

Chapter 2

The Thief's Story

Read and Find Out Pg-8

Q.1 Who does 'I' refer to in this story?

Ans.: I', in this story, refers to Hari Singh, a thief. He used to rob his employers.

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

Ans.: Hari Singh was a pro thief, especially at robbing his employers. Correspondingly, the author has used the words 'fairly successful hand' to bring out his expertise of theft.

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

Ans.: Hari was a thief who used to rob his employers and was good at it. Anil used to give Hari meals in lieu of the work he did. Later, Anil also taught him how to read and write and add numbers.

Read and Find Out Pg-10

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

Ans.: The thief thought that Anil, his employer, would get upset when he would come to know about the theft. This reaction of his would not be for the loss incurred but for the trust broken by Hari Singh.

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

Ans.: Hari said that in his short career as a thief he had seen different people react differently on their losses. A greedy man's face showed fear, a rich man would get angry and a poor man would show mere acceptance.

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

Ans.: Probably yes, Anil did realise the case because the notes were wet even in the morning and he knew that it had rained the previous night so it is likely that somebody had taken the notes out in the weather. However, Anil did not make any mention of it to Hari.

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.: Hari Singh, though a fifteen-year-old boy, was an expert thief. Hari Singh was not his real name. He took a new name every month to prevent getting caught which clearly shows his cleverness and wit. He was quite pleased with the idea of Anil teaching him to read and write his name, sentences and add numbers. Writing like an educated man, he felt, would open the doors of success in his life and get him a life beyond his dreams.

One day, when Anil returned home with a bundle of notes, Hari's inner thief made him forget all the good that Anil had done to him and the

advantage the education would bring to him and he stole the money and ran away. However, his conscience stopped him from boarding a train and made him analyse his act which made him feel guilty and he returned to Anil's place.

Q.2 Why does Anil not 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.: Anil realized that his money was stolen the previous night since the notes were wet when he woke up and it had rained the previous night which made it clear that the notes were out in the weather. However, he did not say anything to Hari. Neither did he hand him over to the police. There can be many reasons behind this decision of Anil. One, he was a good man and he knew how difficult it was to live in poverty since he himself made money by fits and starts. His profession (a writer) signifies a sound and mature mind which can differentiate between a criminal at heart and a criminal by circumstances. Since Hari had returned, Anil knew that he had realized his mistake which was, probably, enough for him to learn a lesson in life.

On the contrary, many other people would have taken an opposite decision and would have handed Hari to the police.

The fact that Anil fed Hari meals, taught him, did not say anything to him despite knowing that he made some money when he went to the market for some purchases, and did not hand him over to the police make him very different from the other people.

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.: People like Anil and Hari Singh are not merely fictional but they exist as well. However, with changing times there are not many people willing to help anyone like Anil did in the story. Similarly, people like Hari are also getting rare who would realize their mistakes and return to their employers.

Anil has been portrayed as a very simple and honest man with a kind heart. He wrote for a magazine but made money by fits and starts. He understood the circumstances of others well. Not only did he give Hari Singh shelter but also taught him and ignored his little thefts of making a rupee or so from his daily purchases.

On the other hand, Hari Singh, a boy of fifteen, was an expert thief. He was not a thief by heart but a thief by circumstances. When he got respect and affection by Anil, his heart changed and his conscience made him return from the station and put the bundle of notes under the mattress.

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

Ans.: Yes, it can be inferred clearly from the story that Anil was a struggling writer. Initially, he refused to keep Hari as he couldn't pay him. However, his good nature made him pity on Hari Singh who didn't have any work to do. He agreed to keep Hari but offered only food. It is also mentioned in the story that he made money by fits and starts but he wasn't a miser which can be inferred from the concluding part of the story in which he told Hari that he would then be paid regularly (since Anil had received some money from a publisher).

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.: Yes, I have met many people like Hari Singh. They can be seen on railway stations, bus stations, as domestic help etc. It can be said that the

circumstances can turn anyone into a thief irrespective of the age, gender, caste or region.

Some of the possible circumstances are as follows:

1. Poor financial condition.
2. Lack of good guidance by the parents.
3. Father's death (considered as the disciplinarian)
4. Broken homes.
5. Bad company of friends
6. Extravagant spending.
7. Peer pressure.
8. Neglect of delinquent behaviour

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.: It seems that the story is set in Uttar Pradesh, an Indian state.

We can get precise clues from the names of the persons and places mentioned in it. For example, the name of the train – the Lucknow Express and the Jamuna Sweet Shop.

The Jamuna Sweet Shop further shows that this place might be in a rural area. Both these clues are very important to find out the place.

If the story is set in U.P. the language must be Hindi. The characters in the story, evidently, did not speak to each other in English. As the basic language of the place is Hindi and Hari Singh didn't even know how to read and write there is no possibility of them talking to each other in English.