

Seth Gopaldas Banarasilal and the Orphanage

In the good old days in India, people in general, and the merchant class in particular were quite pious and devout. They often sacrificed a certain portion of their accumulated wealth for the welfare of society. Seth Gopaldas Banarasilal however, was a different kind of merchant, who hailed from the small town of Rampur. He had a flourishing business of textiles and had amassed huge amounts of wealth. Yet, he possessed a track record of never giving even a single penny to anyone, much less, for any good cause. With time, his wealth kept on increasing as ever, but as destiny would have it, he developed many ailments of body and mind as he aged. He had severe ulcers, terrible health, mental depression, and a family full of turmoils. Shattered by all this, he consulted many physicians and health experts. But all in vain. At last, he ran into a noble person. 'You must have a lot of money and you must not be giving any charity' suggested the wise man. And thus arose his interest in philanthropy and acts of altruism.

He approached an orphanage, with a view to help them by his acts of charity and munificence. The director of the orphanage, Dr. Dinanath, a person of noble character and virtuous beliefs, was an intellectual and mathematician par excellence.

The Seth approached him and proudly asked – Sir, do you accept donations at your orphanage?

Dr. Dinanath replied – 'We do accept little donations and We are thankful to you for your support, Sir!'. 'But', he continued, 'We would be really grateful if you could help us by some work, rather than cash'.

'But, why?' 'What's wrong with monetary help' protested the surprised Gopaldas, who was taken aback at the answer.

But, the gentle mathematician replied with composure – 'Because *money brings in 'heat'*, enmity and turmoil. And a little extra wealth draws too much of unnecessary attention. We feel that extra money is identical to heat, and learn to be contented with little.

'Then, is there no way I can help?' asked the merchant.

'Of course, you can Sir! You can help us by doing some positive work for us. You can run fans and pumps in our orphanage or even help us by spinning the yarn or crushing the cattle fodder. In this way, you can do some work on our system and we will flourish.'

But Seth Gopaldas seemed inquisitive at the analysis of the mathematician. Dr. Dinanath continued – 'Gopalji, It is not difficult to work for us, actually. Just by entering into our orphanage itself, you have done some work for us.' Seth Gopaldas was literally amazed.

And what could fuel the mathematical nerve of Dr. Dinanath more than this? He had very carefully calculated the factors which led to the prosperity of his orphanage, and had developed a full-blown mathematical model around it – that included everything even to the minutest extent of opening and closing the orphanage doors. He began joyfully explaining:

Look, Gopalji, when you entered this gate, you have already made us flourish.

But how? The seth demanded an explanation.

It's simple. If you did not open the door, we would need to engage a labour to go and open the door every single time. You see, every positive work counts.' Said Dinanath

The seth seemed to understand. Well, he said – what a wonderful idea it would be: to come to your orphanage to see you and take a trip to the jungle through the back gate.

No, No, NO – said Dr. Dinanath. That door does not help.

But, what is the difference? Gopaldas interjected – 'These two doors are exactly identical.'

Apparently yes, said Dr. Dinanath. But, this time, A worker is required to close the door to prevent the wild animals from entering the orphanage. So, everytime you go out, you deplete us of our limited resources. Dr. Dinanath finally chuckled with a remark– '**For us, work is definitely a higher grade of contribution than the heat of money, Sethji**'.

Seth Gopaldas, who had always been proud of his money, realized that money certainly is not everything. To flourish, money alone may not be enough, rather a combination of money and useful work are required. As Dr. Dinanath had said, he too knew that many intellectuals actually value the contribution of work more. That day, he had literally met with a turning point in his life. The glimmer of money and wealth, which is what he had always lived for, seemed to fade away, as he was getting convinced – 'Money is identical to heat'. 'So true!', he thought, 'my own fate has seriously been molded by the same heat of money.'

Yet, inspite of all this internal tussle that he was going through, he seemed to be beaming with a purposeful smile at the discovery he had just made. Some positive work had to be done for this world.