

A Horse and Two Goats by R K Narayan: Summary & Analysis

Plot summary

The short story "A Horse and Two Goats" by R. K. Narayan is set in a fictional small Tamil village named Kritam where the protagonist of the story, Muni, lives. The village consists of less than thirty houses, mostly made of bamboo thatch, straw and mud. Only one house called the Big House, the house of the village chief, is made of brick and cement.

Once upon a time, Muni owned a herd of forty sheep and goats. But it is now reduced to just two goats. On the day of the story, Muni takes his usual breakfast of a handful of millet flour and then shakes down drum sticks from the tree in front of his house. When Muni expresses his wish for a drumstick sauce, his wife asks him to bring groceries like dal, spices, oil and potato. He goes to the village shop and makes all efforts to get these things in credit but fails. He comes back home to be humiliated further by his wife and takes the two goats and goes to a place in the outskirts of the village beside the highway to graze his goats.

Muni sits under the clay horse statue where he usually sits to protect himself from the sun and watches the trucks. That day he sees a yellow station wagon approaching. The wagon comes and stops in front of the statue. A red faced American, dressed in Khaki, gets out of the wagon and asks in English about the nearest gas station.

As the American notices the horse statue, he gets fascinated by it and starts a discussion with Muni. He offers Muni cigarettes and carries on with the funny conversation where the two of them do not understand each other – Muni speaking in Tamil and the American in English.

First Muni assumes the American to be a police man or a soldier and tries to defend himself by saying that he is not involved in the crime that has happened in the nearby village. Then as he finds the American to be friendly by his gestures, he carries on telling his story.

Muni ends up telling the stranger how cheetahs or jackals sometimes carry their cattle off. He also tells him that he never went to school, as in those days only Brahmins went to schools. He narrates how the temple priest can see in the camphor flame the face of the thief, and how at the end of the Kali Yuga, the world will be destroyed and the clay horse will come to life and trample down all bad men. Muni also expresses his grudge for the village chief who has gathered a lot of money.

The American also tells his own story of he being a businessman dealing in coffee and how one day he was forced to work for four hours in his office when there was no electricity or elevators. This incident made him curious to "look at other civilizations". So, he has come to India to see how people live here. He further adds that his wife has stayed back in Srinagar.

Thinking Muni to be the owner of the horse statue, the American offers a one hundred rupee note to buy it. Realising that some financial element has entered the talk, Muni thinks that the man wants to

buy his goats. In fact, he has always dreamt of selling his goats at a good price and setting up a small shop with the money someday. Muni is happy that he has sold his goat for one hundred rupees and the American is happy that he has bought the horse statue.

Muni comes back home to show the money to his wife. She does not believe that he has sold the goats for such a hefty price. She accuses Muni of theft. Her belief of Muni stealing the money gets even stronger when the two goats return home just afterwards.

A Horse and Two Goats – Commentary

R. K. Narayan in his short story "A Horse and Two Goats" has addressed many important social issues through the use of humour, instead of seriousness. Using the simplest of settings, Narayan has crafted a sensitive yet amusing story, rich in situational comedy.

The title of the story draws attention. By the title "A Horse and Two Goats", it seems like the horse was also a pet of Muni just like the two goats. But actually it was a clay horse statue. It didn't even belong to Muni. But due to the miscommunication, it happened so that the American bought the horse statue from Muni thinking him to be the owner. So, the horse statue served Muni more than his goats. Again, it was the horse statue which the man wanted to buy, but Muni thought that he was selling his goats. So the most amusing part of the story lies there in the confusion between the horse and the goats. So, from both the angles the title serves the purpose well.

The story is narrated in the third person narrative technique where narration and dialogues are well proportioned. The characterization of Muni, his wife and the American has been great. Narayan has spent just about the right amount of words on each of the important characters.²

The greatest themes in the story have been the theme of cultural clash between the East and the West, the theme of poverty and wealth, and finally the theme of knowledge and wisdom. Moreover, it has been a vivid portrayal of rural life in India with hunger and poverty, social classes and caste system, prejudices and superstitions.

"A Horse and Two Goats" is a short story written by acclaimed Indian writer R.K. Narayan. The story was first published in 1960 in the Indian newspaper The Hindu. It did not reach a broad international audience until it was published again in 1970 as the title story in Narayan's short story collection A Horse

and *Two Goats and Other Stories*. The story appeared for a third time in *Under the Banyan Tree*, another volume of Narayan's short stories published in 1985. Although the story was generally praised by critics, it is not one of Narayan's more well-known works.

The story takes place in Kritam, one of the smallest of India's seven hundred thousand villages. Despite its small size, the village has a grandiose name: Kritam means "crown" or "coronet" in the Indian language of Tamil. There are only thirty houses in the village, most of them simple thatched huts. The only sophisticated residence in the village is the Big House, a brick and cement building from whose well the local villagers get their water. Muni, an old goat herder, lives with his wife in one of the huts. He is the poorest resident of the village. Every day, he herds his flock of forty goats and sheep to the highway on the outskirts of the village and lets them graze as he sits and watches them.

One day, Muni picks some "drumsticks," or seed pods, from the tree in front of his home and asks his wife to cook them in a sauce for him to eat. Because of the couple's poverty, Muni's daily meals usually consist of only millet and an onion at lunch. Muni's wife agrees to make the sauce if he can get all of the necessary ingredients from the village shop: dhal, chili, curry leaves, mustard, coriander, gingelly oil, and a potato. Muni has no money to pay for the items, but tries to convince the shop owner to give them to him on credit by engaging in conversation and laughing at his jokes. However, the shop owner shows Muni a ledger of past debts that he owes, and says he must pay them off before he can apply for credit. Muni tells him that his daughter will give him some money for his fiftieth birthday, although he does not actually have a daughter. The shop owner does not believe him and says that he looks at least seventy.

Muni goes home and tells his wife to sell the drumsticks, since he could not get the ingredients for the sauce. He then takes his flock of goats and goes to the highway to let them graze as usual. While he is there, he sits on a pedestal at the base of a clay statue depicting a majestic horse and warrior. The statue had been there since Muni was a young child, and his grandfather had explained to him that the horse in the statue was a reference to the mythical horse Kalki, who according to Tamil legend will come to life when the world ends and trample all bad men. While Muni is sitting there, he sees a yellow station wagon coming towards him down the highway.

The car runs out of gas and comes to a stop on the road in front of the statue. A white foreigner gets out of the car and asks Muni in English whether there is a gas station nearby. However, Muni cannot communicate with him because he does not speak English and the foreigner does not speak Tamil. The foreigner, who tells Muni he is a coffee trader from New York, takes an interest in the statue and wants to buy it. He offers to pay Muni for the statue, thinking that it belongs to him. Muni does not understand what the foreigner wants, and initially mistakes him for a police officer, because he is dressed in khaki.

Muni believes the man had arrived to investigate a dead body that was found on the border between Kritam and a neighboring village a few weeks before. He tells him that he does not know anything about the incident and that the murderer probably lives in the other village.

The foreigner does not understand. He offers Muni some cigarettes, and explains that he and his wife, Ruth, decided to travel to India on vacation after a power failure in the Empire State Building forced him to work four hours without air conditioning on a hot summer day. Muni eventually realizes that the foreigner is interested in the statue, and starts explaining the statue's history and the legend of Kalki to him. He talks about the Hindi religion and asks the foreigner about his family while the latter tries to negotiate a price for the statue and says that it would look good in his living room. The conversation continues for a while before the foreigner gives Muni a hundred-rupee note and asks him to help move the statue to his car. Muni believes at first that the foreigner is asking him for change, and suggests that he go to the village money-lender. When the foreigner stoops down to pet some of his goats, however, Muni mistakenly believes that the man is giving him a hundred rupees to buy his flock. Elated, Muni accepts the man's money and leaves the goats behind for him.

Thinking Muni had agreed to sell him the statue, the foreigner flags down a passing truck and pays the men to help him detach the statue from the pedestal and move it to his car. He also pays to siphon off some of their gas so he can restart his engine. Muni goes home and shows his wife the hundred-rupee note, telling her that he received it from a foreign man who stopped to buy his goats. At that moment, however, the couple hears bleating outside their door and discover two of Muni's goats standing there. Muni is confused, while his wife suspects him of stealing the money, and says she will go to her parents' home because she does not want to be there when the police apprehend him.

The main themes of the story are culture clash, miscommunication, money, wealth, and poverty. Narayan contrasts Muni's impoverished but culturally rich lifestyle with the foreigner's materialistic worldview, in which everything may be bought and paid for. While the horse statue carries great cultural and religious importance for Muni's village, to the foreigner it is just a decorative item to serve as a talking piece during house parties.

What is the moral of the story a horse and two goats?

The story A Horse and Two Goats gives the message what happens when two people from different culture meet. One is the foreigner from New York while the other is Muni who can speak only Tamil and has never stepped out of his village Kritam. It is a sensitive but amusing story. The main theme of the story is culture clash.

What is the theme of a horse and two goats?

Culture Clash

The most important theme in "A Horse and Two Goats," and in fact the central theme of Narayan's work, is the clash of cultures, specifically the clash of Indian and Western cultures.

What is the main conflict in the story A horse and Two goats?

The major conflict of the story named 'A Horse and two Goats' is when the Farmer and the tourist (American) never speak with each other.

Due to the language barrier, the farmer could not understand what the tourist trying to say.

Also, the tourist could not make the farmer to understand, that he wants only the horse ad not the two goats. The American tourist failed to make the farmer understand his point of view.

Who is the main character in horse and two goats?

Muni

Characters. Muni is the main character of A Horse and Two Goats, and he's described to be very poor and very old farmer.

Who was the foreigner in horse and two goats ?

The foreigner was a tourist in india.He was rich American buisnessman who dealt in coffee.He was polite and courteous as he offered Muni a cigarette and though he did not understood Muni,he listened to him attentively.He came India because he wanted to know different and difficult lives of the people.

What did Muni say about the horse?

muni interprets the statue: " this is our guardian.....at the end of kali yuga, this world and all other worlds will be destroyed, and the Redeemer will come in the shape of a horse. " Hope it helps!!