughter of a rich widow. She was very beautiful and kind. When she got engaged to be married to the son of a rich landlord, her mother started making all sorts of preparations. She bought beautiful saris, lovely jewellery and all kinds of gifts for Mallika and her in-laws. Mallika wanted to put some of these gifts in a silk bag to take with her. So her faithful old servant Veda was sent to the market to buy one.

Veda returned with a bag, but Mallika did not like the design. So she sent Veda back to the shop to change it. Now, there was only one bag left, and even though it had a peculiar design and a very odd shape, Veda brought it back home. Of course Mallika did not like it one bit. However, she had no choice but to use it.

Soon Mallika got married and it was time for her to leave for her new house. It was in the next village, and her mother packed lots of food for the journey. She put it all in the odd-shaped silk bag. As Mallika was saying her goodbyes, her mother whispered in her ear, 'I have put lots of fruits, coconuts, flowers and some other gifts in the silk bag. Keep it carefully.' She also said something else, but Mallika's friends set up such a wailing then over their departing friend that she could not hear her mother's last few words.

There was a terrible thunderstorm that night and Mallika and the people accompanying her had to stop to take shelter in an old abandoned temple. There, as Mallika stood gazing out at the rain, she heard the sound of someone crying. She looked around and saw a girl, about her age, also dressed like a newly married bride, sitting and crying on the temple floor. Kindhearted Mallika went up to her and asked what the matter was. Sobbing, the girl told her that she was an orphan. She had just been married off by her uncle who had looked after her all these years. But he was too poor and had not been able to give her any gifts to give to her new family. Now she was worried about what her in-laws would say. Mallika felt sad when she heard the story. Then her eyes fell on the peculiar silk bag her mother had given her. It was full of fruits and flowers. Mallika picked it up and gave it to the girl. By then, the storm had died down, and the two brides went their different ways.

Mallika soon got accustomed in her new house. She had a son and was happy with her husband who loved her dearly. Ten years went by, till one day, disaster struck. There was a severe earthquake. Mallika was outside, inspecting the field, so she was unhurt. But her husband and son could not be found anywhere. Almost mad with grief, Mallika started wandering in search of them.

Her beautiful house was nothing but a pile of broken bricks now. Her wealth was gone. Her whole life had been destroyed all of a sudden.

She went from village to village. There were many people like her, homeless and hungry, walking about. Then she heard that in the next town there was a wealthy couple who had built some rooms to shelter people like her and also gave them food. She decided to go there.

When she reached the place, she saw there was a long queue of people waiting for food. Not having eaten a morsel for many days, she joined them. Many more people joined the queue behind her. But as soon as the man distributing the food gave her portion, he announced the food was finished for the day. The people behind her had to go away empty-handed. Just as Mallika was about to start eating, she noticed a tired old woman sitting by the roadside, watching her. The woman had obviously not eaten in many days. Without thinking twice, Mallika gave her portion to the woman.

The man distributing the food saw this. That night, when he was telling the woman who had donated the food about the events of the day, he mentioned Mallika and her generosity. The woman, Soudamani, was touched. 'Bring her to me,' she said. 'My little son needs someone to look after him, and I want someone who is honest and kind-hearted.'

So Mallika started living with the couple. She loved the boy like her own. Indeed, he was exactly her son's age and she would often think of her past life and lost family and shed tears. Soudamani would console her and soon the two women became friends.

Mallika was allowed to take the child to any part of the house except for the prayer room. That was always kept locked and only Soudamani and her husband went in there to offer their prayers. When Mallika asked Soudamani, she said, 'Don't bring the child there. We have kept something very precious to us in the room and we don't want him spoiling anything.'

One day, when Mallika and the boy were playing ball, the child threw the ball hard and it sailed through a window and landed in the prayer room. The boy started crying; he wanted the ball right then. Mallika tried her best to make him understand but he would not listen. Unable to bear his crying, Mallika decided to get the ball, even if it meant disobeying her mistress. She entered the room and was surprised to see that instead of a deity, the only thing in the room was a peculiar silk bag! She recognized it immediately as the one she had given to the orphan girl the night she had left for her new home. Old memories rushed up and she started crying. Just then, Soudamani entered the room and was furious to see Mallika there.

'Why did you touch that purse? I told you never to come in here,' shouted Soudamini.

'This is my purse,' Mallika answered in tears. 'I had given it to an orphan girl one night, when I was on my way to my in-laws' house for the first time.'

'When did you get married?' Soudamini asked, her anger dying down.

'Ten years ago, in the month of Shravan.'

Hearing this, Soudamini too burst into tears. She came and hugged Mallika. 'I was that girl. Perhaps you did not know it when you gave the purse to me, but along with the fruits, it also contained several diamonds and gold coins. I opened the bag only after I reached home. We tried to find you and tell you, but we did not even know your name. We became rich with your gift but never forgot how you helped a poor orphan girl in her time of need. We kept the bag in the prayer room and used it to remind us every day of your generosity and kindness. That is why we decided to help others when we were no longer poor. Whatever we have today is also yours.'

Mallika and Soudamani became even better friends after this. They sent out people to look for Mallika's family and one day, to her great joy, she was reunited with

5. Grammar page



- ▶ The **simple past tense** is usually formed by adding **-ed** to the verb. For example:

jump + ed = jumped lift + ed = lifted
laugh + ed = laughed look + ed = looked

- ▶ If the verb ends with **-e**, just add **-d**. For example:

agree + d = agreed hate + d = hated
die + d = died live + d = lived

- ▶ Remember these spelling rules:

You must double the last letter of some verbs before adding **-ed**. For example:

fan + ed = **fanned** pat + ed = **patted**
grab + ed = **grabbed** rip + ed = **ripped**
nod + ed = **nodded** slam + ed = **slammed**

- ▶ Notice that the verbs above are all **short verbs** of just **one syllable**. They all end with a **consonant** such as **b, d, m, n, p, t**, and have only a **single vowel** before the consonant.

- ▶ With verbs that end in **-y**, change the **y** to **i** before adding **-ed**. For example:

bury + ed = buried fry + ed = fried
carry + ed = carried hurry + ed = hurried
cry + ed = cried try + ed = tried