1. [stern](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/stern)

of a strict bearing or demeanor; forbidding in aspect

*Crinkly lines softened her****stern****face. “I don’t like giving up,” she said.*

1. [snub](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/snub)

unusually short

*You always felt like a younger sister, Rukku. You looked younger, too, with your wide eyes and****snub****nose.*

1. [halting](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/halting)

proceeding in a fragmentary, hesitant, or ineffective way

*You spoke****haltingly****, and you hunched your shoulders, which made you seem smaller than me, though you were born a year before.*

1. [elope](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/elope)

run away secretly with one's beloved

*They were ashamed, she told me, ashamed and angry with her for****eloping****with someone from an even lower caste than the one she’d been born into.*

1. [caste](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/caste)

a hereditary social class among Hindus

*They were ashamed, she told me, ashamed and angry with her for eloping with someone from an even lower****caste****than the one she’d been born into.*

1. [waft](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/waft)

be driven or carried along, as by the air

*I inhaled the sweet scent of milk rice that****wafted****through our apartment.*

1. [bangle](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/bangle)

jewelry worn around the wrist for decoration

*He ripped open one of the packages and dangled a pair of****bangles****in front of you. But before your fingers could close over them, he jerked them away.*

1. [taut](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/taut)

pulled or drawn tight

*“How bad both our girls are at catching!” Amma’s voice was high-pitched and tense as a****taut****string.*

1. [serene](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/serene)

not agitated

*She gazed at the pictures of the Gods and Goddesses smiling down****serenely****from our kitchen wall. As if they’d suddenly leap into life and start helping.*

1. [placidly](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/placidly)

in a quiet and tranquil manner

*In front of the bus stop sign, a woman was already waiting, chewing tobacco as****placidly****as a cow chewing its cud.*

1. [rove](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/rove)

move about aimlessly or without any destination

*“Aamaam,” she confirmed. Her eyes****roved****across my face, which was smarting with pain, and then settled on your cut lip, but she didn’t comment.*

1. [shrill](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/shrill)

having or emitting a high-pitched and sharp tone or tones

*I’d never have caught up to that bus if it hadn’t been for the conductor’s****shrill****whistle, calling the driver to a stop.*

1. [fare](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/fare)

the sum charged for riding in a public conveyance

*My hand was shaking as I opened the drawstring purse at my waist, partly because I was nervous, partly from shock at how high the****fare****was.*

1. [rummage](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/rummage)

search haphazardly

*“Marapachi?” You****rummaged****in your bag, pulled out your wooden doll, and talked to her for a while. Then you stuck her back in your bag and slumped against my shoulder.*

1. [vise](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/vise)

a holding device attached to a workbench

*“Come with me." His hand came down on my arm and formed a****vise****.*

1. [pedestrian](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/pedestrian)

a person who travels by foot

*I’d never seen such an endless flood of vehicles and****pedestrians****.*