

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know Your English - December 21

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“Your colony used to be so clean. Now there’s garbage everywhere. What’s happening?”

“My neighbour’s domestic engineer informed me that our sanitation engineers are on strike. Apparently, they’re...”

“Domestic engineer... sanitation engineer. What are you talking about?”

“They are examples of political correctness. A ‘homemaker’ or a housewife is sometimes referred to as ‘domestic engineer’. It sounds a lot more impressive than ‘housewife’, doesn’t it?”

“It certainly does. What about a sanitation engineer? What does he...”

“He’s the person who collects your garbage, sweeps the streets and...”

“Interesting. So, tell me, are we celebrating tonight? Did your boss give you a raise?”

“Sorry to disappoint you, but I didn’t even ask him for one. I’d planned to, but when I saw him this morning, he looked tired and preoccupied... I thought better of it.”

“You thought better of it? Thought better of what?”

“When you plan to do something and at the last minute think better of it, you don’t carry out your plan. You decide that it’s not a very good idea after all.”

“In other words, you decide to drop the plan. You change your mind about it.”

“That’s right! I was planning to buy Sharma’s old house, but I thought better of it.”

“That house is in terrible condition. How about this example? I was planning to go for a walk. When I saw the grey clouds, I thought better of it.”

“Good example! I was planning to lend Kumar the twenty lakh rupees he’d asked for. But as I was writing the cheque I thought better of it.”

“But tell me, why didn’t you ask your boss for a raise? What stopped you?”

“When I saw him this morning, he looked very worried. Apparently, his daughter has been in hospital for a week, and the doctors have no clue what the problem is. He hasn’t told anyone, and I promised him I wouldn’t let on about his daughter’s condition to...”

“Let on? Does it mean not telling others about her problem?”

“That’s right! The expression ‘let on’ is frequently used in everyday conversation to mean to reveal something about someone.”

“In other words, you pass on information which is meant to be a secret.”

“You could say that. Rajesh never let on that his father was a well-known film producer.”

“How about this example? My friend never let on that he was having money problems.”

“Sounds good. The police think that the minister knows more than he’s letting on.”

“Forget the minister. When do you plan to ask your boss for a raise?”

“I don’t really know. The nub of the problem is...”

“The nub of the problem? Does it mean the main problem or something like that?”

“The word ‘nub’ has several different meanings. It is frequently used to refer to the most important or essential part of something. The nub of the problem is overpopulation.”

“If you’re talking about India, I agree. In the movie, the father and son don’t get along. The nub of the problem is money.”

“Politician: one who is willing to do anything on earth for the workers except to become one.” – Leonard Levinson

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