

MAHESH PUBLIC SCHOOL

STUDY MATERIAL

Subject- English Language & Literature (184)

Book – Footprints without Feet

Chapter- 2

The Thief's Story



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 recognized 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.

Introduction

The story is about a 15-year-old thief who changes his name every month to stay ahead of the police and old employers. This time he kept his name Hari Singh. The other person in the story is a 25 year old writer named Anil. The thief meets Anil and asks him if he can work for him. The story unfolds on how the thief betrays Anil by committing a theft but retracts later on.

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 ex-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.

Short Answer Questions (30-40 Words)

1. Why did Hari Singh approach Anil?

Answer: Hari Singh was a thief who had not much luck in his work recently. So, he approached Anil with the intention of robbing him, as he seemed to be an easygoing and simple man. According to Hari, winning Anil's confidence was an easy task.

2. Anil walked away. I followed casually'. Why do you think the narrator followed Anil?

Answer: The narrator's purpose of robbing Anil had not yet been served. He followed Anil to gain his trust and look for an opportunity that may help him give shape to his plans.

3. Was Hari Singh successful in robbing Anil? Was Anil the only one who was robbed or did Hari also rob himself of something?

Answer: Yes, Hari Singh was successful in robbing Anil. But Anil was not the only one who was robbed at that time. Hari had robbed himself as well. He had lost the chance of receiving education and being literate. He had robbed Anil monetarily but he had robbed himself of the chance for a better and brighter future, which was much more valuable.

4. What did Anil and Hari agree upon to be the mode of payment?

Answer: When Anil stated his inability to pay Hari, Anil questioned Hari if he could feed Hari. Hari realized that he had misjudged his target and moulded the situation for his benefit. Anil then agreed to feed him if he knew how to cook.

5. What are Hari Singh's reactions to the prospect of receiving an education? Do they change over time? What makes him return to Anil?

Answer: Hari Singh feels that education can make him earn a lot of money in an honest way. His prospect on receiving an education does not change over time. He feels that he can earn much more if he gets education. He returns to Anil because Anil trusts him, feeds him, treats him well and even teaches him.

6. How does the thief think Anil will react to the theft?
Answer: The thief thought that on discovering that he had been robbed, Anil would definitely be sad but he would be sad because of the loss of trust and not because of the loss of money.

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

Answer: When he asks Anil that he wants to work for him, Anil clearly says that he will not be able to pay him. They mutually decide that if the thief would be able to cook food for him, then Anil would feed him. But soon, Anil comes to know that he cannot cook. So Anil tells Hari, the thief that he would teach him to cook food, to write his name and full sentences and also to add numbers. Apart from this, Hari also used to steal one rupee from the grocery money every day.

8. What does he say about the different reactions of people when they are robbed?
Answer: The thief says that according to his experience, upon being robbed the greedy man showed fear, the rich man showed anger and the poor man showed acceptance towards whatever had happened with him.

9. Does Anil realize that he has been robbed?
Answer: Yes, probably Anil knew that he had been robbed because all the notes were wet and damp from last night. He still did not say anything to the thief and gave him 50 rupees and told him that from now on, Anil will be paying him money as salary every month.

Long Answer Questions (100-150 words)

1. 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?

Answer: Anil did not hand over the thief to the police maybe because he knew that Hari Singh had realized his mistake. He was feeling guilty for what he had done and wanted to mend his ways. This was the reason why he had come back and put the money back to its place. Anil wanted to give him a chance to become a better person.

No, I don't think that anybody in today's world would have done so because to do so, a person needs to have a lot of patience and compassion which is missing in most of the people today. In today's world a thief is considered a criminal even if he realizes his mistake. It takes a lot of courage to trust someone who has broken your trust once. Although I feel that if a person realizes his mistake he must be given another chance.

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

Answer: When he asks Anil that he wants to work for him, Anil clearly says that he will not be able to pay him. They mutually decide that if the thief would be able to cook food for him, then Anil would feed him. But soon, Anil comes to know that he cannot cook. So Anil tells Hari, the thief that he would teach him to cook food, to write his name and full sentences and also to add numbers. Apart from this, Hari also used to steal one rupee from the grocery money every day.

3. Money can't make a man as much as education can. Elucidate the statement.

Answer: The statement stands true in almost all the aspects of life. Money may buy us all the luxuries and fulfill our needs but it cannot buy us knowledge, civilized thinking, skills and abilities to achieve our dreams. Education lays the platform for all to act upon our goals according to our abilities. Education enables us to keep up with the fast moving world. It opens the door to opportunities we do not know even exist. Money, on the other hand, can assist us to a certain level. It can buy us a plan but education gives us the knowledge of its execution. Just as in the story 'A Thief's Story', Hari Singh prioritized the chance of being literate over a few hundred rupees; we must understand that education can help us to achieve whatever we desire.

4. Hari Singh didn't board the express and returned to Anil. Why did he return? On what values does this incidence put light on?

Answer: Hari Singh was a thief and he had stolen Anil's money. After the theft, he realized that he had robbed not only Anil but also himself of the chance of being literate and having a bright future. His conscience pricked him to think what all he could have got had he not done this. It was difficult for him to rob Anil but it was tougher for him not to back. He realized that he could not make tea, buy daily

supplies and learn how to read and write then. His inner self did not agree to bypass this and forced him to return. Hari's return to Anil shows that despite indulging in criminal acts, he still had a practical and positive attitude towards life. It is the awakening of Hari's conscience and Anil's love and care that reformed Hari's character. It teaches us that love alone can change a person. Anil's understanding nature and caring, changed Hari's thinking to mend his ways for good.