



**Learn English Through
Stories**

E Series

E32

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1. Roopa's Great Escape

By Sudha Murty

Grandpa's and Vishnu Kaka's houses were teeming with people! There was a village festival, and friends and relatives from near and far had come to Shiggaon. There were people the children had not seen or even heard about before. Some said, 'I am your father's fourth cousin.' Someone else said, 'I am your grandmother's second cousin.' The houses were full and there was a lot of fun and laughter everywhere. Nobody expected a separate bedroom or a special dish at the dining table. They all ate together and talked to everybody and slept on the floor on mattresses. The city children were surprised at the ease with which the guests made themselves at home. The women helped out in the kitchen in the morning and in the evening they dressed in shining silk sarees and went to the fair. In fact everyone dressed in their best, put the two hundred rupees Grandpa gave in their pockets and purses and made for the fair.

The fair itself was quite astonishing. The children from Mumbai said, 'It is just like Chowpati on Juhu beach.' The Delhi kids said, 'It is similar to Janpath.' Others said, 'It is like Karaga or Kallekai Parishe in Bangalore.' Vishnu Kaka explained, 'In every village there is a village god or goddess and once a year we worship them in a grand way. At the festival and fair it is not just about selling and buying, it is also about meeting people, exchanging gifts, having a feast and a good time.'

The group moved from shop to shop, peeping into the photo studios, examining bangles, waiting for a turn on the merry-go-round and clapping along to the dances, when someone noticed Suma was missing! Somewhere in the crowd she had got separated from the rest, and now there was no sign of her.

Immediately her mother started wailing, and Grandma consoled her. Vishnu Kaka too looked really worried. The children were scared and thrilled too. This was just like *Home Alone*! As Vishnu Kaka was about to make his way to the police assistance booth, they heard Suma's voice on the mike! 'I am at the police station, Vishnu Grandpa please come and fetch me.' When Suma had been traced, her mother started scolding her. But Suma was not bothered. 'I was not worried,' she said. 'In the crowd when I realized I was not with you people, I straightaway went to the police station and told them to make an announcement.'

Everyone declared she was a very brave and sensible girl, and for a change that day Vishnu Kaka said, 'Today I will tell a story about a young girl like Suma who had a lot of courage. I read this story in a book when I was young.'



Once, there lived a very clever young girl called Roopa. She was an orphan and had been taken care of all her life by the people of the village in which she lived. She was very hard-working and once she became old enough, she lived all by herself and looked after herself. But she always missed having a family of her own, even though her neighbours were such loving and caring people.

One day, when Roopa was about sixteen years old, she went down to the river along with some other women and girls to wash clothes and fetch water. Diwali was around the corner and everyone was excited. They were discussing what new clothes they would get. Some were expecting their husbands and fathers to return to the village with lovely gifts for them and were looking forward to all the merrymaking that would happen over the next few days.

Only Roopa was quiet. She did not have anyone to buy her new clothes or shoes or presents. The villagers were kind to her, but they had barely enough for their own needs so how could she expect them to get anything for her? Yet today, hearing all the happy chatter around her, she could not keep quiet any longer.

'Even I will get a new sari this year!' she told Rama, her best friend.

Rama and all the other girls were astonished. Who was going to get Roopa her new sari? 'I heard from a distant uncle the other day. He was working for many years in a faraway city and did not know that my parents had died. Now that he is back, he has promised to visit me on Diwali. I am sure he will bring some marvellous gift for me!' Roopa had started weaving a story, and now she kept adding, telling all kinds of tales about her imaginary uncle. Her friends listened open-mouthed. Then they went home and told everyone about Rupa's luck. Roopa was finally no longer all alone in the world.

As soon as the bunch of women had gone away, who emerged from behind a tree, but Bholu the trickster. He had been sitting under the tree, planning his next theft, when he had fallen asleep. Then he had woken up and seen the women at the river and had sat there still hoping to hear something about the villagers. Sure enough, he had heard Roopa's story, and was now ready with a plan!

Bholu decided to dress up as an old man and appear at Roopa's house a few days before Diwali pretending to be her uncle! Then he would take her away along with any valuables she may have got from her parents.

A week before Diwali, an old stranger appeared at Roopa's door. He was carrying new clothes, sweets and other gifts. Roopa was out doing some errands so her neighbours came around to find out who he was. Bholu acted perfectly like Roopa's long-lost uncle, eagerly waiting to meet her. When Roopa returned home, she found everyone sitting around an old man, who said he was the uncle she had made up a story about!

Roopa was astonished. How had this happened? She had only been pretending to have a relative just so her friends would not feel sorry for her, and now here he was, a real person! Then her neighbour, who had looked after her all these years, said, 'Roopa, this is your Uncle Bholu; he learnt he had a niece and came here looking for you. He wants to take you home with him and look after you like his own daughter. You are so lucky, Roopa, and we are so happy for you!'

Roopa looked around at everyone, beaming happily at her, and thought what harm would there be if she went away with this uncle. She happily packed whatever little things she owned and waving goodbye to her friends and neighbours, went off with Bholu.

No sooner had they reached his house than he took off his disguise and appeared before her as a young man. Roopa was horrified. Oh, what a fool she had been to believe his story and come away with him! He was nothing but a trickster.

In Bholu's house there was no one else but his mother, who was old and slightly deaf and blind. After eating his lunch, Bholu decided to walk about for a while, meeting his friends and telling them how he had kidnapped Roopa. She too ate her lunch, pretended she was very sleepy, yawned loudly and told his mother, 'Aunty, I am very tired after that long journey. I am going to bed for a little while. If your son comes round tell him not to wake me up.'

Bholu's mother nodded, though she had not heard much. Roopa quickly went to the other room, borrowed some of Bholu's clothes, wore them and ran off. She took with her a few coins and a thick stick to defend herself if need be. Before leaving, she arranged the pillows in such a way on the bed that in the evening darkness it looked like someone was sleeping on the bed. Then she covered the pillows with a dupatta and a sheet. If anyone only looked in from the door it would seem as if a woman was sleeping on the bed.

Bholu returned home when it was well past evening. His mother told him Roopa was in her room. He peeped in, saw someone sleeping and went away. Many hours passed, Bholu kept checking whether Roopa was awake or not, but each time he saw her sleeping without moving a muscle. Finally, he realized something was wrong.

He went up to the bed now and pulled back the dupatta and the sheet. Imagine his shock when he saw nothing but pillows on the bed! Roopa had disappeared! He ran out immediately and asked everyone around if they had seen a young, pretty girl walk out of his house. But no one had, because Roopa had cleverly disguised herself as a man!

Meanwhile, Roopa too had walked many miles till she reached a different town. There she looked around for work, and was taken in by an innkeeper to look after the guests and to show them their rooms. Roopa, who now called herself Rupesh, was happy doing this work. She could not return to her village till she did something about Bholu, otherwise he would be sure to land up there and bring her back with him, pretending to be her uncle.

After many days, Bholu turned up at the town. He walked from shop to inn to market, asking if anyone had seen someone like Roopa. Of course no one had.

Roopa got to know and decided to teach him a lesson. When Bholu reached her inn, he did not recognize her in men's clothes. She agreed to give him a room for the night. She told him, 'Sir, I will give you a room in the attic. It is nice and warm and cosy there, and you will be away from this harsh winter cold.'

Bholu happily agreed and followed her to the room. A ladder was kept in the middle of the room which went up to a little trapdoor. If you climbed through the door, you entered the attic. Bholu quickly went up the ladder, found his bed, wrapped his blanket around himself and went off to sleep.

When it was the middle of the night, Roopa sneaked into the room and removed the ladder. Then she threw some marbles right under the trapdoor and stamped loudly around the room. Bholu woke with a start.

Who was that walking around his room? He called down nervously, 'W-who is there?'

Roopa called out in her man's voice, 'Nothing to worry sir. The soldiers are looking for a thief they believe is hiding in this inn.'

Bholu was really scared. How did the soldiers know he was a thief and a trickster? He was sure they were looking for him, and decided to make a run for it. He opened the trapdoor and stepped down. But there was no ladder! Bholu fell with a loud thud on to the floor! When he tried to get up, his feet slipped on the many marbles strewn about the room and he went crashing and sliding all over the place! Finally he hit his head against a wall and passed out, unconscious.

Roopa had been watching this from the door with great delight. Her plan was working! As soon as Bholu fainted, she heaved him up and packed him up in a large box. She placed a nice silk cloth on top of him. Then she dragged the box outside the inn and stood there.

Soon a bullock cart passed by with two travellers heading for the inn. When they saw Roopa, or Rupesh, standing outside the inn, they asked, 'Are you the manager of this inn?'

Roopa nodded yes.

'Why are you standing here then?'

Roopa replied in a worried voice, 'I look after this inn. I was supposed to go to my own village earlier today to attend a wedding. But there was so much of work that I could not leave, and now here I am waiting for my cart with this heavy box.' Then she lowered her voice and whispered, 'This box is full of gifts I bought for the wedding, and if I don't reach in time, everyone will be really disappointed.'

The two travellers, who were up to no good themselves, looked at each other. The same thought had come to both! They said, 'Don't worry, brother. You can take a ride on our cart. Why don't you put your box on the cart here? But before we start, would you mind getting us a drink of water?'

Rupesh, or Roopa, smiled to herself, and dragged the box on to the cart. Then she went inside to fetch the water. She took her time. As soon as her back was turned, the two travellers opened the box to see what it contained. They saw some lovely silk cloth on top. Now assured that they had got their hands on some valuables, they quickly urged their bullocks forward and made a dash for it.

Once they were well and truly out of sight, Roopa grinned to herself. Her plan had worked! She ran to the nearest police station, and told them all about the theft.

The two men in the bullock cart were just celebrating their theft of the box, when they were horrified to see soldiers waiting for them down the road. What could they do, they wondered. They were crossing a bridge over a river at that time, and quickly tipped the box into the water. Then they heaved a sigh of relief and went their way.

So that was the end of Bholu, and Roopa too returned to her village, where she lived happily on her own. She was not going to trust any stranger anymore!



‘And that’s what brave Suma did too! When she was in trouble she did not talk to any stranger, but went straight to the police for help. We must always remain cool like this when in trouble,’ signed off Vishnu Kaka. Suma was delighted at this praise, and ate her bhujia with great happiness all the way home!

2. Grammar Page

The Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense shows action in the indefinite past. The present perfect tense is also used to show action begun in the past and continuing into the present.

To make the present perfect tense, use **have** or **has** and a verb that ends in **ed**.

We **have lived** in this house for five years.
(= *and we still live there*)

Your plane **has** already **landed**.
(= *and it's still on the ground*)

She **has dirtied** her new shoes.
(= *she made them dirty and they're still dirty*)

The teacher **has pinned** a notice on the board.
(= *and the notice is still there*)

You don't need your key. I've already **opened** the door. (= *and it's still open*)

Notes

The **ed** form of a verb is called the **past participle** when it is used with **has** or **have** to make the present perfect tense:

have + **landed**
(*past participle*)

has + **opened**
(*past participle*)

Irregular Past Participles

Remember that irregular verbs don't have a simple past form that ends in **-ed**.

Irregular verbs also have unusual **past participles** that don't end in **-ed**. The past participle of some verbs is the same as the simple past tense.

irregular verb	simple past tense	past participle
fight	fought	fought
have	had	had
lose	lost	lost
teach	taught	taught
win	won	won