

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English

S. UPENDRAN

MAY 06, 2013 21:26 IST

UPDATED: MAY 06, 2013 21:26 IST

What is the difference between ‘womanish’ and ‘effeminate’?*(K Ashwini, Tirupathi)*

Both words are often used with men to show disapproval. The word ‘effeminate’ is used exclusively with men. When you label a man ‘effeminate’, you are suggesting that the individual is not at all manly; everything about him – his behaviour, taste, habits, looks, etc., – is very feminine. Unlike the word ‘effeminate’, ‘womanish’ can be used with both men and women. When used with a woman, it means the individual has all the characteristics of her sex; she looks and behaves in a manner that befits a woman. In this case, it is used as a compliment. When used with a man, the word suggests that the individual is rather feminine. It shows contempt.

** The students took great delight in imitating Ram’s effeminate walk.*

** Jeetender had the womanish habit of breaking down when things went wrong.*

What is the meaning of ‘sub rosa’?*(T Narasimha Rao, Hyderabad)*

This Latin expression literally means ‘under the rose’, and today it is used in everyday contexts to mean ‘in secret’ or ‘privately’.

** As expected, the Chairperson held the crucial meeting sub rosa.*

According to ancient Greek mythology, the Goddess of Love, Aphrodite, gave her son, Eros, a beautiful rose. Eros, better known as the God of Love, presented the same flower to the God of Silence (Harpocrates).

This was Eros’ way of ensuring that the God of Silence would hush up Aphrodite’s indiscretions – her numerous affairs with other gods.

With the passage of time, the rose became an emblem of silence and a token of secrecy. During the Middle Ages, at important council meetings, a single rose was usually hung from the ceiling. This was a signal to all those sitting/standing under the flower (sub rosa) that they were sworn to secrecy. They were to remain silent about everything they saw and heard.

What is the meaning of 'to pay lip service to someone'?

(A Ravishankar, Ponneri)

Whenever we complain about how corrupt the system has become, our politicians – the corrupt and the not so corrupt ones – join the chorus and publicly pledge their support to weed out corruption.

But this expression of solidarity is insincere for they don't really intend to do anything to create a new system. When you 'pay lip service' to something, you pledge support to a cause that you may not even believe in. You merely talk; you don't follow it up with any action.

** So far the government has only paid lip service to the idea of compensation.*

What is the opposite of 'sin'?

(AK Sarma, Bilaspur)

Most Indian languages have an opposite – punyam, punya, etc. **English**, however, does not have an exact opposite for 'sin'. Many people make do with words like 'virtue', 'grace', etc as opposites.

Dash of humour

"Please place your donation in an envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered." – **Church Bulletin**

upendrankye@gmail.com

Printable version | Apr 20, 2018 5:35:54 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/books/know-your-english/know-your-english/article4689736.ece>

© The Hindu