



TREASURES

In a narrow, dusty, village street, a five year old boy was often seen playing with gay abandon. His name was Chandu. He was a lanky fellow, with shiny eyes and a sunburnt face - a result of hours and hours of playing in the streets.

His game of choice was collecting sports cards and the thrill of winning them was overwhelming. A keener playmate might have noticed his sleight of hand, but these bunch of kids were no match to his shrewdness.

The skill with which he negotiated his business was prodigious. If luck, stealing and cheating failed him, he would resort to trading. A shiny pebble, a dark marble, a piece of chalk, a false promise; everything was on trade for a coveted card.

By and by his collection grew large. The large collection not only attracted the jealousy of his playmates and his siblings but also the disapproval of his mother. Things had come to such a pass that his mother had declared the cards contraband.

His mother was harsh, but his father was different. Chandu longed the company of his father, but the latter was very busy. Chandu's father reached his shop before Chandu woke up in the morning and returned after he had slept. On occasions, he would see his father in his shop. It was a treat to see him work; probably he had inherited the tricks of the trade from his father.

His father was always careful with the green cards they called money. Sometimes he would bring home a red shiny stone or a yellow pebble. Had his grandmother also declared such stuff contraband, the young boy wondered, for his father was always careful not to show it to her and forbade the young boy from discussing it with anyone.

Meanwhile, Chandu's collection was growing by the day, and to escape his mother's wrath, he hid them in a jar and placed it under his bed. When alone in the room, he would retrieve the bundle and examine it with loving appreciation. What greater joy could ever exist?

But one day the father found Chandu very, very sad. The boy was inconsolable and sobbing continuously. The father tried hard to cheer him up and spent a considerable time with the boy.

After coaxing for a long, long time, the boy said, "Papa, there is no use collecting those cards which you hide from grandma. Someday someone will throw them out on the streets like mama threw my sports cards today!"