**THANKSGIVING**

“DON’T JUDGE MY PATH IF YOU HAVEN’T WALKED MY JOURNEY.”

I looked at Sameer with utter amazement. I just couldn’t believe my eyes.

Yes it was Sameer himself. He was working here at the Honda Service Centre, assisting the technicians with the motorbike servicing.

Sameer was not an automobile engineer not even a mechanic . He was just a helper. He had very little knowledge of nuts and bolts. Of course he had a lot of perseverance and surely a deep hope for a bright future.

I know Sameer as a young boy in the school for Special children.

Yes, Sameer was one of them; no one would have liked to be his friend, he was a restless child, with impaired speech, always shabbily dressed, clumsy and ready to fight for the slightest reason.

Few days in the beginning, I too kept a little aloof from him, could not see any hope in his improvement. May be I never made an attempt to know him, understand him and accept him as he was. Till one day his previous teacher told me his shattering story.

Sameer was a victim of Mental Retardation from birth. And to add to it , he had lost his mother when he was eight. Unable to take care of him and his two brothers, his father thought it wise to marry again.

But from that day started his ordeal. His step mother used to humiliate him calling him insane and even physically abuse him. His world was shattered beyond comprehension. He was too traumatized to live a normal life. Slowly , his mental health worsened.

The school for Special children was a ray of hope for him. For two years he tried to cope up with very little improvement. But all the teachers continued to take care of him , motivated him and helped him to stand on his own feet. I tried my best to understand his limitations ,his fixations ,his frustration and outburst. My care and appreciation for all the little tasks he performed slowly boosted up his morale.

At the age of eighteen he was shifted to the Vocational Training Centre, of the same school. Here he gained a life of dignity, he was good at his work , slowly he started taking interest in his personal grooming, his clothes, and overall appearance. I made it a point to see him regularly and make him feel that I cared for him.

He had become a presentable young boy now.

When he saw me, he hurriedly came to me, with his face lit up with joy and happiness. Still Sameer cannot speak. But he can hear and understand.

“I am so proud of you Sameer “

He had volumes to speak , but couldn’t, but I… I surely read it all in his grateful eyes, I knew what he wanted to say, understood what he wanted to express.

His journey was indeed long and weary, I wish I could shorten it for him; however I had tried my best to walk a few steps along with him.

He bowed down and touched my feet , I gently touched his head ,lifted my eyes to the heaven and said a small prayer of thanksgiving.

**Curie Pereira**