

## THE THIEF'S STORY - BY RUSKIN BOND

### About the Author

**Ruskin Bond** (born 19 May 1934) is an Indian author of British descent. He lives with his adopted family in Landour, Mussoorie, India. The Indian Council for Child Education has recognised his role in the growth of children's literature in India. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, his novel in English. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014.

### The Thief's Story - Summary

The story is about two different people. One is a thief of 15 years of age and the other is a man of approximately 25 years, watching a wrestling match somewhere. The name of the person watching the match is Anil. The thief approaches Anil and starts talking to him because he feels that he had not robbed anyone in the past few days and thought that it would be easy to rob a simple person like Anil. They both start talking and Anil asks the thief his name. The thief introduces himself as Hari Singh. This is not his real name as he changes his name every month to escape his former employers or police. Then they started talking about the wrestlers and Anil was leaving when Hari called him again and asked him if he could work for Anil. Anil said that he won't be able to pay him but could feed him if he knew how to cook. Hari lied that he knew how to cook. Anil took Hari to his room which was above a sweet shop. Hari cooked a meal which was really bad because Anil did not eat it. Anil asked Hari to leave but he tried to please Anil. Hari smiled in his most attractive way and Anil could not stop laughing looking at him. Anil agreed to teach Hari how to cook, write full sentences and add numbers. Hari was grateful as he knew that there would be no limit to robbing people once he learnt how to read and write.

The narrator used to like working for Anil as he used to make him tea in the morning and then go out to buy the groceries for the day. He also used to steal 1 rupee from the money that was given to him to buy the groceries every day. Anil knew that he used to steal but did not mind.

Anil used to make money by irregular works. Sometimes he used to borrow money and the other day, when he had money, he would be lending it to other people. Whenever he used to get money, he would go out with his friends to celebrate.

One day, Anil came in with a bundle of notes and told Hari that he had sold a book to a publisher. At night he kept the money safely under the mattress of his bed. Hari realized that he had been working for Anil for more than a month and had not stolen anything apart from the 1 rupee that he kept every day from the grocery money. Hari had many chances to steal as he had the key to the room

as well. But he was surprised with the amount of trust Anil had on him as he had never seen such a trusting person in his life. This trust thing was preventing him from robbing Anil as Hari thought that robbing a careless person like Anil didn't make much difference because he might not even notice that he had been robbed and that took out all the fun from the work. Then he thought of stealing Anil's money and justified himself that if he didn't steal money from Anil then also he would waste it on his friends and also, Anil didn't pay him for the work that he did.

Hari then woke up at night and quietly crawled to Anil's bed. He steals the money and decides to leave the city by Lucknow Express that departed at 10:30. When he reached the station, the train had slowly started moving from the platform. He could have easily caught the train, but he hesitated and he himself did not know the reason for it. Before he had reached the station he counted the money and it was 600 rupees in 50 rupee notes. He could live a lavish life for 2 - 3 weeks with so much money. After the train had left, Hari was all alone at the train station. He was left with no place to sleep at night. The only person he knew was Anil and he had looted him as well. He sat on a bench in a park and as it started to rain, he sat down under the clock tower. Then he realized that the notes had got wet. He realized that learning how to read and write would help him to get a much more respectable and honest job which would pay him much more than these few hundred rupees. Then he decided to go back to Anil's house.

He reached the room and placed the money back. Next morning, he woke up a bit late and Anil had already made his tea. Anil gave a 50 rupee note to Hari as he had got paid for some work and he would be paid regularly. Hari took the note in his hand and realized that the note was still wet from the rain last night. Hari realized that Anil had come to know about his misdeed but there was no sadness, anger or guilt in his mind. The narrator smiled in a beautiful way and it was genuine happiness as he knew that he had saved himself from the wrong road.

### **TEXTBOOK PG. NO. 8 AND 10**

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

Ans. 'I' refers to Hari Singh, the narrator of the story who is a fifteen- year old experienced thief.

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

Ans. He is a fairly successful hand at stealing. He is an experienced thief. He is so swift and clean in his work that he has never been caught stealing.

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

Ans. Anil gives him food and a place to live in.

Q.4 How does the thief think Anil will react to the thief?

Ans. According to Hari, Anil would be sad not because of the loss of money but because of the loss of trust in Hari.

Q.5 What does he say about the different reactions of people when they are robbed?

Ans. According to Hari, a greedy man shows fear, a rich man shows anger whereas a poor man shows acceptance when they are robbed.

Q.6 Does Anil realise he has been robbed?

Ans. Yes, Anil realized that he had been robbed, as he gave a fifty rupee note to Hari which was still damp due to the rain.

TEXTBOOK PG. 13

Q.1 What are Hari Singh's reactions at the prospect of receiving education? What makes him return to Anil?

Ans. Hari was very happy and grateful when he learned to write his name. He was excited when Anil promised him to teach him to write whole sentences as well. He knew that being educated would add to his abilities to achieve anything he wanted.

When Hari left Anil's house, he realized that stealing was simply a crime but being educated is an entirely different thing. He knew the respect, reputation and possibilities that would come to him once he was educated. So, his urge to receive education compelled him to return to Anil.

Q.2 Why does Anil not hand over the thief over to the police? Do you think most people would have done so?

Ans. Though Anil knew about the theft, he does not hand over the thief to the police as he was glad that Hari had realized his mistake of stealing and understood the importance of education in life. Hari wanted him to become a

literate man and lead a respectful life. Anil was understanding and so did not want Hari to be thrashed by the police and humiliated for stealing.

Most people would not have done so as Anil.

Q.3 What did Anil and Hari agree upon to be the mode of payment? ( CBSE 2015)

Ans. When Anil stated his inability to pay Hari, Hari asked Anil if he could feed him. In reply Anil wanted to know if Hari could cook. Anil thus agreed to feed Hari if he knew how to cook.

Q.4 Did Hari like working for Anil? Give reasons to support your answer. ( CBSE 2014)

Ans. Yes, Hari liked working for Anil. He was happy to carry on the chores for him and was grateful for the education he was receiving. He used to make a profit of about a rupee a day while buying the day's supplies as well, which was a decent amount besides being fed.

Q.5 State the events that took place on the night of the theft. ( CBSE 2016)

Ans. After stealing Anil's money and leaving Anil's house, Hari went to the railway station but did not board the train to Lucknow. He walked away slowly through the bazaar as he did not know anyone who would provide him shelter except Anil. He was forced to take shelter under the clock tower later when it started raining heavily.

Q.6. Money can't make a man as much as education can. Elucidate. ( CBSE 2013)

Ans. Yes, the statement stands true in almost all aspects of life. Money may buy us all the luxuries and daily necessities but it cannot buy us critical thinking, skills and abilities to achieve our dream. Education helps us to keep up with the fast moving world. It opens the door to opportunities. Money can buy a plan but education gives us the knowledge of execution.

In the story 'A Thief's Story' Hari Singh befriends the struggling author Anil with the intention of stealing. But the kind Anil teaches him to read and write besides providing him food and shelter. Gradually, he develops trust in Hari Singh. Hari Singh does steal Anil's money and tries to run away forever. But, some inner voice stops him from doing so. He returns back to Anil because he wants to live a life of

dignity. This clearly shows that even a thief like Hari prioritized education over a few hundred rupees knowing its worth. Education not only develops our character but can help us achieve our desires.

- **Character sketch of Hari Singh**

- Hari Singh was a 15 years boy who was an **experienced and a successful thief**. He was successful because of his cleverness and intelligence. He carefully planned everything before choosing his victims. He went to places where people would not suspect him and win their confidence to get job. After sometime he would run away stealing money from there. Thus **he used to change his name to fool the police and his former employers**. He managed to steal six hundred rupees from his Anil's house. Later there is a transformation in the end of this story where **he decides to come back to Anil and keep his trust alive**. This shows that there is good in every bad person. He wanted to become an educated person in the future. **He wanted to mend his ways and become clever and respected man and earn his livelihood honestly without stealing**.

**CHARACTER SKETCH OF ANIL**

- **Anil** was a kind, simple and easy going young man. He was tall and lean stature and **interested in sports** like Wrestling. He was **not very rich** and could not offered to employee Hari as a cook. He had the **patience and goodness to not only teach Hari to cook but also to read, write and add numbers**. Though he knew that Hari was stealing little bits of money from him, he ignored this fact. Anil was a **writer who wrote for magazines** and made money in fits and starts. He was a **very trusting person**. Even when he earned a large amount of money, he kept the money under his mattress and not under lock and key. He was **generous and paid Hari when he got some money**. Hari had tried to steal the money from him. He **was forgiving** and he forgave Hari - the theft and continued to be good to him.