



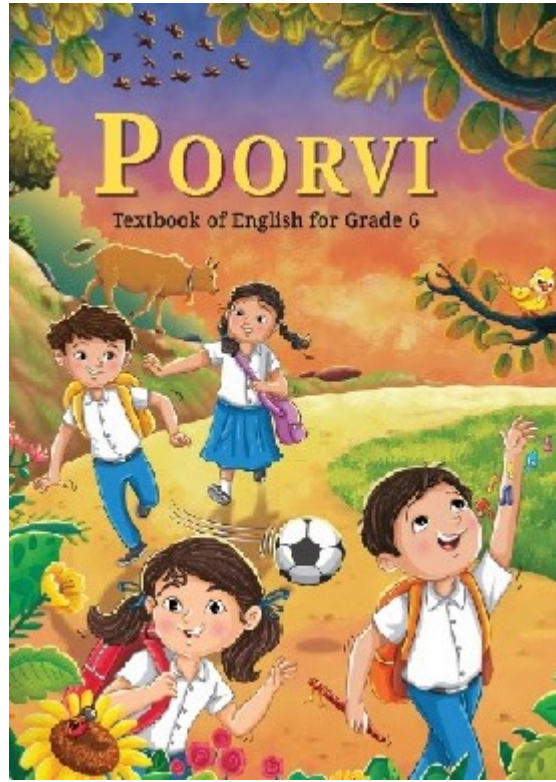
Learn English Through Stories

A1 Stories

Elementary Level

**Adapted and modified by  
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# 1. Neem Baba

by S. I. Farooqi

Amber returned from school and sat down in the shade of the neem tree in her courtyard. She felt that the tree was whispering to her. She looked at the tree and spoke to the tree.

**Amber:**

*Namaste!* I am Amber. I would like to talk to you. May I?

**Neem Baba:**

Sure, dear Amber. I know you. You played in my shade in your childhood. You may call me 'Neem Baba'.

**Amber:**

I have seen you almost everywhere. Please tell me something more about yourself.

**Neem Baba:**

I am very old. I was born millions of years ago somewhere in North India or Myanmar. Soon, my family spread outside India.

**Amber:**

Outside India? Where else can neem be found?

**Neem Baba:**

My family can be found in many Asian and African countries and even in some parts of America.

**Amber:**

That's wonderful! Who gave you your name?

**Neem Baba:**

The story of my name is very thought-provoking. I was born in India and given Sanskrit names such as *Arishta* (the one who cures diseases), *Nimba* and *Nimbaca*. The name '*Neem*' is given by the Iranians.

**Amber:** Really?

**Neem Baba :** Yes, in Hindi, my name is *Nimb*. In India, I have other names—*Nim*, *Leemba*, *Nimori*, *Nimbamond*, *Nimbe* and *Nimo*.

**Amber:** You are so well known! That is wonderful.

**Neem Baba:**

Dear Amber, we become well known for what we do. People find us useful and that is why they know us. Scientists call us ‘bitter grace of God’, ‘nature’s gift to man’, and ‘cleanliness-parting tree’. Some even call us ‘magic tree’ and ‘the tree of the twentieth century’.

**Amber:**

I know that people clean teeth with your twigs and protect clothes with your leaves. Sometime back, when my brother had measles, the doctor told us to put neem leaves on his bed and make him lie down on them. Can you explain why?

**Neem Baba:**

The doctors know that neem leaves have chemical properties that destroy germs. Measles cause itching all over the body. Neem leaves give comfort and do not allow germs to breed. Neem leaves, bark, flowers, fruits and even roots can be used to make medicines to cure many diseases.

**Amber:** Yes, I once had a cough and I could not breathe properly. My grandmother cured me with a medicine made from neem bark. And when my father had itching in the eyes, she prepared a kajal from neem flowers, which cured him.

**Neem Baba:** Oh, little Amber, you know so much. Remember, these remedies are to be used only by people who are well trained and have a lot of experience.

**Amber:** Yes, I will. Tell me Neem Baba, is there any use of neem for the farmers?

**Neem Baba:** Yes. If the powder of neem seeds is mixed in water and sprayed on plants and trees, then locusts don’t eat them. If it is used in rice fields, where water remains standing, it stops mosquito breeding and helps to increase crop yield. It also saves the crop from termites, which eat roots of the crop, and it also stops breeding of other insects that eat crops.

**Amber:** That means, if we put the powder of neem seeds in stagnant water around our homes, mosquitoes won’t breed in them! This must be a cost-effective method to stop mosquitoes from breeding. Please tell me other uses of neem in our daily life.

**Neem Baba:**

Of course. People save their stored grains from insects by adding neem seed powder to them. Neem oil is also used to make soaps and toothpaste. Furniture made from neem wood is not eaten by termites. Neem also purifies the air. There are many qualities yet to be discovered. Will you discover them when you grow up?

**Amber:** Yes, Neem Baba. I will. Thank you for your time today!

Neem Baba: Bless you, my child!

## 2. What a Bird Thought

I lived first in a little house,  
And lived there very well,  
I thought the world was small and round,  
And made of pale, blue shell.  
I lived next in a little nest,  
Nor needed any other,  
I thought the world was made of straw,  
And nestled by my mother.  
One day, I fluttered from my nest,  
To see what I could find,  
I said the world is made of leaves,  
I have been very blind.  
At length I flew beyond the tree,  
Quite fit for grown-up labours,  
I don't know how the world is made,  
And neither do my neighbours.

### 3. A letter from Daadi

Dear Vikram and Vaibhavi,

*Namaste!* I just got your message that you are better now.

I am happy that the natural cures that I had shared, helped you. You should try to remember these cures and may share them with your friends. When I was a child, I learnt them from my grandmother. She used to find home remedies for most of the weather-related common illnesses. Let me share some of the benefits of the spices that most of us have in our kitchen.

Let me start with *haldi*, which is called turmeric in English. It helps in improving our energy level and digestion. It helps in reducing body pain too.

Next, let us take *methi*, which is called fenugreek in English. You will be surprised to know that it helps me in keeping my sugar level and my body weight in control. I need to soak the *methi* seeds overnight and drink the water in the morning.

- *Jeera* (cumin) seeds soaked in water overnight can also improve digestion and help cure sleeplessness.
- You know, when you were babies and had gas in your tummy, I used to put *heeng* (asafoetida) water on your tummy to give you some relief. *Heeng* can also help in controlling cough and cold.
- *Dalchini* (cinnamon) and *laung* (clove) give relief when we have toothache till we can consult a dentist.
- *Adrak* (ginger) is another herb that can help us when we have cough and cold. It also gives relief from pain. Do you know, ginger has been used for cooking for more than 4000 years? Even today, it is extensively used in cooking Indian food.
- *Kali mirch* (black pepper) is also helpful in digestion and can give us relief from body pain.
- You may have seen that at the end of a meal, *saunf* (fennel seeds) and *ajwain* (carom seeds) are served. It is because they help in the digestion of food.
- *Elaichi* (cardamom) also helps us with digestion and respiratory troubles in addition to curing bad breath.

Now, go into the kitchen and try to identify these herbs and spices. And remember, you must consult an elder before you use them.

My love and *aashirwaad* to both of you!

Yours affectionately,

*Daadi*



## 4. Change of Heart

Prabhat always wanted to win. His parents, teachers, and friends said that he did not know how to accept defeat. The fact was that he could not bear losing, not even at marbles. He felt so good when he won that he never wanted to give up that feeling. On the contrary, losing made him feel terrible. He thought that losing was the worst thing that could happen to anyone.

If Prabhat sensed that he would lose a game, he would not play it. He would take part only when he was sure of winning, even if the game lasted only for a minute. You could not stop him from playing the kind of games he was really good at, like badminton.

A new student joined Prabhat's school, and his name was Surya. Surya was an excellent badminton player. Prabhat waited for the last Friday of the month. Last Friday was significant. This was when the coach conducted friendly matches in the games period. The teams were decided on Monday and it was no surprise when Prabhat and Surya were chosen to play a round against each other. Prabhat was given the responsibility of keeping score for their match. On one hand, Prabhat prepared for the match with great seriousness. Surya, on the other hand, seemed relaxed, not taking the things seriously at all. He walked about the whole time, smiling and cracking jokes about all sorts of things. But on Friday, at the badminton court, Surya was a real phenomenon. He won points again and again, laughing and joking all the time. However, Surya was paying so little attention to the match that Prabhat managed to change the scoreboard while his opponent was looking elsewhere.

Prabhat managed to win by cheating. He made a big thing of his win, but it did not matter to Surya.

"It's been fun. We should play again some other time," said Surya.

On that day, everyone was discussing their game and how Prabhat had played so well. Surprisingly, Prabhat could not sleep well that night. He had won the game but he did not feel as happy as he usually did. What was surprising was that Surya did not feel bad about losing. What was more surprising was that Prabhat saw Surya playing basketball the next day. Surya was so hopeless at it that he could not score a basket for ten minutes. Yet, he enjoyed playing the game. His happy smile never left his face.

Prabhat kept a close watch on Surya for some days. He was great at some things, terrible at others but what was common was the enjoyment. He enjoyed everything equally. As Prabhat went on with his observation, he realised that to enjoy a game, you did not need a scoreboard to keep a tally of your scores. Neither did you have to worry about winning and losing. You needed to enjoy the game for its own sake. What matters is trying to do well, and enjoying every moment of it.

Prabhat learnt something through the observations every day, soon realising the change in himself. He had even begun playing hide and seek, and felt sad whenever it was about to end. He also started joking while playing badminton. Soon, the other students started talking amongst themselves, "Good fun playing with Prabhat, that fellow definitely has a great sporting spirit."

## 5. Yoga

Yoga is a physical, mental, and spiritual practice that originated in ancient India. The word 'Yoga' comes from the Sanskrit root 'yuj', which means 'to join' or 'to unite'. This symbolises the unity of mind and body; thought and action; harmony between human and nature. It is a holistic approach to health and well-being.

Sage Patanjali presented the ancient tradition of yoga in a systematic way in 'Yoga Sutras of Patanjali'. He described yoga as the means to make the mind quiet and free from all distractions.

Yoga has become increasingly popular around the world due to its many health benefits.

Here are some of the benefits of yoga—

- Yoga postures (*asanas*) help to stretch and strengthen the muscles, increase flexibility, endurance and balance. This can improve overall physical fitness. This can also help to reduce body pains, such as lower back pain.
- Yoga involves breathing techniques and meditation, which can help to calm the mind and reduce stress and anxiety. It relaxes the mind, improves the quality of sleep and increases concentration.
- Yoga has been shown to boost the immune system. It can improve heart health by lowering blood pressure and improving circulation.
- Yoga can aid in weight loss by burning calories, and maintaining health.

Yoga promotes a sense of overall well-being. This is the reason why the benefits of practising yoga are internationally recognised. The World Health Organisation (WHO) on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021, launched an App called WHO mYoga. The app contains a collection of videos and audio files to teach and support yoga practice. The aim was to have an easy-to-use and free tool for people across the world to encourage them to practise yoga.

We can start practicing yoga at any given moment of time. We must remember that when we practice yoga *asanas* (postures), we do not just stretch the body. The mind has to be with the body. This is the reason why it should be practised without distractions. If each stretch is coordinated with the breath and awareness, our practice will become a yogic practice.