



Learn English Through Stories

A Series

A60

**Adapted and modified by
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1. A Journey Through the Desert

Adapted from Sudha Murty

Many years ago, I drove my car. I did not have a driver. I went to a petrol station to get fuel. Next to it was a service station. I took my car there on some Saturdays. They checked my car and fixed it. It took two hours.

At the service station, two boys worked. They were twins. Their names were Ram and Gopal. They were 14 years old. They were poor and did not go to school. But they were smart. They spoke many languages: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi.

Bangalore is a big city. It is the capital of Karnataka. Many people live there. They come from different places. The city is very mixed. Ram and Gopal met many people at work. That is how they learned many languages. They were errand boys. They did small jobs at the station. Everyone liked them because they were happy and worked hard.

When my car was at the service station, I sat under a tree. The boys gave me a chair. I read books. Over time, I talked to Ram and Gopal. They told me about their life. They had no father. Their mother worked hard as a laborer. They lived in a small house in a poor area with their uncle. They went to school until class four. Then they stopped because they had no money. No one at home could help them study.

At the service station, they earned a little money. They got free breakfast and lunch. Sometimes, car owners gave them small tips. They worked long hours. They started at 8 in the morning and finished at 8 at night. Sunday was their only day off.

Even with a hard life, Ram and Gopal were always smiling. They never said no to work. They did not complain. I saw rich children who were not happy. They did not like to work. They made excuses. But Ram and Gopal were different. They were happy, even with little money. I learned that money does not make happiness.

I liked Ram and Gopal. They were full of energy. Sometimes, I brought them snacks or old shirts. They were so happy, like the shirts were very special. But I never saw them wear the shirts. They said, "Madam, we wear dirty clothes at work. The station makes clothes greasy."

One day, I brought storybooks for them. I thought they could read at night. Other children their age went to school or played sports. But Ram and Gopal worked to help their family. When I gave them the books, they looked sad. It was the first time I saw them unhappy. They said, "Madam, reading is hard for us. It takes a long time. Can you tell us the story?"

I said, "How can I tell stories here? You are working."

They said, "At four o'clock, we have a break. If you come then, we can listen to your stories." Their eyes were big and hopeful. I could not say no. I remembered my children. They loved my bedtime stories. So, I said yes.

Every Saturday, I went to the service station. Even if my car was fine, I went to tell stories. At four o'clock, Ram and Gopal sat with me. They listened carefully. They loved the stories. They always wanted more. This happened for many months.

Then I got a driver. I stopped driving my car. My driver took the car to the service station. I did not see Ram and Gopal for a long time.

Years passed. One day, my driver said the car had a problem. He took it to a garage called Good Luck Garage. When he came back, he said, "The mechanic asked about you. He knows you. He asked if you still teach at the college."

I was confused. I did not know anyone who owned a garage. I teach Computer Science. Why would my student own a garage? I thought it might be an old student. My driver said the garage owner was young and honest. He said I should meet him.

The next day, I went to Good Luck Garage. It was a nice, modern garage. It had good tools. There was a small office with glass walls. A young man in blue clothes greeted me. He held a spanner and a screwdriver. He said, "Madam, please sit in the office. I will wash my hands and come."

I sat on a sofa in the office. It was clean and simple. The young man looked familiar, but I could not remember him. Maybe he was my student from years ago? Students change when they grow up. They look different.

The young man came back. He brought a coffee mug and a glass of water. He said, "Madam, you look different. You look old and tired."

I smiled. "I'm sorry, I don't remember your name. Please tell me who you are. I am getting old."

He smiled. He had a dimple on his cheek. Then I knew. He was one of the boys from the service station! But was he Ram or Gopal? I used to mix them up. I asked, "Are you Ram or Gopal?"

He said, "I am Ram, Madam."

I was so happy. "Please sit down, Ram. I am glad to see you."

Ram knew my car. That's why he asked about me. He said, "Madam, thank you for helping us years ago."

I was surprised. "What help? I only gave you old shirts, snacks, and told stories."

Ram said, "Madam, your stories changed my life. Do you remember them?"

I did not remember. I told them many stories. "No, I don't," I said.

Ram sat down. He closed his eyes and told his story. "Madam, our life was hard. You knew that. The only good thing was your visits on Saturdays. We loved your stories. They helped us forget our problems. We lived with our uncle. He took our money. We worked long hours. I wanted to study, but school was far. We had no money or help. Studying was a dream. Then you told us a story. It changed everything."

I was curious. "Which story?" I asked. Now I was the listener, and Ram was the storyteller.

Ram said, "You told us about a village. The people were poor. They wanted to go to another village. Life was better there. The elders said, 'Go to that village. Pick up stones in the desert. You can sell them for money.'"

"Two boys started the journey. They took food and water. At first, the desert was cool. The sun was not hot. They walked easily. They were not tired. But then the sun got hot. The sand burned their feet. They thought they were near the end. So, they ate all their food and drank their water. But they were only halfway.

"They started picking up stones to sell. Their bags got heavy. One boy said, 'This is too hard. I'm going back.' He threw his stones and left. The other boy said, 'No, let's listen to the elders. Let's cross the desert.' He kept walking alone. It was hard. He had no food or water. Sometimes, he wanted to go back. But he had hope. He kept going.

"After a long time, he reached the town. He was tired. The town looked normal, not special. He stayed in a small place to sleep. The next morning, he opened his bag. The stones were not stones anymore. They were diamonds! He sold them and became rich."

Ram looked at me. “Madam, you explained the story. You said a student’s life is like the desert. Exams are like the hot sun. Problems are like the hot sand. Studying is like being hungry and thirsty. A student must work hard and collect knowledge, like the boy collected stones. More knowledge means a better life later.”

Ram continued, “Your story gave me hope. I decided to study, even with problems. I worked hard. The service station owner helped me. He paid my fees for an Automobile Diploma. I worked and studied. Then I took a loan from a bank. I started this garage. Now, I am successful. I paid back the loan. I am free.”

I was amazed. “Ram, you did so much! Where is Gopal now?”

Ram looked sad. “Gopal followed another story you told. It was about a jackal in the desert. One morning, the jackal saw his shadow. It was big. He thought, ‘I am strong. I will hunt a camel.’ He looked for a camel all day. He ignored small animals he could catch. By evening, his shadow was small. He was tired and hungry. He could only hunt a mouse.

“Gopal was like the jackal. He wanted big things, but they were too hard for him. He failed. Now he works as a peon in an office. He does not want to work with me.”

I was shocked. My stories changed their lives in different ways. I did not know stories could be so powerful. I did not write those stories. Someone else did, long ago. I silently thanked that person. Did they know their stories would help two boys years later?

I left the garage feeling proud of Ram. His hard work and hope made him successful. Stories are small, but they can change lives. Ram’s journey showed me that.

2. Comprehension Questions and Answers

Question 1: What did the narrator do with her car on Saturdays?

Question 2: Who were Ram and Gopal?

Question 3: How old were Ram and Gopal?

Question 4: What languages did Ram and Gopal speak?

Question 5: What did the narrator do while her car was being fixed?

Question 6: What did the narrator give to Ram and Gopal?

Question 7: Why did Ram and Gopal not read the storybooks?

Question 8: What story changed Ram's life?

Question 9: What job does Ram have now?

Question 10: Why did Ram and Gopal not go to school?

Answers

Answer 1: She took her car to the service station.

Answer 2: They were twin boys who worked at the service station.

Answer 3: They were 14 years old.

Answer 4: They spoke Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi.

Answer 5: She sat under a tree and read books.

Answer 6: She gave them snacks, old shirts, and storybooks.

Answer 7: Reading was hard for them, and it took a long time.

Answer 8: The story about two boys crossing a desert to collect stones.

Answer 9: He owns a garage called Good Luck Garage.

Answer 10: They were poor and had to work.

3. Picture Dictionary



post office (पोस्ट ऑफिस) A place to buy stamps and to post parcels. डाकघर; वह स्थान जहाँ से हम डाक सामग्री आदि खरीदते हैं.

pot (पॉट) A container used to hold liquid. You make tea in a tea pot. बर्तन.



potato (पटेटो) A vegetable which grows in the ground. Most people like to eat potatoes आलू.



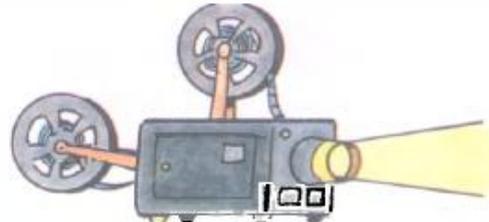
prince (प्रिन्स) The son of a king or queen. राजकुमार.



princess (प्रिन्सेस) The daughter of a king or queen. राजकुमारी.



prison (प्रिजन) A building where people who do wrong things are locked up. जेल; वह स्थान जहाँ अपराधियों को सजा के लिए बन्द किया जाता है.



projector (प्रोजेक्टर) A machine which is used to show films. पर्दे पर चित्र दिखाने की मशीन.



propeller (प्रोपेलर) A blade which goes round and round very fast to make an aeroplane or ship go forward. हवाई जहाज अथवा जहाज चलाने वाला पंखा.



puddle (पडल) A small pool of water. पोखर; तालाब.



puffin (पफिन) A bird which has a beak like a parrot. Puffins live near the sea. काले-सफेद पंखों वाला पक्षी जिसकी चोंच रंगीन तथा तोते जैसी होती है.