



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G17

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

Contents

- 1. Housewife.**
- 2. The Value of Games and Sports.**
- 3. Grammar Page – have or have got.**

1. Housewife

By Rabindranath Tagore

When we were two years or so below the scholarship class, our teacher was Shibnath. He was clean-shaven, with closely cropped hair except for a short pigtail. The very sight of him scared boys out of their wits. In the animal world, creatures that sting do not bite. Our teacher did both. His blows and slaps were like hailstones pounding saplings, and his **sarcasm**, too, burnt us **to the core**.

He complained that the relationship between pupils and teacher was not what it was in times past; that pupils no longer revered their teacher like a god. Then he would hurl his power down on to our heads, like a **slighted** god, roaring thunderously; but his roaring was mixed with so many coarse words that no one could have taken it for a **thunderbolt**.

His ordinary Bengali appearance, too, **belied** the noise he made, so no one confused this god of the second stream of the third year with Indra, Chandra, Varuna or Kartik. There was only one god like him: Yama, god of death; and after all these years there is no harm in admitting that we often wished he would go, there and then, to Yama's home. But clearly no god can be more **malevolent** than a man-god. The immortal gods cause nowhere near so much trouble. If we pick a flower and offer it to them, they are pleased; but they do not harass us if we don't offer it.

Human gods demand far more; if we fall the slightest bit short, they **swoop**, red-eyed with fury, not at all godlike to look at.

Our teacher had a weapon for torturing boys that sounds trivial but which was actually terribly cruel. He would give us new names.

Although a name is nothing but a word, people generally love their names more than their own selves; they will go to tremendous lengths to further their names; they are willing to die for them. If you distort a man's name, you strike at something more precious than life itself. Even if you change someone's ugly name to a pretty one – 'Lord of ghosts', say, to 'Lotus-lover' – it's unbearable. From this we derive a principle: that the abstract is worth more to us than the material, fees to the goldsmith seem dearer than gold, honour means more than life, one's name more than one's self.

Because of this deep law of human nature, Shashishekhar ('Moon- crown') was intensely distressed when Shibnath gave him the name 'Bhetaki' ('Flat-fish'). His misery was doubled by the knowledge that the name was precisely pointed at his looks; yet all he could do was sit quietly and suffer silently.

Ashu was given the name 'Ginni' ('Housewife'), but there was a story behind this.

Ashu was the goody-goody of the class. He never complained to anyone: he was very shy – maybe he was younger than the others. He smiled gently at anything that was said to him; he studied hard; many were keen to make friends with him, but he never played with any other boy, and as soon as we were released from class he would go straight home. At one o'clock every day a servant-girl would bring him a few sweets wrapped up in a leaf, and a little bell-metal pot of water. Ashu was very embarrassed by this; he could not wait for her to go home again. He did not want his classmates to think of him as anything more than a schoolboy. The people at home – his parents, brothers and sisters – everything about them was very much a private matter, which he did his utmost to **conceal** from the boys at school.

So far as his studies were concerned he could not be faulted in any way, but every now and then he was late to school and could give no good answer when Shibnath questioned him. His disgrace on these occasions was appalling: the teacher made him stand by the steps to the building, bent double with his hands on his knees. His misery and shame were thus displayed to four whole classes of boys.

A day's holiday came (to mark an eclipse). The next day Shibnath took his place on his stool as usual and, looking towards the door, saw Ashu entering the class with his slate and school-books wrapped in an ink-stained cloth. He was even more hesitant than usual.

"Here comes the Housewife!" said Shibnath, laughing drily. Later, when the class was over, just before he dismissed the boys, he called out, "Listen to this, everyone."

It was as if the whole of Earth's gravity were dragging young Ashu down, but all he could do was sit with his legs and the end of his dhoti dangling down from the bench, while all the boys stared at him. There were many years to come in Ashu's life, many days of joy, sorrow and shame more significant than this – but none could compare with what his young heart suffered on this occasion. Yet the background to it was very ordinary, and can be explained in a very few words.

Ashu had a little sister. She had no friend or cousin of her own age, so Ashu was her only playmate. Ashu's home had a covered porch, with a gate and railings in front. The holiday had been cloudy and very wet.

The few people who continued to pass by, shoes in their hands, umbrellas over their heads, were in too much of a hurry to look round. Ashu played all day with his sister, seated on the steps of the porch, while clouds darkened the sky and the rain pattered.

It was the wedding-day of his sister's doll. Ashu was giving solemn and **scrupulous** instructions to his sister about the preparations for the wedding. A problem then arose about who would be the priest. The little girl suddenly jumped up, and Ashu heard her ask someone, "Please, will you be the priest at my doll's wedding?" Turning round, he saw a **bedraggled** Shibbanath standing under the porch, folding his wet umbrella. He had been walking along the road, and had taken shelter from the rain there. It was Shibbanath whom the little girl had asked to be priest at her doll's wedding.

Ashu dashed straight into the house when he saw him, abandoning the game and his sister. His holiday had been utterly ruined.

This was what Shibbanath described with withering amusement the following day, to account for his calling Ashu 'Housewife' in front of everyone. At first the boy smiled gently, as he did to everything he heard, and tried to join in a little with the merriment all around him. But then one o'clock struck, the classes were dismissed, the servant-girl from home was standing at the gate with two sweets in a *śāl*-leaf and some water in a shining bell-metal pot, and Ashu's smile gave way to a deep red blush around his face and ears. The veins in his aching forehead began to throb; he could no longer hold back the flood of tears in his eyes.

Shibbanath took a light meal in his rest-room, and settled down for a smoke. The boys danced round Ashu, boisterously chanting, "Housewife, housewife!" He realized that to play with your little sister on a school holiday was the most shameful thing in the world, and he could not believe that people would ever forget what he had done.

Vocabulary

1. Sarcasm — hurting comments — sarcasm is the lowest form of wit
2. To the core — very much
3. Slighted — insulted
4. Thunderbolt — shock
5. Belied — gave a false impression
6. Malevolent — unkind
7. Swoop — pounce
8. Conceal — hide
8. Scrupulous — careful
9. Bedraggled — wet and untidy

2. The Value of Games and Sports

We all are familiar with the maxim: 'health is wealth'. According to the World Health Organisation, 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social as well as spiritual well-being of an individual and not merely the absence of disease.' Academics serve the purpose of nourishing the mind. But a healthy mind resides in a healthy body. One can develop and maintain a healthy body by actively participating in games and sports.

Recreation, particularly sports, is still a **farthing** for the people of India, for they believe more in earning money and amassing wealth for the future generation. Games and sports, therefore, remain neglected from their day to day lives. They, in fact, consider them as unnecessary and as mere wastage of time. The moment a child opens their mouth to express a desire to go to play, the parents or the elders snub them with the **refrain** that their examination is at hand or they had not done well in the previous examination. This mind-set is, to a considerable extent, responsible for the **reluctance** of children towards sports and games. The one who has not played any game in their childhood can hardly develop an interest for the same in the latter part of their life. This **vicious cycle** continues. But things have begun to change for the better.

Games keep our body alert, active, youthful and energetic. They **instil** in us a spirit of adventure. Games increase the circulation of blood, **boost metabolism**, burn **calories** and improve the respiratory and digestive system. A healthy person can work hard cheerfully for a longer period of time, and can face dangers boldly. Games also instil in the players the spirit of self-reliance, self-confidence, justice, and fair play. They enable them to cultivate virtues like discipline, honesty, integrity, loyalty and patriotism.

While playing games, various muscles of the body get exercised and one need not join a gymnasium for this purpose. **Brisk** walking, running, cycling, skipping, swimming and yoga are common activities to keep oneself fit. They also tone up the body of both the young and the old. Mild exercises are beneficial for patients recovering from heart attack and those who suffer from obesity, diabetes, blood pressure, etc. Exercise invigorates the mind and the body and helps to keep one fit.

Games are an excellent means of recreation. Soccer, cricket, grass tennis or wrestling are watched by millions of fans all over the world. When we watch

and play games, we forget all our worries and anxieties. They enable us to divert our mind from negative thoughts.

A sports person develops team spirit, learns to adjust with other person's shortcomings, and respects and follows the rules of the game he/she plays. Sportspersons display punctuality, **diplomacy** and self-discipline. Sports build in us the confidence to face the challenges of life and not be deterred by failures, which are the stepping stones to success. Such an approach would help one reorganise one's skill after any set back and work harder with renewed vigour to achieve one's goal.

Games generate a feeling of sportsmanship and broaden one's outlook. They are very essential for students. In our schools, however, games and sports are not given much importance. A period of half an hour or forty-five minutes once or twice a week is all that is given to sports or games. Children find it difficult to pursue a sport of their liking in the **specified** period. Some schools cannot afford funds for sports equipment while most schools do not have a playground. Many schools do not employ any physical instructor to guide the children in various sports. Even parents want their children to complete their home assignments after school hours rather than go outdoors to play games. They fail to realise that games make children strong, both mentally and physically. Many school children become **obese** due to lack of participation in games. Obesity puts them in the high risk category of **contracting** diseases like diabetes, heart ailments, etc. The education system needs to be reformed, to ensure that equal importance is given to sports and games.

There is hardly anyone in the present era who is unfamiliar with the advantages of playing games yet the majority of the adult population in India never opts for going to play games; it is the students or the children who are found to be playing different sort of games; they too go to play against the will of their respective parents. Fortunately, with the advent of IPL cricket followed gradually by similar **leagues** in other sports like football, hockey, tennis, wrestling, kabaddi, etc., that have all been seen to bring in good moves for the players, sports as a means of livelihood is beginning to find favour with quite a few people. Games and sports not only strengthen the bones and muscles of the body, but also accelerate blood circulation raising the rate of metabolism and respiration. In short, games and sports are an integral part of life and those who tend to ignore this compromised their health.

The apathy of the general public and authorities for sports and games is evident from our country's poor performance in international sports events. In Beijing Olympics, India's best-ever performance of winning one gold and two bronze medals was lauded as a 'historic breakthrough' for the country. India then followed it up with a tally of six medals at the London Olympics. However, it is grossly disappointing to see that even players from small countries like South Korea, Romania, etc., are able to win a far larger number of medals. India is far behind other countries in a number of games. Moreover, in the absence of funds and facilities, the players are unable to utilise their talent and energy in a productive manner. For example, hockey is mostly played on grass courts in India even as the entire world has adopted the astro-turf. There is also a lack of training of international standard. The players lack **motivation** to excel in the absence of awards and incentives. They are unaware of the diet they should follow to keep themselves fit. Cricket is the only game which is given importance. But **accusations** of match-fixing, faulty selection procedures and misappropriation of funds have dented, the image of cricket in India.

Sports no doubt have plenty of advantages but they also have drawbacks. Some sportsmen fracture or lose their limbs, or get permanently disabled while playing games. Many students take too much interest in games and ignore their studies. The unprecedented flow of money into some sports, mainly cricket, has given rise to corrupt practices like rigged elections and match-fixing.

The Government formulated a National Sports Policy in, 2001. It promotes the popularity of sports among public at large. It aims at the development of **infrastructure** and the provision of better coaching facilities. The National Welfare Fund for sportspersons was set up in March 1982 with a view to assist outstanding sportspersons of yesteryears, who had brought glory to the country in sports but are living in neglect and want. The scheme was reviewed in July 2009 to provide for lump-sum ex-gratia assistance to outstanding sportspersons of yesteryears. Seventy per cent of our population lives in villages. To popularise games and to tap hidden talent in rural areas, the Rural Sports Programme was launched in 1970-71. The scheme has been revised. Grants to Sports have been increased. Sports scholarships are given to talented boys and girls.

Following years of encouragement, some rural sports like Kabaddi, Archery and Wrestling have made a foray into the international arena today and medal

hauls have been made in the Asiad, the Commonwealth Games and even in the Olympics.

Sports and games being an effective means of ensuring general good health, measures should be taken to ensure people's active participation in games. The Government should evolve a long-term national sports policy. Children should be informed about the advantages of playing games. They should be made to play games regularly. Training facilities for various games should be introduced. The existing training facilities should be upgraded and expanded. The selection of players for national and international games should be fair. For this, Government has already introduced a scheme related to talent search and training. Under this Scheme, assistance is provided to promising sportspersons for training and training-cum-competitions in India and abroad, and for purchase of equipment and availing of scientific support. Support staff such as coaches, sports scientists, doctors, masseurs, etc., are also encouraged as well as assisted for undergoing specialized training for attending seminar/conferences and major international sports events, and for appearing in qualifying examinations. This scheme is implemented through Sports Authority of India (SAI). The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports implements various schemes as incentives to sportspersons to take up sports. Various awards like Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, Arjuna Awards, Dhyanchand Award, Dronacharya Award, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy, Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Award, etc., are conferred to recognise spectacular and outstanding performances of the sportspersons. All these schemes are introduced to encourage and motivate sportspersons for higher achievements and to inspire the younger generation to take up sports as a career.

It is a foregone conclusion that if **maximal** participation in sports and games is ensured, it will improve the overall health of the nation and its citizens.

There is a recent example — how the Indian government treated its athletes: Top Indian female wrestlers (Olympic medallists) were protesting on the streets of New Delhi against the head of the country's wrestling federation, Brijbhushan, whom they accused of sexual harassment. The government was reluctant to take any action against him because he was a parliamentarian from Prime Minister Modi's BJP. The wrestlers even went to the sacred river Ganges to throw away their Olympic medals...

Vocabulary

1. Farthing — a thing of little value (a quarter of a penny in old British money)
2. Refrain — a statement of comment that is often repeated
3. Reluctance — disinclination
4. Vicious cycle — harmful cycle of cause and effect
5. Instil — implant gradually, to cause to acquire
6. Boost — increase
7. Metabolism — chemical processes in plants or animals that change food, minerals, etc., into living matter and produce energy
8. Calories — units of the energy-producing value of food
9. Brisk — quick
10. Diplomacy — the art and skill of dealing with people
11. Specified — stated
12. Obese — very fat
13. Contracting — catching or developing
14. League — groups of sports teams that compete over a period of time for championship
15. Motivation — stimulation
16. Accusations — statements accusing a person of a fault, wrong doing or crime
17. Infrastructure — the basic structures and facilities necessary for a country or an organisation to function efficiently, e.g., buildings, equipment, etc.
18. Maximal — greatest possible

3. Grammar Page

Unit 17

have and have got

A **have** and **have got** (= for possession, relationships, illnesses, appointments etc.)

You can use **have** or **have got**. There is no difference in meaning. You can say:

- They **have** a new car. or They **'ve got** a new car.
- Lisa **has** two brothers. or Lisa **has got** two brothers.
- I **have** a headache. or I **'ve got** a headache.
- Our house **has** a small garden. or Our house **has got** a small garden.
- He **has** a few problems. or He **'s got** a few problems.
- I **have** a driving lesson tomorrow. or I **'ve got** a driving lesson tomorrow.

With these meanings (possession etc.), we do not use continuous forms (**I'm having** etc.):

- We're enjoying our holiday. We **have** / We **'ve got** a nice room in the hotel.
(not We're having a nice room)

For the past we use **had** (usually without **got**):

- Lisa **had** long hair when she was a child. (not Lisa had got)

B In questions and negative sentences there are three possible forms:

| | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Do you have any questions? or <input type="radio"/> Have you got any questions? or <input type="radio"/> Have you any questions? (<i>less usual</i>) | <input type="radio"/> I don't have any questions. or <input type="radio"/> I haven't got any questions. or <input type="radio"/> I haven't any questions. (<i>less usual</i>) |
| <input type="radio"/> Does she have a car? or <input type="radio"/> Has she got a car? or <input type="radio"/> Has she a car? (<i>less usual</i>) | <input type="radio"/> She doesn't have a car. or <input type="radio"/> She hasn't got a car. or <input type="radio"/> She hasn't a car. (<i>less usual</i>) |

In past questions and negative sentences, we use **did/didn't**:

- Did you have** a car when you were living in Paris?
- I **didn't have** my phone, so I couldn't call you.
- Lisa **had** long hair, **didn't** she?

C **have breakfast / have a shower / have a good time** etc.

We also use **have** (*but not have got*) for things we do or experience. For example:

| | |
|-------------|--|
| have | breakfast / dinner / a cup of coffee / something to eat etc. a bath / a shower / a swim / a break / a rest / a party / a holiday an accident / an experience / a dream a look (at something) a chat / a discussion / a conversation (with somebody) trouble / difficulty / fun / a good time etc. a baby (= give birth to a baby) |
|-------------|--|

Have got is not possible in these expressions. Compare:

- Sometimes I **have** (= eat) a sandwich for my lunch. (not I've got)
- but* I **'ve got** / I **have** some sandwiches. Would you like one?

You can use continuous forms (**I'm having** etc.) with these expressions:

- We're enjoying our holiday. We're **having** a great time.
- 'Where's Mark?' 'He's **having** a shower.'

In questions and negative sentences we use **do/does/did**:

- I **don't** usually **have** a big breakfast. (not I usually haven't)
- Where **does** Chris usually **have** lunch?
- Did you have** trouble finding somewhere to stay? (not Had you)