



The Guilt Is Alive

Hemalatha Gnanasekar

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Long ago, when life began, our species survived by reacting instantly to the threats. The ancient humans who stopped to smell the roses became easy targets for predators. Today, the predators are mostly gone, but we are still so primed to pay attention to bad news and tend to ignore the good things happening around us. Sivadoss, my father belonged to this very category. He was a grumbler and kept complaining constantly about one thing or the other. He failed to count his blessings and would rather count his problems. He was blessed with five children, three sons and two daughters and I happen to be the eldest of them. Being his loving daughter, I would make an all out effort to solve all his problems, whatever it be. However, father would take the progress for granted and find a new cause for alarm. After his retirement, when he was finding it difficult to make both ends meet, he took a drastic decision in his life. He wanted the eldest of his three sons Sampathkumar to go abroad for a job and support him financially. When he divulged this fact to me, I set about the task in good earnest and wished to fulfill his desire. My brother on the other hand was a man of temper. First, he expressed his disinterest in leaving the family and second he was not willing to pay through his nose to the international recruiting agencies as bribes to get a job. With my prayers, I succeeded in changing his mind. Very soon, he also got a job offer in Jamaica. It was from an Indian, Narayanan, settled in Jamaica. He did not charge any recruitment fee and was also willing to pay for his air-tickets. On reaching Jamaica, my brother realized that he had been duped. He was not given the promised job. He had a tiff with his boss and left the company. Suddenly he finds himself on the streets, penniless. I was gripped with an acute feeling of guilt, for it was me, who had coaxed him to accept the job and leave the country. Shocked beyond belief at the plight my brother had landed himself, I now felt that it was my responsibility to bring him back to India. The letter was the only means of communication then and with less access to phones, it took me nine long years to achieve this goal. It was at this time when I was rejoicing at the reunion and thought that I was at last free from the guilt feelings that had been plugging me for nine long years that the tragedy struck. I was shattered and my life will never be the same again. If only my father had not been too ambitious or dependent on his son! If only I had not taken my father's grumblings too seriously! If only I had not clung to my vow of non-interference ! The guilt feelings continue. The guilt is alive. Only this time, there is no way that I would recover..... The book offers many lessons which are universal in nature. First, it teaches a lesson to the over-ambitious parents who depend too much on their children for support or rather expect too much from their children. Besides, it teaches the younger generation as to how the negative traits like ego, pride, revenge and short temper could actually destroy your life. And last but not the least, it teaches a lesson to the exclusive children of the world who are so naive and wish to live up to their parents' expectations, without weighing the pros and cons and try to please them, no matter what....! The book no doubt would stir up various emotions in the minds of the readers and make them ponder over the pointless life and our helplessness in it.

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