

Gift of generosity

Generosity, in the proper sense of the word, is the virtue, which elevates us to do actions worthy of our kind, nature, descent, or origin, which is heavenly. Real generosity is doing something nice for someone who would never find it out. The selfless act of giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our mind to the unexplained world occupied by the needs of others...

Sanjeev Baitmangalkar

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give"
- Sir Winston Churchill

A fateful Sunday drastically changed my life. I was hit by a reckless rider. The accident confined me at home for the next several months. I had quite a lot of visitors every day in the hospital and later recuperating at home.

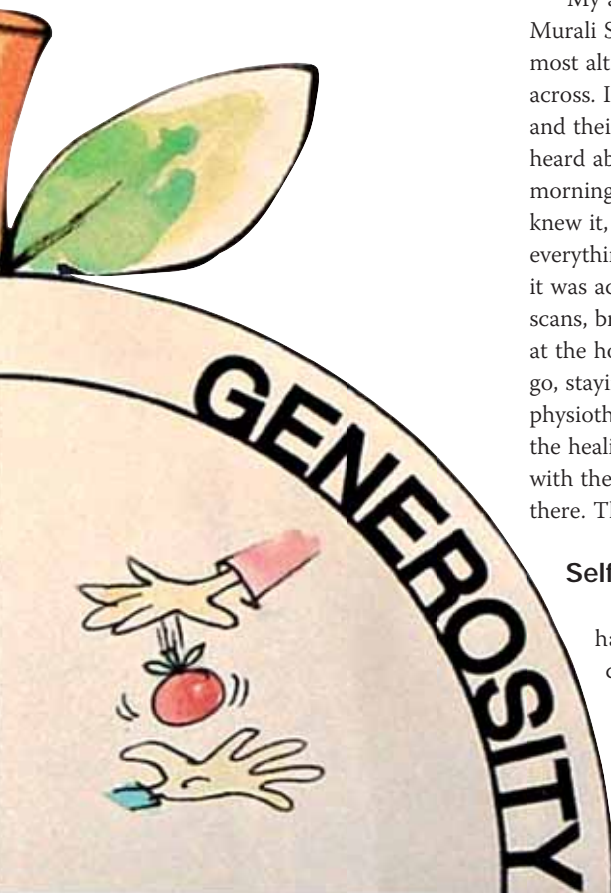
My accident brought me close to Murali Srinivasan and Satish Prabhu - two most altruistic people I have ever come across. I am blessed to know these two men and their human values. The moment they heard about my accident on that fateful morning, they rushed to my aid. And before I knew it, a system was in place to take care of everything that needed to be done. Whether it was accompanying me to the MRI's and scans, bringing food and medicines, staying at the hospital when the others had to go, staying with me through those painful physiotherapy sessions, taking me through the healing sessions or simply providing me with the moral support, they were always there. They were generous with their help.

Selfless service

John Bunyon once said, "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." If you sit down with people who exhibit such qualities and talk to them, you will discover many hidden nuggets of gold. One day Murali and his wife Bhagya were going for a walk. They saw a family on

the roadside, who hailed from Akola. The family had travelled to Tirupati and was robbed of all their belongings and money on their way. They landed in Bangalore because they were misguided on their journey back home. Being of rural decent and deprived of learning opportunities, they could only speak and understand Marathi. Somehow they walked to the streets of Bangalore begging to know if anyone understood their language, so that they could tell about their misfortune and ask for help to get back to their hometown. Imagine the horrifying time they had undergone - no money, food, and shelter. Their pilgrimage turned out as an ordeal. They asked every passerby, "Sir, do you speak Marathi?" They asked Murali and Bhagya too. "The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others," said Mahatma Gandhi. Unlike so many who shrugged them off, this couple turned around and said, "Yes, we do." Imagine the joy and hope that comes to one in such a situation. The family was simply overjoyed.

"Think of giving not as a duty but as a privilege," said John Rockefeller Jr. After listening to the woes and troubles of this family, Murali and Bhagya gave them a few thousand rupees and told them, "Now, you can go back to home, this money will pay for your tickets and all other expenses." "Generosity is not giving me that which I need more than you do, but



it is giving me that which you need more than I do," said Khalil Gibran. Generosity consists not the sum given, but the manner in which it is bestowed. Murali helped the family to reach station and board the train to return back. "The poor don't know that their function in life is to exercise our generosity," said Jean Paul Sartre. There is a thin line that divides the genuine from the fake or the phony. Gratitude is the virtue of the genuine. "Though we cannot read and write, but if you write down and give us your address, we will somehow see that this money reaches you back," said the family's head to Murali.

I don't know whether Murali and Bhagya practice the tithing concept or simply pay it forward. But, Murali simply asked, "Is there a temple in your village that you go to?" "Yes Sir, there is," replied the man. "Then, do not send the money back to us, just give it to that temple." And thus Murali and Bhagya with their generosity rekindled faith and hope in the hearts of this family by putting an end to their ordeal as they saw the family embark on their journey home.

"One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest," said Maya Angelou. It made me think what qualities make such human

beings. What qualities in Murali, Bhagya and Satish made their generosity possible? Good leadership and human qualities do not come with rank or recognition, designation or position, or with money. It works the other way around. A simple principle of leadership is, "Only way you can make life meaningful is by adding value to other

peoples' lives." And this is what I see Murali, Bhagya and Satish practice.

"Remember that there is no happiness in having or in getting, but only in giving. Reach out. Share. Smile. Hug. Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself," writes Og Mandino. Taking a leaf out of their lives, and learning from Murali and Satish, lets see how one can cultivate this quality of generosity:

Be grateful

It would have been hard for Murali or Satish to be generous if they were not satisfied with what they have. Generosity does not come out of acquiring more, but out of contentment. John Rockefeller once said, "I have made millions, but they have brought me no happiness." It's simple, if you are not content with little, you won't be with lots either. Where greed exists, generosity doesn't. If you are not generous with little, you won't suddenly change if you become wealthy.

Put people first

Once Murali's friend spoke about a couple whom he met at a chemist's shop. The couple had a fourteen-month-old child, who had fallen on a hot frying pan. The child's thighs burnt badly and his skin had peeled off, leaving the sight of raw flesh most painful even to see. Murali found out where they lived and did pranik healing for the baby. The baby recovered remarkably well. John Maxwell writes, "The measure of a leader is not the number of people who serve him, but the number of people he serves." Generosity requires putting others first. When you do that, giving becomes much easier. "Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world. So long as you can sweeten another's pain, life is not in vain," Helen Keller said.

Don't allow desire for possessions control you

"No person was ever honoured for what he received. Honour has been the reward for what he gave," said Calvin



Coolidge. I read this somewhere that people can be divided into three groups – the haves, the have-nots, and the have not yet paid for what they have. If you look around, you would find many people who are slaves to their desires to acquire more and more. Richard Foster writes about the idea of an illusion, “Owning things is an obsession in our culture. If we own it, we feel we can control it; and if we can control it, we feel it will give us more pleasure.” Murali and Satish’s lives convey the message to all of us that- “If you want to be in charge of your heart, don’t allow possessions to take charge of you.”

Regard money as a resource

Wake up to the fact that when it comes to money, one can’t win. And here is why;

- If you focus on making it, you’re materialistic
- If you try to but don’t make any, you’re a loser
- If you make a lot and keep it, you’re a miser
- If you make it and spend it, you’re a spendthrift
- If you don’t care about making any, you’re not ambitious
- If you make a lot and still have a lot when you



Satish Prabhu



Murali Srinivasan & Bhagya

die, you’re a fool for trying to take it with you.

Now that’s tricky isn’t it? So what can one do with money then? Consider holding it loosely and be generous with it to accomplish things of value. “Money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. If it gets on top and you get under it, you will become a slave,” said E Stanley Jones, the theologian who is said to have spent much time with the Mahatma.

Develop the habit of giving

Both Murali and Satish, as I know them, give away lots of books on personal growth, and those who read them benefit immensely. ‘The Gospel of Wealth’ was an essay written by Andrew Carnegie (the industrialist who donated money and books to set up libraries all over America) in 1889 that described the responsibility of philanthropy by the new upper class of self-made rich. He said that the life of a wealthy person should have two phases: one that of acquiring wealth and the other that of redistributing it. How does one maintain the habit of generosity? By cultivating the habit of giving – be it your attention, time, money, or resource. “Just the very act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, does something within us. It destroys the demon of greed,” writes Richard J Foster. If you are enslaved by greed, you cannot lead.

So, are you a generous leader? A generous leader continually looks for ways to add value to others, do you? A leader gives money to something greater than himself, do you? To whom are you giving your time? Is it for your own ulterior or monetary benefits, or for their cause? Are you helping those who cannot give you anything in return or help you? One takeaway from Murali’s story for me is ‘You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.’ Maxwell writes, ‘If you are not giving in the small areas of your life, you’re probably not as generous a leader as you could be.’

How can one improve on generosity? There are a few suggestions to consider:




Give something

“When you become detached mentally and concentrate on helping others with their difficulties, you will be able to cope with your own more effectively. Somehow, the act of self-giving is a personal power-releasing factor,” writes Norman Vincent Peale. Bhagya gave away whatever money she had at home to that family from Akola to help them out. It would have been easy for her to walk past without a thought. Give away something you value to someone who could benefit from it and someone you care about. Find out what kind of hold your possessions have on you. Anonymity might even be better.

Let your money work

Love is one treasure that multiplies by division. It is the gift that grows bigger the more you take from it. It is business in which it pays to be an absolute spendthrift. You can give it away, throw it away, empty your pockets, shake the basket, turn the glass upside down, and tomorrow you will have more than ever. If you know someone with a vision to impact the lives of others, provide him with the resource. Put your money to work for something that will outlive you.

Plan your succession

I learned a lot from Sukharamwala who was my boss. He once told me, “If you want to move higher, make yourself obsolete in your present job,” an advise I never forgot. It is like letting go to move on. Once you attain a certain level in leadership, find the right potential to pass on the baton. Invest time and effort in making other people as better leaders. “There is a wonderful mythical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life - happiness, freedom, and peace of mind - are always attained by giving them to someone else,” said Peyton Conway March. Eleanor Roosevelt once quoted, “Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give.” 



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