



Learn English Through Stories

H Series

H25

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

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

Contents

Adventures of Feluda:

- 1. Trouble in Gangtok — Four.**
- 2. Grammar Page: Verb + Preposition 2**

Trouble in Gangtok

By Satyajit

Four

I woke at 6.30 a.m. the next morning, to find that the rain had stopped and there was not a single cloud in the sky. The sun shone brightly on the world, and behind the range of mountains, now easily visible from our room, stood Kanchenjunga. The view from here was different from that in Darjeeling, but it was still unmistakably the same Kanchenjunga, standing apart from all the other mountains—proud, majestic and beautiful.

Feluda had risen before me and already had a bath. ‘Be quick, Topshe. We have lots to do,’ he said. It took me less than half an hour to get ready. By the time we went down for breakfast, it was only a little after 7 a.m. To our surprise, we found Mr Sarkar already seated in the dining hall.

‘Good morning. So you’re an early riser, too,’ Feluda greeted him. Mr Sarkar smiled, but seemed oddly preoccupied, even somewhat nervous. ‘Er . . . did you sleep well?’ we asked.

‘Not too badly. Why, what’s the matter?’

Mr Sarkar glanced around briefly before taking out a crumpled yellow piece of paper from his pocket. Then he handed it over to Feluda and said, ‘What do you make of this?’

Feluda spread it out. There were some strange letters written with black ink. ‘It looks like a Tibetan word. Where did you get it?’

‘Last night . . . in the . . . I mean, d-dead of night . . . someone threw it into my room.’

‘What!’ My heart gave a sudden lurch. Mr Sarkar’s room was next to ours. The same stretch of the veranda that ran in front of our room went past his. If the man I saw last night was real, and not something out of a dream, why, he might have—! But I chose not to say anything.

‘I wish I knew what it said,’ added Mr Sarkar.

‘That shouldn’t be a problem, surely? Dozens of people here can read Tibetan. You could go to the Tibetan Institute, if no one else will help you. But why are

you assuming this is some sort of a threat? It could simply mean “May you live long”, or “God be with you”, or something like that. Is there a specific reason to think this is a warning or a threat?’

Mr Sarkar gave a little start, then smiled and said, ‘No, no, certainly not. I do nothing but mind my own business. Why should anyone threaten me? But then again, why should anyone send me their good wishes? I mean, purely out of the blue like this?’

Feluda called a waiter and ordered breakfast. ‘Stop worrying. We’re right next to you, aren’t we? We’ll both look after you. Now, have a good breakfast, relax and think of the Lama dance this afternoon.’

Our jeep arrived on time. Just as we were about to get into it, I saw another jeep coming from the direction of the dak bungalow. As it came closer, I could read its number plate. SKM 463, it said. Why did it seem familiar? Oh, of course, this was the new jeep that Mr Shelvankar’s driver was now driving. I caught a glimpse of the blue jacket the driver was wearing, and then, to my utter surprise, I saw Mr Bose sitting in the passenger’s seat. He stopped his jeep at the sight of ours. ‘I was waiting for information from the army,’ he told us, leaning out. ‘All that rain last night made me wonder if the roads were all right.’

‘And are they?’

‘Yes, thank God. If they weren’t, I’d have had to go via Kalimpong.’ ‘Didn’t Mr Shelvankar use the same driver?’

Mr Bose laughed. ‘I can see you’ve started making enquiries already. But yes, you’re right. I chose him deliberately, partly because his jeep is new, and partly because . . . lightning doesn’t strike the same place twice, does it? Anyway, goodbye again!’

He drove off and soon disappeared. We climbed into our own jeep. The driver knew where he was supposed to take us, so we were off without wasting another minute. I glanced up as we approached the dak bungalow to see if I could see Helmut, but there was no one in sight. There was a slope to our left, leading to another street lined by buildings. One of them looked like a school for there was an open square ground in front of it with two tiny goal posts. A little later, we reached a crossing where four roads met. We drove straight ahead and soon came across a large sign that said, ‘North Sikkim Highway’.

Feluda had been humming under his breath. Now he broke off and asked the driver, 'How far has this road gone?'

'Up to Chungtham, sir. Then it splits into two—one goes to Lachen, and the other to Lachung.'

I had heard of both these places. They were both at a height of nearly 9,000 feet and reported to be very beautiful.

'Is it a good road?'

'Yes, sir. But it gets damaged sometimes after heavy rain.'

The few buildings that could be seen by the road soon disappeared altogether. We were now well out of the town, making our way through hills. Looking down at the valley below, I could only see maize fields. It seemed as though someone had cut steps in the hillside to plant the maize. It looked most attractive.

After driving in silence for another ten kilometres, our driver slowed down suddenly and said, 'Here's the spot. This is where the accident took place.' He parked the jeep on one side and we got out. The place was remarkably quiet. I could hear nothing but the faint chirping of a bird, and the gurgling of a small river in the far distance.

On our left was a slope. The hill rose almost in a straight line on our right. It was from the top of this hill that the boulder had fallen. Pieces of it were still strewn about. The thought of the accident suddenly made me feel a little sick.

Feluda, in the meantime, had finished taking a few quick photos. Then he passed his camera to me and walked over to the edge of the road on the left. 'It may be possible to climb down this slope, if I go very carefully. Wait for me. I shouldn't take more than fifteen minutes,' he said. Before I could say or do anything to stop him, he had stepped off the road and was climbing down the slope, clutching at plants, bushes and rocks, whistling nonchalantly. But the sound of his whistling faded gradually, and in just a few minutes there was silence once more. Unable to contain myself, I moved towards the edge of the road and took a quick look. What I saw made me give an involuntary gasp. I could see Feluda, but he had climbed such a distance already that his figure looked like that of a tiny doll.

'Yes, he's found the right spot,' said the driver, joining me. 'That's where the jeep had fallen.'

Exactly fifteen minutes later, I heard Feluda climbing up, once again clutching and grasping whatever he could lay his hands on. When he came closer, I stretched an arm and helped him heave himself up on the road.

‘What did you find, Feluda?’

‘Just some nuts and bolts and broken parts of a vehicle. No Yamantak.’

This did not surprise me. ‘Did you find nothing else?’ I asked. In reply, Feluda took out a small object from his pocket. It was a white shirt button, possibly made of plastic. Feluda put it away, and made his way to the hill that rose high on the other side of the road. I heard him mutter ‘rocks and boulders, rocks and boulders’ a couple of times. Then he raised his voice and said, ‘Felu Mitter must now turn into Tenzing.’

‘What do you mean? Why Tenzing? Hey Feluda, wait for me!’ This time, I was determined not to be left behind. The hill that had looked pretty daunting at first turned out to have little clefts and hollows one could use as footholds. ‘All right, you go before me,’ Feluda said. I knew he wanted to be right behind me so that he could reach out and catch me if I slipped and fell. Luckily, that did not happen. A few minutes later, I heard Feluda say, ‘Stop!’ We had reached a place that was almost flat. I decided to sit on a small rock and rest for a while. Feluda began pacing, examining the ground carefully. I paid no attention until he stopped and said, ‘Hm. This is where that boulder must have slipped from. Look at those bushes over there—and that small fern—see how they’ve been crushed?’

‘How big do you think it was?’

‘You saw the pieces, didn’t you? It need not have been very big. A rock the size of a dhobi’s bundle would be enough to kill, if it fell from such a height.’

‘Really?’

‘Yes. It’s a matter of momentum, you see. Mass into velocity. If you stood at the bottom of Qutab Minar and someone threw a pebble aimed at your head from its top, you might end up with a fractured skull. Haven’t you noticed when you play cricket that the higher the cricket ball is thrown in the air, the more difficult and painful it is for a fielder to catch it?’

‘Yes, I see what you mean.’

Feluda turned and started to stare at a certain spot that looked more barren than its surroundings.

There were grassy patches everywhere else.

‘Topshe, do you want to find out how that stone slipped out? Come and have a look.’ Feluda pointed at something in that barren portion of the hill. I got up and peered. There was a small hole. What could it mean?

‘As far as I can see,’ Feluda said slowly, ‘yes, I am almost a hundred per cent sure about this— someone forced the rock out of the ground, using either a strong iron rod, or something like that. Otherwise there wouldn’t be an empty space here. Which means—’

I knew what his next words were going to be. But I held my breath and let him finish.

‘—Which means the accident that took Mr Shelvankar’s life was caused by man, not nature.

Someone killed him . . . someone incredibly cruel, and clever.’

2. Grammar Page

Verb + Prepositions 2: Verb + AT

look / stare / glance **AT** ..., have a look / take a look **AT**

Why are you **looking at** me like that?

laugh **AT** ...

I look stupid with this haircut. Everybody will **laugh at** me.

aim / point (something) **AT** ..., shoot / fire (a gun) **AT** ...

Don't point that **knife at** me. It's dangerous.

We saw someone with a gun **shooting at** birds, but he didn't hit any.

Written: She has not replied to my question.

Spoken: She hasn't answered my question.

Exercise

Complete the sentences. Use these verbs + the correct preposition:

explain	laugh	listen	look	point	reply	speak
		throw	throw			

1. I look stupid with this haircut. Everybody will me.
2. I don't understand this. Can you it me?
- 3 We live in the same building, but we've never one another.
- 4 Be careful with those scissors! Don't them me!
- 5 You shouldn't directly the sun. You'll damage your eyes.
- 6 Please me! I've got something important to tell you.
- 7 Don't stones the birds!
- 8 If you don't want that sandwich, it the birds. They'll eat it.
- 9 I tried to contact Tina, but she didn't my emails.

Answers

Complete the sentences. Use these verbs + the correct preposition:

explain	laugh	listen	look	point	reply	speak
		throw	throw			

1. I look stupid with this haircut. Everybody will **laugh at** me.
2. I don't understand this. Can you **explain it to** me?
- 3 We live in the same building, but we've never **spoken to** one another.
- 4 Be careful with those scissors! Don't **point them at** me!
- 5 You shouldn't directly **look at** the sun. You'll damage your eyes.
- 6 Please **listen to** me! I've got something important to tell you.
- 7 Don't **throw** stones **at** the birds!
- 8 If you don't want that sandwich, **throw it to** the birds. They'll eat it.
- 9 I tried to contact Tina, but she didn't **reply to** my emails.