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My Experiments with Truth

by M.K. Gandhi

Pre-reading Task

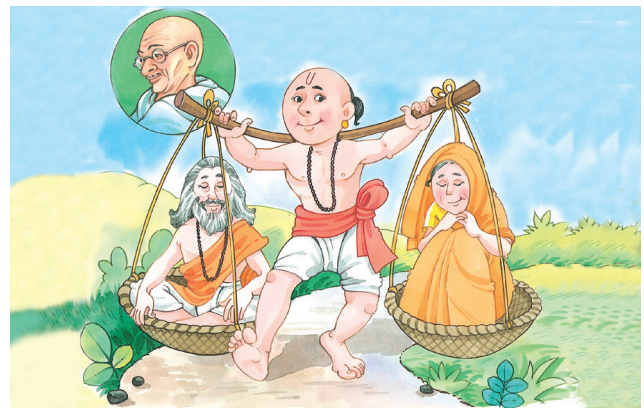
To err is human. All human beings make mistakes. But the best of the lot learn from their mistakes and improve.

1. Have you ever made any mistake?
2. What did you learn from it?
3. What do you do when you find a drawback or weakness—
 - (i) try to improve yourself?
 - (ii) try to forget it and don't care at all?
 - (iii) try to hide it from others?
 - (iv) try to lay the blame on others?

Now read this extract from Gandhiji's autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*.

I must have been about seven when I was put into a primary school and I can well recollect those days, including the names and other particulars of the teachers who taught me. I do not remember having ever told a lie, either to my teachers or to my schoolmates. I used to be very shy and avoided all company. My books and my lessons were my sole companions. To be at school at the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as the school closed—that was my daily habit.

Two incidents belonging to this period have always **clung** to my memory. As a rule, I had a distaste for any reading beyond my school books but somehow my eyes fell on a book purchased by my father. It was *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* (a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents). I read it with **intense** interest. One picture in the book showed Shravana carrying his parents on



clung: held on closely

intense: deep

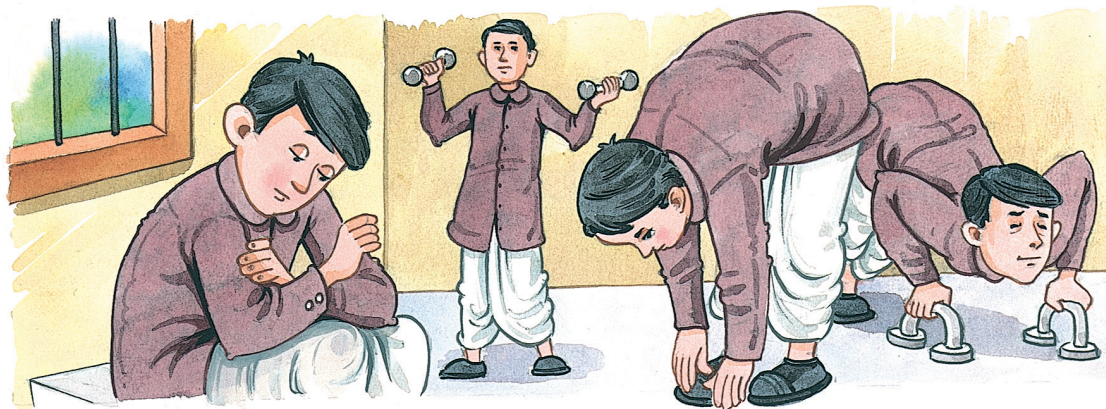


pilgrimage. The book and the picture left an undying impression on my mind. 'Here is an example for you to copy,' I said to myself.

Another similar play—*Harishchandra*—captured my heart. 'Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?' was the question I asked myself day and night.

To follow truth and to go through all **ordeals** Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me.

There was another such incident during the time when I was in the seventh standard. Dorabji Gimi, the headmaster, was very popular among the boys, as he was a disciplinarian, a man of method and a good teacher. He had made gymnastics and cricket compulsory and I disliked both. I never took part in any exercise before they were made compulsory. I then had the false notion that gymnastics had nothing to do with education. Today I know that physical training is as important as mental training. The reason for my dislike for gymnastics was my keen desire to serve as nurse to my father. As soon as the school closed, I would hurry home and begin serving him. Now it happened that one Saturday, I had to go from home to the school for gymnastics at four o'clock in the afternoon. I had no watch, and the clouds deceived me. When I reached the school all the boys had already left. The next day, on being asked the reason for absence, I told Mr Gimi what had happened. He refused to believe me. I was convicted of lying! That deeply pained me. How was I to prove my innocence? There was no way. I learnt that a man of truth must also be a man of care. This was the first and last instance of my carelessness in school.

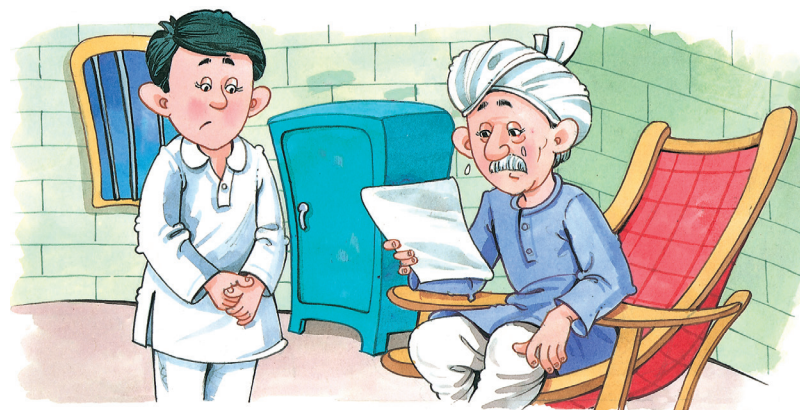


pilgrimage: a journey to a holy place

ordeals: painful experiences

But there is another neglect for which I am still paying the penalty. I do not know when I got the notion that good handwriting was not a necessary part of education, but I retained it until I went to England. When later, especially in South Africa, I saw the beautiful handwriting of lawyers and young men, I was ashamed of myself and repented of my neglect. I saw that bad handwriting was regarded as a sign of imperfect education. I tried later to improve mine, but it was too late. I could never repair the neglect of my youth.

There is another incident which I must share. I committed a theft when I was fifteen. I had run into a debt of about twenty-five rupees. My brother had on his arm an armlet of solid gold. I stole a bit of gold out of it and the debt was cleared. But this became more than I could bear. I resolved never to steal again. I also made up my mind to confess it to my father. But I did not dare to speak. Not that I was afraid of my father beating me. I was afraid of the pain that I should cause him. I decided at last to write out the confession. In this note not only did I confess my guilt, but I also asked adequate punishment for it. I also promised never to steal in future. With trembling hands I handed the confession to my father. He read it, and pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. Those pearl drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. A clean confession, combined with a promise never to commit the sin again is the purest type of repentance. This incident, for me, was an object lesson in 'Ahimsa'.



I Understanding the Story

A. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Which two books inspired Gandhiji a lot during his childhood?
2. Pick out the extract from the text which tells that Gandhiji was punctual.
3. Why did Gandhiji dislike games and gymnastics?
4. What made Gandhiji feel ashamed of himself during his visit to South Africa?
5. Why did Gandhiji steal gold from his brother's armlet?
6. Why did he confess his guilt to his father? How did he make the confession?
7. What, according to Gandhiji, is the purest type of repentance?

II HOTS

- A. Explain: He who is truthful will do no evil.
- B. Confessing one's mistake to one's parents needs great mental strength. Would you describe Gandhiji as a brave boy?

III Life Skills

'Physical training is as important as mental training.' Discuss with your partner the importance of physical training in life.

IV Values

- A. Every incident of Gandhiji's life taught him something. Given below are some incidents from his life. Read these incidents and write the values that Gandhiji imbibed from them.

	Incident	Values Imbibed
1.	He saw the picture of Shravana carrying his parents on pilgrimage	
2.	He read the play <i>Harishchandra</i> .	
3.	His headmaster convicted him of lying.	
4.	He observed the good handwriting of people in South Africa.	
5.	He stole gold and confessed it to his father.	

B. 'We become the books we read.' How far is reading good books instrumental in building good character? Discuss.

V Writing Skills

A. The chapter 'My Experiments with Truth' is a collection of Gandhiji's real-life incidents and experiences at school, which taught him what one should or should not do at school.

List at least five things that you think a student should do while at school. Also write at least five things that a student should not do at school.

1. A student should _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

1. A student should not _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

- B. Gandhiji's father experiences mixed feelings for his son on receiving the confession note. He pens down his feelings in the form of a diary entry. Imagine yourself in his place and write a diary entry in about 80-100 words.

About the Author

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, lovingly called the 'Father of the Nation', was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, a small town on the western coast of India. He was born in a middle class family of *Vaishya* caste. Revered the world over, he is known to his many followers as *Mahatma*, or 'the great-souled one'. His concept of active non-violent resistance propelled the Indian struggle for independence. *The Essential Gandhi*, *All Men are Brothers* and *Freedom's Battle* are some of his popular books.



5

Today and Tomorrow

by J.E. Carpenter

Pre-reading Task

1. Have you ever been punished for not doing your homework? Yes/No
2. Do you know anyone who is always regular in their work? Talk to them and find out the secret of their regularity.
3. If you are half asleep and your mother tells you to pack your bag before sleeping, will you—
 - (i) get up and pack it immediately?
 - (ii) tell her to wait for ten minutes?
 - (iii) tell her that you will pack it in the morning?

Now read the poem.

Don't tell me of tomorrow;
 Give me the man who'll say,
 That when a good deed's to be done
 "Let's do the deed today."

We may all command the present,
 If we act and never wait,
 But repentance is the phantom
 Of a past that comes too late!

Don't tell me of tomorrow
 There is much to do today,
 That can never be accomplished,
 If we throw the hours away,
 Every moment has its duty,
 Who the future can foretell?
 Then why put off till tomorrow
 What today can do as well?



I Understanding the Poem

A. The poem 'Today and Tomorrow' highlights the importance of time. Can you find some famous proverbs based on the same idea? One has been given below.

1. Time and tide wait for none.

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

B. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What sort of man does the poet like?
2. How can we 'command the present'?
3. What happens if we throw the hours away?
4. Why should we not put off any work/good deed till tomorrow?
5. Find out the four pairs of rhyming words in the poem.
6. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

II HOTS

Yesterday is dead, tomorrow is unborn but today is a gift. That's why it is called 'present'. How can one make one's present a worthy gift?

III Life Skills

Kushal has the habit of procrastination. He gets scolded by his parents and almost all the teachers for being so disorganised. What suggestions can you give him to manage his time?

IV Values

What according to you is the best way of spending time out of the given options? Give reasons for your choice.

- (a) grooming yourself
- (b) gaining knowledge
- (c) entertaining yourself
- (d) teaching someone
- (e) helping the needy

V Writing Skills

- A. Write a letter to your brother living in a hostel to maintain a balance between playing games and studying so as to make the most productive use of his time.
- B. Write a short story to illustrate the proverb—
'A stitch in time saves nine.'

About the Author

J.E. Carpenter has written only a few poems but they are mostly on the importance of making the best use of the present moment. It is a great irony that we are always complaining about the shortage of time. Yet we waste it as if we had an inexhaustible store of it.



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The Helpful Young Man

by Shaharyar

Pre-reading Task

1. If you find an old man trying to cross a road, will you—
 - (i) come forward and help him?
 - (ii) ask someone else to help him?
 - (iii) not bother about it at all?
2. When you help a needy person, do you—
 - (i) boast of it to your friends?
 - (ii) expect him to pay you back for your help?
 - (iii) keep it to yourself?

Now read the story of a boy who helped the needy and finally got rewarded for his goodness.

Once upon a time there lived a peasant who had seven sons and plenty of land. One morning when the peasant woke up, he found himself blind. A number of doctors were consulted and much money was spent, but in vain.

One day a strange *faqir* visited the blind peasant and said that he could see again if the ash of the eyes of a particular fish could be arranged and rubbed in his eyes. So it was decided that one of his sons would go to fetch the fish. Six of his elder sons got scared. Therefore, they were reluctant to go for the purpose. They advised their father to send the youngest son for it. The old man sent for him and asked him to fetch the required fish.



The young man set out for the **remote** ocean. On his way, he met with numerous **calamities**. But his determination and power bore fruit. He reached the destination. When the young man took the fish out of water, it cried, 'O wise man, please drop me back into the ocean. Tell me what you want. I promise you that I will be at your mercy, if I do not fulfil my promise.'

The young man threw the fish back into the ocean and said, 'I want your eyes.' He narrated the whole story to the fish and the purpose for which he needed its eyes.

'I am at your mercy, my lord. If you are determined to take out my eyes, I am ready. But if I restore your father's eyesight without losing my eyes, will you spare my life?' it asked.

'How is it possible?' the young man asked.

'Take some sand in your hand and touch my closed eyelids with it. Take the same sand with you and touch the closed eyelids of your father with it. He will get his eyesight back. I pray for your father's health. Remember me in your hard times. I may prove helpful to you,' it said assuringly.

'Well, I will leave you, but in case my father does not get his sight back, your life will not be spared. It is not just an idle threat. I suggest that one must honour one's words.' Saying so, he took the sand with him.

As soon as the father's eyelids were touched as advised, his eyesight was restored. Other six brothers got the **amazing** news and rushed to their father.



remote: distant, far away

calamities: misfortunes, disasters

amazing: surprising, astonishing

They grew jealous of their youngest brother. They feared that he would be the heir to the father's property. The eldest brother came forward and said, 'Thanks, O Lord, you have restored our father's sight. But dear father, may I ask our youngest brother where are the eyes of the fish you needed. He has touched your eyelids just with sand. It is a mere chance that your eyesight has been restored. It was possible that the touch of the sand would have caused you injury.'

Other brothers stood by him. They **compelled** their father that he should be asked to bring the eyes of the fish. Their plan went well. The good son was disgraced to leave the house for his dishonesty. He left the house and roamed aimlessly as he had nowhere to go.

One day, as he was passing through a forest, he noticed that a black **buck** came running to him. The small animal stood by him and spoke in a trembling voice.

'Dear sir, the hunters are after me. Please save me. I will help you whenever you call me.'

The young man trusted the buck. 'Go into this ditch and I will cover you with grass and leaves. When they go away, I will call you back.' The buck acted upon his advice. When the hunters came, they asked him, 'Have you seen any buck this way?'

'What is a buck?' he said.

'This fool does not know what a buck is. Hurry up lest we should miss the opportunity,' they said.

'Come out now. They have gone away.' The buck thanked him and promised to help him when he was in distress. The boy continued his journey.



compelled: forced to do something

buck: deer (male)

After some time, he heard a cry. He stopped and looked in the direction from where the cry had come. He discovered that a jackal was being chased by hunters. The jackal approached him for help. The young man helped it too. The jackal too promised to help him in his hour of need.

The young man kept on wandering for many days. He was tired and hungry and wanted to take some rest. He spotted a strange palace. He decided to go inside the palace and meet its owner. The palace belonged to a princess who was very beautiful.



She was famous for a magic mirror. She could see everything in it. She had **proclaimed** that she would marry the man who could **evade** his reflection in the magic mirror. But he would be beheaded if traced in the mirror.

The young man saw human skulls of many young men who had failed in this adventurous task. But he was not afraid. He went to the princess fearlessly and accepted the challenge.

'Now that you have come,' the princess smiled, 'do you know the conditions?'

'Of course,' was his reply.

'All right, hide yourself tonight.' Her voice was as sharp as a double-edged dagger.

At night, the young man went to the sea-shore and called forth the fish for help.

'Sure, sure,' said the fish, 'I will hide you in my stomach and go deep into the ocean.'

The princess took up the mirror. She rotated it in every direction. At last she succeeded in tracing him. In the morning when the young man came, she told him his hiding place.

'Should you be beheaded now?' The princess paused for a moment and said, 'Well, you appear to be an interesting person. I give you another chance.'

This time the young man went to the woods and called for the buck.

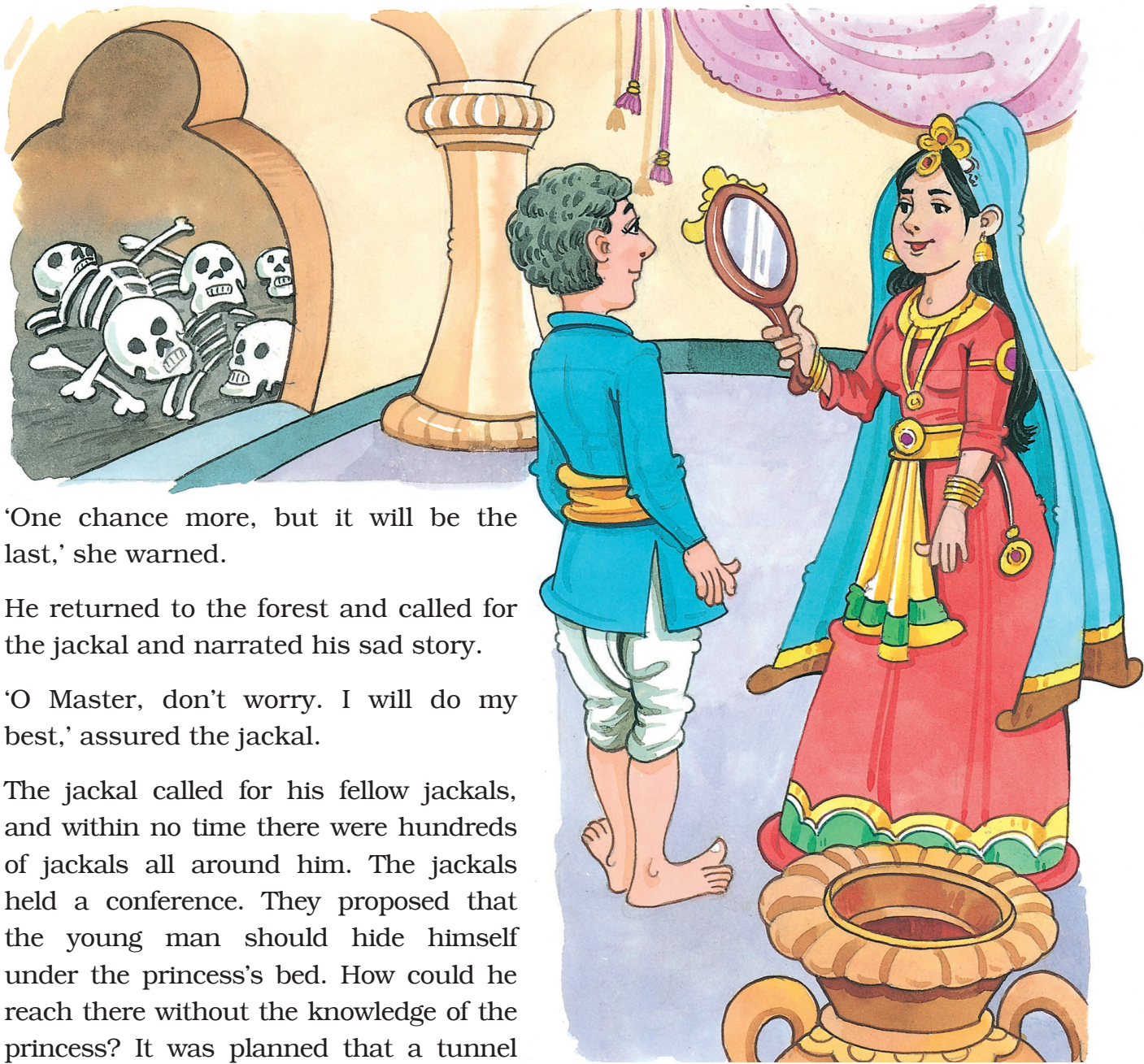
'Hello, master, what can I do for you?' asked the buck.

On hearing the whole story, it said, 'Master, sit on my horns. I will take you to the remote hills.'

Next morning, the princess told him that he was hiding in the hills.

proclaimed: declared

evade: to avoid



'One chance more, but it will be the last,' she warned.

He returned to the forest and called for the jackal and narrated his sad story.

'O Master, don't worry. I will do my best,' assured the jackal.

The jackal called for his fellow jackals, and within no time there were hundreds of jackals all around him. The jackals held a conference. They proposed that the young man should hide himself under the princess's bed. How could he reach there without the knowledge of the princess? It was planned that a tunnel should be dug. Its other end should be right under the bed of the princess. The plan was executed immediately and the young man was right under her bed.

The princess woke up, took the magic mirror in her hand and rotated it. But to her astonishment, she could not trace the young man. She repeated the process a number of times but in vain. At last she got sick of this job. She smashed the mirror against the lamp post. 'Come out young man, I have lost the game,' she cried.

The next moment the young man came out from under her bed. The princess was surprised at his intelligence. She accepted her defeat and agreed to marry him. Thereafter the young man lived with his wife happily.

I**Understanding the Story****A. Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Why did the young man go to the remote sea?
2. Why did the elder brothers become jealous of their youngest brother?
3. How did the young man save the buck and the jackal?
4. What proclamation had the princess of the strange palace made?
5. How did the three animals—the fish, the buck and the jackal, repay the kindness of the young man?
6. How did the young man finally conquer the princess?

B. Given below in the boxes is the story you have read in a jumbled form. Rearrange the jumbled sentences and reconstruct the story in your notebook. Also mark the route of the young man's adventurous journey in the map given on page 35.

goes to the ocean to fetch the fish

helps a buck and a jackal

leaves his home and goes away to a forest

cures his father's eyes with magical sand

accepts the princess's challenge

goes to the jackal for help

reaches a strange palace and meets the princess

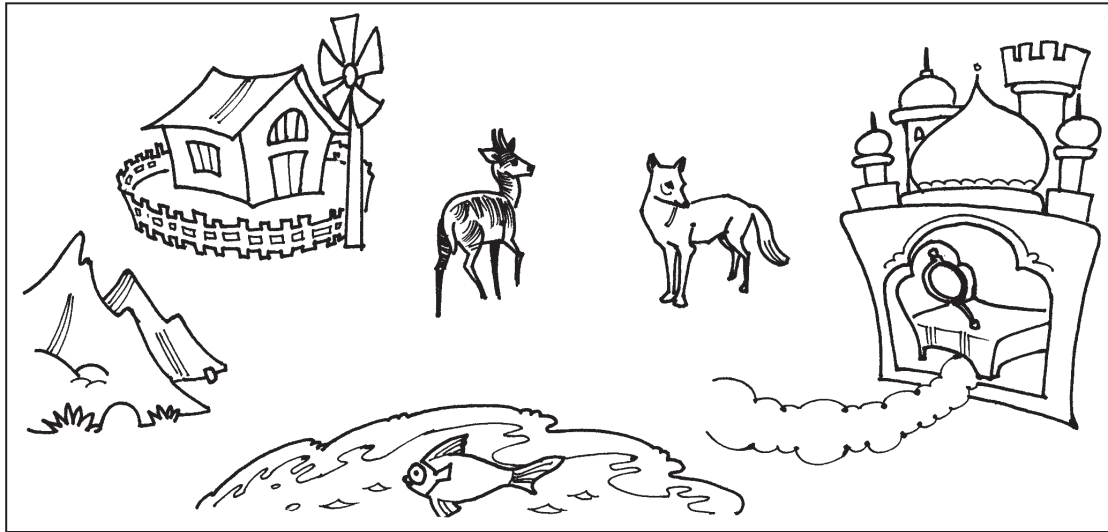
hides in a tunnel under the princess's bed

gets married to the princess

the princess accepts her defeat

goes to the fish for help

goes to the buck for help



II HOTS

Why did the princess allow the young man extra chances to hide himself?

III Life Skills

Given below are some adjectives. On the basis of your comprehension of the story, put these in appropriate boxes under suitable characters. You can also add some more adjectives.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------|---------|---------|
| clever | brave | cowardly | greedy | honest |
| kind | courageous | daring | jealous | helpful |
| intelligent | beautiful | cruel | wicked | |

the young man	his brothers	the three animals	the princess

Which of these qualities enabled the young man to succeed in life?

IV Values

- A. How did the young man's goodness fetch him support in the time of need?
- B. Have you ever helped anyone in distress? Get into groups of four. Take turns to describe how you helped the needy ones.

V Writing Skills

Imagine yourself to be a minister of the princess. Write a notice informing everyone about the strange condition laid down by the princess for her marriage.

About the Author

Shaharyar is a Pakistani diplomat born in the princely state of Bhopal in the pre-partition days. He has been associated with the Lahore University of Management Sciences. *The Helpful Young Man*, though written like a fairy tale, realistically depicts human nature and teaches great human values.

