

The power of giving

My husband works for the Indian Army. This entails moving base, every two years or so, from one exotic locale to another; primarily small border towns. These frequent moves to nondescript towns make it very difficult for an army wife to pursue a career. So I remained a homemaker, until we



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A SELFLESS ACT OF GIVING,
WHILE HELPING SOMEONE
IN NEED, REPAYS US SEVERAL
TIMES OVER

by **Chitra Jha**

were posted to a city of opportunities, Hyderabad. I honed my dormant skills, underwent some training, and started working as a verbal ability and communication skills instructor for one of the leading MBA coaching institutes. I was thrilled beyond words with this newfound identity and economic freedom. I loved my work, and poured my heart into it; reaping immense benefits and popularity.

By the time I was entrenched in my

profession, it was time for our next move. My company has about 80 offices/ learning centres across India, and I was assured of a job wherever I went. That knowledge made me sit smug; I was a career woman now. In due course of time, my husband received his posting orders. We were moving to a beautiful place, Shimla, the queen of hills. I was happy about this move, but the only hitch was that my company did not have a centre in Shimla. Not only my company, but also none of the competitors had opened office there, because this erstwhile summer capital of British India does not have a thriving 'competitive' culture. Students who desire MBA coaching move out to the nearest city, Chandigarh, for it. I was disappointed, but tried to shrug it off by saying, "I am not a career person. I have enjoyed

sweet domesticity for so long. I shall enjoy it once again.”

Soon, I bid my farewells and reached Shimla. Now that I had tasted success at work, I decided to explore the work scene at Shimla. I found a small coaching centre, primarily focussing on engineering and medical entrance exams. I approached the owner with my credentials, and luckily for me, he smelt an opportunity. He started a ‘Spoken English’ batch of housewives for me on a profit-sharing basis. I was a working woman once again; feeling thrilled with life.

In Shimla, as in most other hill stations, almost everyone is a pedestrian. Since I do not drive, I felt very much at home with this walking culture. The walk to my work took about half an hour, and passed through a beautiful deodar/cedar forest. I loved this walk. I would feel so happy with life that I would smile at every passer-by. Most of them responded by smiling back. Soon it became a kind of game for me. I started enjoying exchanging smiles. It spread such good cheer. It was a very happy time for me.

One fine day, I was walking with my usual smile switched on, and broadening at every passing face. I spotted an old Himachali couple on the other side of the road. Himachali people dress very well; especially the old gentlemen are always dressed in an Indian bandgala jacket, trousers and ubiquitous Himachali cap. This gentleman too was dressed similarly. I beamed a smile at the couple, and the old man smiled back; a toothless grin. There was something very sweet about his smiling countenance. It warmed my heart. Suddenly, this man signalled me to cross over to his side of the road. I smiled and obeyed. He seemed to hesitate while speaking. I guessed that he needed some help. At close quarters, his clothes looked worn out. His wife too was looking at me with some apprehension in her eyes.

The old man asked, “Why did you smile at us?” I was taken aback by this

question, and replied gingerly, “I am God’s child, and so are you. God’s children must greet each other. I felt happy to see you, so I smiled.” He seemed satisfied with my answer and added, “You are a good woman. Would you help us?” I said, “Sure. What can I do for you?” My positivity encouraged him. He said, “We have come from Bilaspur, to meet a minister at the secretariat. Now our work is over and we need to return home. Unfortunately, I have lost my wallet, and we have no money to buy our return tickets. We haven’t even eaten anything since morning. If you can give us about hundred rupees, we shall be grateful.”

I didn’t even think twice before reaching out for my wallet. To my

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embarrassment I realised that I didn’t have a single hundred rupee note in my purse. Since there was no requirement for carrying any money on my daily commute, I had not checked my wallet in the morning. Sheepishly, I emptied my wallet, taking out all the notes and all the coins. By the cursory look that I took at the collection, I guessed that it would amount to about 90 rupees. I felt as though somehow I had let the old man down. With moist eyes I handed over all that money to him and said, “I am sorry that I do not have any more than this right now. Please forgive me.” The old man took the money with gratitude, and blessed me. His wife too beamed a toothy smile.

I walked on with a mixed bag of feelings. For a fleeting moment I wondered if it was a con story and I was duped.

The embarrassment of moving around with almost an empty purse lingered on for a while. But predominantly there was a feeling of freedom. I loved the fact that I didn’t hesitate before emptying out my little fortune. It was a great feeling. I had never done it before. I felt as though I had achieved some kind of liberation from attachment with money. I reached home with a spring in my step.

A real surprise awaited me at home. As usual, I switched on my laptop and opened my mail. There was a mail from one of my colleagues at Hyderabad, informing me that the head of academics of my company head office in Mumbai had been enquiring about me. She had thoughtfully sent me his contact number. I immediately dialled it. Lo and behold, I was being offered the opportunity to be part of a team, working on a new vertical of ‘communication enhancement’. It was a prestigious project, which involved conceptualisation, content writing, and launching of the product. A dream come true! Well, it was beyond anything I had ever dreamt about. They were offering me airfare, hotel stay, and money to boot.

I pinched myself. Was I dreaming? Then it dawned on me. I was being rewarded, a thousandfold reward, for my simple act of generosity that afternoon. The old man’s toothless grin flashed in my mind’s eye. Was he some kind of an angel? Aren’t we all angels in disguise? My faith in Divinity and the power of ‘giving’ took a quantum leap. I remembered something that I had read somewhere, “The nature of nature is ‘giving’. Since we too are part of nature, it is natural for us to give. Giving means sharing. No more, no less. When we give we are just being a channel for the flow of His grace; because he is the only Source of abundance on Earth.”

I felt grateful beyond words, tears welled up in my eyes, and I let them roll down. Tears of love, joy, faith and gratitude. ☺

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