



**Learn English Through Stories**

**G Series**

**G49**

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# 1. A Shadow

By R K Narayan

Sambu demanded, 'You must give me four annas to see the film tomorrow.' His mother was horrified. How could this boy! She had been dreading for six months past the arrival of the film. How could people bear to see him on the screen when they knew he was no more? She had had a vague hope that the producers might not release the picture out of consideration for her feelings. And when a procession appeared in the street with tom-tom and band, and with young boys carrying placards and huge coloured portraits of her husband, she resolved to go out of town for a while; but it was a desperate and unpractical resolve. Now the picture had arrived. Her husband was going to speak, move and sing, for at least six hours a day in that theatre three streets off.

Sambu was as delighted as if his father had come back to life. 'Mother, won't you also come and see the picture?'

'No.'

'Please, please. You must come.'

She had to explain to him how utterly impossible it would be for her to see the picture. The boy had a sort of ruthless logic: 'Why should it be impossible? Aren't you seeing his photos, even that big photo on the wall, every day?'

'But these photos do not talk, move or sing.'

'And yet you prefer them to the picture which has life!'

The whole of the next day Sambu was in great excitement. In his classroom whenever his master took his eyes off him for a moment he leant over and whispered to his neighbour, 'My father was paid ten thousand rupees to act in that film. I am seeing it this evening. Aren't you also coming?'

'To see *Kumari*!' sneered his friend. He hated Tamil pictures. 'I won't even pass that way.'

'This is not like other Tamil films. My father used to read the story to us every night. It is a very interesting story. He wrote the whole story himself. He was paid ten thousand rupees for writing and acting. I will take you to the picture if you are also coming.'

'I won't see a Tamil picture.'

'This is not an ordinary Tamil picture. It is as good as an English picture.'

But Sambu's friend was adamant. Sambu had to go alone and see the picture.

It was an attempt at a new style in Tamil films—a modern story with a minimum of music. It was the story of Kumari, a young girl who refused to marry at fourteen but wanted to study in a university and earn an independent living, and was cast away by her stern father (Sambu's father) and forgiven in the end.

Sambu, sitting in the four-anna class, was eagerly waiting for the picture to begin. It was six months since he had seen his father, and he missed him badly at home.

The hall darkened. Sambu sat through the trailers and slide advertisements without enthusiasm. Finally, his father came on the screen. He was wearing just the dhoti and shirt he used to wear at home; he was sitting at his table just as he used to sit at home. And then a little girl came up, and he patted her on the head and spoke to her exactly as he used to speak to Sambu. And then Father taught the girl arithmetic. She had a slate on her knee and he dictated to her: 'A cartman wants two annas per mile. Rama has three annas on hand. How far will the cartman carry him?' The girl chewed her slate pencil and blinked. Father was showing signs of impatience. 'Go on, Kumari,' Sambu muttered. 'Say something, otherwise you will receive a slap presently. I know him better than you do.' Kumari, however, was a better arithmetician than Sambu. She gave the right answer. Father was delighted. How he would jump about in sheer delight whenever Sambu solved a sum correctly! Sambu was reminded of a particular occasion when by sheer fluke he blundered through a puzzle about a cistern with a leak and a tap above it. How father jumped out of his chair when he heard Sambu declare that it would take three hours for the cistern to fill again.

When the film ended and the lights were switched on, Sambu turned about and gazed at the aperture in the projection room as if his father had vanished into it. The world now seemed to be a poorer place without Father. He ran home. His mother was waiting for him at the door. 'It is nine o'clock. You are very late.'

'I would have loved it if the picture had lasted even longer. You are perverse, Mother. Why won't you see it?'

Throughout the dinner he kept talking. 'Exactly as Father used to sing, exactly as he used to walk, exactly . . .' His mother listened to him in grim silence.

'Why don't you say something, Mother?'

'I have nothing to say.'

'Don't you like the picture?'

She didn't answer the question. She asked, 'Would you like to go and see the picture again tomorrow?'

'Yes, Mother. If possible every day as long as the picture is shown. Will you give me four annas every day?'

'Yes.'

'Will you let me see both the shows every day?'

'Oh, no. You can't do that. What is to happen to your lessons?'

'Won't you come and see the picture, Mother?'

'No, impossible.'

For a week more, three hours in the day, Sambu lived in his father's company, and felt depressed at the end of every show. Every day it was a parting for him. He longed to see the night show too, but Mother bothered too much about school lessons. Time was precious, but Mother did not seem to understand it; lessons could wait, but not Father. He envied those who were seeing the picture at night.

Unable to withstand his persuasions any more, his mother agreed to see the picture on the last day. They went to the night show. She sat in the women's class. She had to muster all her courage to sit down for the picture. She had a feeling of great relief as long as the slide advertisements and trailer pieces lasted. When the picture began, her heart beat fast. Her husband talking to his wife on the screen, playing with his child, singing, walking, dressing; same clothes, same voice, same anger, same joy—she felt that the whole thing was a piece of cruelty inflicted on her. She shut her eyes several times, but the picture fascinated her: it had the fascination of a thing which is painful. And then came a scene in which he reclined in a chair reading a newspaper. How he would sit absorbed in a newspaper! In their years of married life, how often had she quarrelled with him for it! Even on the last day he had sat thus after dinner, in his canvas chair, with the newspaper before him; she had lost her temper at the sight of it and said, 'You and your newspaper! I could as well go and sleep off the rest of the day,' and left his company. When she saw him later he had fallen back in his chair with the sheets of newspaper over his face . . .

This was an unbearable scene. A sob burst from her.

Sambu, sitting in his seat on the men's side, liked to see his father in the newspaper scene because the girl would presently come and ask him what he was reading, annoy him with questions and get what she deserved: Father would shout, 'Kumari! Will you go out or shall I throw you out?'

That girl didn't know how to behave with Father, and Sambu disliked her intensely . . .

While awaiting eagerly the snubbing of the girl, Sambu heard a burst of sobbing in the women's class; presently there was a scramble of feet and a cry: 'Put the lights on! Accident to someone!' The show was stopped. People went hither and thither. Sambu, cursing this interruption, stood up on a bench to see what the matter was. He saw his mother being lifted from the floor. 'That is my mother! Is she also dead?' screamed Sambu, and jumped over the barrier. He wailed and cried. Someone told him, 'She has only fainted. Nothing has happened to her. Don't make a fuss.' They carried her out and laid her in the passage. The lights were put out again, people returned to their seats and the show continued. Mother opened her eyes, sat up and said, 'Let us go away.'

'Yes, Mother.' He fetched a *jutka* and helped her into it. As he was climbing into it himself, from the darkened hall a familiar voice said, 'Kumari! Will you go out or shall I throw you out?' Sambu's heart became heavy and he burst into tears: he was affected both by his mother's breakdown and by the feeling that this was the final parting from his father. They were changing the picture next day.

## 2. Free University Education

Over recent years, more and more people have been attending university and arguments have persisted as to whether students should pay for this privilege or not. Although there are convincing arguments on both sides, I strongly believe that it should be free.

One argument put forward in favour of charging students is that education is becoming more expensive to fund as universities grow in size. Consequently, making students pay may maintain standards and ensure the quality of the teaching. In addition, it is argued that most students benefit from university in terms of higher paid jobs, so it is fair that they pay for at least some of the cost, especially given that the majority of students attending university are from the middle classes. Last but not least, in many countries, there is a shortage of people to do manual jobs such as plumbing and carpentry, so making university more expensive may encourage people to take up these jobs.

However, there are a number of arguments in favour of making university education free for all. Firstly, it will encourage more people to attend and this will benefit society. This is because it will lead to a more productive and educated workforce. Research has generally shown that those countries that have a better educated population via university have higher levels of innovation and productivity. In addition, there is the issue of equality of opportunity. If all students are required to pay, those on a low income may be dissuaded from attending, thus making it unfair. The reason for this is that they will likely not be able to secure financial support from their family so they will be concerned about the debts they will incur in the future.

In conclusion, I am of opinion that all education should remain equally available to all regardless of income. This is not only fair, but will also ensure that countries can prosper and develop into the future with a well-educated workforce.

### 3. Grammar Page

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## Questions 1

**A** In questions the subject is usually after the first verb:  
*subject + verb*                      *verb + subject*

Tom	will	→	will	Tom?
you	have	→	have	you?
the house	was	→	was	the house?

- ☐ Will **Tom** be here tomorrow?
- ☐ Have **you** been working hard?
- ☐ When **was the house** built?

The subject is after the *first* verb:

- ☐ **Is Katherine** working today? (*not Is working Katherine*)

**B** In *present simple* questions, we use **do/does**:

you live → do you live?  
the film starts → does the film start?

- ☐ Do you **live** near here?
- ☐ What time **does** the film **start**?

In *past simple* questions, we use **did**:

you sold → **did** you **sell**?  
the train stopped → **did** the train **stop**?

- ☐ Did you **sell** your car?
- ☐ Why **did** the train **stop**?

But do not use **do/does/did** if **who/what** etc. is the subject of the sentence. Compare:

who object

Emma phoned somebody.

object

Who did Emma phone?

who subject

Somebody phoned Emma.

subject

Who phoned Emma?

In these examples, **who/what** etc. is the *subject*:

- ☐ **Who** wants something to eat? (*not Who does want*)
- ☐ **What** happened to you last night? (*not What did happen*)
- ☐ **How many people** came to the party? (*not did come*)
- ☐ **Which bus** goes to the centre? (*not does go*)

**C** In questions beginning **who/what/which/where**, prepositions (**in, for** etc.) usually go at the end:

- ☐ **Where** are you **from**? ☐ **What** was the weather **like**?
- ☐ **Who** do you want to speak **to**? ☐ **Which** job has Tina applied **for**?

You can use *preposition* + **whom** in formal style:

- ☐ **To whom** do you wish to speak?

**isn't it ...? / didn't you ...?** etc. (negative questions)

We use negative questions especially to show surprise:

- ☐ **Didn't you** hear the doorbell? I rang it three times.

or when we expect the listener to agree with us:

- 'Haven't we met before?' 'Yes, I think we have.'

Note the meaning of **yes** and **no** in answers to negative questions:

- ☐ **'Don't you want to go?'** { **'Yes.'** (= Yes, I want to go)  
**'No.'** (= No, I don't want to go)

We often use negative questions with **Why ...?** :

- ☐ Why **don't we** eat out tonight? (*not* Why we don't eat)
- ☐ Why **wasn't Emma** at work yesterday? (*not* Why Emma wasn't)