



Learn English Through Stories

Adapted and modified by

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Yoked With an Unbeliever

“I am dying for you, and you are dying for another.” —Punjabi Proverb.

When the small boat left the big ship for Bombay, many people were crying. The person who wept the most was Miss Agnes Laiter. She had a good reason to cry: the only man she ever loved, Phil Garron, was going to India. Everyone said India was a perilous place full of jungles, tigers, snakes, diseases, and soldiers.

Phil stood on the ship, watching the boat in the rain. He felt sad too, but he didn't cry. He was going to India to work on a “tea” job. He didn't know what “tea” meant, but he imagined riding a horse over hills covered with tea plants and earning a lot of money. He thanked his uncle for getting him this job. Phil wanted to turn over a new leaf—to change his lazy habits, save money, and return to marry Agnes. For three years, Phil had lived without a job, depending on his friends. He was kind and good-looking, but he was not strong in his ideas or plans. His friends were happy when he left for India. They said, “Good luck, Phil! Don't come back!”—or that's what Phil thought they meant.

Phil had a big plan: he would work hard, prove everyone wrong, and marry Agnes. He was a nice person, but he was weak. He didn't know how to save money, though he wasn't wasteful in any obvious way. You couldn't point to one bad habit, but he was not reliable, like soft clay that could be shaped easily. His flippant attitude made him seem careless.

Agnes stayed in England, doing her duties at home. Her family didn't like her engagement to Phil. She cried often while Phil sailed to Darjiling, which his mother called “a port on the Bengal Ocean.” On the ship, Phil made friends, spent money on drinks, and wrote long letters to Agnes at every port. When he arrived at the tea plantation, between Darjiling and Kangra, the job wasn't as exciting as he had hoped. The pay was lower, and the work was harder. Still, he did fairly well and felt proud of himself. He thought he was on cloud nine because of his efforts.

As time passed, Phil got used to his work. He thought about Agnes less and less. Sometimes, he forgot her for weeks and then remembered her suddenly, like a student who forgot his homework. But Agnes never forgot Phil. She was the kind of person who holds on to love forever.

Then, another man came into Agnes's life. He was young, rich, and a good match. Phil was far away, his letters were short and unclear, and Agnes's family pushed her to marry this man. In the end, she did. She wrote a long, emotional letter to Phil in Darjiling, saying she would never be happy again. She was right. Her heart was torn to pieces.

Phil received the letter two years after arriving in India. He felt hurt and unfair. He spent days thinking about Agnes, looking at her picture, and telling himself he was a loyal lover. He wrote a long, sad letter back, saying he would love her forever, that all women were the same, and that he would wait for her. The letter was eight pages long, full of dramatic words. It sounded beautiful, but anyone who knew Phil's true feelings would say it was selfish. His epistle was more about showing off than true love. Phil meant every word for two days, but then he forgot about it. It was his last effort before he moved on.

Agnes was very sad when she read Phil's letter. She cried, put it in her desk, and became Mrs. Somebody Else to please her family. This was what good women did in those days.

Phil continued his life in India. He didn't think about the letter again, except as a piece of art he had created. His life was not bad, but it wasn't good either—until he met Dunmaya. She was the daughter of a Rajput soldier from the Indian army. Dunmaya had Hill blood, and like many Hill women, she was free and not hidden behind a veil. She was beautiful, honest, and clever, though sometimes a bit strict. Phil met her somehow—it doesn't matter how. By this time, Phil was comfortable in India. He spent all his money, never saved, and stopped writing to his friends in England. He started to see India as his home. Some men live like this, and they lose their purpose. The weather was nice, and Phil saw no reason to return to England. He was drifting with the tide, letting life carry him along.

At twenty-seven, Phil decided to marry Dunmaya and stay in India. He had a long life ahead, but no energy to chase big dreams. They married in an English church. Some of his friends thought he was foolish; others thought he was smart.

Dunmaya was a good wife. She understood Phil's weaknesses but respected him as an Englishman. She took care of him gently and, in less than a year, learned to dress and act like an English lady. Hill women could adapt quickly to

new ways. Dunmaya wore black and yellow clothes and looked beautiful. Her astute mind helped her manage Phil's life.

Meanwhile, Agnes kept Phil's letter in her desk. Sometimes, she thought about him working hard in dangerous Darjiling, hoping she would return. Her husband was a better man than Phil, but he was sick with heart problems. Three years after their marriage, he went to Bombay for treatment and died. Agnes, a religious woman, believed his death was God's plan. She was free now, with a lot of money and no one to judge her in Bombay. She read Phil's letter again, kissed it, and decided to find him. She wanted to offer him her love and money and live happily together, far from unkind people. For two months, she planned this in a hotel, dreaming of a romantic future.

Agnes searched for Phil. It took a month because his plantation was not in Darjiling but near Kangra. When she found him, Phil looked almost the same. Dunmaya was kind to her.

The sad truth of this story is that Phil, who wasn't worth much, was loved by two women. Dunmaya loved him deeply, and Agnes loved him so much that her life was ruined. Worst of all, Dunmaya was making Phil a better man. Her care and guidance were saving him from a wasted life.

This seems very unfair.

Comprehension Questions and Answers

1. Why was Agnes Laiter crying when Phil left for India?
2. What did Phil think his “tea” job would be like?
3. What does the idiom “turn over a new leaf” mean in the story?
4. Why did Agnes marry another man?
5. Who is Dunmaya, and how did she change Phil?
6. What was wrong with Phil’s long letter to Agnes?
7. What is the “unfair” part of the story’s ending?
8. Why did Agnes decide to find Phil after her husband died?
9. What does the word “astute” mean when describing Dunmaya?
10. What does the idiom “torn to pieces” tell us about Agnes’s feelings?

Answers

1. Answer: Agnes cried because Phil, the man she loved, was going to India, a dangerous place, and she feared losing him.
2. Answer: Phil thought he would ride a horse over tea-covered hills and earn a lot of money.
3. Answer: It means Phil wanted to change his lazy habits and become a better person.
4. Answer: Agnes married another man because Phil was far away, his letters were unclear, her family pressured her, and the man was a good match.
5. Answer: Dunmaya is Phil's wife, a clever Hill woman. She managed his weaknesses and made him a better man.
6. Answer: The letter was dramatic and selfish, more about Phil's feelings than true love, and he forgot about it quickly.
7. Answer: It's unfair that Phil, an unworthy man, is loved by both women, and Dunmaya saves him while Agnes's life is ruined.
8. Answer: Agnes believed her husband's death was God's plan, and she wanted to reunite with Phil, offering her love and money.
9. Answer: "Astute" means clever and perceptive, showing Dunmaya's ability to understand and manage Phil.
10. Answer: It shows that Agnes was emotionally devastated when she had to marry another man and give up Phil.