



Learn English Through Stories

F Series

F50

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

Contents:

- 1. A Problem Solved**
- 2. A Short Essay**
- 3. Grammar Page**

A Problem Solved

One

Krishnagopal Sarkar of the village of Jhinkrakota handed over the running of his estate and his other responsibilities to his elder son, and set off for Benares. His humble tenants wept bitterly at losing him: so liberal and pious a landlord was rare indeed in the materialistic world.

His son Bipinbihari was a modern, sophisticated, and educated to BA. He had a beard, wore glasses, and did not mix much with others. He was highly virtuous: he never even smoked or played cards. His manner was courteous and affable – but in fact he was a very hard man, and his tenants quickly felt the effect of this. The old landlord had been lenient with them; but with his son there was no hope of a pauper's exemption from debt or rent, on whatever grounds. They had to pay on the nail, without a single day's leeway.

When Bipinbihari took over, he found that his father had frequently released land to Brahmins free of rent, and many people had had their rent reduced. If anyone came with a plea of some kind, he was never able to refuse it: this was his weakness.

'It won't do,' said Bipinbihari. 'I can't let half the estate go rent-free.' He reached two separate conclusions. Firstly, work-shy people who sat at home growing fat on rent from land they had sublet were in most cases useless and deserved no pity. Charity to the likes of them simply gave refuge to idlers. Secondly, it was much harder to ensure an income than in his father and grandfather's time. There was much more scarcity. It cost four times as much to preserve a gentleman's dignity as it had in the past. His father's open-handed, happy-go-lucky scattering of assets would not do now; on the contrary, they should now be retrieved and expanded. Bipinbihari began to do what his conscience told him – that is, he began to act according to 'principle'. Whatever had gone out of the house, bit by bit came in again. He allowed very few of the rent-free tenancies to continue, ensuring that even these would not be permanent.

In Benares, Krishnagopal heard, through letters, of his tenants' distress: some of them actually went and appealed to him personally. He wrote to Bipinbihari saying that what he was doing was deplorable.

Bipinbihari replied that formerly when gifts had been made various things were received in return. There had been a reciprocal relationship between zamindar and tenants.

Recently laws had been passed that banned anything being given in return other than straightforward rent: a zamindar's rights and privileges, other than rent, had been abolished. So what else could he do but keep a close eye on his dues? If the tenants gave him nothing extra, why should he give extra to them? The landlord-tenant relationship was now purely commercial. He would go bankrupt if he went on being so charitable: it would be impossible to maintain either his property or his ancestral dignity.

Krishnagopal pondered deeply on the way that the times had so greatly changed, and concluded that the rules of his own era no longer applied to what the younger generation had to do. If one tried to interfere from a distance, they would say, 'Take back your property then; we can't manage it in any other manner.' What was the point? It was better to devote what was left of one's life to God.

Two

Things went on like this. After a great deal of litigation, wrangling and argument, Bipinbihari had arranged nearly everything as he wanted.

Most tenants were afraid to resist his pressure; Mirja Bibi's son Achimaddi Bisvas was the only one who refused to give in.

Bipinbihari's attacks on him were the most severe of all. Land given away to a Brahmin could be justified by tradition, but it was impossible to see why this son of a Muslim widow should be given land free or nearly free. True, he had won a scholarship and learnt a little at school, but this did not give him the right to be so above himself. Bipin learnt from the older staff on the estate that the family had received favours from the landlord for a long time – they did not know exactly why.

Maybe the widow had gone to him with tales of woe, and he had taken pity on her. But to Bipin the favours seemed highly inappropriate. Never having seen the family's former poverty, he looked at their prosperity and arrogance and felt they had cheated his soft-hearted, unsuspecting father – had stolen some of the zamindar's wealth.

Achimaddi was a very confident young man. He was determined not to budge an inch from his rights, and a fierce contest developed. His widowed mother urged repeatedly that it was stupid to take on the zamindar: they had been protected so far – it was best to have faith in that protection, and give the landlord what he wanted. 'You don't understand these things, Mother,' said Achimaddi.

Achimaddi lost at each stage as the case went through the courts. But the more he lost, the more his tenacity increased. He staked all he had on keeping all that he had.

One afternoon Mirja Bibi came with a small present of garden vegetables and met Bipinbihari privately. Casting her plaintive eyes on him as if caressing him with her motherly gaze, she said, 'You are like my son – may Allah preserve you. Do not ruin Achim, my dear – there'll be no virtue in that. I consign him to you: think of him as an unruly younger brother. Son, do not begrudge him a tiny piece of your untold wealth!'

Bipin was furious with the woman for impertinently using the privilege of age to speak so familiarly to him. 'You're a woman,' he said, 'you don't understand these things. If you've anything to tell me, send your son.' Mirja Bibi had now been told by another's son as well as her own that she didn't understand these things. Praying to Allah, dabbing at her eyes, the widow returned to her house.

Three

The case went from the criminal court to the civil court, from the civil court to the district court, from the district court to the High Court. It continued for nearly eighteen months. By the time that Achimaddi was awarded a partial victory in the appeal court, he was up to his neck in debt. Moreover, he had escaped from the tiger on the river-bank only to be assailed by the crocodile in the river. The money-lenders chose this moment to put the court's decree into action. A day was fixed for the auctioning of all that Achimaddi had.

The day was Monday, market-day on the bank of a small river near by. The river was high during the monsoon, so some of the trading was on the bank, some of it in boats: the hubbub was continuous. Among the produce of the season, jackfruit was especially plentiful, and there was lots of hilsa-fish too. The sky was cloudy: many of the traders, fearing rain, stuck bamboo-poles into the ground and stretched canopies over their stalls.

Achimaddi had also come to do some shopping, but without a paisa in his hand: no one would sell to him even on credit. He had brought a kitchen-chopper and a brass plate, hoping to raise money by pawning them.

Bipinbihari had strolled out to take the evening air, attended by a couple of bodyguards with *lāthis*. Attracted by the crowd, he decided to visit the market.

He was just – out of interest – questioning Dvari the oil- man about his earnings, when Achimaddi came at him charging and roaring like a tiger, brandishing his chopper. The stallholders intervened and quickly disarmed him. He was soon handed over to the police, and the trading in the market continued as before.

It cannot be said that Bipinbihari was unhappy at this turn of events. For a hunted animal to turn and have a go at the hunter is an atrocious breach of etiquette; but never mind, the fellow would receive his due punishment. The women of Bipin's household were outraged by the episode. The fellow was an impudent scoundrel! The prospect of his punishment, though, consoled them.

Meanwhile, that same evening, Mirja Bibi's house – foodless, childless grew darker than death. Everyone forgot what had happened, had their dinner and went to bed: only for one old woman was it more significant than anything else, yet there was no one in the whole world to fight against it except for her: a few old bones and a frightened, bitter heart in an unlit hut!

Four

Three days passed. On the next there was to be a hearing before the Deputy Magistrate. Bipin himself was to give evidence. He had no objection, even though the zamindar had never appeared in the witness- box before. That morning at the appointed time, he put on a turban and watch-chain and with great ostentation was carried in a palanquin to the court. The court-room was packed: there had not been such a sensational case for a long time.

Just before the case was to be heard, an attendant came up to Bipinbihari and said something in his ear: somewhat flustered, saying he was needed outside, he left the court-room. Outside, he saw his aged father standing a little way off under a banyan tree. He was barefoot, wore a *nāmābali* (religious scarf), and carried a Krishna-rosary: his slender body seemed to glow with kindness; calm compassion for the world shone from his brow. In his chapkan, *jobbān* (Robe) and tight fitting pantaloons, Bipin had difficulty in doing obeisance to his father. His turban slipped over his nose, and his watch fell out of his pocket. Fumbling to replace them, he invited his father to step into a lawyer's house near by. 'No,' said Krishnagopal, 'what I need to say can be said here.'

Bipin's attendants drove curious bystanders away. 'Everything must be done to release Achim,' said Krishnagopal, 'and the property taken from him should be returned.'

'Have you come all the way from Benares just to say this?' asked Bipin, amazed. 'Why do you favour him so much?'

‘What would be the point of telling you why?’ said Krishnagopal.

Bipin was insistent. ‘I’ve managed to retrieve gifts of land from many whom I felt were unworthy of them, Brahmins among them – and you didn’t turn a hair. So why have you gone to such lengths over this Muslim fellow? If, having gone so far, I release Achim and hand back everything, what shall I say to people?’

Krishnagopal was silent for a while. Then, fiddling nervously with his rosary, he said in a quavering voice, ‘If a frank explanation is necessary, tell them that Achimaddi is your brother – my son.’

‘By a Muslim mother?’ said Bipin in horror. ‘Yes, my boy,’ said Krishnagopal.

Bipin was flabbergasted. At length he said, ‘You can tell me everything later. Please come home now.’

‘No,’ said Krishnagopal, ‘I shall not live at home ever again. I’m returning to Benares at once. Please do whatever your conscience permits.’ Blessing him, fighting back tears, unsteady on his feet, Krishnagopal set off back.

Bipin could not think of what to say or do. He stood in silence. But at least he understood now what morals were like in the old days! How superior he was to his father in education and character! This was what happened when people had no ‘principles’! As he walked back to the court, he saw Achim waiting outside – drained, exhausted, pale, white-lipped, red-eyed – captive between two guards, clad in dirty rags. And this was Bipin’s brother!

Bipin was friendly with the Deputy Magistrate. The case was dismissed on a technicality, and within a few days Achim was restored to his former circumstances. But he did not understand the reason, and other people were surprised too.

It soon got about, however, that Krishnagopal had appeared at the time of the trial. All sorts of rumours circulated. Shrewd lawyers guessed the truth of the matter. Among them, the lawyer Ramtaran had been brought up and educated at Krishnagopal’s expense. He had all along suspected – and now he could see clearly – that if you looked carefully, even the most respectable could be caught out. However much a man might finger his rosary, he was probably as much of a rogue as anyone else. The difference between the respectable and the unrespectable was that the former were hypocrites and the latter were not. In deciding, however, that Krishnagopal’s famous generosity and piety were a sly façade, Ramtaran found that an old and difficult problem had been solved and, in addition, felt – through what logic I do not know – that the burden of gratitude was lifted from his shoulders. What a relief!

2. Donating Money to Charity

Giving money to those in need can be a personally satisfying experience, but there is a choice between donating nationally and internationally through charities or giving directly to those around you. This essay will consider the merits of both approaches.

The first advantage of providing direct support is that you can know exactly how your money is being spent. For example, if you give money directly to people in your local village or town, you can see where it has gone. When you donate to larger charitable organisations, on the other hand, you are not sure how much will actually be given to those in need as opposed going on other costs such as administration and expensive marketing campaigns. Another benefit is that you can see the impacts on those you are helping, which can lead not only to great personal satisfaction but also to respect from others in the local community who appreciate the work you do.

There are advantages, however, in giving to charities that are national and international. First and foremost there is the choice of good causes. Locally the kinds of places to help may be limited, but in larger organisations you can get involved in such activities as sponsoring a child or conserving wildlife. Not only this, donating to larger charities with an international reach means having the knowledge that you are involved in issues of fundamental global importance, such as curing diseases and human rights, or helping those caught up in tragic environmental events, such as flooding, earthquakes and famines.

In conclusion, given the benefits of both, I would argue that an individual should make their own choice based on their personal preferences and whichever provides them with the most personal satisfaction. What is crucial is that we continue to give to those who are more in need than ourselves.

3. Grammar Page

FOR

<i>duration of time</i>	We walked for two hours. She has been ill for two days.
<i>purpose</i>	These books are for blind people. What is this tool for? I bought this dress for my brother.
<i>in view of</i>	She is not fit for this post.
<i>distance</i>	I walked for five kilometres.
<i>in the direction of</i>	She left for Delhi last week. They will leave for America next week.
<i>in favour of</i>	I will vote for her. Are you for and against the motion?
<i>considering</i>	The boy is clever for his age.
<i>on behalf of</i>	We should fight for the poor.
<i>inappropriateness for something</i>	This is not good for you. It's bad for you.

FROM

<i>place of origin</i>	They come from Nepal. She comes from Germany.
<i>start of a range</i>	From 10 to 15 protestors were arrested. .
<i>source</i>	This saying is from Austen's novel. I knew it from her.
<i>cause</i>	He suffers from nervousness. Did he suffer from heart disease?
<i>getting safety</i>	He had to take shelter from the rain. The hunter saved the girl from the tiger.
<i>being unlike</i>	Her behaviour is different from her sister.
<i>after or onwards</i>	The park will be open from Monday.
<i>start of a period of time</i>	She was with me from yesterday until today.
<i>distance</i>	The bus park is very far away from here. It's a few minutes' walk from here.