



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G54

Adapted and modified by

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1. Narsiga

By Raja Rao

HIS father had died of cholera, his mother of famine, and one sultry afternoon, a thin, tall woman, angry and effusive, turned up and calling herself his aunt carted him away into a distant village, where she took a husband for herself from one of the widower pariahs, 'to bring up this poor orphan child', she said. She worked in the houses husking the paddy, and he worked on the fields of the Master. But one day the Master said, 'Why not come and stay in the ashram, Lingayya, we shall give you a hut!' And Lingayya took his wife and his wife's 'orphan' and settled down on the Master's lands. She rose up early to light the bath-fire for the ashram boys, then she swept the floors, washed the vessels, and when she had nothing else to do, she took the Master's child to play with the deer in the garden. Meanwhile, young Narsa, the orphan, played with the dogs or pulled the tails of tethered cows. He was nearly five years old, and very soon he would have to go out like the other boys to graze the cattle. But the Master said, 'No. We shall buy him sheep, and he shall go out with the sheep.' And at the next fair of spring, the Master bought him not only five sheep and three goats, but even a pair of country slippers and jacket, and every morning as the sun pierced through the thatch-hole and beat against his shut eyes, he would suddenly stretch out his wiry limbs and leap up like a frightened frog. Fixing his fallen dhoti about his bulging round stomach, he would brush back his scattered hair and walk out into the yard. Shiva! Shiva! The sun was already high up over the Rampur Hill, and the Master's students were on the terrace for the morning meditation. Time to take the sheep into the woods! But the Master's brother, the same who beat boozy servants and chastising husbands with a whip of supple, shining leather, caught him by his hair and said:

'You little monkey, why do you grow hair like a sheep? If a thief were to catch you he would shear your head with a single stroke.' Narsa said, 'If a thief comes, I will slip beneath his feet and gallop back on my sheep. I can already ride on them.'

'You little fool,' cried the Master's brother, touched and amused, and going back into his room, brought back a pair of long silvery scissors, and cut away Narsa's swarthy hair. Only a little soft hair remained—such as the city people have—and the Master's brother brought perfumed oils and combed Narsa's

head till it shone like black beads, and caressing it, Narsa went into the woods, the sheep before him.

Bow-legged Rangayya, who worked on the Corner-fields by-the-Canal, saw Narsa going into the woods with the sheep, and said, 'Hey, you little monster! From when did you become an earning person? As though there were not enough of us wanting to live!'

'What do I know, Uncle?' tittered back Narsa. 'The Master bought me sheep, and the Master's brother cut off my hair— and they send me into the woods. . . .'

'Well, anyway, will you look after my own sheep, you son of my woman!'

'Yes, Uncle. Oh yes, Uncle. . . . And how many sheep have you?'

'I have—well I have three, my dear fellow. And if ever you bring them home alive evening after evening for six months, I shall give you a packet of sugar candies.'

'Where are they—the sheep?' asked Narsa, joyful. 'Where are they—your sheep, Uncle?' He already saw in front of him sheep after sheep, sheep that bleated and kicked and browsed over the rockless side of the blue Kantur Hill, sheep that wept and sneezed and dunged, and the mother-sheep that forgot their lambs, and the puffy, white ones, naughty and restless, that would so often stray away from the fold that he must hang a bell at their necks which would tingle-tingle-ta across the woods.

'And a little one too, Uncle? Where are they—your sheep, Uncle?'

'Oh, I'll buy them at the next fair and bring them home. I'll buy six of them.'

'All right, Uncle,' cried Narsa and took the sheep into the woods. He drove them into the bael woods, on the bank of the river, and left them by the railway embankments where the grass flourished between the gravel. Sometimes he drove them as far as the cactus growth by the village crematorium, for there the grass grew to unmeasured heights. One day he even saw a corpse getting burnt. There was such wonderful playfulness in the fire. He gazed and gazed at it from behind the cactus-over-the-mound, and when he went home, his aunt tore the skin off his back—for 'the dead are not for the living', she said.

When Uncle Sampanna had bought his sheep, and Carpenter Siddayya had bought a few too, Narsa drove into the woods more and more sheep. Sometimes he would ride on them, and go thinking himself one of those powerful gods that have animals for their vehicles. Now he would be Shiva, the Serpent-garlanded, and the knotted grass became the serpent and the long-horned goat the bull. And now he would ride on Rama's chariot of flowers, a bael flower at the sheep's tail, and two others behind its ears. And my, such a rain of flowers welcomed him back to Ayodhya! Sometimes, when it was too hot to leave the shade, he would take a little lamb and lull him to sleep as his aunt did when she was sober. But suddenly he would feel like sucking milk, and rushing to a mother sheep he would put his mouth to the teats and suck. The sheep would try to kick at him, but he would give it fresh grass, and suck teat after teat, beat his head against the udder and suck. Once he was satisfied he lay back on the grass—and laughed. Sometimes laughing he grew tired and slept till the sun was nearly set, and hearing the cawing of the evening crows, he would rise up and, gathering his sheep, hurry back home. Driving the sheep into the pen by the well, he would wash himself with a little water from the leather bucket and go into the hut. Dusk would have fallen and it would be hardly visible within. But he would feel himself into the bed-corner, fall flat on the floor in prostration before the gods—for the gods gave food, auntie said—and taking his bowl that was always by the hearth, he would sit out in the courtyard and munch his rice and pickles. Often auntie turned up after having lighted all the lamps in the ashram, and she always brought back a bowl of soup or a piece of city-sweets that the Mistress gave her when she was going home. She was a good woman, the Mistress! May she have a hundred male issues, auntie used to pray again and again.

'Hey, orphan, come back, you little monkey!'

'Yes, auntie. And what do you think I saw today? A huge big serpent, big and shining and hanging down into the canal. I took my stick and tried to fling him into the water. He jumped up like a little dog, but I took my stick and beat him and beat him till his head was torn off his body. But suddenly as I looked from the corpse to the rocks, the rocks to the fields, and the fields to the hills and the hills to the wide white skies, I was so beaten by fear that I ran over the bund moaning and shouting. What do you think of that, auntie?'

'What do I think of it! I think that you are a wretched imp, and that happily for me one of these days you will be food in the mouth of Death, and I shall drink

one full seer of warm milk in satisfaction that I have not to bother myself with such a monkey as you.’ And suddenly rising up, she ran to the kitchen-fuel and, taking a stick, she beat him on the back and on the legs and on the knuckles. Narsa knew quite well, the more he howled and wept the more she would be afraid, for the Master’s brother loved him and disliked people being beaten, so yelling and beating his mouth as at a funeral, Narsa would shriek loud into the night. Far off in the Master’s house, the light was to be seen in the drawing-room—therefore the Master had not yet gone in for dinner. People were sitting round him, and maybe among them would be the Master’s brother.

‘Amma . . . Mother . . . Amma . . . ,’ Narsa would gurgle in his throat, as though he was laughing more than weeping. ‘Amma. . . .’

‘The Master’s brother has gone to Tippur to buy provisions, you wretch. I’ve seen him on the station road. I’ve seen him with Squint Ramayya, with baskets and sacks. He won’t come to rescue you. And, by the grace of God, for once I’ll give you a good anniversary, a jolly sweet one too.’ And feeling irritated against the constant intrusions of the Master’s brother, auntie beat him all the more. But Narsa really never suffered from it. He knew the Master’s brother would fret and howl at auntie—and then taking Narsa into the big kitchen give him mangoes or city-sweets.

‘You whore of a woman,’ Pariah Lingayya cried out from the cattle-shed where he was chopping hay. ‘Don’t you know this is not the house of the dead, you witch?’

‘It’s not you who bore this child,’ she shouted back, and gave Narsa fresh blows on the back.

Meanwhile the Master’s brother was seen coming through the milky path that winds round the well. He is tall and his cigarette is shining like a firefly. He coughs as he moves along. The spotted calf is prancing behind him, and suddenly running towards him butts him from the back, and leaps across the yard and furrowed field. A pumpkin-moon is just rising over the Rampur temple.

Auntie stops beating, throws her arms akimbo, and feeling very self-righteous, begins the tale before she is questioned.

‘I lick your feet, Master. But this boy is ruinous. He steals everything in the house. He does not even allow a grain of rice to remain in its place. He ate

away a quarter of a pau of melted butter last night. And just now when I came home. . . .’

‘You liar,’ retorts Narsa, sheltering himself behind the back of the Master’s brother. ‘Master, you know I don’t rob, I don’t thief. I simply eat what I am given. She simply tells lies. Master, she is drunk, that is what it is. . . . Yesterday night, Master, she and my uncle beat each other. . . .’ ‘No, Master, no. I lick your feet. No, I’m not drunk.’

‘Give me the accounts. I gave you five annas this afternoon. What did you buy?’

‘Master, I bought . . . half a seer of rice, a pau of dal, onions, chillies, salt . . .’

‘Where, at the toddy booth, you pariah? Do you think I can’t smell you from here, you wretch, you ruin-of-a-house. You get drunk and beat this orphan till his bones are broken. Unfortunately they’re calling me for dinner. Else it would have been your marriage day. Thank your horoscope it isn’t. Anyway, from today onwards Narsa will sleep in my room. You never can be relied on. Oh, you buffaloes!’

While auntie is falling at the feet of the Master’s brother, Narsa suddenly jumps on her back and cries out ‘hoye-hoye’ as though he were on a sheep. The Master’s brother drags him away with him. In the house they put him by the cradle of the child, and till the dinner is over and people have chewed the betels, Narsa stands recounting story after story to the child. It is hardly ten months old, but whenever it sees a late crow sailing across the sky, it thrusts its little hands towards the porch and cries out, ‘Caw-caw . . . Cawww.’

‘Little Master, so the lion said to the tiny mouse,’ continues Narsa, giving the cradle a jerk, ‘I shall be your friend and you shall live with me.’ Across the courtyard, out there in the coppery light, the hut is seen squat as a quern, and at the door two shadows are sitting face to face, lifting their hands to their mouth. Behind is the flat expanse of the shining river, and a quail is heard to splutter through the night. From the palm-woods rise the wails of hungry, clamouring jackals.

After dinner Master came and sat in the courtyard, and the Mistress and others sat round him, listening to him. Master made such funny jokes, and everybody laughed. Sometimes people came from the city to see Master, people with gold rings on every finger of their hands and some that had wives

drowned in gold and in nothing but gold. They said Master was a big man and even kings wanted to see him. Auntie said, there was a big, big man called Gandhiji, and the Master knew him, and had talked to him, and the Master worked for him. Who was this Gandhiji, Narsa had asked. 'An old man—a bewitching man, a saint, you know! He had come from village to village, and I have beheld him too,' auntie said. 'He looks beautiful as the morning sun, and he wears only a little loincloth like a pariah. And they say he is for us pariahs, like the Master is for us pariahs. They say he works for the pariahs as the Master works for us. They say he loves the pariahs, as the Master loves us. He is a great man. They say he is an incarnation of God, that is why everybody touches his feet, even Brahmins, my son. You will touch his feet too, some day,' auntie had assured him. 'When you touch his feet you feel as though the body has sunk to the earth, and you are nothing but a mere ant before an elephant. But he is so simple! He pats you on the back, and says we must love each other, and spin at home, and when he says don't pay revenue dues to the Red-man's Government, we should not pay them. You know those city-boys who come to learn under the Master. They are the Mahatma's men. And the Master, he is a Mahatma's relation—one of his chiefs.'

And Narsa was so moved that, that very evening, he slipped beside the chair of the Master, and putting his two little hands on the Master's legs tried to massage them. The Master patted him on the back and said:

'Why are you here, Narsiga?'

'Master, Master,' he blubbered, 'I felt like it. You see, Master, I love you. And you love me, Master. And auntie said you are a Mahatma's man. And I love the Mahatma too. . . .'

And when Narsa had said this, everybody around him laughed so much that he felt overcome with shame and wanted to slip out of the place, when the Master's brother caught him by the hair and thrust him back into his seat. But the Master was so kind that he made Narsa sit on the arm of the chair, and caressed his neck and his back. He is such a good man, the Master! But then all of a sudden the Mistress turns to Narsa and says:

'Narsiga, what has happened to you, my dear fellow? Why is it I saw you this morning with a huge big shoe, twice as big as your head? What has happened to the ones I gave you?'

‘Mother,’ he lisped, ‘the ones you gave me, Mother . . . I lost them by the canal . . . the other day.’ Seeing that the Mistress was not angry, he became bolder and continued: ‘You see, Mother, it happened like this. I had let the sheep eat the bael leaves. I had torn them down with my scythe and I had let the poor lambs eat them. They were munching and munching. I saw a big dog coming from the opposite side. Mother, it was on the opposite side of the canal. You know, Mother, the same dog that had eaten away our small deer and had left the bones by Ramayya’s hut. It is big as a wolf, Mother. I threw stones at him.’

‘But what about the shoe, you idiot,’ swore the Master’s brother, impatient.

‘It is about the shoes, Master. I had torn down the leaves. The sheep were munching and munching. The big dog that had eaten the young deer stood just near the sluice of the canal. He sat with his paws down, his ears stretched, and I knew with one jump he would fall on my sheep. I took a stone and sent it straight at him. He simply gobbled a fly on his body and would not look at me. I felt frightened. I had no more stones by me. I took my left shoe and sent it straight against his eyes. The devil rose up and wagged his tail, looking all the time at Sampanna’s fifteen-day-old lamb. I took my second shoe and sent it straight against his legs. It hit him this time, and he wailed and turned back. ‘Now he is down,’ said I, and I rushed at him, my stick lifted up. But he grabbed at one of my shoes, and ran off towards the crematorium. I ran too and not until I had sent him by the village temple did I stop. The shoe, Mother, he took it away, the same brown dog, with an ear torn off. The other—I never found it. But I’ll beat him one day, Mother. The next time I catch him I’ll give him a good skinning.’

‘Well done, my hero,’ cried the Master’s brother, who always loved to joke. Narsa felt comforted. Yes, he had done the right thing. But the Mistress again turned to him and asked:

‘Then why didn’t you come and ask me for a new pair, you fool? You shouldn’t go about among the cactus thorns, barefooted.’

‘Mother, I wanted to ask. But, you see, Mother . . . I went and asked uncle Sampanna. He said he would pay me eight annas a month if I looked after his sheep. He said he would buy me sweets with it. Then, said I to him: ‘Uncle, buy me a pair of shoes instead for this pair. I have to walk barefoot, and it is summer, the sands are scorching, the stubs hard, and the goats throw thorns on every path.’ He said ‘No, a pair of shoes costs too much. Take mine. They’ll

do for you.’ ‘Quite so, Uncle,’ I said, and he gave me the ones he wore. I put my feet into them and I said, ‘They are too big for me, Uncle.’ He put some clay into them, and stuffed some leaves at the back, and he said, ‘Go ahead!’ They pinched me as I walked. But I dare not ask uncle Sampanna. He is an angry man, and auntie says he is a very bad man. . . .’

‘Why didn’t you come and tell me? I would have squeezed it out of his flesh,’ spat out the Master’s brother. Narsiga was embarrassed and silent.

‘Why didn’t you come to ask me for new shoes?’ the Mistress said angrily.

‘For nothing,’ he whispered, hiding his face behind his arms.

‘Speak, you monkey!’ commanded the Master’s brother.

‘Mother,’ he began, trembling, ‘I can’t say. I saw that you gave a blanket to the old Mohammedan beggar; I saw that you gave a shirt to Barber Ranga, and you give food every day to Chandrayya, and Sampanna and Rajanna and all the people who live in our huts. Mother, you give milk for Chinnamma’s child and Ramamma’s child, and I have seen you prepare woollen head-gear for them. Mother, you are so good. How can you feed all? . . .’

The Master was moved. He patted him on the head and said at the next fair he would have a pair of shoes. But Narsa would not have it. Why should Master give away everything? Narsa earned eight annas from Sampanna and six annas from Rachanna. He took their sheep into the woods. And when the Master’s brother was distributing wages the following Tuesday afternoon for the weekly fair, Narsa cried out, grave and authoritative like Shop-keeper Ramachetty had done to Pariah Rachayya, who hadn’t paid his debts,

‘Hey, Sampanna. You owe me eight annas.’

Sampanna feigned not to hear.

‘Hey, Uncle,’ cried out Narsa again, trying to let the Master’s brother hear it, ‘do you hear? You owe me eight annas.’

‘Oh, yes, yes. Another time,’ he said, and rose up to go.

‘Master, Master,’ whispered Narsa in the ear of the Master’s brother, ‘I want to buy a pair of slippers, and uncle Sampanna has my eight annas.’

The Master’s brother fumed and spat, and uncle Sampanna paid him not only eight annas, but eight and eight and eight annas—he had not paid for such a

long, long time—and Narsa went to the fair the same afternoon, to buy his pair of slippers, a pie worth of Bengal gram, and he bought something else that none saw and none knew, but the next morning everybody wondered who could have stuck a paper-flower on the cradle-stand. Narsa himself wondered.

Narsa is now a big person. He can reach the Master's waist. He now wears long jackets and big slippers, and even a cap such as the sahibs wear. 'It protects the eyes,' the Master said. Besides, he now knows how to read. He can read what is written on the top of tea-boxes, and trains, and once he had even tried to read the paper that the postman brings to the Master every day. Rangappa, the sullen student of the Master, gives lessons to Narsa and the other ashram boys. They sit every evening at lighting time in the verandah of the central building, and there they learn alphabets and words. And Narsa even knew a poem that was printed in the middle of the book—you know, the one about Mother Cow and the Hungry Tiger? Poor orphan calf! But what Narsa liked the most was the prayer at the end. It was so sweet. It spoke of the Mother. Mother who was good, Mother who was kind. Mother who grew rice. Mother, Mother, Mother, it ended, and Narsa always sang it closing his eyes and figuring the Master's wife— sometimes it was only his auntie—as a huge big goddess, sitting on a swan, like the one in the picture by the sanctum door, a huge light behind her head, a conch in one hand, a wheel in another, and a tamed lion at her feet. She held rice in one hand and a lotus in the other, and it was surely the same, thought Narsa, to whom he sang. And when it came to the end, 'Mataram, Mataram, Vande Mataram,' Narsa's eyes suddenly grew full of tears, and the whole earth seemed to grow soft and radiant, and he felt his head resting on the lap of a great big mother. 'Mataram, Mataram, Vande Mataram', he gently lisped to himself.

But he wanted to know who this Mother was. He heard the other boys in the ashram say that one should fight for the Mother. One should pray for the Mother. One should love the Mother.

'Who is this big Mother, Sir?' he asked one day of his teacher.

'Mother,' he said, 'which Mother?'

'The one we sing about after the classes are over.'

'Oh! you idiot,' swore the teacher. 'Why don't you know even that much, you buffalo? It is our country, our Motherland.'

‘What is our country, Sir?’

‘Country! Country is the one we live in. This is our country.’

‘But it is ours,’ Narsa said.

‘No, no,’ cried the teacher. ‘The country is big, a million million times as big as this ashram. But it is no more ours. The Red-man rules us. He takes away all our gold, and all our food, and he allows the peasants to starve and the children to die milk-less. He has put the Mother into prison. But, my son, you must not hate him. He is not a bad man. But there is a devil in him, a monster and a devil in him. The devil haunts him. And one day when we shall have driven him out of the country, we shall be happy and beautiful and our Mother will rejoice in her freedom.’

‘Master, is the Red-man the same who comes hunting in the woods, with big huge, white hats, and faces like the monkeys? But, Sir, they are bad men. Bad men. What do you think, Sir, last year when I took the sheep into the woods, one of them, one of these Red-men, put up a little tent by the big bridge of the river. He had one servant, two servants, and three servants. They all went behind him. And they had dogs too. I knew they went in search of deer. Poor things! So I used to sit behind the huge pipal by Saint Rahman Khan’s tomb, and cry ‘Ooo, OOOO’ like a deer. The dogs came running. And the men followed. They caught me and beat me. Sir, they are bad men—the Red-men. I saw them beat Left-handed Rachanna too, for he had sworn at them. They had walked across the fields hunting a crane. Bad men, Sir, very bad men. And the Mother is caught by them. And they beat her. Sir, I too will also fight against them. Tell me, Sir, how can I fight against them?’

‘You are too young, you idiot,’ swore the teacher. ‘You cannot fight now. Tell the truth, and love everyone, says Gandhiji.’

‘Gandhiji, Sir!’

‘Yes, it is the Mahatma who says it, the Saint. Speak the truth and don’t be cruel to anyone.’

‘Where is the temple of this Saint, Sir?’

‘No temple for him, idiot. He is a living man. He is in prison now. He is always in prison. The Red-man has put him there.’

‘Like the Mother, Sir?’

‘Yes.’

‘But, Sir, there is one question I want to ask,’ he said, very thoughtfully. ‘If my sheep were to stray away, I have to beat them. Now, if I have not to be cruel should I beat them, or should I not?’

‘Oh, don’t bother,’ cried the teacher irritated, and Narsa went back to the hut ruminating whether to beat the sheep or not. And the snake, it is a wicked thing. It comes rushing towards you when it sees you. And they said tigers lived in the jungles, and the jackals, and many frightening things. He would ask the Master. He would ask him that very evening.

But when the evening came, and he sat by the Master, he forgot all about it. He only knew Mother was imprisoned by the Red-man, and the Red-man beat her. And because Saint Gandhi came to take her out, they put him also into prison. And they beat him too. Sometimes in anger, Narsa used to tear down long branches to beat the Red-man, only once, for beating but once is not cruel. He beat his sheep but once, and he liked them all the same. And when the train thundered over the bridge, he used to lift up his long sticks, and wave them in the air, for Red-men went in the trains, and they would be afraid. One day he even arranged an assault on them. He could not, of course, do it alone. So he spoke of it to Rami, Scavenger Sankanna’s daughter Rami. Rami came every day to the ashram hospital to do her business, and the Master’s brother used to cut jokes and say she was Narsa’s wife. Narsa liked it. And whenever he saw her, he used to run to her and undo her braid. And she would hide her face behind the sari and weep. But sometimes Narsa used to sit near the hospital and wait for her to come. When he saw her by the old-well-corner, he would do the business himself and surprise her. It pleased Rami. And every day he did the business Rami accompanied him as far as the railway embankment, and then she went back home along the line. Now, one morning Narsa took Rami with him, and having gathered a pocket full of gravel stones, he stood by the bridge, and as the train slowed down, he took up stone after stone that Rami handed him, and flung them against the train. When he had thrown three or four or five, he shivered and ran back—and that evening there came on him a fever such as he had never seen. It rose and rose and his body began to burn like the rocks by the canal. Auntie said it was because she had not offered the goddess the promised coconut and bodice-cloth. But he knew why he had fever. The devil in the Red-man’s body had seen him and jumped into him. And Narsa swore and prayed night after night, that never would he throw stones at

the Red-man. The Saint, Gandhi, said, 'Love the Red-man.' He would love them. But he loved the Mother too. And he loved Saint Gandhi too for he had tried to rescue the Mother from the Red-man. 'Saint Gandhi,' he said, beating his cheeks to ask forgiveness, 'pardon me, O Saint. You are great. You are next only to God. You are by the Mother. Saint, I shall never hate the Red-man again. Take away the devil from me, Saint. Saint, I fall at thy feet and kiss them. O Saint!'

The Saint seemed to take him in his arms and pat him as the Mother did. And Narsiga burst into such a flood of tears that it gently floated him down into softest sleep.

On a sultry autumn day when the earth was breathing out dust and nothing but dust, Narsa came home earlier than usual, and what should he see in the Master's house but many and many a city-man and villager gathered round the Master, with happy faces and weeping eyes. 'What is it, Uncle?' he asked old Rachanna of the corner-field, who sat by the threshold. 'The Mahatma is released from prison, my son,' said the old man. 'The Mahatma, the Saint,' shouted Narsa, 'the Mahatma, the Saint,' and running out into the courtyard he danced and threw stones at the trees, and frolicked with the deer. He saw Nanjakka carrying the Master's child in her arms, and he ran to the Little Master and said, 'Little Master, the Mahatma is released. The Mahatma, the Mahatma!' and he made the Little Master clap his hands and laugh. Then he ran into the pen and told the sheep the Mahatma was released, and rushing towards the fields where he had seen uncle Sampanna ploughing the figtree-plot, he said, 'Uncle, hey, Uncle Sampanna! The Mahatma is released. Leave the fields and rejoice. The Mahatma, you know, is going to fly in the air today like Goddess Sita when she was going back from Lanka with her husband Rama. He is going to fly in the air in a chariot of flowers drawn by four horses, four white horses. He is going to pass by our home, Sampanna, what do you say to that, hey?' and dancing round and round himself he fell on the grass and rolled. But Sampanna had urgent work to do, and the news did not touch him. So Narsa jumped up and ran to the old-well-plot where Carpenter Rangayya—the same who had fallen from the ladder some time ago—would be working. But the carpenter was fast asleep on a little plank, his turban spread over his face. 'Hey, wake up, Rangayya, the Mahatma is out of prison, out of prison—the Mahatma. . . .' 'I knew it, you idiot,' growled Rangayya, 'I knew it long before you.' 'Oh, uncle, you don't know that the Mahatma is going in the air—like Rama and Sita going back to Ayodhya. Sita was taken out of prison and

they flew back to Ayodhya. Master says the Mahatma will fly like that, with four white steeds, such as even the District Collector never had. The Mahatma. . . . The Mahatma. . . . The Mahatma. . . .’ But seeing his ‘wife’ Rami coming along the canal path, he rushed towards her to declare the great news. ‘The Mahatma is released . . . the Mahatma . . . the Mahatma. . . .’ he shouted out. ‘And the Mother too. The Mother and the Mahatma are both released by the Red-man. Heycorn, what do you say to that, Rami?’ ‘What do I say?’ mocked back Rami, smiling in her sari. ‘I knew it long before you. You see I’ve already the little flag. They gave it to me, the city-boys. And in the village square the Master is going to speak and all the householders are gathering there this evening to listen to him. Did you know that, you son of my woman?’

‘That, oh, yes, I knew it long, long ago,’ he lied. ‘But you don’t know, the Mahatma is going in the air, with his wife Sita, and in a flower-chariot drawn by sixteen steeds, each one more beautiful than the other. And they will fly through the air and the heavens will let fall a rain of flowers. The Mahatma will have the Mother on his right, and our Master at his foot, and they will go across the clouds’ and the stars. And we shall gaze at them. Come, Rami,’ he dragged her towards him, ‘come, we shall run into the village to sit in the square to be the first to hear the Master speak. Come.’

He hooked his arm into hers, and taking the flag thrust it up into the air, and shouted, ‘Mother, Mother, Mother,’ and they ran across rut and puddle, dung and boulder, down the Rampur road, amidst screeching bats and hovering crows, over the canal bridge, and under the bulging, haunted pipal, and then turning round the Kuppur mound, they faced the cattle dust of the darkening village. The air was light, and the night was just falling. But, Lord, what a lot of stars!

2. Principles of Gandhi

By Grok

Mahatma Gandhi's principles, often rooted in his philosophy of nonviolence and truth, can be summarized as follows:

1. **Ahimsa (Nonviolence):** Gandhi believed in resolving conflicts peacefully, avoiding harm to others, and promoting compassion, even toward adversaries.
2. **Satyagraha (Truth and Resistance):** This principle involves pursuing truth and justice through nonviolent resistance, standing firm against oppression without resorting to aggression.
3. **Self-Reliance (Swadeshi):** Gandhi emphasized independence, encouraging individuals and communities to rely on local resources and skills to foster empowerment and sustainability.
4. **Equality:** He advocated for the dignity and equal treatment of all people, regardless of caste, religion, or gender, famously working to uplift the marginalized, like the "untouchables" (whom he called Harijans).
5. **Simplicity:** Gandhi lived a minimalist life, believing material detachment allowed focus on spiritual and moral growth.
6. **Discipline and Self-Control:** He stressed personal discipline, including celibacy, fasting, and meditation, to strengthen resolve and clarity of purpose.

These principles guided his leadership in India's independence movement and remain influential in peace and justice movements worldwide.

3. Donation and Charity

By GROK

Donation and charity are simple acts of kindness that can make a big difference in the world. Donation means giving something, like money, food, or clothes, to help others who need it. Charity is when people or groups work to support those who are poor, sick, or facing hard times.

Helping others through donation and charity is a good thing. It shows care and love for people we may not even know. For example, giving money to a hospital can help sick people get better. Sharing food with the hungry can give them strength and hope. Even small donations, like old clothes or books, can bring joy to someone's life.

Charity also makes the giver happy. When we help others, we feel good inside. It builds a sense of community where everyone looks out for each other. Many people donate because they want to share what they have and make the world a better place.

In short, donation and charity are easy ways to help people in need. They spread kindness and show that we care. No matter how big or small, every act of giving can change someone's life for the better.

4. Grammar Page

Unit
54

Verb + **to ...** (**decide to ... / forget to ...** etc.)

A After these verbs you can use **to ...** (*infinitive*):

offer	plan	manage	deserve
agree	arrange	fail	afford
refuse	hope	promise	learn
decide	forget	threaten	tend

- ☐ It was a long way to walk, so we **decided to take** a taxi home.
- ☐ Simon was in a difficult situation, so I **agreed to help** him.
- ☐ I waved to Karen, but **failed to attract** her attention.
- ☐ I like Dan, but I think he **tends to talk** too much.
- ☐ How old were you when you **learnt to drive**?
or ... learnt **how** to drive?



Dan **tends to talk** too much.

The negative is **not to ...**:

- ☐ We **decided not to go** out because of the weather.
- ☐ I **promised not to be** late.

After some verbs, we use **-ing** (*not to ...*). For example, **enjoy/think/suggest**:

- ☐ I **enjoy reading**. (*not enjoy to read*)
- ☐ Andy **suggested meeting** for coffee. (*not suggested to meet*)
- ☐ Are you **thinking of buying** a car? (*not thinking to buy*)

For verb + **-ing**, see Units 53 and 62.

B After **dare** you can use the infinitive with or without **to**:

- ☐ I didn't **dare to tell** him. or I didn't **dare tell** him.

But after **dare not** (or **daren't**), we do not use **to**:

- ☐ I **daren't tell** him what happened. (*not I daren't to tell him*)

C We also use **to ...** after **seem, appear, pretend** and **claim**. For example:

- ☐ They **seem to have** plenty of money.
- ☐ Ann **pretended not to see** me when she passed me in the street.

You can also use **to be -ing** (*continuous infinitive*) and **to have (done)** (*perfect infinitive*):

- ☐ I **pretended to be reading** the newspaper. (= I pretended that I **was reading**)
- ☐ Have you seen my keys? I **seem to have lost** them. (= it seems that I **have lost** them)
- ☐ She **claimed not to have seen** me. (= she claimed that she **hadn't seen** me)

D After these verbs you can use a question word (**what/how** etc.) + **to ...**:

ask know decide remember forget learn explain understand wonder

For example:

We asked	how	to get	to the station.
Have you decided	where	to go	on holiday?
I don't know	whether	to apply	for the job or not.
Do you understand	what	to do?	

also

show/tell/ask/advise/teach somebody **what/how/where** to do something:

- ☐ Can somebody **show me how to use** this camera?
- ☐ Ask Jack. He'll **tell you what to do**.