

It is The Heart That is Important



Deepa Ramanathan

*Veeranari Chakali Illama Women's University,
Hydrabad, India*

The world is full of people who practise altruism. The general rule is the haves reaching out to the have-nots, or we can say the more fortunate ones reaching out to the not-so-fortunate ones. Having grown up and received my education in a middle-class family where I saw my parents struggle, I really envied some of my relatives who, at that time, to my eyes and heart, seemed to have it all. Though at a certain stage in my life the circumstances changed, my belief and “oh, poor me” attitude did not.

This story gently reminds us that generosity is not measured by what we have, but by what we are willing to share. In the smallest acts of kindness, we often discover the greatest lessons of humanity and compassion.

Life is a great teacher, and I learned a valuable lesson that is forever ingrained in my life—a lesson I would carry with me into my next birth, if at all there is one, and that too as a human being. I would like to share that experience with all of you here.

On a cold winter day (the cold winters of the capital city, New Delhi), I was waiting with my son for the school bus. A big park served as the backdrop, and a temple stood opposite it on the other side of the road. Outside the park, on the pavement, usually sat the not-

so-fortunate ones, who would be treated with different eatables (bread, biscuits, fruits, tea) and would get richer by a few coins given to them by the kind-hearted and generous people going in and coming out of the neighbourhood park and the temple. People would also show their affection towards a huge street dog that was a regular there. The dog was intelligent; he knew he would be treated to fine eatables without having to work too hard.

That day was no different. Though it was morning, it was still quite dark, and the street lights were illuminating the entire area. An old amma (old lady) came and occupied her space on the pavement. Their places were fixed—who would sit where—as if they owned that little place. A Samaritan came out of the temple with a big



sweet box. God would have fulfilled one of his demands from a long list of wishes and desires which, like Draupadi's sari, is unending. He opened the box; it contained ladoos, the sweetness filling the air and tickling my taste buds. In his magnanimity, he gave a piece of ladoo to the amma (how I wished he could have given me one), who gave him loads of blessings and wishes. The Samaritan smiled, happy that he had created a good deed, and walked away.

The true climax comes when the two old women, despite having almost nothing, break their own share again to feed the street dog, showing that compassion grows stronger when it is shared, not when it is kept.

Amma was jubilant. She opened her mouth to bite into that ladoo, and lo and behold, her companion, another amma, came there, grinning and greeting her friend with a toothless smile.

The first amma, the recipient of the ladoo, not wanting to eat alone, broke the ladoo in half and gave it to her friend. No sooner had they opened their mouths than the four-legged animal came there from nowhere, sniffing at the ladoo. And lo! What I saw was unbelievable. Both of them broke their ladoos further into halves and gave them to the dog. Now all three enjoyed their share of ladoo, leaving my son and me wonder-struck. My little son commented, "Ma, the old amma shared that one ladoo of hers with others." In my heart of hearts, I was thinking: had I been in that amma's place, I would have popped the entire ladoo into my mouth—not every day do I get to eat a ladoo.

Soon the school bus arrived and all the children boarded it. The bus left, and we walked back home. I was in a trance, too shaken by the incident. That day I learnt a very important lesson: for giving and sharing, you do not have to be the fortunate one—it is the heart that is important. Smiling and feeling very happy, I entered my home. I was enlightened.

