



Jyoti's Light

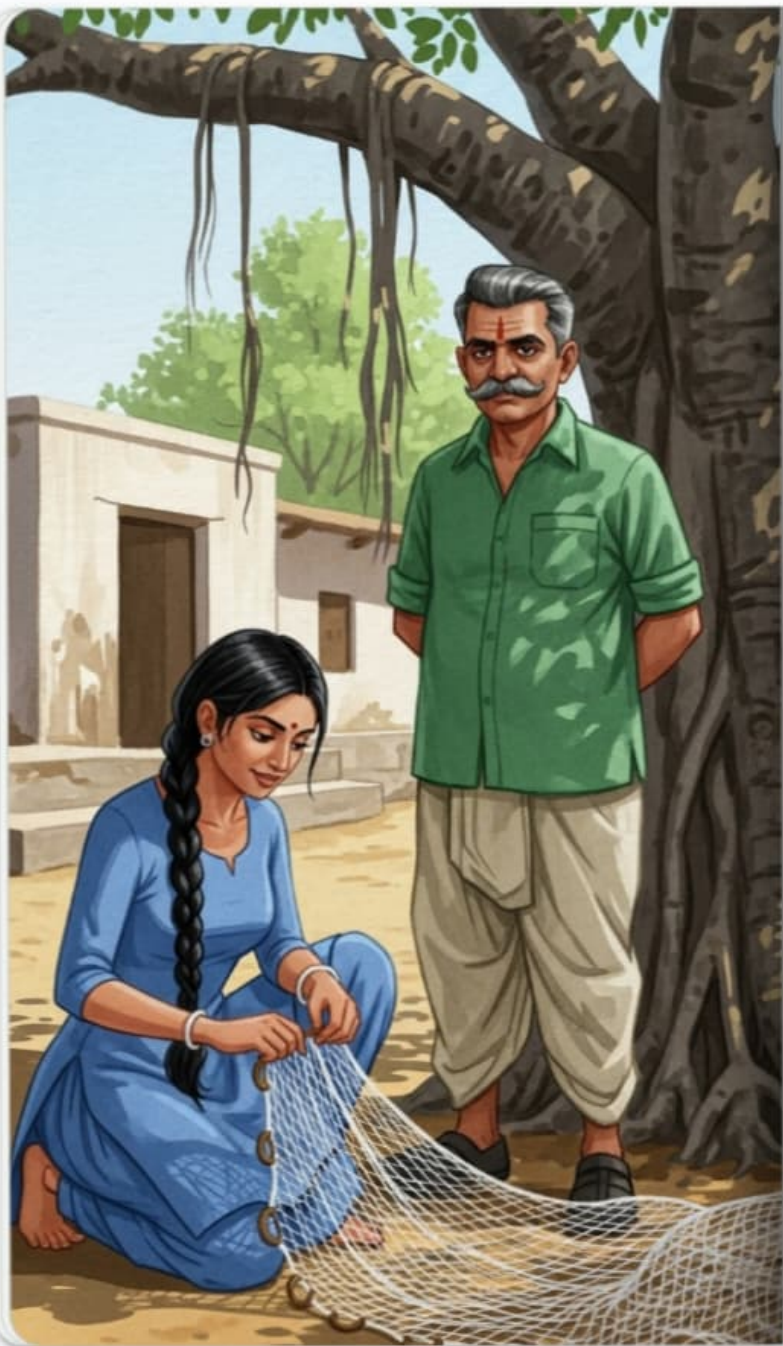
By Sudhir K



In a bright village in Bihar, nestled beside fields of green, lived a woman named Jyoti. Her name meant 'light,' and her smile was as warm as the morning sun. She loved her village and all the busy, colorful life happening around the well and the market.



But Jyoti carried a special kind of light, too. Every morning, before the rush began, she would sit quietly with her worn book, reading the stories of Jesus. His words gave her peace and a strong, quiet courage. This was her secret joy.



Not everyone understood Jyoti's light. One afternoon, while she was helping a neighbor mend a fishing net, a stern-faced man named Raghu glared at her from the shade of the Banyan tree. He believed her new faith brought discord to the village.



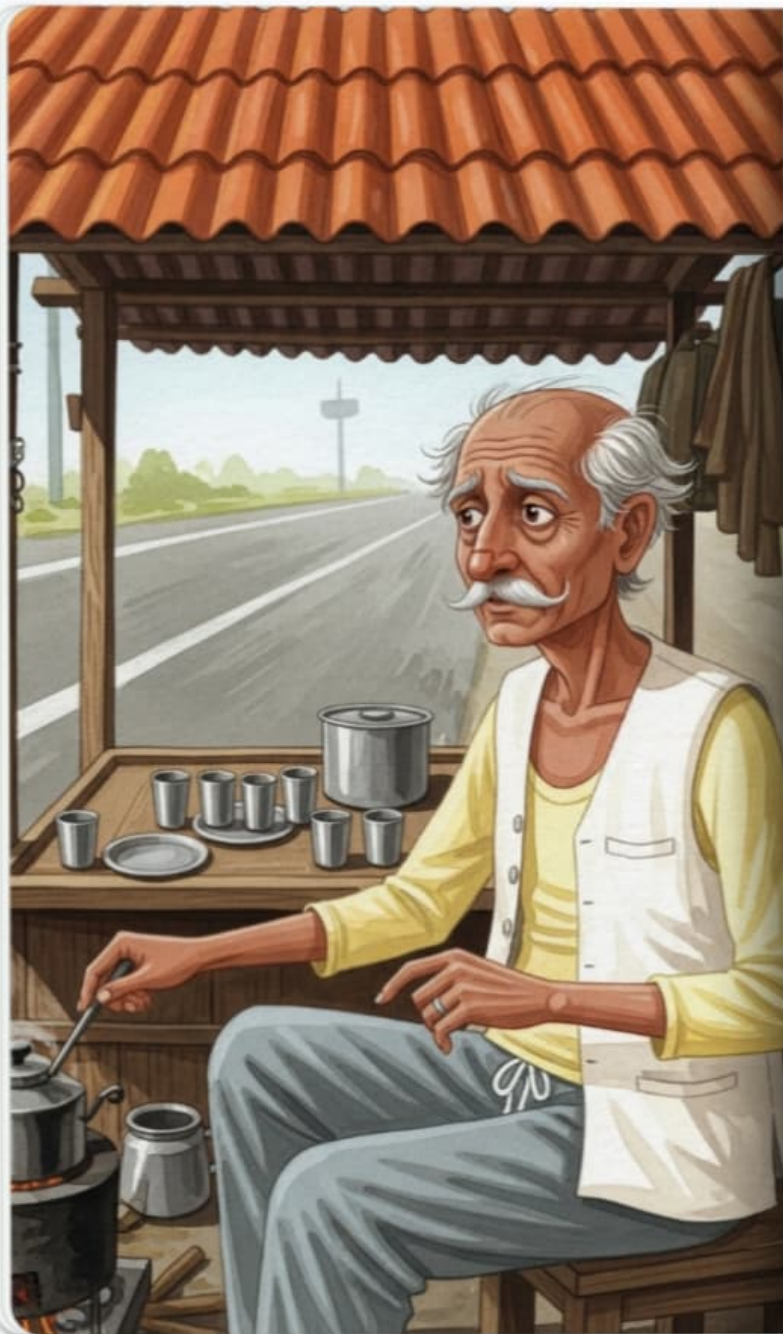
"Jyoti," Raghu later demanded, standing in her doorway, "this new path must end. Your beliefs are confusing the children and upsetting the old ways. You must leave this Jesus." Jyoti looked at him, her quiet courage shining brightly.



"Raghu ji," she replied softly, "I cannot. My heart finds peace in this path, and it teaches me only to love and serve." The next day, when she went to the village well, a thick rope was tied across the path. "No water for those who walk against us," a voice shouted from a distance.



Jyoti didn't argue. Instead, she took her empty pots and walked an extra mile to a distant hand-pump, her feet kicking up dust on the lonely road. She was tired and thirsty, but she hummed a tune of hope as she worked.



An older man named Hitesh, who kept a small tea stall by the main road, watched her pass every day. He wasn't Christian, but he knew cruelty when he saw it. He remembered how Jyoti had once nursed his sick goat back to health.



One evening, the persecution grew worse. A handful of young boys, egged on by Raghu's harsh words, sneaked into Jyoti's little garden and trampled her small harvest of tomatoes and chilies. When Jyoti saw the destruction, a single tear tracked down her cheek.



Hitesh saw the boys running away. He put down his chai ladle and walked quickly to Jyoti's home. "Jyoti," he said, standing beside her, "your faith is your own business. But your kindness to this village is our business. This stops now."



Hitesh didn't change his religion, but he changed his actions. He brought Jyoti a handful of new seeds and sat with her while she began to replant her garden. Others saw Hitesh's simple, honest courage. The ropes around the well soon loosened, and though the path was still sometimes difficult, Jyoti's light shone even brighter, reflected now in the kindness of a friend.

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