

The Shoe-Shine Boy



It was hopeless to remain there in the small village. There was no food, no love and no future. So Krishna decided to leave for the big city—Hyderabad. May be afterwards, one by one, he could take his family also there. He just could not see the hunger and *torture* his family faced. So, one fine day, Krishna simply ran away.

That was four years ago. He was only eleven then. From the day he left his house, Krishna had a difficult time. In the beginning he had no food and no shelter. No one cared for him. He hated begging, so he cleaned cars

and floors of shops and served at food stalls. He did whatever he could do honestly for his *survival*. He slept outside the railway station and made friends with orphan boys and *stray dogs*.

Slowly, he started borrowing shoe-polish *kits* from his friends whenever they were sick or needed a holiday. Within a few weeks he was able to purchase his own kit. He started travelling in trains, getting paid by passengers to get their shoes polished. At night he always slept outside the Secunderabad railway station.

“You must search the empty compartments for leftover things,” his friends advised him. “Sometimes, if you are lucky, you get a bedsheet or a foodbag.”

The group decided which pair or trio would go on an inspection of which empty train.

Usually, they found nothing except empty plastic bottles or disposable glasses, but sometimes, if they were lucky, they would come across some food item or a forgotten bag.

Krishna did not like to take those things. His mother had taught him to earn money by working for it. "Only hard work can bring us success," she used to say, "begging or stealing cannot open any magic door for us."

But his new friends had taught him otherwise; that accepting leftovers was not a theft and no *sin* at all. It would not harm anybody.

So, on that lucky night, Krishna, with Nandu and Deepu, was scheduled to be on the inspection tour of a train at the end of its run. Krishna knew that Nandu was down with fever and Deepu would be trying to get tickets for a new picture that was a box office hit. "May be he has got the tickets," Krishna thought as he waited for his friends before entering the train alone. His eyes searched for leftover things as he went from one compartment to another, when suddenly his eyes fell on a small briefcase lying on an upper berth, in a corner. "No one could have left that *purposely*," he thought, "so it would be a theft if I take it away with me. Someone must have forgotten it, but another person will *grab* it if I leave it here. I must give the bag to a responsible person so that the owner will get it back. There may be something important in that bag."

Thinking thus, Krishna took the bag but he was afraid to go to the police. He had seen them being rough to people. "They may accuse me of stealing it and then put me in jail," he thought, "Better I go to the station master. At least he knows that I am not a thief."



The station master knew him well. He had earned his goodwill by his honesty and good manners. He would definitely help him in a difficult situation. He was sure of that. So, he decided to listen to his inner voice.

He took the bag and went to the station master's office. "I found this bag in an empty compartment, Sir!" he said. "I wish to hand it over to the police, so that they can return it to its owner."

It took a lot of courage to do that. But he decided to do what he believed to be correct.

And his courage paid off. The owner of the briefcase came to lodge a complaint and was happy to get back his briefcase which contained a lot of money. He rewarded the boy handsomely. The railway people too collected some fund for Krishna. The press published the story of the shoeshine boy and many welfare associations came forward to *felicitate* Krishna on Children's Day. Now, Krishna stays in a hostel and studies in a good school. His dream is going to come true. In the near future he will be able to get decent job and look after his family.

Word Treasure

torture : suffering

stray dogs : wandering dogs

purposely : deliberately; on his own

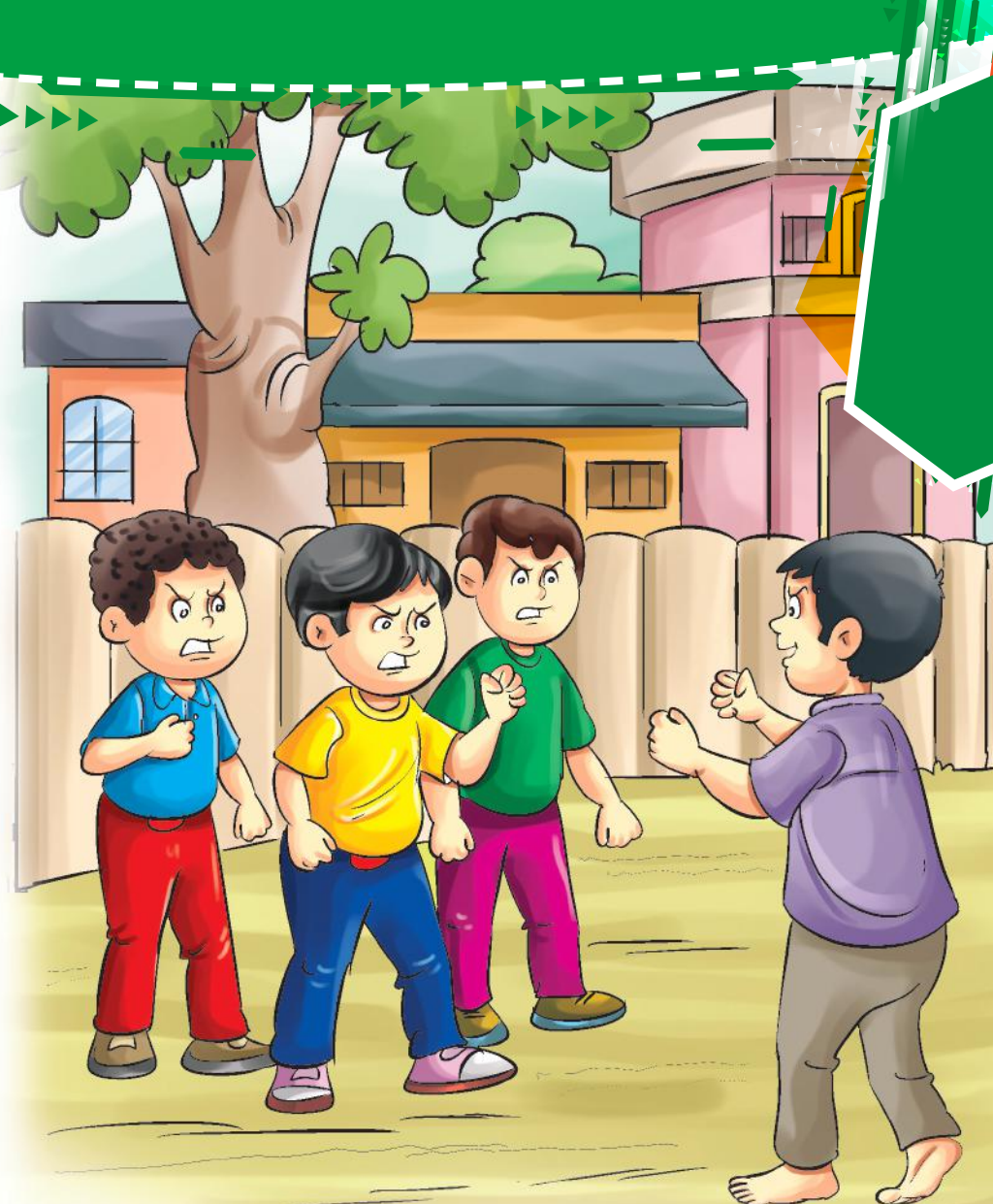
felicitate : honour

survival : living

kits : equipment

grab : take

sin : evil deeds





EXERCISE TIME

Comprehension Skills

A. Tick (✓) the correct option :

1. That was _____ years ago.
a. three b. four c. five
2. He started travelling in _____.
a. trains b. buses c. ships
3. The station _____ knew him well.
a. teacher b. police c. master

B. Fill in the blanks with the correct option :

published, honesty, decided, empty, torture

1. Krishna _____ to leave for the big city.
2. Krishna could not see the hunger and _____ his family.
3. He had earned his goodwill by his _____ any good manners.
4. The found a bag in an _____ compartment.
5. The press _____ the story of the shoeshine boy.

C. Write 'T' for true or 'F' for false statements :

1. Krishna lived in village there was no food, no love or no future.
2. Krishna decided to leave for a small village Rampur.
3. He started travelling in trains, getting paid of passengers to get their shoes polished.
4. After his work, he stays in a hostel and studies in a good school.
5. Krishna was a dishonest and coward boy.

D. Answer the following questions :

1. How was Krishna's life at the time when he left the village?
2. How did Krishna earn his living?
3. What did Krishna find in the train? What thought came to his mind?
4. What was Krishna's image in the minds of the workers and porters at the station?
5. What did he do with the bag which he found in the compartment?

Fun with Words

E. Pick the odd word out in each row :

station master	train	compartment	school
cry	truthful	honest	responsible
Krishna	friends	Nandu	Deepu
he	begging	stealing	entering

Essential Grammar

F. Some words describe actions. Fill in the blanks with these words :

to read, to pull, to keep, to open, to recite

1. The students are going _____ a song to the founder of their school.
2. Mrs. Sehgal went to the garden _____ her favourite magazine.
3. The child began _____ the dog's tail.
4. The teacher requested the students _____ their notebooks on her table.
5. Amit wanted _____ the bottle, but he couldn't.

Essential Writing

G. Think and write what happens to the shoe-shine boy after he completes his studies.

Essential Speaking

H. Role Play

In a group of 5 to 6 students prepare a small skit based on the story.

Fun to Do

I. Prepare a chart in a decorative way. Write the slogan in good hand writing :

"We should always remain honest."