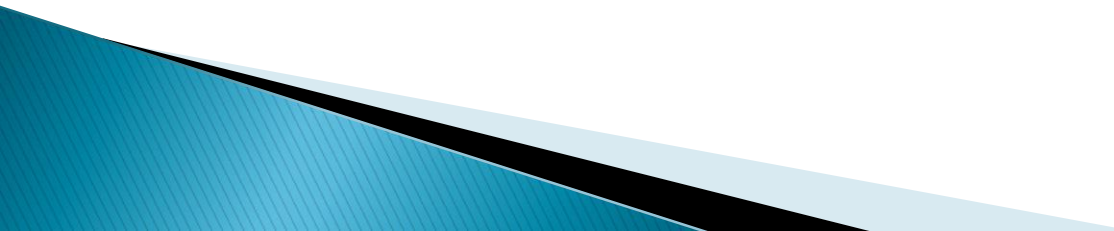


MODULE-3

LESSON-2

A GIFT OF CHAPPALS

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER

- ▶ MUSIC MASTER :
 - ▶ Bony figure --- mostly bald head
 - ▶ A fringe of oiled black hair
 - ▶ Old fashioned tuft
 - ▶ Gold chain and a diamond ring
 - ▶ Gold-bordered veshti edge
 - ▶ Scrawny toes
- 

Mridu crept up to the window. Lalli was sitting a little distance away, awkwardly holding her violin and bowstring, her elbows **jutting** out and her eyes **glazed** with concentration. In front of her, with most of his back to the window, was the bony figure of the music-master. He had a mostly bald head with a **fringe** of oiled black hair falling around his ears and an old-fashioned **tuft**. A gold chain **gleamed** around his leathery neck, and a diamond ring glittered on his hand as it glided up and down the stem of the violin. A large foot stuck out from beneath his gold-bordered *veshti edge*, and he was *beating* time on the floor with the **scrawny** big toe.

He played a few notes. Lalli stumbled behind him on her violin, which looked quite helpless and unhappy in her hands.

Jutting* - extending out, **fringe***- part of hair, **scrawny*** - thin

What a difference! The music-master's notes seemed to float up and settle perfectly into the invisible tracks of the melody. It was like the wheels of a train fitting smoothly into the rails and whizzing along, as Ravi said. Mridu stared at that huge, beringed hand moving effortlessly up the violin's stem, making lovely music.

Squawk! There was Lalli derailing again!

“Amma!” came a wail from the gate. “Amma oh!”

“Ravi, send that beggar away!” cried his mother from the back verandah, where she was chatting with Tapi. “He has been coming here every day for the past week, and it's time he found another house to beg from!” Paati explained to Tapi.

Mridu and Meena followed Ravi out. The beggar was already in the garden, making himself quite at home. He had spread his upper cloth under the neem tree, and was leaning against its trunk, **apparently** prepared to take a little **snooze** while he waited for the alms to appear. “Go away!” said Ravi sternly. “My Paati says it’s time you found another house to beg from!”

The beggar opened his eyes very wide and gazed at each of the children one by one. “The ladies of this house,” he said, at last, in a voice choked with feeling, “are very kind souls. I have **kept my body and soul together** on their generosity for a whole week. I cannot believe that they would turn me away.” He raised his voice. “Amma! Amma-oh!” Sad his wail might be, but it certainly wasn’t **feeble**. It began in a deep, strong **rumble** somewhere in his **withered** belly, and came booming out of his mouth, with its few remaining teeth stained brown with betel-chewing

Snooze*- a short sleep, **kept my body and soul together***- kept his body and soul together

“Ravi, tell him there’s nothing left in the kitchen!” called Rukku Manni. “And he’s not to come again—tell him that!” She sounded fed up. Ravi didn’t have to repeat it all to the beggar. What his mother said had been easy for them all to hear, there under the neem tree. The beggar sat up and sighed.

“I’ll go, I’ll go!” he said wearily. “Only let me have a rest here under this tree. The sun is so hot, the star has melted on the road. My feet are already blistered.” He stretched out his feet to show large, pink, peeling blisters on the soles of his bare feet.

“I suppose he doesn’t have the money to buy chappals,” Mridu whispered to Meena–Ravi.

“Have you got an old pair in the house somewhere?”

“I don’t know,” said Ravi. “Mine are too small to fit his feet, or I’d have given them to him.” And his feet were larger than Mridu’s and Meena’s.

The beggar was shaking out his upper cloth and tightening his dhoti. He raised his eyes and looked fearfully at the road, **gleaming** in the afternoon heat.

“He needs something on his feet!” Meena said, her big eyes filling. “It’s not fair!”

“Ssh!” said Ravi. “I’m thinking about it! Blubbering, ‘it’s not fair, it’s not fair’ isn’t going to help. In two minutes he’ll be frying his feet on that road. What he needs is a pair of chappals.

So where do we get them? Come, let's search the house." He pushed Mridu and Meena into the house.

Just as she stepped into the verandah, Mridu's eyes fell on the odd-looking chappals she had noticed when she arrived.

"Ravi!" she whispered to him. "Whose are those?"

Ravi turned and glanced at the shabby-looking, but sturdy old slippers. He **beamed** and nodded. "These are just the right size," he said, picking them up.

Mridu and Meena followed him nervously back into the garden.

"Here!" said Ravi to the beggar, dropping the slippers in front of the old man. "Wear these and don't come back!" The beggar stared at the slippers, hurriedly flung his towel over his shoulder, pushed his feet into them and left, muttering a blessing to the children. In a minute he had vanished around the corner of the street.