

I PASS THE DELHI TEST

S. M. Gavaskar

SUNIL MANOHAR GAVASKAR (b.10 July 1949), the legendary Indian opening batsman, is also a renowned TV commentator and prolific writer. In addition to numerous write-ups in leading journals, he has authored three best-selling books *Sunny Days* (1976), *Idols* (1983) and *Runs 'n Ruins* (1981). Born and brought up in Bombay where he attended St. Xavier's High School and College, the 'Little Master', is the first batsman in Test Cricket to have surpassed Don Bradman's world record of 29 test centuries. By the time he retired from the Test Cricket, he had made 34 test centuries in 125 test matches, setting a new world record. Though this record has been broken by another legendary Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar, but the fact remains that most of Gavaskar's hundreds were scored as an opener, facing all the fury of the new ball, a feat not achieved by anyone in Test Cricket till date.



In the present extract taken from *Runs 'n Ruins*, Gavaskar recounts his experiences when he was going through a lean patch of his career and how people and he himself had lost faith in his ability. The extract is a wonderful example of how failure can be the pillars of success provided one has the determination to do so.

A. Work in small groups and discuss the following questions:

1. Do you play cricket? How much do you like it?
2. Where and how did the game of cricket originate?
3. How many countries play Test Cricket? Can you make a list of these countries?
4. What is the difference between a Test Match and a limited over one-day match?
5. Which form of cricket do you like more? Give reasons.

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1. We had another two days to practise in Delhi before the Second Test began. On the eve of the test, my second book, *Idols*, was released by Kapil Dev, the Indian skipper, with Clive Lloyd as chief guest. Michael Holding and Jeff Dujon honoured the functions by their presence. There were plenty of Pressmen around and the atmosphere was very cordial.
2. Within hours the battle was to be resumed, so we went back to the hotel to rest. There was little of rest however, since my wife's friend from college days, Bijoya, dropped in to see her. As they were meeting each other after seven or eight years, they had a lot of news and gossip to exchange and then during the evening Bijoya's sisters and brother dropped in with their spouses, with the result that there was almost an **impromptu** party in our little room. This was the first time I missed the privilege of being the captain because a skipper gets a suite and so is able to look after his-guests better. Most hotels where we stayed and the local Cricket Associations were kind enough to give me a room to myself, though in a home series only the skipper is entitled to one and if a vice-captain is named, then he also gets a single room.
3. Bijoya and her sisters left around midnight, with Bijoya warning me that I had better do well the next day as that was going to be her first day at a Test Match. Earlier in the evening, as we had returned from the *Idols* release function, I was accosted by some young girls who had asked me to score the fastest century of my career the next day. I remember laughing at that because I would have been happy to score even half that much in the game, so low was my confidence at that stage.
4. It was certainly not helped by the derisive comments passed earlier in the day by part of the crowd which had come to watch us practise. I even picked up a person from the crowd who had said something nasty and had an exchange of words with him. I left the nets early and sat in the dressing room, having informed Kapil that rather than pick up a fight with the crowd, it would be better for me to be inside. Apparently Kapil did not like the fact that I had left the nets, though at that moment he did not say anything. My intention was quite simply to try and keep cool and be relaxed than get upset by the taunts of the crowd. Crowds all over India are basically the same and are particularly adept at kicking a man when he is down.

5. Next morning I woke up earlier than usual and saw that a few messages had been **shoved** under the door along with the newspapers. A couple of messages meant a lot and so when I went to the ground, I was feeling relaxed and completely at ease. After our customary warm-up exercises, a ritual that is absolutely necessary in today's age of almost non-stop international cricket, we went back to our dressing room. The Manager was Dilip Sardesai, a jovial person, and he was joking with us when Kapil walked in with a huge **grin** saying that he had won the **toss** at last and that we would be batting. With those words the familiar tightening of the stomach muscles took place and the feeling that another Test Match was to begin came on. **Irrespective** of how many years or how many tests one has played, the nervous tension never seems to vanish. Actually, it is a good thing, because it shows that one cares about one's performance and the tension makes one that much keener.

B.1. Answer the following questions briefly :

1. Which book of Gavaskar was released on the eve of the test? Who released the book?
2. Who was the chief guest? Who were the other important guests?
3. Gavaskar could not take good rest, as he had intended. Why?
4. 'Within hours the battle was to be resumed, so we went back to the hotel to rest.' What does the 'battle' refer to?
5. Why did Gavaskar leave the nets early during practice? What was Kapil's reaction?
6. What did the young girls ask Gavaskar? Why did he laugh at their request? What does it suggest about the level of his confidence?
7. How far, do you think, is it proper to make derisive comments when a good player is struggling to regain his form? Does it help the player anyway?
8. 'A couple of messages meant a lot.' What does Gavaskar mean by this?
9. How do you feel when your friends or relatives offer their best wishes when you are getting ready for exams? Does it help you anyway?
10. What are your feelings on the eve of an important examination? Do you feel any sort of anxiety even after a good preparation? If so, why?

6. I had planned how I was going to tackle the bowling. So When Anshuman and I walked out to bat, I was feeling relaxed. The Delhi wicket is normally a beautiful batting track though it helps seam bowling initially, but this morning the bowlers got no help. In any case, the West Indians are not quick in the air to swing the ball. They do make the ball move after pitching, which is even more difficult. Marshall's third ball saw me off the mark with a couple of runs past point. That was another hurdle passed. No batsman likes to score a **duck**. When one scores a run to open one's account, there is great relief that one is not going to be an **utter** failure, which a zero signifies. There was a bouncer in the over and I hooked it, which brought a **frown** on the bowler's face, followed by a cunning smile. I smiled back to say, 'Right. Today you bounce and I am going to hook.'
7. In the next over I got a quicker bouncer which I tapped rather than hooked for a boundary and I knew then that it was going to be my day. Every time Marshall bounced, I hooked. There were two alarms, one physical and the other which almost cut short my tenure. When I was 16, a bouncer came screaming at my face and I missed my shot, but luckily the ball brushed my hat and went through Dujon's gloves. The **umpire** did not signal anything, so runs were added against my name, though I had actually not **nicked** that ball. Perhaps the umpire was misled by the sound of the ball brushing my cap and though that meant that a chance would be registered against my name. I was not complaining, for I got some runs, and every run in tests counts. The second alarm came when I hit the ball off the **middle** but it went at a height where Roger Harper or Joel Garner could have leapt and caught the ball. Fortunately, the fielder was not as tall as these two and so I got six runs instead.
8. I was enjoying myself, because the **ball** was coming through nicely and one could play shots without worrying about movement off the wicket. So there were drives and even the odd square drive in this innings. I had a good bat too, so the ball went off like an obedient thing when told to do so. I had no clue that I had passed 50, because there was seemingly no applause. I found out later that I had got it with a shot for a boundary and so the applause had mingled. I don't look at the scoreboard or the clock when I am batting. It surprises many people, but that's the absolute truth. It is not superstition, but because I feel under less tension and I am more relaxed like this than if I was

aware I was close to a century. When one is near a century and knows it, then there is the possibility of being hasty and impatient and losing one's wicket. After all, I have always believed that a century should be just a **milestone** in one's quest for more runs.

9. Thus when I flicked a ball from Marshall past mid-on and it went off for a boundary, I was surprised when Dilip Vengasarkar stopped in the middle and said, 'Well played', and thrust his hand out. He must have known by the expression on my face that I did not know my score because he said, 'Bloody hell! It's your twenty-ninth.' Jeff Dujon and Viv Richards were there to pump my hand and offer their congratulations, and Clive Lloyd was making his way from the first slip to offer his hand. I just shook my head in wonder because in my mind I thought I was in the 80s and here I was already past a century. It was a benumbing moment. Ever since my return from the West Indies, people were eager for me to score the 29th century and so whether it was a plane, taxi, office, hotel lobby or restaurant, strangers would walk up and offer their good wishes for me to score that hundred. Much as I appreciated their sentiments, the cry 'We want your 29th' was becoming a little **strident** to the ears. It was therefore a great relief to get that century and see the delight on the face of my countrymen. They had waited for it patiently, prayed for it and probably had tensions in their lives while I was struggling for it. There is simply no way I can express my gratitude to the Indian cricket-lovers for the way they have supported, encouraged, and at times **chided** me during my career. I imagine the only thing I can do to repay their loving concern is to try and score as many runs as I can before Test Cricket is finished with me.
10. The rest of the innings is more of a blur because I played as if in a daze and it was no surprise when Larry Gomes knocked my off-stump back as I played forward and missed the ball. My century had come in 94 balls. I was informed,



and I was surprised because I do not think I have ever played so many shots to get a century. Most of my centuries have a liberal sprinkling of ones and twos and take their time coming and this was definitely the quickest in terms of time as well as deliveries faced. Yet it is not my best test century. My best test century was the one scored in the first test at Old Trafford in 1974. There the conditions were against batting and I had not scored a test century for three and a half years. In fact the last one I had scored was during my **debut** series in the West Indies in 1971. So there were doubts in my mind then about my ability to score runs. That knock in Manchester was an important point in my career and gave a new **lease** to my cricketing life.

B.2. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Why was Gavaskar finding it easy to play?
2. Give two instances when luck favoured Gavaskar during the match.
3. What is 'another hurdle' Gavaskar talks about?
4. "I don't look at the scoreboard or the clock when I am batting." What light does it throw on Gavaskar's way of batting?
5. "Bloody-hell! It's your twenty-ninth." Who said this? What does the 'twenty-ninth' refer to? Why did it bring delight to the countrymen?
6. How does applause help a performer? Have you ever experienced it?
7. Which one did Gavaskar consider to be his best test century and why?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

spouse (n): other half, husband or wife

impromptu (adj): unplanned, unpremeditated

shove (v): to push something with force

grin (n): a big smile that shows your teeth

toss (n): an act of throwing coin into the air in order to make a decision based on which side the coin falls on.

irrespective (adv): despite a particular fact, situation or quality

duck (reg): zero

utter (adj): complete, often used for emphasising how bad someone or something is

frown (n): An expression showing annoyance

umpire (n): someone whose job is to make sure that the players obey the rules in the field

nick (v): touch or glance

milestone (n): an event or achievement that marks an important stage in a process

strident (adj): unpleasant, raucous, harsh

chide (v): to speak in an angry way; rebuke

debut (n): the first time a payer or a performer appears in public

lease (n): new energy and enthusiasm

C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. 'Right. Today you bounce and I am going to hook.' What does it suggest about Gavaskar's plan to tackle West Indian bowling?
2. 'I do not think I have ever played so many shots to get a century. Most of my centuries have a liberal sprinkling of ones and twos and take their time coming and this was definitely the quickest in terms of time as well as deliveries faced.' Does the statement suggest any change in Gavaskar's batting in this particular match? If yes, what kind of change is suggested here?
3. Pick up sentences as the ones quoted in the earlier two questions and evaluate how far it is justified to say that Gavaskar was a good planner of the game.
4. Notwithstanding that it was his quickest century, Gavaskar does not think it was his best century. Why?
5. How much did the countrymen admire and love Gavaskar? Give evidence from the lesson.
6. 'Crowds all over India are basically the same and are particularly adept at kicking a man when he is down.' How far do you agree with Gavaskar's observations? Can you cite examples -from cricket or elsewhere - in favour of or against this observation?
7. Who among the modern cricketers, in your opinion, show the kind of concentration and application that Gavaskar used to show?
8. 'Offence is the best strategy of defence.' How does Gavaskar's century prove this?
9. A good autobiography is honest. The author describes success and admits failures, accepts blame and claims credit. In what ways do you think Sunil Gavaskar is honest in writing about his experiences? Use specific references from the lesson as examples.

C. 2. Group Discussion

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

- a. Fortune favours the brave
- b. Modelling affects sportsperson's performance

C. 3. Composition

Write a paragraph in about 100 words on each of the following:

- a. The sportsperson you like most
- b. Performing in unfavourable condition is the test of a genius
- c. Where there is will there is a way

D. WORD STUDY

D.1. Dictionary Use

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

acosted	exchange	obediant	boundry
impromptu	privillage	necesity	impre
benuming	encoraged		

Ex. 2. Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common:

look	function	plan	strident
name	surprise	test	lease

D.2. Word-meaning

Ex. 1. Find from the lesson words the meanings of which have been given on the left hand side. The last part of each word is given on the right hand side:

a big smile that shows your teeth:	in
skilful at doing something	pt
to criticise someone in an angry way:	ide
the first time a performer or player appears in public	ute
an event or achievement that marks an important stage in a process:	stone

an expression on your face made by moving eye-brows:own
to push someone or something with force:obe
the act of throwing a coin into the air in order to make a decisionss

D. 4. Phrases

Ex.1. Read the lesson carefully and find out the sentences in which the following phrases have been used. Then use them in sentences of your own:

drop in at times look after pick up at ease

E. GRAMMAR

Ex. 1. Read the sentences carefully:

I had left the net. He had won the toss.

In the above examples the sentences are in Past Perfect Tense. Change the following sentences into Past Perfect Tense:

1. I read a book.
2. He cleans the floor.
3. They have played for India.
4. You will do the work.
5. The boy is eating a mango.

F. ACTIVITY

Ex 1. Registers

Words like **run**, **pitch**, **cover** are used in special sense in cricket. In other words they are the registers of cricket. Read the lesson carefully and find out the registers of cricket used in the lesson. Find out the meaning of each of these registers with the help of your game teacher or reference books / dictionaries.

