Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G55

Adapted and modified by

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1. A Client

By Raja Rao

THE last bell rang. Gathering his notes and his books Ramu left the class with his usual hurry. Sundaresha was standing on the steps talking to somebody. No, Ramu would not see him. No, he would not! Unconsciously he jumped down from the verandah and walked along the gravelled path with redoubled speed. How he hated them all, these rich, carefree people. . . . Oh! if only he had his own books. It was not his fault if he had not done well in his last examinations. How could he? One cannot learn without books. His brother could write all that nonsense about working hard, getting a university scholarship, and bringing a name to their ancient, revered family. If only he knew what it was to wash one's own clothes, clean the vessels, cook the food and sweep the floor, and spend uncountable hours waiting at the doors of Sundaresha's to be condescendingly honoured with the loan of a book. To talk to them charmingly, when you detested them in the heart of your hearts, to flatter them, cringe before them, and even slave for them when necessary. It was not easy like swearing before peasants or commanding one's wife. Bangalore is not Hariharapura. If only his brother knew that.

'Ramu, Ramu.' Somebody was calling him. Lifting up his head he saw Jayalakshmi, his neighbour in the chemistry class, coming towards him with her usual smile of friendliness and forced mockery.

'Ramu, you're coming with me in my Victoria.'

'Sorry.'

'I suppose women not being equal to men, you cannot sit by me.'

'No. I'm in a hurry.' The devil throw the girl into the fire. But somewhere, something graceful and mysterious swept up, drawing him into forbidden secrets, sweetly tender. But the Brahmin in him woke up. The caste mark was not on his face but on his soul. The sweetness sank into ashes. Away. . . .

'Goodbye, Jayalakshmi.'

'Bye-bye.'

He grit his teeth, and thrusting away all thoughts of Jayalakshmi, he walked on trying to think of the approaching examinations. As he passed by the pipal tree near the gate, he saw a queer old man standing on the road, and smiling to every student that came along, exaltedly, expectantly. He wore a gold-laced turban and a loose long-coat in the old fashion. He was bare-footed, and his dhoti, also gold-laced, was creamy white; and by contrast his wrinkled dust-covered feet seemed bluish-green like cow-dung. Coldly returning his smile Ramu walked away feeling somehow that things were not well with him. Perhaps it was just tiredness. Or only loneliness; or, who could say, maybe the cat he had seen at the window on waking up forbode something terribly evil. No, no, he assured himself, the gods would not desert him after all these years. They would help him and bless him. 'O Kenchamma, O Goddess, my salutations to Thee!'

He hardly got to the Mysore Bank Square when he heard somebody calling him from behind. The voice was unfamiliar but affectionate. And turning round whom should he see but the same old man, more smiling than ever, and his eyes beaming with intense, surging love. Ramu shivered.

'Ramu,' cried the old man, running up to him, breathless, 'Ramu, are you not our Ramu of Hariharapura?'

'Yes,' he murmured confusedly. His lips trembled and he perspired all over oppressed by some unaccountable fear. He would have preferred to meet the will o' the wisp than this haunting old man.

'That's it,' he exclaimed, putting his hands on Ramu's shoulders. 'There you are, my boy. When I saw you by the gate I was sure as the dog knows its food that you were our Ramu. . . . But I wanted to make certain. And when I asked somebody who came behind you he said I was right. Well done, my old man, I said to myself, no mistaking it. And I ran and ran. But how like a fawn you fly! Now let me see. So you're our Krishnappa's son and Shama's brother? What, Ramu, how is Hariharapura? Is it always the same old Hariharapura?' Who the devil could this be, thought Ramu to himself, as they moved on. He knows my father, he asks about Hariharapura—and the wretch that I am, I never remember people. How he speaks too with such familiarity! He must be somebody I know! Surely. . . .

'Everything goes on as usual,' he muttered mechanically.

‘And how is our old friend Bhatta? When I saw him last, he was already losing his eyesight and he had been rather ill. Is he better now?’

‘I believe he had died some years before I was born,’ answered Ramu, still confused. ‘But his son is living and I know him pretty well.’

‘Oh, I’m sorry for the old chap. Anyway when you see young Bhatta will you give him my blessings, and ask him if he still remembers me. Will you, my son? And now tell me: how are the Corner-house people? How many children has Venkanna’s son, Srikantha? I had been to his marriage. That was the last time I saw Hariharapura. Oh, that I should have left my byre and my manger. But in those days, who would have refused a job in the Bangalore Secretariat? I was young, I was brilliant, and one day I would be an amaldar or a sub-division officer, I thought. And I went. . . . And I have never been able to go back and visit my relations and find out whether they were dead or alive. Government service, my son, is like prostitution. Once you take that profession you cut away all bonds. But why all that now? I have had enough of that slavery. Thanks be to God, I am out of it. Well, I retired from my service, and have had to stay on here for the education of my children. Each summer I said to myself, let the vacations come and we will go to Hariharapura, and drink the sweet waters of the Hemavathy. But children never have enough! They always cry for more. If only they were like other children, obedient, loyal, hard-working. Oh, what shall I say of my children? But . . . let me see. My Srinivasan is in your class. Surely, in yours. . . . You know Srinivasan? S.T. Srinivasan? Now, tell me, Ramu, and I shall swear to you on anything I shall never let it out, tell me if it is true that he is very full of pranks in the class, that he has joined a group of vagabonds who smoke cigarettes and go to the houses of prostitutes. Tell me, Ramu, tell me!’

What could he answer? The question came all of a sudden and Ramu was still thinking, trying to remember all the people he knew, and all the relatives one talked of at home, and yet he could remember no one resembling this queer old man, who spoke with such familiarity and affection. Brother Shama, his brother, who knew his relatives to the tenth generation, had never said a word about him. Surely he would have, and no doubt have sent Ramu along directly to this old man when Ramu first came to Bangalore. And again, this Srinivasan? He had no class-fellow with that name.

‘I’m sorry,’ he stuttered, embarrassed to put a straight question. ‘I’m sorry. Excuse me. . . . I don’t remember where I could have seen you.’

‘Good God! Ramu, how scandalous that you should ask who I am! Good God! If you should forget your relatives so soon then I know how little you will care for us all, when you will have gone through the Civil Service examinations and become District Judge or Assistant Commissioner! Really, really! I cannot believe my ears. No, I cannot. But . . . I must accept it. It is not your fault, my son; it is the immoral influence of this ignoble education called “modern”.’ He gave an accentuated sigh, and pathetically holding on to Ramu’s arms, he continued, ‘Well, my son, anyway don’t ignore your relations. No, please don’t. But, as you have forgotten who I am, I’ll tell you. I am Hosakere Nanjundayya. . . . Ho-sa-ke-re Nan-jun-dayya.’ He stood straight in front of Ramu, peering at his eyes. Ramu felt somehow abashed, repentant, revolted. Hosakere Nanjundayya, . . . Ho-sa-ke-re Nan-jun-dayya. . . . No, he could remember no such name. He felt unhappy. The cat at the window reappeared. Ill-luck. Wretched. . . . Wretched. . . .

Looking at the old man he suddenly felt relieved. The shame turned into pity, and then into courage.

‘Please pardon me,’ he burst out almost without a thought, ‘I think I still cannot recall where I could have seen you. I really am ashamed of myself. . . . But, you see, my memory. . . .’

Nanjundayya now wriggled with amused laughter.

‘Why,’ he cried, still laughing, ‘why, I knew your family before you were born!’ How often I dined in your house. Oh, how often! Your father, dear Ramu, simply adored me. He could not, he used to swear, live without me. You see, he was my sister’s brother-in-law’s wife’s maternal uncle. And when I went to see my sister in Kantur, he always sent for me and would not let me go till the vacations were over. . . . And my sister naturally complained that I never stayed in her house. Poor thing! now she is dead, and so is your revered father. Oh, that I should survive them.’ He seemed almost in tears. But he soon gave a forced smile, and continued. ‘Now, tell me, Ramu, my son, are you still in the Verandah-House? Or have you moved to the new one your father was building by the mango grove? I told him it would simply be a waste of money. But he would not listen. “I want my children to be happy,” he would declare. “I will build a house that will house all of them with their wives and children and children’s children.”’

‘We still live in the old Verandah-House,’ said Ramu. In fact he had never heard of such a plan. He was still rummaging through his memory to find out who Hosakere Nanjundayya was. Neither his sister-in-law nor his brother Shama, nor in fact the talkative Bhatta, had ever spoken of a Hosakere Nanjundayya. Strange! So very strange. Absurd.

They were now in Chikpet, and Nanjundayya insisted on taking Ramu to the Udipi Coffee House. Ramu refused at first, but when Nanjundayya forced him with threats and prayers, he accepted, and they went in. The Coffee House was full. But they found a comfortable corner near the kitchen door.

‘Now tell me, Ramu, my son,’ said Nanjundayya, as soon as they were seated, ‘what will you have, dosè or uppittu?’ What kindness! What respectful friendliness! Ramu said with his usual sense of politeness that he did not want anything. But Nanjundayya was a man of experience. He knew a man by his face. A few kind words and Ramu said he would have uppittu.

‘Lakshmana,’ shouted Nanjundayya, familiarly and authoritatively. A curly-haired, bright-eyed, intelligent-looking, immaculately-dressed young boy came running, with an amused, almost mocking smile upon his face.

‘What ho! Nanjundayya, it is ages since I have seen you. Perhaps you haven’t had enough clients.’

Clients! Ramu was startled. Why, the old man had just said Government Service was so damnable. . . . And clients! But then, he said he had retired from service. Perhaps he is a clerk to some lawyer. So many retired people become clerks to pleaders and advocates. But why did the boy smile so mockingly? No, no. Perhaps Nanjundayya comes here often. The boy was just joking with familiarity. Surely. . . .

Meanwhile somebody called Nanjundayya from behind. Ramu turned back. The man looked crude and malicious. ‘What, my dear Nanjundayya,’ the man shouted teasingly, and his ‘dear’ was interminably long and emphatic, ‘What, my dear, dear Nanjundayya, does the world still go round and round, my man? Ahum! With your gold-laced turban, your beautiful velvet coat, your gold-laced dhoti, you look, my young man, a veritable bridegroom. What! Whose daughter? The Prime Minister’s or the Maharaja’s, hey?’ Lord! This very devil, this villain of a Vishwanath, to come here, here . . . and at this moment. . . . Nanjundayya was furious. And with a violence that seemed strange in that smiling, sentimental old man, he howled: ‘Get away, you impertinent man, get

away! Do not display your monkey tricks before respectable company! Go your way, you devil!' And turning to Ramu Nanjundayya gave a broad, triumphant smile. This devil was not his friend! No! The brute took undue liberties of familiarity. How Nanjundayya had spat on him. Couldn't get away with it. Isn't that so, Ramu?

Vishwanath was gone. He laughed heartily, amused at the serious air of Nanjundayya. Harsh words did not matter to him. He was accustomed to it. He was a professional jester. He sat not far from them, chattering away to a young man who laughed so contentedly that he spat out the coffee that he had half-swallowed. Ramu was burning with anger. He detested them all.

Now the uppittu was brought. And munching it, they continued to talk.

'Then you do not know anything about my Srinivasan?'

'No.'

'Anyway, you must come with me and meet my wife and children. After we leave the Coffee House you will come along with me. You will, my son, won't you?'

'I would very willingly have come. But, you see, my exams are approaching. . . .'

'Exams! Exams! Why, for a brilliant boy like you, why this fear of the examinations? Being first in all the examinations, you cannot plead with me that you are afraid of them! No, you cannot!' It was a painful blow to Ramu. First! Why, if only he could get through, merely have the minimum. First! Yes, in Hassan High School. Not here. Not here. He felt humiliated. He felt angry. The cat suddenly appeared at the window, glared at him, and disappeared. Was he only talking in his dream?

'Anyhow, look here, my son,' Nanjundayya was shouting at Ramu trying to make him more attentive to his talk, 'Do you mean to say examinations are the end and aim of all your existence? It is because of these examinations that we have become such slaves, losing our ancient traditions and our self-respect. Do you know what Mahatma Gandhi thinks of it? He thinks it to be one of the most pernicious elements of our modern life. Do you listen to me, my son? And after all what does it matter in these days whether you are a BA or MA? All get the same thirty or forty rupees a month. And even to get that, what fortitudes, what briberies, what dust-licking humiliations one has to bear. But,

Ramu,' he corrected himself, patting the other's back, 'no, no, I do not mean that you will be one of these twenty-five or thirty-rupee clerks! Oh, Ramu! I swear to you on the spirits of my ancestors, no, I did not mean it. I am sure as the hawk knows its prey that you will have ten such clerks under you.'

'With your blessings,' said Ramu politely.

'My blessings,' cried out Nanjundayya, bursting with milky enthusiasm, 'well, my blessings are always with you, always, always! Why, Ramu, if I did not give my blessings to you, who else do you think should have them? For all the food that I have eaten in your father's house, and for all the affection I have received from your family, could I not be even so generous as to give you my blessings? You will get through all your examinations brilliantly, and marrying a rich man's daughter you will be a big official of His Highness the Maharaja's Government. But when you are a Commissioner or a Judge, do not forget this poor Nanjundayya, my son. . . . Oh! do not. . . .

The word marriage disturbed Ramu. How often had he not racked his brains with it? From the day he had discussed with Jayalakshmi the unhappiness of most of the couples where the man is 'modern' and the wife of the old, traditional world, he somehow could not find peace within himself. He saw nothing clearly. To marry an uneducated girl, and be unhappy all one's life, then. . . . To marry for money! Well, it would help one for a moment. But afterwards. . . . To have one's life ruined because of a few rupees! Oh, no! How horrible. . . . But then, how long to live like this . . . cooking . . . washing . . . sweeping . . . counting each pie as though it contained the germ of eternal happiness. Impossible! A good marriage is profitable for the moment. . . . A room overlooking a spacious garden. . . . A smiling wife bringing in hot coffee. . . . The langour. . . . The mother-in-law's supplications. . . . A veritable small divinity. . . . Books on the shelf, beautiful green, blue, golden books. An electric light at the bedside. . . . No smell of kerosene oil. . . . Work till midnight. . . . Exams. . . . 'How have you done, Ramu?' 'Not bad.' (In his heart: 'Excellent!') Results. . . . Ramu first! The eager, envious, flattering looks of the class-fellows. And all Hariharapura shouting his glory.

'No, I will not forget you,' mumbled Ramu, pursuing his own thoughts.

'Let us see. Let us see,' chuckled Nanjundayya. 'Don't I know these assurances! When you will be, say, a District Judge, and I come to you, you will ask the servant to tell me that you are either too busy or too tired to receive anybody,

and thus politely turn me out. How many such cases have I not heard of or seen. Could you believe me, Executive Engineer Ramaswamy is my own father's aunt's grandson. And yet when I went to see him the other day, he sent word through his peon to say he was going out and that he could not receive me at the moment. And again, take Chandrasekharayya. Yes, Chandrasekharayya the Minister. He is my own cousin . . . that is, my grandfather's brother's grandson. Today when he was passing by Chikpet in his new car, I greeted him and he did not even return it. Oh, Ramu, what shall I say of all the others who are my closest relations, and friends, and with whom I have played when I was a child? You see, my son, it is all due to this pernicious system of education. Yes, I know, Ramu, you will never treat me like that. I am sure you will not. What a dear fellow you are.' He patted Ramu again enthusiastically. But poor Ramu! The idea that he would be a big government official at once flattered and disquieted him. Would he get to be a big man? A man of distinction and authority? Perhaps never.... But who could say? The future might hold pearls in its palms. Engineer? Minister? No, never.

'Lakshmana,' Nanjundayya shouted out again.

'Yes, your esteemed Highness!'

'Two coffees,' he said, when Lakshmana arrived. 'But wait a moment, Ramu, what more will you have?'

'Nothing.'

'Now, don't play the woman! Come, tell me.'

'Well, then I will have a *dose.*'

'I say, Lakshmana. Two coffees, warm, very warm, mind you. And two *doses.*'

'Yes, Your Highness!' Lakshmana was amused at Nanjundayya's generosity.

'Now,' said Nanjundayya, turning to Ramu, 'look here, my son. Eat as much as you like. When one has a guest like you, even a miser will turn the Generous Cow. And especially when one knows that you have to cook your own food. I know, my dear Ramu, cooking one's food for oneself makes the very rice and soup worse than manger-munch. I know it, poor boy!' How Ramu hated him. He wanted pity from nobody. The wretch! The old owl! But how did he know

about Ramu's cooking his own food? If only he could catch the rascal who had revealed it.... Well... But he smiled. He could not betray his thoughts.

Meanwhile Lakshmana brought the *dose* and coffee. These little boys moved hither and thither like fairies; and they brought you things before you had winked your eyes a dozen times. Swallowing a big morsel of dos, Nanjundayya continued.

'There is nothing like having a home, my son. Especially for one like you who has lived in such comfort.' ('Have I?' thought Ramu.) 'You are so soft and quiet. Yes, my son, you need a home. And after all why not marry?' He smiled confusedly. 'I am sure you have already thought of it. And in these days which boy of your age would not have thought of it? Well, Ramu?' Ramu was silent, Still the same tormenting question! Why the devil talk of it all the time? Stop it, old fellow! and leave me to myself! Please.

'Anyway, tell me, my son. How old are you? Why, what a silly fool I am! Don't I know it? I know your horoscope as I know my own! You were born under Jupiter, on the eleventh day of Asvin, in the year Bhova. So,' he counted on his trained fingers, 'you are nineteen years, four months and three days old.' How the devil did he know all this? Who could have told him? Perhaps he remembers it? Or....

'At nineteen, my son, you must begin to think of marriage. And… '

'No, I have not thought of it. Nor shall I think of it. At least not for a few years.' He was decisive. He felt happy to have made that decision. He needed such forced moments to make up his mind about things. And once made, he held to them stubbornly, irrevocably.

Nanjundayya went grey as a plantain flower. But he knew his trade much too ell to lose hope. When he had tackled hundreds and hundreds of 'modern young men' of Bangalore, yes, of Bangalore, what did a country-kid like Ramu mean to him? Patience! And he would win the game.

'I know all these sophisticated tricks, Ramu!' He looked greatly amused. 'I know them as I know myself. It is the same old story all over again. You say to us, in front of us, that you do not want to marry, and secretly you wish you could get a rich man's daughter. Well, well, my son, don't count me for a peasant. In this very Bangalore—this home of modernism—I have spent these

three-and- thirty years. No, you must be plain. It is no use trying to hide your feelings. How will you hide them when you have a little wife by you, and a rich father-in-law shining only in your light? ... And then, you rascal, you will still tell me you don't want to marry, you little monkey?'

'I assure you, I don't want to marry.' Ramu was grave. He looked determined. 'You need not marry now, my son. Nobody forces you to.' Nanjundayya changed his tactics. He suddenly became serious and deep-voiced. 'No, I do not want to force you to do anything ... But, you see ...I mean, you see. ...I have placed all my hopes in you.... Your father, Ramu, was such a great friend of mine that I loved him as though he were my brother. And, though I have a son, he is not one in whom the hopes of a decrepit, dying old man like me can be placed. So you see, my son, I would like to see you a big man, a rich man, and married to the daughter of a man of money and distinction.' He seemed almost to plead, to beg. Ramu was moved. How very affectionate, he thought. 'Ramu, if I could ask the gods a boon, it would be to give me a son brilliant, sincere, loving like you. Of what use are all the herd of children I have—puling, shrieking, jealous, indifferent children! They eat all I can give them, and always want more, more. They are always hungry and always weep, crying they haven't all the clothes they need. And yet, old as I am, I have to slave for them from dawn to midnight, to earn so that these brats, these vagabonds, may have enough to grow fat on! Oh, to earn for one like you, Ramu my son, it would dispense one of Benares!' Nanjundayya had tears in his eyes. He would have sobbed like a woman were he not in a Coffee House. What would Ramu say to please him, to comfort him? He looked so pitiful, wretched. Ramu smiled with sympathy and respect. Nanjundayya's face grew more lively and his eyes beamed forth confidence and hope. Yes, the game was not lost.

'Ramu,' he continued, pressing Ramu's arms with gratitude, 'Ramu, I cannot tell you how I... love you. 0, how happy I would be to see you one day an Assistant Commissioner with a dozen servants and half a dozen clerks. Yes, Ramu, I would weep with joy. I would be happier still to find you with a beautiful wife, sweet, tender and obedient, clothed in a Dharmawar sari and adorned with diamond earrings, sapphire and ruby necklaces, and a half-seer gold belt to complete it all. If I were you, my son, I would marry now, this very moment, so that I should have a home to live in while in Bangalore, and a wife ready to live with when you will be an Assistant Commissioner in four or five years' time. I would, if I were you!' He smiled almost ecstatically. Ramu thought: After all, perhaps the old man is right. Old men are always so full of ripe wisdom.... Why not marry? Sofas.... Hot coffee.... Electric light.... But... if

the future should turn out to be dark and treacherous! To live a life of misery.... Jayalakshmi was right.

'I would have married if I were you,' continued Nanjundayya. 'Listen to the words of an old man. My son, there's nothing like timely marriage. To marry at nineteen, to have nuptials at twenty-one, and to have a child at twenty-two or twenty-three, that is the ideal, the ancient, infallible ideal. Nothing like it. Listen, Ramu, suppose you begin thinking of it. And I assure you, for the sweet memory of your esteemed father, I would do anything to get you a suitable father-in-law. You have only to say yes, and you will see in ten days' time everything will be settled. I do not say this to flatter myself. But I must tell you that there are few families in Bangalore that I do not know, and in all of them I am treated with consideration and love. And at this very moment I know of at least fifteen mothers who would fall at your feet and call you their god and offer their daughters in marriage to you. Well, Ramu, my son? What do you think of it? Would he accept? Should he? To be married to a rich man's daughter? But no. He had to be patient. He had to think over it. For the moment the best thing would be to refuse.

'No,' he said softly, respectfully, 'no, not for the moment, I am going home in a few days, and when I am back I shall have decided one way or the other. In any case, for the present let me say no.' Home! He was sure never to speak about it to anybody. But why did Jayalakshmi come into his mind suddenly? Surely he was not going to ask her opinion of it. Her brilliant, mocking smile came back with cruel precision. Why did she stick to him? He had never cared for her. He had never asked her to be friends with him. No! No! The sooner he decided to drop her the better. These modern girls are so dangerous. But something in him revolted and affirmed itself with terrible softness. A luminous feeling filled his being. Warmth ... peace ... harmony ... Jayalakshmi.

'Well, Ramu, my son,' went on Nanjundayya with indefatigable patience, 'anyway, I shall look for a suitable bride for you. And when you are back you will tell me your decision. There's no hurry—not the least. You understand, my son. This poor Nanjundayya will always be the same old chap, tender, generous and paternal, and he only wishes one thing, and that is Ramu's happiness.' His lips trembled, and his eyelids gently closed with emotion.

'May your blessings be on me. I promise you again, I will think it over.'

They had now finished their coffee. Nanjundayya went to the counter, paid the bill, and joined Ramu on the steps. Ramu was happy to be going home. He was glad of the treat, but now he had to go and work. So, turning to Nanjundayya, he said, 'Well, when shall we see each other next?'

'Why, Ramu!' exclaimed Nanjundayya anxiously, 'surely you do not want to disappear so soon! I want so much to take you home and show you to my wife and children. You must see them, my son, you must.'

'Please do excuse me, do. I shall surely come and see you before I leave for Hariharapura. But not today...

Nanjundayya looked embarrassed. What the devil could one do with such a boy?

'Anyhow,' he said after a moment's reflection, 'you go by Dodpet, don't you? I go the same way. So can we go together?'

'Most willingly,' answered Ramu amiably, and they hurried along the busy Chickpet. When they were at the Dodpet corner, Nanjundayya suddenly stopped, his hand upon his forehead, looking irritated, restless and confused.

'My son, my son,' he cried out helplessly, 'I am awfully sorry. I had completely forgotten that I had an engagement at six with a friend. I am really sorry. Would you mind coming with me for a few minutes—just here, in the Potter's Street—and I will see you home? Unless...

'Of course I can do that,' answered Ramu. But what a curse!

They walked on silently for some time. Nanjundayya still looked greatly annoyed, and now and again he would unconsciously stop for a few seconds as though thinking over something, and suddenly turn to Ramu, force a smile and ask to be excused for this irritating delay. He had lost his vigorous gesticulations and his bubbling gaiety. But Ramu was much too lost in his examination worries to think about the old man's moods. They were soon in the New Market Square, and slipping through one of the side streets, they arrived in a narrow, quiet lane.

'Thank God!' exclaimed Nanjundayya, 'we are out of that noise and stink. Well, Ramu, you are going to see one of my very best friends. Vishweshwarayya was

a class-fellow of mine. From an ordinary constable he rose to be the Director-General of Police, all by sheer intelligence and courage. You will see for yourself what a simple, generous, unassuming man he is. He simply loves me. He does!' Nanjundayya's enthusiasm seemed less brilliant and he spoke in a mechanical staccato. 'He retired some years ago, and now what do you think, Ramu, he is one of the richest and most powerful men in this city. He has four sons-in-law, and all in responsible posts, entirely due to his influence. There is no Minister, Ramu, there is, I tell you, no Minister who does not go to consult him and ask his advice on the most important affairs of the State.... And yet you will see what an honest, respectful and loving man he is...Ramu was a little tired of all this. He was thinking of his room, books and examinations. But the old man continued, 'You will see all that for yourself. I'm sure you will.'

They slipped again into a smaller lane and were soon in a narrow square, where among mud-walled houses there rose a two-storeyed bungalow, with a balcony, curtained windows and a large garden of mango and guava trees.

'That is the house,' said Nanjundayya, pointing towards the bungalow. 'You will see how very fashionably it is furnished. All in modern style; All... They were at the gate. Nanjundayya opened the door as though it were his own house. And when they were halfway up the main drive, Vishweshwarayya himself came down to meet them. He was tall, and his navy-blue suit in European style shone like sapphire with the evening sun. He had a very amiable smile upon his face and his voice was deep, deferential. Thanking Ramu for having honoured him with this visit, he led them to the drawing-room. Nanjundayya was silent now, and looked more annoyed than ever. What after all was this, thought Ramu. But Vishweshwarayya kept him so busy with questions—what subjects he had chosen for his degree, where he lived, and how long he intended to stay in Bangalore—that Ramu had hardly any time to think. Somehow he felt uneasy. Besides, this beautiful drawingroom in European-style lamp-shades with birds on them, vases with artificial flowers, velveteen carpets on the floor, and magnificent gilt-framed pictures of the English countryside—all this so bewildered him that he felt confused and lost. Suddenly the door opened, and a charming girl of eleven or twelve, dressed in a gorgeous Dharmawar sari of blue and gold, entered with a silver plate full of fruits and cakes and glasses of coffee, and placing it on the table by Ramu, went and sat between her father and Nanjundayya, her hands upon her knees, shyly, awkwardly. There was a crammed silence. Nanjundayya, who had been silent so long, turned dramatically towards Ramu, and roared with victorious laughter. He had won. Ramu sat on his chair, his hairs on end, and feverish with indomitable hatred.

Immediately he remembered the cat at the window. It licked its feet, and with quiet, sinuous movements, lifting up the head, glowered at him and fell on the autumn leaves below. In the neighbouring room, his fat landlord, with a large tummy and one eye, sneezed. Once... Twice?... No.... Fallen into the trap, thought Ramu. Yes! he had. Would he marry the girl?
‘My Prince, Royal Prince,
Charming Prince, Eternal Prince,
You are mine and I am yours.
Virtuous and adorable, my Lord, my Husband,’

sang up the innocent voice.

2. Progressive Society

By Grok

A progressive society is one that continually evolves to meet the needs of its people, embracing change while striving for equity, justice, and innovation. It is built on the foundation of inclusivity, where diverse voices are not only heard but actively shape the direction of collective growth. Such a society prioritizes education, critical thinking, and access to resources, ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to thrive regardless of their background.

At its core, a progressive society values adaptability. It recognizes that traditions and systems must be re-evaluated in light of new evidence and shifting realities—whether that's through advancements in technology, shifts in cultural norms, or responses to global challenges like climate change. This adaptability is paired with a commitment to social justice, dismantling outdated hierarchies that perpetuate inequality and replacing them with structures that uplift the marginalized.

Empathy drives progress in this context. Policies and innovations aim to improve quality of life, from universal healthcare to sustainable infrastructure, reflecting a belief that the well-being of the collective matters more than the privilege of a few. Yet, a progressive society isn't utopian; it's pragmatic, balancing idealism with the realities of human nature and resource limitations.

Ultimately, a progressive society is a work in progress—never static, always questioning, and bold enough to redefine itself for the betterment of all. It's a living experiment in what humanity can achieve when it chooses cooperation over division and curiosity over complacency.

3. Grammar Page

Unit 55 Verb (+ object) + **to** … (**I want you to** …)

A

We say:

verb + **to** …			*verb* + *object* + **to** …		
want **expect** **ask** **help** **would like** **would prefer**	**to go** **to be** **to work** etc.	*and*	**want** **expect** **ask** **help** **would like** **would prefer**	somebody something	**to go** **to be** **to work** etc.

- We **expected to be** late.
- Would you **like to go** now?
- He doesn't **want to know**.
- We expected **Dan to be** late.
- Would you like **me to go** now?
- He doesn't want **anybody to know**.

We do not usually say 'want that':

- Do you **want me to come** with you? (*not* want that I come)

You can use **help** with or without **to**. You can say:

- Can you help me **to move** this table? *or* Can you help me **move** this table?

B

These verbs have the structure *verb* + *object* + **to** … :

verb + *object* + **to** …		
tell **advise** **remind** **warn** **invite** **encourage** **persuade** **get** **force** **teach** **allow** **enable**	somebody	**to do** **to be** **to work** etc.

- It's not a nice hotel. I wouldn't **advise you to stay** there.
- Can you **remind me to call** Sam tomorrow?
- Joe said the switch was dangerous and **warned me not to touch** it.
- I didn't move the piano by myself. I **got somebody to help** me.
- Who **taught you to drive**?
- They don't **allow people to park** in front of the building.

In these examples, the verb is *passive* (**I was warned** / **we are allowed** etc.):

- **I was warned not to touch** the switch.
- **Are we allowed to park** here?

We do not use **suggest** with **to** … :

- Jane **suggested that I ask** you for advice. (*not* Jane suggested me to ask)

C

We say '**make** somebody **do** something', '**let** somebody **do** something' (without **to**):

- I **made him promise** that he wouldn't tell anybody what happened. (*not* made him to promise)
- Hot weather **makes me feel** tired. (= causes me to feel tired)
- Her parents wouldn't **let her go** out alone. (= wouldn't allow her to go out)
- **Let me carry** your bag for you.

We say '**make** somebody **do**', but in the *passive* we say '(be) **made to** do' (with **to**):

- **We were made to wait** for two hours. (= They **made us wait** …)