

Everyone wants to go to heaven, but are there any volunteers.

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give”

– Winston Churchill

There was a man, very honest and hardworking, but poor. His work ethics however brought results. Slowly and steadily his fortunes rose and he became the wealthiest man in the entire surroundings. During this entire period, however, he maintained his honesty, never cheating or swindling anyone. He was always true to his word.

Finally the time came and hero of our story passed on. He found himself standing in front of Chitragupt (Divine Accountant). “You have lived a very honest life and never succumbed to the temptations when you were poor. You rightly deserve a place in Heaven” said Chitragupt. “Let me show you your lodging place”. Chitragupt drove him through the clouds. On each cloud there was a mansion, with the size of mansions increasing as the moved on. Chitragupt kept on orienting him “Mr. Gupta lives in that yellow mansion”. “Is it the same Mr. Gupta who worked as a manager in my company?” asked the man. “Yes. And that blue mansion of high cloud belongs to Mr. Sharma” replied Chitragupt. “Is it the same Mr. Sharma from my town, who did small contracting work for my company?” asked the man. “Yes” was the answer. And they moved on.

Our hero was getting very excited, dreaming about his mansion. “All these lesser mortals (while they were working for him) have mansions. I will have a palace. Or maybe they will just make me the king of heaven.” His chain of thought was disturbed by a sudden stop in front of a small hut. “Who lives here?” inquired the man. “That will be your place of stay” announced Chitragupt. “There has to be mistake! Don’t you know I was the wealthiest man in the entire region?” the man protested.

“Well this is what we could afford in whatever you sent us during your mortal life on earth” was the simple reply.

Whether this is a true story or not, we will never find out. But the underlying message is very clear. We have the option to live a selfish and empty life or a caring and fulfilled life. You may say that I am a self made man who never care about anybody else and I live a fulfilled life. If that is your deal then so help you God, this article is not for you. This article is about making a difference in other’s life by extending yourself.

It is part of every religion to share what you have with the have nots. As a Hindu, we have extra responsibility of giving *sensibly*. We will briefly cover what giving sensibly means as opposed to just giving.

As per our scriptures a Hindu should divide his income in 6 equal parts. 1st share is for the God, 2nd for the King (Taxes), 3rd for savings and rest is to be used for sustenance. God gets 1st share not the last or whatever remains. Philosophy is let God have the 1st share and you have what is left. By doing that we are putting God in our debt, and he will give us a fulfilling life. Objection can be that the king takes more than one share. That is

true but since god gets 1st share, king's extra comes out of the sustenance part. Having said that I know sometimes it is not possible to give one 6th part of income. Particularly when average American spends 104% of his income, which means an ever increasing debt. We can start small. It is not only money that a person can give. We can give our time too. We can share our special skills.

As Hindus our responsibility is to give *sensibly*. What would really constitute as “given to God”? Does giving money to priest is a gift to God? We do need Temples as a place of Satsang (Congregation). We also need priests to take care of Temples and to perform various Samsakaar. We also need people dedicated to spiritual study to maintain our values. Full time priests need money to sustain them and their family. They should be able to live a decent lifestyle. Money is needed for building and maintaining temples. Something given to fulfill this goal is a gift to God. However, most of the time priests and spiritual gurus take this too far exhorting money via spiritual blackmail. Gifts given to priests and spiritual gurus with huge bank balances, enjoying lavish lifestyles driving Rolls Royce is not a sensible giving. When a priest gives a long list of things to perform *Puja*, he does not want it for God, he wants it for himself.

Helping sick people who can not afford medicare is sensible giving. Helping invalid and old people is sensible giving. But one should be careful when helping an able bodied poor. This could be an act of sin. A Chinese proverb “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for life.” should be the guideline. Gift of education is the biggest gift of all and is most sensible giving. Help poor kids or adults get educated and we will make this earth a better place to live in.

Everyday several thousands kids are born. On the other hand everyday several thousand complete their life journey and pass on. A lot is said about the person passing on for a few days. Lot of things, some true, some exaggerated, some completely false. After a few month no one remembers this great person, maybe except the immediate family and too because they are missing the income provided by the person, more than the person himself. A few people other than the immediate family will however remember. These are the people who are better off because this person made a positive impact in there life. Will there be anyone claiming that they are better off because of you? It is up to you.

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