

## A Pact with the Sun

SAEEDA'S mother had been **ailing** for a long time — fever, cough, body-ache, painful joints and what not. Treated by a variety of physicians for weeks, she **often** showed signs of improvement but soon **relapsed** into her old, sick self, one complaint **substituted** by another. Though weak and **colourless**, she was **forbidden** normal food and was under strict orders to remain **perpetually confined** to her small, **dingy** room with doors and windows **fastened**, **deprived** of sunshine and fresh air.



When she became critical, her relatives and neighbours **persuaded** her to consult a specialist even though his fee was likely to be high. Life is more precious than money, they said. Saeeda's mother was poor but she **heeded** their advice and sold a few **trinkets** to pay the doctor's fee and the cost of medicine. The doctor came in a few days and examined her and prescribed effective but costly medicine. To the question as to what she should eat he said, "Anything you wish to eat — chapati, vegetables, milk, fruits, etc. In addition to all this," he added **emphatically**, "leave this dark **hovel** and occupy a bigger room with doors and windows open. Sit in the sun every morning from eight to nine. Sunshine and fresh air," he **concluded**, "are more important than medicine."

The doctor and his advice became a subject of noisy commentary among all present. Some favoured while others opposed it. **Exposure** to sun and air for someone **afflicted** with **chronic** cough was dangerous, an experienced lady declared. A younger neighbour nearly **quarrelled** with her over this. Too **exhausted** to participate in the debate, Saeeda's mother remained quiet but **determined** to follow the doctor's advice. "Forget the consequences," she said at last. "I'll **carry out** his instructions to the letter. Move my bed into the next room and let me sit in the sun on my charpoy for an hour daily."



It so happened that the sky remained **overcast** the next morning. The same was the case the following day. Saeeda's mother was **dejected**.

She **muttered**, "O Lord of mine, why have you ordered the sun to remain hidden? How will I ever be cured?"

Saeeda was playing with her doll nearby and she heard her mother's **lament** but kept calm. Later in the afternoon, when she **stumbled** on a spot of **pale** sunshine in the **courtyard**, she ran

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to her mother to say the sun was there. “No, no”, said everybody present. “It’s too late and **chilly**. Your mother can’t sit out there.” **Disheartened**, Saeeda returned to her doll. There was no sun really except for its last **remnant entangled** in the top branches of the family mango tree.

Now, children have **at their command** a secret language, **foreign to grown-ups altogether**, in which they fluently communicate with trees, flowers, animals, the sun and the moon, **perhaps** even with the **Almighty**. Using that special language, Saeeda **addressed** her **remark** to the last **departing** ray of the sun. “Dearest sister, do come tomorrow with lots of **warmth** and **brightness**. You see, my mother is ill and needs your help.”

“Surely,” answered the light, “don’t look unhappy. We’ll be here at the fixed hour.”

Next day, early in the morning, when the **sprightly** sunrays **embellished** themselves for their journey down to earth, the sun said, “It’s our **day off** again. We’re staying up here. The road to earth is blocked by an army of thick, **mucky** clouds.” The little rays so much wanted to go down for a **lark** but they remained quiet. One of them, though, who had made a pact



with little Saeeda said, “Sir, I can’t stay back. I’ve given my word to Saeeda whose mother is ill and needs our help. I’ll **pierce through** the clouds to reach Saeeda’s courtyard. How else will her mother be cured?” Hearing this, all the rays nearly **staged** a revolt against their father, the sun. “Fancy staying back again,” they said in a single voice. “What will the people of the earth say about us? That we of the **heavens** have turned liars?”

The sun **relented**. “Please yourselves,” he said. “Mind your clothes, though. The clouds are mucky.”

“Never mind our clothes. We can always change. But go we must.” And the rays rushed towards the earth. The clouds **stood guard** between them and Saeeda’s courtyard. The little rays focussed their heat — and they had enough of it — on a **battalion** of clouds, which had to **flee** from its **post**. The rays got through, shooting past the **bewildered** clouds. They were already late.

Saeeda saw the whole **host** of them **approaching** and her heart **leapt** with joy. She shouted, “Amma, Amma! The sun is here. Come out.” The old lady’s eyes **welled up** with tears of **gratitude**. Her charpoy was placed in the courtyard and she sat on it for an hour **reclining** against **bolsters**. It had been months since she had felt the sun on her hands and face and breathed in fresh air. She thought she was in a new world. Though pale, her face glowed and her eyes shone bright. She saw her child too bathed in sunlight and kissed her. The morning air

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brought in a new fragrance from nearby flowers. The birds **chanted** a new tune. Saeeda's mother felt better already.

She is fully recovered now, but she still follows the doctor's advice — an hour of sunlight and **lungful** of fresh air every day.

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### Vocabulary

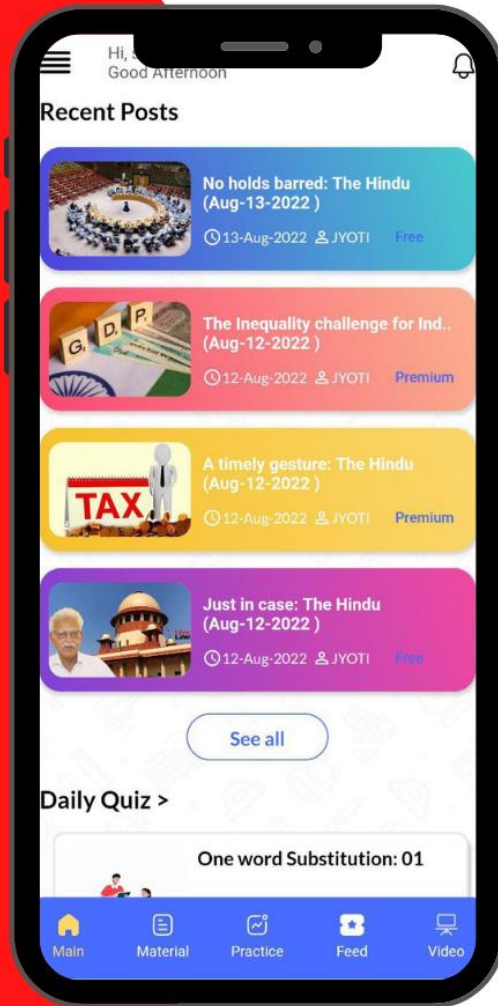
1. **Pact** (noun) – deal, contract, agreement, compact, treaty समझौता
2. **Ailing** (adjective) – unwell, sickly, sick, indisposed, poorly बीमार
3. **Often** (adverb) – frequently, much, many times, repeatedly, usually अक्सर
4. **Relapse** (verb) – to become worse again after an improvement आरोग्य होकर फिर रोगी होना
5. **Substitute** (verb) – Put in the place of another किसी के स्थान पर रखना
6. **Colourless** (adjective) – pale, dull, pallid, lifeless, dreary बेरंग, फीका
7. **Forbid** (verb) – prohibit, disallow, prevent, proscribe, outlaw रोकना, मना करना
8. **Perpetually** (adverb) – forever, incessantly, continually, eternally, permanently निरंतर रूप से
9. **Confine** (verb) – Detain, Sequester, Quarantine, Keep, Restrict सीमित रखना
10. **Dingy** (adjective) – dark, drab, gloomy, dreary, dismal धूंधला, काला
11. **Fastened** (adjective) – Firmly closed or secured बंद किया हुआ
12. **Deprive** (of) (verb) – divest, strip, dispossess, deny, impoverish वंचित होना
13. **Persuade** (verb) – convince, influence, induce, coax, sway मनाना
14. **Heed** (verb) – Pay close attention to; give heed to ध्यान देना
15. **Trinket** (noun) – Cheap showy jewelry or ornament on clothing हलका गहना
16. **Emphatically** (adverb) – Forcefully बलपूर्वक, दृढ़ता से
17. **Hovel** (noun) – A poor cottage; a small, mean house; a hut. झोंपड़ी
18. **Conclude** (verb) – finish, complete, close, infer, terminate समापन करना
19. **Exposure** (noun) – Contact, Spotlight अनावरण
20. **Afflict** (with) (verb) – trouble, distress, torment, plague, rack से पीड़ित होना
21. **Chronic** (adjective) – persistent, inveterate, habitual, continuing, constant चिरकालिक
22. **Quarrel** (verb) – dispute, fight, argument, squabble, wrangle झगड़ा करना
23. **Exhausted** (adjective) – tired, worn out, spent, weary, fatigued थका हुआ

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24. **Determined** (adjective) – resolute, firm, stubborn, fixed, unyielding दृढ
25. **Carry out** (phrasal verb) – perform, execute, implement, conduct, accomplish पूरा करना
26. **Overcast** (adjective) – cloudy, sunless, dark, clouded, murky बदल से घिरा हुआ
27. **Dejected** (adjective) – depressed, despondent, unhappy, downcast, miserable उदास
28. **Mutter** (verb) – Talk indistinctly; usually in a low voice बड़बड़ाना
29. **Lament** (noun) – A cry of sorrow and grief विलाप
30. **Stumble** (on) (verb) – Walk unsteadily लडखडाकर चलना
31. **Pale** (adjective) – Very light colored फीका, कमज़ोर
32. **Courtyard** (noun) – An area wholly or partly surrounded by walls or buildings आंगन
33. **Chilly** (adjective) – cold, cool, freezing, chill, frigid ठंडा
34. **Disheartened** (adjective) – discouraged, despondent, dejected, depressed, downhearted निराश
35. **Remnant** (noun) – A small part or portion that remains after the main part no longer exists अवशेष
36. **Entangle** (verb) – tangle, snarl, enmesh, embroil, involve उलझाना
37. **At one's command** (phrase) – able to use particular skill well.
38. **Foreign** (to)(adjective) – Strange, Unfamiliar, Unknown, Alien अपरिचित
39. **Grown-up** (noun) – adult, mature वयस्क
40. **Altogether** (adverb) – entirely, totally, completely, fully, wholly कुल मिलाकर
41. **Perhaps** (adverb) – possibly, maybe, probably, perchance शायद
42. **Almighty** (noun) – creator, omnipotent, lord, all-powerful, divine सर्वशक्तिमान
43. **Address** (verb) – Speak, Talk, संबोधित करना
44. **Remark** (noun) – Comment, Statement टिप्पणी
45. **Departing** (adjective) – leaving, outgoing प्रस्थान, निर्गामी
46. **Warmth** (noun) – heat गर्मी
47. **Brightness** (noun) – light, luminosity, shine; kindness, tenderness, friendliness चमक

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48. **Sprightly** (adjective) – Full of spirit and vitality चुस्त-दुरुस्त
49. **Embellish** (verb) – decorate, adorn, ornament, beautify, embroider सजाना
50. **Day off** (phrase) – A day when you are not required to work दिन की छुट्टी
51. **Mucky** (adjective) – muddy, filthy, dirty, grimy, grubby गंदा, मैला
52. **Lark** (noun) – an activity done for enjoyment or amusement:
53. **Pierce through** (phrase) – Cut or make a way through प्रवेश करना
54. **Stage** (verb) – Act, Perform, Present, Show प्रदर्शन करना
55. **Heaven** (noun) – Any place of complete bliss and delight and peace स्वर्ग
56. **Relent** (verb) – Concede, Yield, Surrender नरम पड़ना
57. **Stand guard** (phrase) – watch person or place, or prevent escape.
58. **Battalion** (noun) – regiment, corps, squadron, company, brigade पलटन
59. **Flee** (verb) – escape, run away, get away, bolt, leave भाग जाना
60. **Post** (noun) – position, place, station, office, mail
61. **Bewildered** (adjective) – confused, baffled, perplexed, bemused, puzzled व्यग्र, बेसुध
62. **Host** (noun) – Crowd, Swarm, Congregation, Mass भीड़
63. **Approach** (verb) – Come up to, Come near Come close to पहुँचना
64. **Leap** (verb) – jump, skip, spring, bound, bounce उछलना
65. **Well up** (phrasal verb) – Come up (as of feelings and thoughts, or other ephemeral things) से भर जाना
66. **Gratitude** (noun) – appreciation, thanks, thankfulness, gratefulness, recognition कृतज्ञता
67. **Recline** (verb) – To assume or to be in, a recumbent position; as, to recline on a couch. झुकना
68. **Bolster** (noun) – a long thick pillow that is put under other pillows तकिया
69. **Chant** (verb) – recite as a chant or a psalm गाना
70. **Lungful** (noun) – breath, sniff, smell साँस



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