



# **Learn English Through Stories**

## **G Series**

### **G21**

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# 1. Sheikh Makhmoor — Part 1

By Premchand

1

It was a dark period in the history of the kingdom of Jannat-Nishan. Shah Kishwar's victories had overwhelmed the land like sweeping tides. The kingdom had been ruined, the edifices of freedom had been torn apart, and the land and its people were facing great distress. Shah Baamurad had fought with courage and even sacrificed three hundred thousand warriors of his family, but in vain. The might of the enemy's sword triumphed over his valiant efforts. Shah Kishwarkusha, the victor, established his rule. Shah Baamurad who had sacrificed everything for the sake of freedom and was now alone and friendless, began to live in a shack.

This shack was situated in a mountainous region, inhabited by different tribes. The mountains stretched far into the horizon. Shah Baamurad began to spend his days of hardship in this area. He had no friends in the world. Far away from human habitation, he spent entire days just sitting on a rock, absorbed in thought. The hill people believed that he was a mystic lost in a trance. Years passed by.

Shah Baamurad continued to live like this. Then came a time when he was past his youth, and old age overtook him.

One day, Shah Baamurad went to the chief of the village and expressed his desire to get married. Shah's proposal took the chief by surprise but as he held Shah Sahib in high esteem he didn't say a word. Instead, he offered him his young daughter in marriage.

They were soon married and in the third year of their marriage, a child was born to the couple. Shah Sahib was overjoyed. He took the child in his arms and said eagerly to the surprised mother, "God be praised that the kingdom of Jannat- Nishan has now got an heir."

The child grew up. Compared to children of his age, the boy was twice as intelligent, courageous and strong. Each morning Rinda, his mother, got him ready and prepared his breakfast before starting her household chores. Shah Sahib then held his hand and took him far away from human habitation. There he made him sit on a rock and study, or explained to him the intricacies of royal etiquette, or tutored him in the art of warfare. That he showed such keen interest in these matters suggested he was fully aware of his royal lineage. He even had the disposition of a royal personage. All the children in the settlement obeyed him and carried out his instructions without demur. His mother was proud of him, his father

revelled in his presence. Everyone around believed that the child was the result of Shah Sahib's spiritual and miraculous powers.

Soon, the boy Masood grew to be a handsome young lad. One evening, when he turned seven, Shah Sahib went out alone for a walk and returned with a crown on his head that was studded with jewels. Rinda was scared but couldn't say a word. Shah Sahib hugged Masood.

He gave him a bath, made him sit on a rocky throne, and said in a choking voice, "Masood, I take my leave today, and I bestow upon you this crown of the kingdom of Jannat-Nishan. There was a time when this crown adorned the head of your unfortunate father. I congratulate you on assuming the throne. Rinda, my beloved wife, your unfortunate husband was once the emperor of this kingdom. Soon we are going to part, so I should reveal the secret to you. Masood, you're still a child, but you're courageous and sensible. I'm convinced you'll respect your father's last wish and will try to fulfil it. This is your kingdom and this is your crown. These are your subjects. Try to restore them till your last breath. If your efforts prove futile, and you are made to die in exile, then pass on this legacy to your heir. Hand over this crown to him; it will be his inheritance. I have nothing more to say to you. May God keep you both well and happy, and may all your wishes be fulfilled."

Shah Sahib's eyes closed as he was speaking. Rinda rushed and clasped his feet. Masood began to sob. The next morning, people from the village gathered and laid Shah Baamurad's body to rest in a mountain cave.

## 2

For half a century, Shah Kishwarkusha ruled his country as a just king. But the moment Kishwarkusha the Second assumed power, he dismissed all the counsellors of his wise father and appointed new ministers and counsellors according to his whims. Conditions soon began to worsen. The new leaders began to oppress people and inflict injustice on them. Things reached such a state that one of the leaders owing allegiance to the Muraadiya dynasty organized an uprising and within weeks, a large army had been raised. Masood quietly joined this army and began to discharge duties as an ordinary soldier.

Masood was in the prime of his youth. He combined virile passion with leonine courage. Few had ever set eyes on such a strapping, handsome youth. He loved hunting lions. For miles around, the jungles were emptied of wild beasts.

Throughout the day he did little else but hunt. He had such a melodious voice that when, in a fit of ecstasy, he began to sing, travellers and women from the hills would gather to hear him. His attractive face was imprinted in many people's minds, and many people yearned to see him.

There were many who had lost their heart to him but none, so far, had been able to win him over. If there was anything that he loved, it was the shiny sword that he had inherited as a legacy. He loved this sword even more than his life. He had no interest in new dresses for himself, but he got various kinds of sheaths crafted for the sword. Not for a moment would he like to part with the sword.

It's true that for a brave soldier, nothing is more precious in the world than his sword. And such a sword becomes more precious if it has been tried and tested many a time. Masood had killed many wild beasts with this sword, and sent to death countless highway robbers and plunderers. He had the firm conviction that one day this sword would hang over the head of Kishwarkusha the Second and then he would bask in the blood of his jugular vein.

One day, while chasing a lion, Masood strayed far away from his normal path.

The sun was scorching. He felt faint because of hunger and thirst but couldn't find any wild fruit trees or water springs. As he stood there wondering, he saw a lady horse rider wielding a spear approaching at the speed of lightning. Drops of perspiration shone like pearls on her forehead, and the scent of ambergris wafted from her hair that lay with abandon on her shoulders. Their eyes met and Masood lost his heart to her. He had never seen such a ravishingly beautiful woman before. He lost his wits. This young woman was known in these parts as Princess Sher Afghan.

The princess reined in her horse and said hotly, "So, you're the young man who hunts lions in my territory! Tell me what punishment should I give you for your misconduct?" Masood's eyes blazed when he heard this and his powerful hands reached out to the hilt of his sword. But he restrained himself and said, "I'd have given a befitting reply had this question been asked by a valorous man and not by you." This question angered the princess all the more. She spurred the horse, lunged at Masood with her spear and launched a fierce attack on him.

Masood was exhausted from his day's wanderings and his limbs were giving way. Princess Sher Afghan was adept in the art of wielding a spear. She made one deft move after another until Masood fell off his horse, wounded. All this while, Masood had simply tried to fend off the Princess's blows without

actually making any attempt to attack her.

The princess then jumped off her horse, ripped her scarf into pieces and bandaged Masood's wounds. She had never encountered a man of such courage and honour. She arranged to have him brought with utmost care to her tent and, for two entire weeks, she took care of him. His wounds healed and a luminous glow returned to his face. He yearned to see the princess who had stopped coming after his wounds were healed.

Then one day, Princess Sher Afghan summoned him to her court and said, "You arrogant young man, you should thank God that you've recovered from the wounds of my spear. I forgive your audacity. Now leave my realm. In future, don't dare to come here to hunt. We are confiscating your sword, lest you venture to come here once again, intoxicated with your arrogance."

Masood pulled out his sword from the sheath and replied in a thundering voice, "As long as I have a breath left in me, no one can take away this sword." Hearing this, a tall, giant-like fellow came forward and struck the wrist with which Masood was holding the sword. Masood deflected the blow and struck out with his own sword, severing the man's head. Sparks began to fly from the Princess's eyes at this turn of events.

She said threateningly, "Make sure this fellow doesn't leave this place alive."

Veteran soldiers surrounded him from all sides and began to strike Masood with swords and spears.

Masood's body was riddled with wounds. Blood gushed from them as thirsty words pierced his body again and again. He locked his sword with those of many others in combat and broke them. He wounded many and sent many to their death. His sword remained intact in his hand, gleaming like flashes of lightning, clearing his path. Witnessing this, the princess who was a skilled warrior herself, could not but appreciate his feat.

She came forward, kissed his sword and proclaimed, "Masood! You're the hero of heroes, don't waste your time hunting lions. There are other arenas in this world where your shining sword can show its miracle. Go forward and serve your people and your land. Leave us women to indulge in hunting and leisure."

Masood was amused by this remark. He was going to say something but stopped himself. The next moment he was on his way home with a heart wounded by the piercing glance of a maiden. He reached his home three weeks later and fell at his mother's feet.

Chief Namak-khwar's army grew in numbers every day. It began to plunder royal treasuries under the cover of darkness. The numbers grew further to the extent of a veritable army and now the chief had the courage to take on the royal forces. In the very first encounter, twenty-four forts fell into the hands of the rebel army. The royal army led the charge with full force in the battlefield but the soldiers of Kishwarkusha the Second lacked the energy, the fervour and the passion which propelled Namak-khwar and his cohorts in the war zone. There was no comparison between the two sides in terms of martial strategies, weaponry and the outward show of strength. The Shah's soldiers were all healthy, fully fit and experienced. Their weaponry and their manoeuvres and stratagems instilled such fear among spectators that no one could even imagine that an ill-equipped, disorganized and untrained force could stand their ground before such a strong army even for a minute. But when the marching bugle rent the air, people witnessed a strange spectacle—while the chief's soldiers marched with war cries, the royal soldiers looked sideways at escape routes from the battlefield. The battlements were crushed in an instant. Chief Namak-khwar was now sitting in great pomp and splendour in the well-built fort of Muskaat, ready with medals to reward his soldiers for their valour in the battle. The first name on the list was that of Masood's.

Masood was now the pride of the rebel army. In the battlefield, he was the first person to draw his sword, it was invariably he who led the attack. He was fearless and could foray into enemy battlements with ease. Each blow of his sword spelt doom, and each arrow from his bow carried a message of death.

But Masood's glory and honour were short-lived. Some senior officers, who could not match his skill with the sword, grew jealous. They began a plot to do away with him. Through sheer coincidence, they soon saw an opportunity to carry out their plans. To quash the rebellion, Kishwarkusha the Second raised a huge army and made Mir Shuja its commander. Mir was as valorous in the battlefield as Asfandiyar, the legendary Persian prince. When Chief Namak-khwar heard this, he was utterly distraught. To fight Mir Shuja meant inviting sure defeat. In the end, they decided to decamp from their present position and fortify themselves in a fort.

At that moment, the young Masood stood up and made a passionate appeal. "No, let's not shut ourselves inside a fort. Let's meet our enemy face to face. Our chests are not so weak that we can't bear to face the

arrows and the muskets of our enemies. Shutting ourselves up in a fort is an open declaration that we cannot face them head on. Have all of you, who are loyal to Shah Baamurad, forgotten that he sacrificed as many as three hundred thousand worthy soldiers for this very kingdom? No, we shall never shut ourselves in a fort. We shall face the enemy valiantly with all our strength. By the grace of God who is just, our swords shall sever the necks of our enemies and our spears shall strike their bosoms.”

Hundreds of eyes turned to gaze at Masood. Commanders frowned while soldiers could feel their hearts beating violently with enthusiasm. Chief Namak- khwar hugged him and said, “Masood, I appreciate your courage and your resolve. You are the pride of our army. You have advised us like a real man. We shall certainly not confine ourselves to a fort. We shall face the enemy head on and shed our blood unreservedly for the sake of our beloved Jannat-Nishan. You shall be our torchbearer, and we shall follow you.”

Masood prepared a group of his select soldiers and they pounced upon Mir Shuja with such resolve and ferocity that chaos spread through the enemy ranks. When Chief Namak-khwar saw that Mir’s soldiers were in disarray, he leapt on them with his troops. Swords clashed with swords and spears confronted spears. The battle raged on for three hours. The royal forces beat a retreat and Masood’s sword made short work of Mir Shuja.

Then both officers and soldiers joined in the collection of booty. Masood, wounded and exhausted, set off with his valiant friends in the direction of Muskaat fort.

Later, when he came to his senses and opened his eyes, he found himself lying on a soft, velvety bed in a well-decorated room. The refreshing scent of flowers filled the room and he saw several attractive maidens there. He gazed in astonishment when he saw a young maid, beautiful as a fairy, moving slowly towards him with a garland on a tray. It seemed as though spring itself had come to greet him with its bouquet of flowers. Seeing her, the slim, attractive maidens lowered their eyes to the floor and kissed her hennaed hands. Masood recognized her instantly. This was Princess Sher Afghan.

The princess laid the garland around Masood’s neck. She presented him with precious stones and jewels. Then she took a seat on her bejewelled throne.



## 2. Grammar Page

Unit  
21

### will and shall 1

**A** We use **I'll ... (= I will)** when we've just decided to do something. When we say 'I'll do something', we announce our decision:

- Oh, I left the door open. **I'll go** and shut it.
- 'What would you like to drink?' **I'll have** orange juice, please.'
- 'Did you call Max?' 'Oh no, I forgot. **I'll call** him now.'

We do not use the *present simple* (**I do / I go** etc.) in these sentences:

- I'll phone** him now. (*not I phone him now*)

We often use **I think I'll ... / I don't think I'll ...**:

- I'm a little hungry. **I think I'll have** something to eat.
- I don't think I'll go** out tonight. I'm too tired.

In spoken English **will not** is usually **won't**:

- I can see you're busy, so **I won't stay** long. (= I will not stay long)

**B** We often use **I'll** in these situations:

*Offering to do something*

- That bag looks heavy. **I'll help** you with it. (*not I help*)

*Agreeing to do something*

- A: Can you give Tom this book?  
B: Sure, **I'll give** it to him when I see him this afternoon.

*Promising to do something*

- Thanks for lending me the money. **I'll pay** you back on Friday.
- I won't tell** anyone what happened. I promise.



We use **won't** to say that somebody refuses to do something:

- I've tried to give her advice, but she **won't listen**.
- The car **won't start**. (= the car 'refuses' to start)

**Will you** (do something)? = please do it:

- Will you** please turn the music down? It's too loud.

The car won't start.



**C** We do *not* use **will** to talk about what has been decided or arranged before:

- I'm going** on holiday next Saturday. (*not I'll go*)

Compare:

- I'm meeting** Kate tomorrow morning. (decided before)
- A: **I'll meet** you at half past ten, OK?  
B: Fine. See you then. (decided now)

**D** We use **shall** mostly in the questions **shall I ...? / shall we ...?**

We use **shall I ...? / shall we ...?** to ask if it's OK to do something or to ask for a suggestion:

- Shall I** open the window? (= do you want me to open it?)
- I've got no money. What **shall I** do? (= what do you suggest?)
- '**Shall we go?**' 'Just a minute. I'm not ready yet.'
- 'Where **shall we** have lunch?' 'Let's go to Marino's.'

Compare **shall I ...?** and **will you ...?**:

- Shall I** shut the door? (= do you want me to shut it?)
- Will you** shut the door? (= I want you to shut it)