

Chapter 2 The Thief's Story

READ AND FIND OUT

Q 1. Who is the 'I' in this story?

Ans 1: The 'I' in this story refers to Hari, a young boy who engages in stealing.

Q 2. What is he 'a fairly successful hand' at?

Ans 2: He has managed to successfully trick his masters and steal their money without getting caught up until now.

Q 3. What does he get from Anil in return for his work?

Ans 3: In return for his work, he receives food and a place to stay. Anil also teaches him how to write names and numbers.

Read and find out

Q 1. How does the thief think Anil will react to the theft?

Ans 1: He believes that Anil will be upset, not just because of the financial loss, but more so because his trust has been broken.

Q 2. What does he say about the different reactions of people when they are robbed?

Ans 2: A greedy person tends to feel fear, a wealthy individual often reacts with anger, and someone who is poor might simply accept their situation. However, a careless person like Anil may not even notice that he has been taken advantage of.

Q 3. Does Anil realise that he has been robbed?

Ans 3: I believe Anil only understood he had been robbed when he noticed the wet currency notes. However, he chose not to bring it up because he saw a hint of remorse in the person who returned the money.

Think About It

Q 1. What are Hari Singh's reactions to the prospect of receiving an education? Do they change over time?

(*Hint: Compare, for example, the thought: "I knew that once I could write like an educated man there would be no limit to what I could achieve" with these later thoughts: "Whole sentences, I knew, could one day bring me more than a few hundred rupees. It was a simple matter to steal — and sometimes just as simple to be caught. But to be a really big man, a clever and respected man, was something else."*) What makes him return to Anil?

Ans 1: When Anil first offered to teach Hari Singh how to write names and numbers, Hari's thoughts were still trapped in a cycle of crime. He might have been considering the possibility of forging signatures to make a

living. He expressed this when he thought, "I knew that once I could write like an educated man, there would be no limit to what I could achieve."

Over time, however, Hari was deeply influenced by Anil's character traits. Anil's trust in him, along with his kindness and generosity, began to resonate with Hari. He started to realize that he no longer wanted to be a thief or a deceiver; he aspired to be a respectable gentleman instead. This change in perspective is evident in his later thoughts: "I realized that whole sentences could one day earn me more than a few hundred rupees. Stealing was easy, and getting caught could happen just as easily. But to truly become a clever and respected man was an entirely different goal."

Q 2. Why does not Anil hand the thief over to the police? Do you think most people would have done so? In what ways is Anil different from such employers?

Ans 2: I believe that most employers would have chosen to report the thief to the police. However, Anil took a different approach. He was a kind-hearted and compassionate person who understood the power of trust, kindness, and empathy to transform lives. He recognized that the harsh treatment from the police and exposure to hardened criminals could lead someone further down a dark path.

In fact, Hari's decision to return the stolen money demonstrated that he was already on the road to reform. All he needed was a little encouragement, which Anil provided by offering him a regular salary and teaching him how to form complete sentences.

Talk About It

Q 1. Do you think people like Anil and Hari Singh are found only in fiction, or are there such people in real life?

Ans 1: I believe that characters like Anil and Hari Singh exist not just in stories but also in real life. However, there are certainly more people like Hari Singh than like Anil. Almost every day, we come across news reports of household servants who gain their employers' trust only to seize the opportunity to steal valuables. Police records are filled with such incidents.

On the other hand, individuals like Anil are quite rare; they often go unnoticed because they don't seek recognition for their good deeds. For instance, my grandfather had a servant named Ramdeen who once stole a few hundred rupees. When he confessed to my father that he had taken the money to help with his daughter's wedding, my grandfather not only returned the stolen money but also gave him twice that amount. This act of kindness left a lasting impression on Ramdeen, and he never stole again for the rest of his life while working in our home.

Q 2. Do you think it a significant detail in the story that Anil is a struggling writer? Does this explain his behaviour in any way?

Ans 2: I believe this detail isn't crucial to the story. It doesn't really impact his character. As a struggling writer who earns money sporadically, he should be more cautious with his finances. Instead, he tends to waste it on outings with his friends whenever he gets paid. His generous and kind nature seems to stem from his upbringing and the influence of his parents or surroundings.

Q 3. Have you met anyone like Hari Singh? Can you think and imagine the circumstances that can turn a fifteen-year-old boy into a thief?

Ans 3: I believe that no child is born a thief or a criminal; rather, it is their circumstances, society, or difficult experiences that shape them. I've encountered many stories like that of a boy named Ganesh, who lived in my

uncle's village. Ganesh was in the eighth grade and the only child in his family, which had always been happy and loving. He was well-behaved and adored by everyone.

Tragically, Ganesh's life took a dark turn when his parents died in an accident. Following their death, his uncles seized his land and property, forcing him out of his home. In a desperate turn of events, Ganesh ended up joining a gang of criminals and, in a fit of rage, took the lives of two of his uncles as an act of revenge. This raises an important question: how does a young boy transform into a criminal? Isn't it a result of the injustice and cruelty he faced from his own family?

Q 4. Where is the story set? (You can get clues from the names of the persons and places mentioned in it.) Which language or languages are spoken in these places? Do you think the characters in the story spoke to each other in English?

Ans 4: I believe the story is set in Uttar Pradesh, where the primary languages spoken are Hindi and Urdu. It's unlikely that the characters converse in English; for instance, Hari Singh, who is not educated, wouldn't be speaking English to Anil. Typically, at home, we communicate in our native language, which in this context would be Hindi or Urdu.