



# Learn English Through Stories

F Series

F70

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# 1. A Poor Woman's Cry

Adapted from Premchand

In the dusty village of Chandpur, where neem trees cast long shadows and the Ganga River flowed nearby, lived a man named Ram Sevak, known to all as munshiji. This respectful title, munshiji, meant a learned scribe or clerk, a man of papers and promises. Ram Sevak wore it like a badge of honour, sitting daily under a neem tree outside the magistrate's court, his bundle of legal documents spread before him. His sharp tongue and clever words made villagers believe he could twist any law to his favour, as if the goddess Saraswati herself blessed his speech. Yet, behind this façade, Ram Sevak's life was a tangled web of deceit.

Ram Sevak was no ordinary villager. He belonged to a family of aristocrats, proud of their status in Chandpur. His days were spent in the court compound, where he was called Mukhtar Sahib, a term for someone who handled legal matters. But truth be told, he rarely argued cases in court. Instead, he earned respect by managing the money of Chandpur's most vulnerable—widows and elderly folk with no one to trust. These poor souls handed over their savings, believing Ram Sevak's promises to keep them safe. Little did they know, once money entered his hands, it vanished like water into dry sand. He borrowed cowries—small seashells once used as money—and rupees with grand promises to repay by evening, but those evenings never arrived. This habit, passed down through his family, was his true legacy.

Villagers admired Ram Sevak's charm, but not everyone was fooled. Some called him a crocodile in water—unbeatable in his domain of legal talk. Others, less kind, whispered that he was a snake in the grass, charming but dangerous. When a vegetable-seller, a woman from a lower caste, dared to demand payment for two years' worth of spinach, Ram Sevak's pride was wounded. "How dare she enter my courtyard and insult me?" he fumed, his face red with ignominy, a deep shame that stung his aristocratic heart. He felt like biting the bullet and confronting her, but instead, he stormed out, muttering, "Death would be better than this disgrace!" If death accepted such complaints, Chandpur would be a ghost town.

In this same village lived Munga, a Brahmin widow whose life was a tale of sorrow. Her husband, a havildar—a sergeant in the British Indian Army—had died in Burma, leaving her alone. The government gave her 500 rupees as compensation, a fortune for a widow in those days. With no family to lean on,

Munga entrusted her money to Ram Sevak, believing his smooth words. “I’ll give you a little each month to live on,” he promised, his voice dripping with false clemency, a kindness meant to deceive. For a few years, he paid her small sums, but as Munga grew older, his patience wore thin. “Munga, are you ever going to die?” he snapped one day, revealing his true colours. It was as if he’d let the cat out of the bag, exposing his greed.

Munga’s heart broke. Her eyes opened, as if waking from a long sleep. “Give me my money’s account!” she demanded, her voice trembling. Ram Sevak showed her a ledger, claiming her 500 rupees were gone. Furious, Munga grabbed his hand. “You still owe me 250 rupees! I won’t let you keep a single cowrie!” But her anger was like firecrackers—loud but harmless. She had no proof, no papers, only her word against a man who could talk his way out of anything. Desperate, she turned to the village panchayat, a council of elders who settled disputes.

The panchayat day arrived, and villagers from near and far crowded around. Ram Sevak stood tall, his words flowing like a river. “Brothers,” he said, “you are men of honour. Every atom of my being is grateful for your trust. Do you really think I’d cheat a helpless widow?” His voice was so convincing that the elders shook their heads. “No, no, Munshiji could never do such a thing,” they agreed. Munga’s pleas were drowned out. “I’m not wealthy,” Ram Sevak continued, “but I’m beholden to no man. Would I stoop to stealing from her?” Again, the elders nodded, swayed by his eloquence. Munga sighed, whispering to herself, “If I don’t get justice here, God will give it to me.” She left, her heart heavy but her resolve unbroken.

Munga’s life grew harder. Poverty clung to her like a shadow. She was strong enough to work, perhaps carrying bricks or cleaning homes, but after the panchayat’s verdict, she swore never to labour again. Instead, she sat at her hut’s door, her thoughts consumed by Ram Sevak’s betrayal. Day and night, she muttered blessings for him—bitter, poetic curses that stunned passers-by. “May his wealth turn to ash!” she’d cry, her voice sharp as a knife. Slowly, her mind began to slip. She wandered to the riverbank’s cremation ground, her hair dishevelled—tangled and wild—and her body emaciated, thin from hunger. Her eyes, red and wild, marked her as deranged, lost to madness. Villagers began to fear her, bolting their doors when she passed.

Munga's presence became a spectre in Chandpur. Children fled at the sight of her, and men avoided her path. Only Ram Ghulam, Ram Sevak's son, was unafraid. A cruel boy, he took delight in tormenting her, clapping behind her and setting his dogs to chase her. "Look at the madwoman!" he'd shout, laughing as Munga fled the village. Her cries grew darker. Sitting among the ruins, she'd scream, "I will drink your blood!" Her voice, filled with demonic fury, echoed through the night, chilling even the bravest hearts. It was as if she'd spilled the beans about her rage, letting all of Chandpur know her pain. Her laughter, like a hundred owls hooting, sent shivers down spines.

Ram Sevak, for all his courage in court, trembled at Munga's words. He wasn't afraid of lawsuits—he could dodge those like a snake—but the thought of divine justice shook him. His wife, Nagin, was sharper-tongued than he, her words like arrows. "She's barking up the wrong tree," Nagin scoffed one night when Munga's cries woke them. "I'll put her in her place!" But Ram Sevak stopped her. "Don't go out there," he whispered, his legs shaking. They tiptoed to their door, peering into the darkness. Munga lay on the ground, panting, her skeletal frame barely visible. Her voice was more terrifying than her body, a haunting wail that pierced the night.

By dawn, Ram Sevak found Munga still outside his house. "Why are you here?" he demanded, trying to sound brave. "I will drink your blood!" she roared, her laughter cutting through the air. Nagin, furious, shouted, "I'll scorch your face!" but her threat had no effect. Munga's madness was her shield. The village buzzed with gossip. A crowd gathered, eager to see Ram Sevak's ignominy. Ram Ghulam, enraged by the attention, mixed cow dung with water and poured it over Munga, splashing some onlookers. "This is Munshiji's hospitality!" they jeered, fleeing the stench. But Munga didn't move. She sat, refusing food or water, her eyes fixed on Ram Sevak's door.

Days passed. Munga grew weaker, her cries softer. Ram Sevak hoped the storm had passed. "Hunger will make her leave," he told Nagin, who nodded, though fear lingered in her eyes. But one morning, they opened their door to find Munga dead, flies buzzing around her emaciated body. The bird of life had flown, leaving her a silent accusation at their doorstep. The village erupted in outrage. Munga's death was no ordinary event—it was as if she'd cast a curse. No one would touch Ram Sevak's water or shave his beard. Even the dhobis, washermen who cleaned clothes, refused his kurtas. To kill a cow was a sin, but to cause a Brahmin widow's death was worse. Munga had faced the music in life, but in death, she made Ram Sevak pay.

Ram Sevak tried to shrug it off. “The law can’t touch me,” he boasted, knowing no court could charge him. He drew his own water, bought soap to wash his clothes, and let his beard grow, calling it a man’s glory. But at night, fear crept in. He and Nagin left their door open, too scared to close it. One night, a rat scurried under old rags in their storeroom, and Nagin screamed, mistaking it for Munga’s ghost. “She’s here!” she cried, her voice trembling. Ram Sevak, trying to be brave, checked the pots but found only the rat. “You’re imagining things,” he told Nagin, but his heart pounded. Munga’s image—her dishevelled hair, deranged eyes—haunted them.

Nagin’s fear grew unbearable. Pregnant and fragile, she woke one night, screaming that Munga was sitting on her chest. She ran into the courtyard, collapsed, and began convulsing. By evening, a fever burned through her like a red-hot tawa. She spoke nonsense, then fell silent. At midnight, she died, her body still as stone. Fear had killed her, as if Munga’s curse had created a world out of thin air. Ram Sevak was alone now, with only Ram Ghulam. The village refused to help carry Nagin’s body to the Ganga. “Who aids a murderer?” they whispered. Ram Sevak, reciting prayers to Hanuman, pushed her body on a cart to the river, his heart heavy with loss.

Chandpur turned its back on Ram Sevak. His clients vanished, even those whose families he’d served for years. At the court, he sat alone, his papers untouched. A rival, Ramzan, now drew crowds, while Ram Sevak faced a violent storm of fear and despair. One day, returning home, he mistook his dogs for Munga’s ghost and fell, screaming. His mind began to unravel. Months later, he vanished, leaving Chandpur behind. Some say he went to Badrinath, a holy site. Then, a sadhu—a holy man smeared with cow dung ash—appeared in the village, his face eerily like Ram Sevak’s. That night, his house burned to the ground, flames lighting up the sky as villagers watched, not to help but to gawk.

Ram Ghulam, left alone, went to his uncle’s village but couldn’t escape his father’s shadow. One day, he stole radishes and, in anger, set a farmer’s crops ablaze. The police caught him, and he was sent to a reformatory in Chunar. Munga’s cry had echoed far, destroying Ram Sevak’s family. Her death, like a stone cast into fire, burned hotter than any flame, proving that a poor woman’s pain could topple even the proudest man.

## 2. Comprehension Questions

Question 1: What was Ram Sevak's job and title in Chandpur?

Question 2: Why did villagers call Ram Sevak "crocodile in water"?

Question 3: What did Munga give Ram Sevak, and what did he do with it?

Question 4: How did the panchayat rule on Munga's complaint?

Question 5: How did Munga's life change after the panchayat's decision?

Question 6: How did Ram Ghulam treat Munga?

Question 7: What happened to Ram Sevak's family after Munga's death?

Question 8: How did the village treat Ram Sevak after Munga's death?

Question 9: What caused Nagin's death?

Question 10: What happened to Ram Sevak and Ram Ghulam in the end?

## Answers

Answer 1: Ram Sevak was a scribe, called munshiji, handling legal documents.

Answer 2: Villagers called him "crocodile in water" for his unbeatable legal talk.

Answer 3: Munga gave him 500 rupees; he kept it, claiming it was gone.

Answer 4: The panchayat believed Ram Sevak and dismissed Munga's complaint.

Answer 5: Munga became poor, stopped working, and went mad, cursing Ram Sevak.

Answer 6: Ram Ghulam tormented Munga with dogs and cow dung water.

Answer 7: Nagin died, and the village shunned Ram Sevak's family.

Answer 8: The village ostracized Ram Sevak, refusing services and clients.

Answer 9: Fear of Munga's ghost caused Nagin's fever and death.

Answer 10: Ram Sevak vanished, possibly became a sadhu; Ram Ghulam was sent to a reformatory.

### 3. Grammar Page

He said, "Hurrah! We've won the match."

*He exclaimed with joy that they had won the match.*

She said, "Alas! His father is dead."

*She exclaimed with sorrow that his father was dead.*

He said, "Wow! What a nice goal!"

*He exclaimed with joy that it was a nice goal. (He exclaimed that it was a nice goal.)*

He said, "How clever she is!"

*He exclaimed that she was very clever.*

#### Sentences with 'LET'

Let us (proposed/suggested..... that ..... should)

He said, "Let us go to watch a movie."

He proposed/suggested that they should go to watch a movie.

Let without 'us' (ordered/requested..... to let..... or that..... might be allowed to)

He said, "Let me go."

He ordered (requested) to let him go.

He ordered (requested) that he might be allowed to go.

Let (assumption) (assumed..... that..... might be)

The teacher said, "Let ABC be an angle of ninety."

The teacher assumed that ABC might be an angle of ninety.

#### Some other types of sentences

##### Sentences with question tags

*Remove questions tags and use 'asked' or 'wanted to know' as a reporting verb and 'whether' or 'if' as a connective.*

He said to me, "You're going to Pokhara, aren't you?"

He asked me whether I was going to Pokhara.

I said to him, "She wrote this letter, didn't she?"

I asked him whether she had written the letter.

##### Sentences with 'Sir' or 'Madam'

*Remove these words with 'respectfully' and use the reporting verb and the connective on the basis of the types of the sentences.*

Tina said to the Principal, "Madam, have I passed the final exam?"

Tina asked the Principal respectfully whether she had passed the final exam.

He said to his boss, "Sir, I will type this letter myself."

He told his boss respectfully that he would type the letter himself.

##### Sentences with 'please, kindly' and emphatic 'do'

*Remove these words and use 'requested' as the reporting verb and 'to' as the connective.*

He said to me, "Kindly sing a song."

He requested me to sing a song.

She said to them, "Do come to the party on time."

She requested them to come to the party on time.