

LET US THINK ABOUT OTHERS

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I am deeply touched by an unforgettable experience. The location was the Vadilal Sarabhai Hospital of Ahmedabad. To be more precise the place was the entrance of the casualty ward where patients with emergency are admitted. Usually in the early mornings the place is quiet and empty. But on that March 31 the place became alive when an ambulance brought four victims of a jeep accident including me. There were an old woman, two youth and I. The attendants and nurses carried the three people in stretchers and they put me on a wheel chair and took us into a room.

Like other patients I too had no outward wounds. Other patients had broken limbs or perhaps internal problems. Obviously their conditions were more serious than mine. So when the Doctor came to me first, perhaps I was well dressed, I got the three patients to be examined first and admitted them to the casualty ward of the hospital. After examining me the Doctor said that my pain in the back and abdomen may be caused by hair-thin fracture and he advised me to take an X-ray to make sure of any internal injury and he gave some instruction to the nurse sister. The nurse with the note of the Doctor for X-ray took me to a clerk in a close by room. The clerk made some entry in a book and gave me a bill for Rs.35/=.

My purse in a brief case was in the jeep at the site of the accident. I had no money on me to pay the bill! Nobody has yet reached the hospital hearing about my accident. But the clerk began to shout at the top of his voice. "Why didn't you tell me if you have no money to pay the bill? If you have told me that you have no money with you, I would not have written the note to take X-ray and made the bill! Now what you know? You have put me in great danger. If you do not pay the bill, I could loose my job!" the air was filled with the shouting of the clerk.

I was in a dilemma: what to do and what not to do! Then, a poorly clad man appeared there from nowhere and held a Rs.100/- note to the clerk and stopped his shouting.

Thinking to return the money-by-money order I asked the man his name and address. "You don't need to return the money", the man said and went away from there without giving his name or address. There I have noticed close to me two police constables and in the next open room a doctor and a nurse. But I had no idea from where the man came and where he went. To me that a man was my guardian angel sent by God.

That unknown man was my second guardian angel who came to any rescue that day within 45 minutes. My first guardian angel that day came to my rescue at the site of the accident.

All of a sudden an old lady with a lunch box ran in front of my jeep to catch a bus coming from the opposite direction. To save the old woman I took a right turn crossing the road divider. Then to save an auto coming on the road I crossed the road hitting a barbershop on the roadside. Seeing my jeep crossing the road in front the auto rickshaw coming in full speed must have put sudden brake and I saw it turning over twice upside down. I must have hit the old woman. I saw her lying on the roadside. The auto-driver and his passenger with vegetable bundles were also wounded.

'Jesus, save me' I said automatically and got out of my jeep putting off the ignition switch. With the sudden impact of my jeep my back and abdomen were paining and I sat there on the roadside where I got out of the jeep. Sitting there I tried to stop two-three cars waving my hand and shouting. No vehicle stopped as the wounded people and my jeep was off the main lane. In no time a crowd gathered "please stop some vehicle and take us to a hospital", I pleaded with the crowd around me. There a middle-aged woman in salwar-kamis pointed to me and said to the crowd. "It is no fault of this uncle! It is no fault of this uncle! It is that old woman who ran across the road and this uncle tried to save her!"

Hearing the woman repeat the same thing to the crowd, I asked the strange-looking woman what was her name. She took her name two-three times but I could not get it. Seeing my perplexed look, she said again. "My name is Janabbibi. I am a Muslim woman". That woman's words have very good effects on the crowd. Seeing my effort to stop one or other passing vehicle one man said to me: "Bhai (brother), you don't worry. We are calling an ambulance. Another man brought me a glass of water. It brought solance and relief to my parched throat. A third man then took the telephone number my residence, Premal Jyoti and went away to phone.

When I took in everything, my heart was filled with gratitude to God and the crowd around me. If the woman, Janabbibi has not protected me with her words, the crowd, as happen in all accident sites would have thrashed me as the driver of the vehicle involved in the accident without caring what actually happened. The crowd at an accident site usually beat up the driver irrespective of he is at fault or not. But thanks to God, it did not happen in my case. Just the opposite happened. The people at the site of the accident help me in all way possible.

Within six weeks all the injured got well and went home from the Vadilal Hospital including the old fragile woman. But whenever I think of the accident and of Janabbibi and the unknown and helpful man at the hospital cash-counter, I see in them the Good Samaritan in the parable of Jesus in the Gospel.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is narrated by Luke in the Gospel and is very famous. A Samaritan traveller going from Jerusalem to Jericho fell into the hands of robbers. "The robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side. In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side. But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him', he told the innkeeper, 'and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.'" (Luke 10, 30-35)

In the parable the priest and deacon saw the traveller lying half-dead on the roadside. I do not wish to hang them for not caring for the traveller. I believe that both of them were good people like you and me. Perhaps they must have been in a hurry. They must have been concerned to reach on time at their destination, perhaps for a Church ceremony or at some public function just on time. Perhaps they might be habituated not to meddle in the affairs of other people. Perhaps

they were afraid of police harassment needing to climb the high court premises several times unnecessarily. Whatever is the case, I count them among most ordinary people.

But the case of that Samaritan man stands out from most ordinary people. When others think about themselves, the Samaritan man thinks about others. He thinks about those confronting difficulties. The concern for others makes him to take concrete steps to help those in need. The Samaritan man goes to save the helpless man whom the robbery left half dead. He takes him to an inn without caring for himself. He spends his time and money to save the wounded victim of a highway robbery!

That clerk in the Vadilal Hospital has thought about himself and his security. His concern was only to save himself. Without paying his bill, I was a troubleshooter for him. So I became the victim of his anger and shouting. But that poorly dressed man had become a Good Samaritan for me! Seeing my difficult situation, on his own initiative he took out money from his pocket and paid the clerk! By his generosity and kindness he showed that he was a person for others. He proved himself a person who thinks about others.

Many people saw the jeep accident on the National Highway Number 8 in the outskirts of Ahmedabad city. There were huts of slums on both sides of the road and many people were up at that early morning hours. But there was only one Janabbibi who proved herself a person for others. She showed that she is a good neighbour to the person in need of help. She came to the rescue of the driver, which is me, whose jeep was involved in an accident.

Many people have surrounded me at the accident sight seeing the wounded persons. But seeing my helpless and my innocence Janabbibi had come to my rescue. She saved me. She was not afraid of the threatening crowd. She did not think about herself that what would happen to herself if she dared to defend the driver who was the occasion for a major accident. She did not think how the crowd would behave towards herself. She was herself a person for others. So she declared courageously what she has seen: "The accident is not the fault of this uncle at all."

"Who is my neighbour?" A lawyer had asked the question to Jesus and he had answered the lawyer with a parable. At the end of the parable the lawyer drew his conclusion that the Samaritan who helped the half dead person lying on the road was the real neighbour to him. Then Jesus said to him, "You go, then, and do the same" (Luke 10, 37).

Jesus has thus given the message to people to think about others and not of oneself. He has not only given the message but he has also given the example of himself. We can take just one example of his life.

Once Jesus was touring with his disciples on the other side of River Jordan. Then, he got the message that his friend Lazarus was sick in Judea. Two days after receiving the message Jesus said his disciples. "Let us go back to Judea". But his disciples objected, "Teacher, just a short time ago the people there wanted to stone you; and are you planning to go back?" (John 11, 7-8).

Jesus is a teacher always thinking about others. So Jesus even fearing the danger to his own life goes to Judea with firm resolve and determination to his friend Lazarus. There meeting the two

sisters Mary and Martha grieving at the death of their brother Lazarus, Jesus works a miracle. Jesus brings back to life Lazarus who has died and buried for 3 days.

Jesus has always gone to the rescue of others without being concerned about himself. The Gospels says, "Jesus went around doing good to other people." The four Gospels have narrated many instances in which Jesus without caring for the thirst and hunger or the hot and cold weather went around caring and thinking about other people.

Jesus did not deviate from his determined path even when his detractors, the Pharisees and lawyers were trying to do away with him for curing a polio-affected hand breaking the Sabbath law of rest and no work. He always lived for others. He cured sick people and gave sight to the blind. He went about doing good for all people. Taking note of all these activities of Jesus the Evangelist Mathew wrote, "Large crowds followed him. He healed all those who were ill and gave them orders not to tell others about him" (Mt. 12, 15-16).

Coming to my rescue at the right time that poorly dressed man and the Muslim woman Janabbibi walked the path of Jesus without knowing it and they too like the Good Samaritan have set an example for all of us to follow. They tell us anew the command of Jesus "Go, you too do likewise". Come on, let us think about other.