



**Learn English Through Stories**

**D Series**

**D54**

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## 1. The Selfish Groom

Dhanagupta, a famous and rich merchant, had only one son, Yashodhana. The child was born when his father was already quite old, and being the only child, was brought up with great care. When he became a young man, his father started thinking about his marriage. But Yashodhana told him, 'I will choose my own bride. I want someone who is intelligent. She should also be careful with money, and not a spendthrift. After all, she will become the wife of a merchant with a vast business one day. Please give me a chariot, a servant and four horses. I will travel around the country and find such a wife for myself.'

His father agreed and gave him the chariot, servant and horses. Thus, Yashodhana set off to look for a bride. He travelled all over the country, met many women and their hopeful fathers. But whenever a beautiful woman appeared before him, he would say, 'I will marry you, but first take this bag of paddy. I want you to cook me a meal of rice, dal, vegetables and curd with this. Only if you do this will I marry you.'

Whoever heard this strange condition went away without trying. A few tried, but could not succeed. In this way many months went by and a weary Yashodhana arrived with his equally tired servant and horses at a small village. There he saw a small but neat hut, and sitting in front of it an old man and his daughter. The girl was beautiful, with dark, intelligent eyes. Yashodhana was suddenly hopeful. He went up to them and told them about his condition. The girl smiled when she heard him and said, 'Of course I can do it. It is not difficult. Why don't you rest awhile and I will get your meal ready.'

An astonished Yashodhana settled down to wait. Soon he nodded off to sleep. After some time, he felt someone shaking him awake. It was the girl, inviting him to lunch. He washed his hands and sat down. To his amazement, the girl served him fluffy white rice, two types of vegetables, a bowl of steaming-hot, delicious dal and soft, refreshing curd. He ate the meal and then could not hold back his curiosity any longer. 'How did you do it?' he asked.

The girl smiled. 'First I pounded the paddy and got a lot of rice. Then I took the husk to the village jeweller who needs it for his work. He gave me money in return, with which I bought the vegetables and the oil. Then, since there was more rice than could be eaten by one person, I sold the rest and got the curd and some ghee. It took me little time to cook it all and then your meal was ready.'

Yashodhana was amazed. Quickly he revealed who he was—the son of the country's richest man. But the girl was not impressed. She stood back, folded

her arms, looked at him in the eye and said, 'You may want to marry me, but I don't want to marry you. Look at the state of your horses and your poor servant. Did you think about them and feed them properly when you were travelling? I think not. You asked me to cook only for you. What about them? You need to learn some manners and kindness before you can even think of marrying me.'

An ashamed Yashodhana went back home emptyhanded. Over the next few months he mended his ways, and one day arrived at the girl's hut, on foot. There, he humbly asked her father for her hand. The girl looked at his face, now not a hint of arrogance. She also noticed the love in his gaze, and agreed.

Yashodhana and his wife looked after their large business with intelligence, compassion and honesty for many, many years.

## 2. The Tired Horse

Purushottam was a poor farmer. He lived in a village with his young son and a horse. They had never gone anywhere outside the village and were very simple people. One day, they decided to go to the grand fair that was on in the nearest town.

They set off early one morning. Purushottam thought his son was young and would not be able to walk the distance, so he made the lad sit on the horse and started walking beside it. When they had gone some distance, they passed a group of villagers. 'Look!' the villagers shouted. 'The young boy is sitting on the horse while his old father is walking. Hey, don't you have any brains? Let your father sit on the horse.'

Purushottam and his son thought this was right. So Purushottam sat on the horse and his son walked alongside. After a while they met another group of villagers. 'Look!' the villagers shouted. 'The man is sitting on the horse while the little boy is walking. Hey, don't you have any brains? Let your son sit on the horse.'

So Purushottam got off the horse, and not knowing what to do, the two walked beside the horse. Soon they met another group of villagers. 'Look!' the villagers shouted. 'There is a strong and healthy horse but they are walking on foot. Hey, don't you have any brains? Why don't you sit on the horse?'

Now they decided: both sit on the horse. A while later, they passed some more people. 'Look!' they shouted. 'Those two cruel people are sitting on that one poor animal. The horse looks tired. Hey! Why don't you both get off and carry the horse on your shoulders instead?'

Purushottam and his son got off. They used a rope to tie the horse's legs and, lifting it over their shoulders, started walking. They came to a stream. By then the horse was furious at being carried like this. As soon as the man and the boy set it down, it struggled out of the rope and ran away, never to be seen again.

### **3. Chief Minister's Test**

Long ago, there was a king who ruled his kingdom with great wisdom. He made sure each person got a good education and as a result, the people of the kingdom too were clever and wise. The king of one of the neighbouring kingdoms once decided he would appoint as his chief minister one of these intelligent people.

So he set a test to see who was the wisest. He sent his messenger to court with a strange message, 'I want a person who can bring me fresh vegetables grown in the soil of your kingdom. He should also bring with him a pot full of intelligence.' Now, to get to the neighbouring kingdom, it was a good two months' chariot ride. So even if someone started off with fresh vegetables, they would be rotten by the time he reached there.

Even the wise king was perplexed. One young man from his court, however, knew the solution. He asked the king to give him a cart full of soil, manure and lots of vegetable seeds and saplings. He sowed these in the soil and set off with the cart tied to the rear of his chariot. He also planted a pumpkin plant, and when the vegetable appeared, tied a pot over it, so when the pumpkin grew, it would fill the entire pot.

By the time he reached his destination, he had a good crop of vegetables grown in the soil of his kingdom and freshly plucked. The pumpkin too had grown and now filled the entire pot. He took a big basket of the vegetables and the pumpkin in the pot and appeared before the king.

The king was delighted to see the vegetables but puzzled by the pot. What did it mean? 'I have got intelligence in this pot,' said the young man. 'Now you have to see how you can extract it without breaking the pot.'

The king was pleased. This was a very clever answer to his strange message. But he wanted to test the man with some more questions. So he set before him three wooden dolls, all identical. He said, 'These three are identical, but one is better than the others. Which one would that be?'

The young man asked for a piece of wire. Then he inserted it through the ears of one doll. The wire appeared from the other ear. Next he inserted it through the ears of the second doll. The wire came out of the doll's mouth. But when he inserted the wire from the ear of the third doll, it remained stuck inside. He held up the last doll and said, 'This is the best. In a court, if you told a secret to the first doll it would not understand its importance and take out from one ear what it heard from the other. The second type will hear you, but immediately talk about it to others. The third kind will keep the secret safe in its head.'

The king was even more pleased now. But he wanted to set a final test. 'Here are three rings, with green, red and blue stones respectively. Let us assume they are magical stones. The red ring will give the person wearing it good ideas. The green ring will help the person carry out these ideas in normal circumstances. The blue one will help the person carry out the idea in any circumstance. In a court, who should wear which ring?'

The man thought and said, 'The king should wear the red ring, as he needs to get good ideas. The chief minister should wear the green one, as he needs to carry out these ideas in times of peace. The commander of the army should wear the blue ring, as he needs to carry out the ideas in difficult times.'

The king now knew he had before him a brilliant young man. He was made the chief minister and served the king for many years.

## 4. A Cure for Laziness

Basheer had promised himself that he would marry a girl who was as intelligent and hardworking as he was. Once, he went to a country far from his own to do some trade. He stayed in a little inn there. The innkeeper had a daughter called Ayesha. The minute Basheer saw her, he was struck by her beauty, and most of all, her big, bright eyes.

Basheer had to stay in that village for a while and he got to know the villagers quite well. Among them was an old man, perhaps the oldest man in the village. In the evenings, the villagers would gather around him and he would ask them witty questions, to which the youngsters had to give quick answers. One day, as Basheer was walking around in the evening, he heard the old man say, 'I have one sheep. How can I use it to earn some money without killing or selling it?'

There was silence. Then Ayesha spoke up. 'I know, Great Uncle. If I had a sheep, I would look after it very well. When it became fat and healthy, I would sell its wool, milk and dung and make a lot of money. Perhaps I would buy two more sheep and soon have a flock!'

That was a clever answer, thought Basheer, and he stopped to hear a few more questions and answers. Next, the old man asked, 'How would you capture fire in paper and hold the air in your hand?'

Again it was Ayesha who answered, 'I would use a paper lamp and a hand fan.'

The old man had one more question: 'My sister's husband's brother-in-law's wife's friend's son is married to your cousin. What is my sister to me?'

Ayesha said promptly, 'Your sister will remain a sister to you.'

By now Basheer had heard enough. Here was a really intelligent woman—his ideal bride. He met Ayesha's father, who agreed happily to have his daughter marry this sober young man. Soon the two got married and set off for Basheer's village.

When Ayesha reached the village and saw her new house, she realized Basheer was a very rich man. There were servants here to wait on her every wish, cooks to rustle up the most wonderful meals and gardeners to look after Basheer's vast gardens and orchards. There was no need for her to lift a finger! Ayesha decided she liked this new way of living and slowly she lost her earlier hard-working nature. There were enough people who wanted to be friends with her now that she was rich, and soon she gathered a group of good-for-nothing lazy friends around herself. They did nothing but eat and gossip the whole day.



A few years passed, and no one from Ayesha's own village would have been able to recognize her, so fat and lazy was she now. Then one day she fell sick. Doctors came, they examined her, asked all kinds of questions, scratched their heads, and prescribed medicines. But Ayesha still didn't get well.

Finally, word reached her father's village. And the person who was saddest to hear about Ayesha was the very old man who used to throw those riddles at her. He decided he would do something to bring back the clever, sweet Ayesha of old. He reached her house and announced he would stay there for a while. In return, he promised to cure her of her illness. Ayesha and Basheer agreed and the old man started staying with them.

The next day the treatment began. The man said, 'You will get well only if you eat the special food I cook for you. No one must come to the house and it should stay sparkling clean at all hours.' Ayesha agreed. So the man cooked a small meal for her and left it in a box a few yards away from the main house. Ayesha would have to walk up to it. It was a simple meal, but tasty. And Ayesha had to work so hard to keep the house clean without the help of servants that she was always hungry; whatever she ate tasted wonderful.

Many months passed like this. Ayesha got used to the work and the new food habits. She started learning how to help with her husband's business and in the fields. With no one to gossip with, she had to think through everything on her own, and slowly her old intelligence shone forth. Every day she went to bed tired out and slept soundly. The next morning she woke up at the crack of dawn, refreshed, and started her day's work. She realized she was happier now than she had ever been.

She went to the old man and said, 'I am cured at last, Great Uncle. What was the secret of your therapy? I will tell my friends about it too.'

The old man laughed and said, 'I did not do anything. Once upon a time, when you were poor, you were healthy and active. You used to do all the work yourself. Then you became rich and lazy. You had so many maids to do all the work for you. I only gave you healthy food and made you work like before. Your illness disappeared. Rich or poor, it is good to do our own work and be fit. You were always a bright girl, and now you use your energy for better things.'

Basheer was listening to all this silently. Now he smiled. He knew the Ayesha he had loved and married was back for good.

## 4. Grammar page

### The Future Tense

Use the **future tense** for things that have not happened yet, but are going to happen.

Use the verbs **shall** and **will** as **helping verbs** or **auxiliary verbs** to form the future tense.



They **will finish** the job next week.



I **shall be** eight years old next year.



The weatherman says it **will rain** this afternoon.

We **shall play** a game of chess after lunch.

You **will be** sick if you eat too much.

I hope it **won't rain** tomorrow.

Sharon is ill. She **will not be** at the party.

You **will enjoy** visiting New Zealand.

Dad **will be** back for dinner.

He **will make** lots of friends at his new school.