Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G58

Adapted and modified by

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Contents

IN KHANDESH

By Raja Rao

‘Tom-Tom—Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tira-tira—Tira-tira— Tom-tom— Tom-tom… Listen, villagers, listen! Assemble ye all after midday meal—at the Patel’s. At the Patel’s —after midday meal—Tom-tom—Tom-tom—Tira-tira— Tira-tira— Everyone—All— Important business—Important—Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tom-tom— Tom-tom...

Dattopant wallowed in his bed, dreamily. A terrible pain in the stomach had kept him awake late into the night. And then, what with the heavy monsters that rolled over his belly, the horse that galloped without neck or tail, the noise of the grandchild near him, the breathless flight in the air, funeral processions, death-drums, temples and rupees, and mimicking monkeys—he could not sleep. Every other wink he woke up, moaned, and turning away his head, threw his legs aside, and forced himself to sleep —but sleep would never come. Deep in the night he heard an owl hoot somewhere—somewhere very near. Was it from the coconut-tree? The neem-tree?... No, it was from the roof. Death, said the elders, an owl on the tiles means certain death... death before the wane of the evil moon. He would have liked to stand up and shout ‘Ram, Ram’ to frighten away the owl. But he felt tired and restless. After all, to wake up the whole house, make a noise, cry, moan. And move to another house. Where? And for six months too. He, his old wife, his two quarrelling sons, his haughty daughter-in-law, and the puling, whining, slobbering brats. No. This could never be of me. Perhaps the owl was only on the palm-tree. No, it was not on the roof. For sure, no! However, let’s say ‘Ram, Ram’, ‘Ram, Ram’. Sleep will soon come and then everything will be forgotten.

Sleep indeed came but the owl changed into a sheep, the sheep grew long, twisted horns and became a buffalo. A black rider sat on it, a looped serpent in one hand. The buffalo put its muzzle on Dattopant, licked his flesh, sniffed—then with a dart flung into the depths of the raging clouds, and was lost. Dattopant too was lost. A noose was round his neck. The black rider was dragging him against the amassed clouds. … Where? Oh, that eye-shutting abyss! Earth below and space nowhere. ‘Ram, Ram’, ‘Ram, Ram’, he yelled in his sleep. ‘Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram.'

‘Can’t you shut your mouth?’ howled his wife. ‘The children are asleep.’

‘Hey?’

‘Oh! Be quiet.’

No, there was no owl. Forcing every joint in his body to loosen he put his head against the wall, and went to sleep again. There were no more nightmares. He had not slept long, when it was already dawn, and he heard noises of birds and of cattle waking up, and of people coughing and spitting, and walking about the house. But the half-awakened calm was so comforting that he lay on his bed undisturbed. How stream-like was that rest!

'Tom-tom—Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tira-tira—Tom-tom — Tom-tom...he heard the drum beat. He moved his head towards the door and tried to listen. But he feigned as though he were fast asleep. If his wife should see? He even tried to snore. His grandchildren passed near him. The little one, the last born of the second son, cried, 'Grandpa, Grandpa!' He almost felt like smiling back. But he couldn't —he wouldn't. Somehow closed eyes on a hot morning is so enchanting. Funny and bright like a juggler's show.

'Tom-tom—Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tira-tira—Tom- tom. Listen, villagers, listen! After the meal, everybody should assemble at the Patel's—Everybody—Important Business—Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tom-tom—Tom-tom. …'

'Important business! Important business!' Dattopant said to himself. 'What could that be? After all, everything is over now. Thotababa's Tail-End field was already auctioned by the government. Poor chap! One of the richest fellows in the village his father was, in my father's time. Owned half the cotton-fields. They said gold was used to pave his floors. Thotababa! We told him, didn't we, not to get indebted to that Parsi? But he wanted money — money. If not, how could he pay for his pilgrimages, marriages, mistresses?... And now. … Ha! Ha! Poor Thotababa! Ambudevi is Bhattoji's mistress now. Where there's money, there are women. Juicy girl too, Ambudevi. But poor Thotababa! Grind the corn, brother, grind. Then there was that affair of the toddy contracts. It was to be auctioned. Patel, Patwari, Revenue Collector, Police Inspector, Zamindars, motor cars, peons, shouts. Who gets the contract? The Parsi! Why, for every rupee we can pay he can pay two. He comes from Bombay, they say. And he has the Red-man's money. He throws us money and buys back our cotton. Pays for the seeds, and pays for the births, deaths, funerals, all. And for the revenues too, with mortgages. Only Sampathji said, 'I'll go to the town and sell it at eight annas a maund more.' Patel's visit. Patwari's visit. 'Oh, don't you do that!' Sampathji's bulls stayed in his byre, but his stick ran at the Parsi. Missed him! Pity. Be done with him and his money! One would have had a good drink after.

'Hey, buffalo! How long will you lie buried in your bed?' It was his wife. She was sweeping the floor, and the dust was already entering his nostrils.

‘Hey? Is it morning?’ he asked, yawning and cracking his knuckles as though he were just waking up.

‘Morning! The sun is high enough to char you to skin and bone, hey!’

‘I’ll rise.’ He drew up his eyelids painfully. From the opening in the roof, the sunshine poured like boiling pus — thick, steaming, white. The whole heaven is a hellish white bubo, he used to say. How it pours and pours—nothing but pus. It rains pus. And the earth—it drinks the pus, imbibes it eagerly, avidly, sucking....

Rising up, Dattopant folded his little mat and putting it in the corner walked out into the courtyard with his bedsheet. It served as blanket at night and upper cloth during the day. The streets were empty, and the flies were busy humming round the dung and the dustbins. The earth, tanned, hard earth, was lying flat, breathless, benumbed. From the neem by the street came the acrid, fermented smell of oozing liquor. On the high palms two vultures sat, with their fleshy necks, bald as though they had eaten their own skin. *Grhita, grhita, grhita* they hurled their ominous grunts. In Sayyaji’s house they were killing a cock for the match-maker. The pipers would soon begin the music.

The world seemed full of hot silences, and—noises— noises.

From near the temple came the gasp and grunt of the bailiff-drum: ‘Tom-tom—Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tira-tira— Tom-tom— Tom-tom. …’

‘Important business,’ said Dattopant to himself, ‘important business,’ and walked down the street towards the Devil’s Ravine for the morning performances.

In Khandesh the earth is black. Black and grey as the buffalo, and twisted like an endless line of loamy pythons, wriggling and stretching beneath the awful heat of the sun. Between a python and a python is a crevice deep as hell’s depths, and black and greedy and forbidding as demons’ mouths. They seem to gape their mouths to gobble you... to grapple you like crocodiles on a blazing day and drag you to the bottom of cavernous depths. *Baye— Baye—Baye* they seem to cry inaudibly, eager, rapacious, hungry. And they stream out breaths. The breaths are white and parched, curling and twisting and falling back like vermin. They search for a leg, a hand, an eye, a mouth, just to pull you into the abyss of the earth. Field on field is nothing but pythons and abyss—crocodiles waiting for their prey, vermin searching for a carcass. Then, suddenly, there is a yawning ravine in the endless immensity of the python-world, the chief python of pythons, with his venom flowing in red and blue and white. The red venom shines in the sands. The blue one lies in the shadow. And the white is the bubbling, steaming water that crawls over the bed, as though the pus of

heaven had turned liquid. The blood of the earth mingles with the pus of the skies— to bear cotton.

Rows and rows of cotton. Thin, unmoving, bone-like plants, with little skulls in their hands that split and crackle with the heat of the sun. Like the purity of the soul is their substance, within the twists and holes of the skull. But within their purity is the hidden venom—venom again! Black seeds, small knoblike seeds, sitting beside one another as though in clasped conspiracy. The pods would go to the dust, the cotton to the Red-man, and the peasant will have small knob-like seeds, hard as the river-stones, to munch and to crack. There are no stones in Khandesh!

The sun will hit him on the head, the earth maul him by the legs, the Red-man eat all his soul—and within the black and blue of the ravines, the white venom will flow to the end of time. The trains of the Red-man rush towards the city.

Finding none of his usual friends in the ravine—the sun was already high over the north-east—Dattopant hastily finished his excretions and ablutions and ran back to the village eager to hear about this 'important business'. He passed by Dhondopant's house but his son said he had gone to Kantur to see his second daughter, and her new male child. Then he turned round the Flag-Platform, and entered Sonopant's courtyard. His wife was grinding jawari, and the old man was in the byre chopping hay. Dattopant hurried there.

'Hey, brother, what is it all about?'

'Nothing. I think it's about the quarrel between Ramaji and Subbaji. You know, about the Cornerstone?'

'But, on my mother's soul, I thought they were going to the court?'

'No, I met the Patel yesterday. He said it would be settled by us. But I didn't know though it would be today.'

'No, brother, I think it's not that!'

'Must be that. If not what else?'

'No, brother, no. I heard an owl hoot on the roof. I know it is not that.'

'Then let's ask Govindopant.'

'Well, let us go.'

He left the hay on the flank, and they went across the courtyard to Govindopant's back wall.

'Hey, Govindopant!'

'Hey… Hey. …'

‘What’s that tom-tom about, brother?’ Govindopant, a tall man, with long, thick whiskers, and hanging cheeks, rose up from behind the wall, his hands soiled with clay. He was plastering the cattle-shed.

‘Don’t know. Heard the Police Inspector had come on his horse.'

‘Police Inspector! Police Inspector!’ Dattopant shuddered all over. His Sona, he who is dead, was once tied to a tree and beaten: he hadn’t jumped down from the cart when the Inspector was passing. And Dattopant hated the ‘round of hay and honey’ for the Inspector’s servants. And then the being spat on—and bowings!

‘Who told you he’s here, brother?’

‘Why, the women saw him from the well-side.’

‘When, brother?’

‘Yesterday evening. Your daughter-in-law too was there.’

‘Yesterday!’

‘Hey, hey, Father Sonopant, you are here?’ There were a number of voices. Bolopant, Vithobopant and Pandopant came through the byre. They were all young and wore short coats in the city fashion. 'The dangerous clique’, the elders used to call them for their subversive talk, and the Patel had more than once warned them against this ‘city chatter’.

‘The Police Inspector,’ cried Pandopant, as though with real satisfaction. ‘The Police Inspector, Father Sonopant.’

‘What’s he here for, son of your father?’

‘To arrest us no doubt!’ and they all laughed. ‘But, do you know,’ continued Pandopant in a half-jeering, half-excited tone, 'the Maharaja is coming to our village. …’

'The Maharaja!’ Govindopant had never beheld the Sovereign yet. His father, whose grandfather had seen Raja Sivaji, always described how godlike a maharaja looked.

‘Yes, the Maharaja!’ assured Vithobopant. ‘They say he'll come to our village and even stay for a night. …’

‘Nonsense! Nonsense!’ protested Govindopant. ‘Maharajas don't stay in poor huts, young man. My father used to say Raja Sivaji always slept on horseback. He hated staying with peasant folk.’

‘But this Maharaja is different, they say. He has stopped his motor car to talk to peasants passing by.’ It was Dattopant.

‘In Pitthapur Taluka, they said, didn’t they, he went into a peasant hut: “The sun is hot, mother, can you give me a glass of curds?”’

‘As witness,’ interrupted Pandopant, ‘ask the lizard on the wall of the house. The Maharaja...’

‘Now! Now!’ said Father Sonopant, who always calmed a malicious tongue. ‘You know, my son, I’ve heard it’s true. For example, the other day I went to see Lawyer Pandrung Joshi. His son passed the highest tests of the Government, and wanted a big post. Turban on his head and *nazar* in his hand, straight he went to the Palace. He’ll soon be a taluka collector.’

‘So you think he’ll come? The Maharaja?’ said Dattopant. He would offer him curds and mangoes and even a glass of sherbet, such sherbet as no house in the village could offer.

‘Of course! Of course, Govindopant!’ assured Pandopant.

‘Then I’ll receive him in my house. ’

'I!' said Dattopant.

‘I! I!’ shouted Vithobopant and Bolopant.

'Well, let us not quarrel about it,’ said Sonopant, cooling the discussion. They called him the sage.

‘But,’ started Dattopant thoughtfully, ‘do you think we can ask him anything? I mean any question?’ There was always that Sona’s death that bothered him. And the Parsi and the Police Inspector....

There was a noise in the back verandah. It was the Patel coming to see Govindopant.

‘Govindopant! Govindopant!’

‘Yes, Patel!’ he shouted back, proud the Patel had come to see him first—and in front of everybody too. … Maybe the Maharaja would stay with him. Raja Sivaji, his father used to say....

‘I want your help, father.’

‘Don’t you know everything is yours, Patel. The Maharaja. …’ He folded his hands and looked humbler than ever.

Dattopant felt an unutterable hatred growing in his head. *He* would receive the Maharaja....

‘Any help from me?’ asked Pandopant jauntily, suppressing an amused laugh.

‘No, I’ve come to see Govindopant.’

‘Yes, yes, Patel, my house...’

‘No, your mare.’

‘For the Maharaja! But it is old.’

‘My horse is swift as the wind,’ cried Pandopant, looking seriously at the Patel, ‘and strong as the pipal.’ His two companions turned away to laugh, for as everybody knew Pandopant never had any horse.

‘Young man, I am speaking to Govindopant,’ spat the Patel, looking gloweringly at the young man. ‘The Maharaja,’ he said, turning to the elders, ‘is passing by our village, accompanied by the Representative and Relation of the Most High Majesty— across the Seas... of His Majesty who lives in his country, London. …’

‘London, oh yes, London,’ repeated Pandopant, who after his visit to the city proclaimed his knowledge of everything foreign. The Patel feigned not to hear.

'Yes, His Majesty’s Representative—Viceroy, they call him— accompanied by the Maharaja, is passing by the village in the train.’

‘They won’t stay here then?’ interrupted Dattopant, confused.

‘No, they’ll pass by our village in the train.’ Everybody looked at his neighbour disappointed and resentful. Maybe the Maharaja may still....

‘They will pass by in the train, and we have to honour them by standing by the railway line and showing how loyal and faithful our villagers are to the Sovereign.’

‘Loyal and faithful to the Sovereign,’ repeated Govindopant.

‘Those who have horses,’ continued the Patel, ‘will ride them. Those who haven't will stand, a staff in hand. …’

‘With folded hands? Or should we bow, Patel?’ asked Govindopant. He knew how to bow before kings: his great- grandfather had done it to the great Raja Sivaji.

‘Neither fold your hands nor bow, mind you. You will not move the smallest hair on your body as the train passes by. And you will have your backs to the train.’

‘Backs to the train!’ exclaimed Dattopant. They had already imagined how, wearing the most shining of their apparel, in red and gold and blue, they would bow as the Maharaja peeped out to greet them. They would bow again. And he would smile back in return. Govindopant even saw how the Maharaja

would stop the train, come down, and as the ancient stories go, send him bags and bags of gold. He wouldn't touch the gold, of course, never. He would build a large free caravanserai, and a well and a temple by it, and fly an ochre flag for the greater glory of God.

'Backs to the train,' repeated the Patel. 'You know how some devilish, prostitute-born scoundrels tried to put a bomb beneath the train of the Representative of the Most High across the Seas. '

'Yes, I've heard of it in the city. They said it just missed him.' It was of course Pandopant.

'Will you shut your mouth, young man! One word more, and you will go straight to prison. I have been watching you since you came back from the city. You talk of nothing but of bombs and pistols, and corrupt these young men with all those city ideas which no man born to his father would ever utter. I tell you this is the last time I give you the warning. Take care.'

'But...' blurted Pandopant, suddenly turning humble, 'I only said what I heard in the city. …'

'City or no city, I tell you, shut up or I'll ask the Police Inspector to arrest you on the spot!'

'Stitch your lips, young fellow!' cried Govindopant.

'Govindopant,' the Patel said, turning to the elders once again, 'you will have your mare, won't you? For every four telegraph poles there will be one man on foot, and for every four men on foot there will be a man on horse-back.'

'Always your slave!' cried Govindopant, proud.

'Patel,' said Dattopant eagerly, 'shall I stand on my field by the bael tree?' He would show the Maharaja *his* fields.

'That's in the hands of the Police Inspector. This afternoon he'll decide about it all.'

'But—but you'll put in a word for me, Patel?'

'We'll see. … Anyway,' concluded the Patel, turning round to go home, 'you'll all assemble at my house this afternoon. But, Pandopant, I warn you once again: Hold your tongue, or you'll see I was not put into the world for nothing!' Govindopant, Sonopant and Dattopant turned to the young man with looks severe and full of admonition. Yes, he would have to change.

That evening the whole village was merry. 'Tom-tom— Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tira-tira—Tom-tom— Tom-tom... Tomorrow at cock-crow everybody will be

ready by the railway line—Everybody—At cock-crow—Tom-tom— Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tira-tira—Tom-tom—Tom-tom. …'

In Khandesh the earth floats. Heaving and quivering, rising and shrivelling, the earth floats in a flood of heat. Men don't walk in Khandesh. They swirl round and round upon their feet—and move forward. Birds don't fly in Khandesh. They are carried on the billows of heat. Horses don't move in Khandesh. The earth moves to them.

Trees indeed do grow in Khandesh. But they stand shaven and sombre like widows before their husbands' pyre. Now and again they creak their branches—a groan, an oath, a gasp. Men don't speak in Khandesh either. They blubber in their dreams. Trains do rush through Khandesh —clutter-clutter—clutter-clutter—they squeak and snort and disappear for fear they should fly. The long, black, quavering railway lines submit to them like a cat to its mate. There he comes—there—he comes—the monster. Bigger and bigger he swells as he rises up. He shakes and rattles and grits past you.

Trains on trains grind through Khandesh. Trains with spitting men, vomiting women and yelling children.

Trains on trains—clutter-clutter, clutter-clutter—with horses and buffaloes, coal, manure, rice, cotton, wheat, pungent-smelling oranges, melting moon-guavas, and juicy, perfumed, voluptuous mangoes. Trains on trains pass by, day after day, day after day. They pass through Khandesh.

Dattopt and Sonopant and Govindopant—with coats in velvet and gold, with turbans in red and green and blue, dhotis brown as the skin, slippers with sinuous filigree- tails, tassels, kerchiefs, cummerbunds—stand by to see the trains pass by.

Men and horses, coal and cotton pass through Khandesh.

It is a wet sultry morning. The sun is already high, and the air is spongy. The railway line leaps from the maw of heaven, bumps over the hillocks, girdls the mounds, and fling over the depths of the ravines, hisses up, twisting its tail, flopping its head, distraught, and shooting into gullet of the horizon curls itself round and is lost. Sonopant has been up long. Folding his bedding, he lightened his hookah and sat waiting for Dattopant turn up as usual, When he had smoked and dozed, and dozed again, he rose and bawled across the railway line: 'Hey, brother, hey! Wake up and let's go the ravine.' 'Hey! Wait, fellow! Coming. …' Dattopant rose up with an oath, and throwing his blanket by his turban, coat and cummerbund, he left his telegraph-pole and walked up to Sonopant on the other side of the line. The air was suffocating, and a storm seemed to gather somewhere across the rain of heat. The stones beneath his

feet were already scorching. Far off the village rose with its mud walls brown as parched flesh. On the flagstaff a crow sat and caw-cawed. Somebody was walking down the twist of the ravine, an ass behind him. His shadow is black as congealed blood. He descends into the ravine. The ass too descends into the ravine. Whirlpools of sun haze play over them.

‘Hot!’ cried Sonopant, covering his head with his blanket, 'very hot, brother.’

'Ho! Blazing like a frying-pan.’

'Let’s go to the ravine, then!’

‘When the women come, better send them for some water. It’s my young daughter-in-law who comes this morning.’

‘No, brother, I’ll go.’

‘Stay on, brother, don’t worry. That wench does nothing at home. Have to keep the women fit—like horses. Must break them!’

‘There comes Govindopant,’ cried Sonopant, seeing him come up the ravine on his horse. ‘There he is. Earlier than both of us too?

‘He says he cannot sleep. He hears noises of trains at every beat of the pulse. … I, too, brother?

‘I too, brother. Last night what do you think happened? I thought I heard a train. I dressed myself up and said, this is surely the train of the Maharaja, for, I heard the Patel say, they may pass by even at night?

‘At night! No, brother. We wouldn’t be here if they passed by at night?

‘Of course not. Maybe. I don't know? Sonopant was perplexed.

Anyway, I dreamed it was the train. Far off I saw a light moving. It was coming—coming, coming, I heard it sniff and cough and jog. Then I put my ear to the ground. Train! No train. It was only a star hanging between the leaves of the tree.’

'But look here, brother. Wake me up, brother, if there is a train. A whistle there, and you shout, “He! you buffalo— the train—the train. ” Yes, brother! And if I do not answer send a stone straight at my head. If the Maharaja. …’

Govindopant joined them after tying the horse to his telegraph-pole. Their women usually brought food together— unless they quarrelled on the way,

'Sit down, brother,’ said Dattopant, 'and tell us if you know when the Maharaja comes.’

‘Oh, I don’t know. I cannot sleep till I’ve seen the Maharaja. If he does not come I’ll go to Kamalpur, and ask for an audience. Raja Sivaji always gave

audience to every subject that asked for it.' Dattopant looked at him, burning with jealousy. As though he couldn't go to Kamalpur too, and ask for not one audience but a thousand. There was that affair about Sona's death. And the Parsi and the Police Inspector.

At last the women arrived. They had a bell-metal pot in each hand, containing jawari bread and a chilli or two and salt. Dattopant's last daughter-in-law was shy. Besides, since she lost her husband—of cholera or police injuries, she did not know, nor anybody either—she hardly ever opened her mouth. She put the food before Dattopant and hid herself behind a tree. The two other women—Sonopant's old wife, and Govindopant's elder daughter— were still a few yards away.

'Hey, daughter! Go and fetch some water from the ravine,' cried Dattopant. The daughter-in-law came back, and stood respectfully in front of him.

'Some water, woman, some water to gargle our mouths with!'

'The vessel?'

'Oh, put the food on a cloth, and get it in the pot. Quick.

But how is your yelling-one now?'

'It still coughs.'

'To the monster with your coughs and convulsions. Always the same! Women—women.'

Meanwhile the daughter-in-law slowly bent down, put the bread and chillies on Sonopant's folded bedding, and went to bring the water. The two other women arrived, and placing the vessels in front of the men, retired behind the tree to have a nap. They say, when men chatter, women sleep, when women quarrel, men snore!

Very soon the water for washing was there, and splashing their faces with it, Sonopant and Dattopant joined Govindopant who had already begun to munch his bread.

'Hey, brother?' said Dattopant between two mouthfuls, 'is it true the Police Inspector arrested Pandopant and Vithobopant? They say he came on inspection. Found them talking together on the railway line. "Dangerous people.... Dangerous people. …" he cried and arrested them. They deserved it too—these young braggarts with their city-talk.'

'Don't know. Maybe it's true. Maybe not. My woman said the Patel told everybody about it.'

'That's probably to frighten others,' remarked Sonopant, wiser than the rest.

‘If you give the mean fellow a rope for his horse he’ll put it round his neighbour’s neck! That’s the Patel!’ concluded Dattopant, resentful.

‘But, brother,’ put in Govindopant, ‘it’s late, brother. And the morning train will soon pass by. The Police Inspector. … ’

‘Well, brother. But let me eat?’

‘Yes, eat on. But, mind you. …’

‘The morning train comes up only when the shadow is on the line, brother. It has hardly touched the stones.’

‘Oh, yes! But, brother, hurry on. Anyway.’

Then the three went on tearing and munching the jawar bread. The women sat leaning against each other. It was too hot to be lying on the earth. The monsoon would break out soon—and then one would open one’s mouth.

All of a sudden a whirlwind rose over the fields. It seemed as though the earth vomited, spurting and flood-ing dust to the almighty skies. Round and swift it swept, brushed over the sands, swirled over the trees, and rushed into the air—and fell with a groaning, rasping cough. The stones on the railway lines glittered hot and bitter. Their glitter seemed the glitter of fangs. The clouds began to heap up. They roared. They grunted. And thunder shot against thunder. Then all of a sudden there was a commotion in the heavens, and lightning flew across the air, splitting a tree. The tree caught fire and burst into flame. The flame of sunshine danced with the flame of lightning. ... And rain pelted against the earth.

Dattopant and Sonopant and Govindopant sheltered themselves beneath a tree. They lighted their hookahs and puffed away. The air was filled with crackling noises. And the earth pulsed with breath.

Suddenly there was a cry of something strange. ‘It is the horse,’ said Govindopant. 'No, it is the women,’ insisted Dattopant. It was a strange noise indeed. Between the two swishes of rain the noise squeaked. ‘The train!’ said Sonopant. ‘No, brother, not yet time,’ replied Dattopant. ‘Perhaps it’s the thunder,’ put in Govindopant. ‘No, brother, it’s the train,’ repeated Sonopant. And a thunder ground through the heavens hushing his breath across the sheets of rain. ‘The train, surely, listen!’ cried Sonopant, trying to gather his velvet coat and turban. Dattopant put his ear to the ground. Another thunder boomed in the air and rushed through the entrails of the earth. ‘The lightning, brother. The lightning!’ he explained with conviction. He didn’t want to get soaked in the rain. Besides, one couldn’t see....

Clutter-clutter—clutter-clutter. There was a distinct noise. ‘The train! The train!’ cried Govindopant, and ran towards his horse.

Clutter-clutter—clutter-clutter. ‘The train! The train!’ shrieked Dattopant and plunged into the storm.

Curtains follow curtains. It is like a prison-house—the storm. Walls of curtain that tear with a violent breath. Curtain again. Then suddenly the trees, like policemen, hard, gory, smeared with black running blood. Clutter- clutter—clutter-clutter—like a leopard the rain scratches on the back, brusque, snarling, satisfied. Puddles soft as goat’s flesh, but sticky and dogged. Then the eruption of lightning—a whole world of trembling glory. Curtains again, curtains, watery curtains. To tear them, smite them, grapple them. Clutter-clutter—clutter-clutter— clutter-clutter. His telegraph pole. His coat. His turban. Tassel, kerchief, cummerbund. Clutter-clutter. Clutter. Pandopant and Vithobopant in prison. The Police Inspector, fat, bearded. Whipping. Blood. Prison. Iron bars. Sheets and sheets of rain. Curtain on curtain. Water. Go across. Police Inspector. Clutter-clutter. Clutter-clutter. Clutter-clutter. Clutter. Rama, Rama, there—the train!

Dattopant jumped forward and the train squashed him with a thud.

It was a ballast train. The Viceroy’s Special followed it. Special trains like kings need heralds. Life is not bought at the market.

Govindopant did see the Maharaja. He was god-like— like Raja Sivaji.

That afternoon the bailiff-drum led the funeral. Tira-tira—Tira-tira—Tom-tom—Tom-tom—Tira-tira—Tira- Tom-tom … And the fire consumed the body. In Khandesh the fire burns as elsewhere.

2. Grammar Page

Unit **58**

Verb + -**ing** or **to** … 3 (**like** / **would like** etc.)

A **like** / **love** / **hate**

When you talk about repeated actions, you can use -**ing** or **to** … after these verbs.
So you can say:

- Do you **like getting** up early? *or* Do you **like to get** up early?
- Stephanie **hates flying**. *or* Stephanie **hates to fly**.
- I **love meeting** people. *or* I **love to meet** people.
- I don't **like being** kept waiting. *or* … **like to be** kept waiting.
- I don't **like** friends **calling** me at work. *or* … friends **to call** me at work.

but
(1) We use -**ing** (*not* **to** …) when we talk about a situation that already exists (or existed).
For example:

- Paul lives in Berlin now. He **likes living** there.
  (he lives there now and he likes it)
- Do you **like being** a student? (you are a student – do you like it?)
- The office I worked in was horrible. I **hated working** there. (I worked there and I hated it)

(2) There is sometimes a difference between **I like to do** and **I like doing**:

I like doing something = I do it and I enjoy it:

- I **like cleaning** the kitchen. (= I enjoy it.)

I **like to do** something = I choose to do it (but maybe I don't enjoy it):

- It's not my favourite job, but I **like to clean** the kitchen as often as possible.

Note that we use -**ing** (*not* **to** …) with **enjoy** and **mind**:

- I **enjoy cleaning** the kitchen. (*not* I enjoy to clean)
- I **don't mind cleaning** the kitchen. (*not* I don't mind to clean)

B **would like** / **would love** / **would hate** / **would prefer**

Would like / **would love** etc. are usually followed by **to** … :

- **I'd like** (= I **would** like) to go away for a few days.
- What **would** you **like to do** this evening?
- I **wouldn't like to go** on holiday alone.
- **I'd love to meet** your family.
- **Would** you **prefer to eat** now or later?

Compare **I like** and **I would like** (**I'd** like):

- I **like playing** tennis. / I **like to play** tennis. (= I like it in general)
- **I'd like to play** tennis today. (= I want to play today)

Would mind is followed by -**ing**:

- **Would** you **mind closing** the door, please? (*not* mind to close)

C **I would like to have** (**done** something)

I would like **to have done** something = I regret now that I didn't or couldn't do it:

- It's a shame we didn't see Anna. I **would like to have seen** her again.
- We**'d like to have gone** away, but we were too busy at home.

We use the same structure after **would love** / **would hate** / **would prefer**:

- Poor David! I **would hate to have been** in his position.
- **I'd love to have gone** to the party, but it was impossible.