



Short Story

(25)

Wistful Pilgrimage

-By Surendra Gandhi

Pursuit of happiness comes not from getting something we don't possess, but rather FROM RECOGNIZING AND APPRECIATING WHAT WE DO HAVE. Owning more and pursuit of more is not the road to lasting happiness and harmony in life. The only thing that can bring happiness to anyone is his own self. Usually crisis of a serious nature brings about significant changes in one's life. We need to refine our understanding of happiness so that we can really improve the quality of our interaction with loved ones and establish a healthy environment to nurture the family as a whole for generations to come.

Abhijit and Nandita are at a cross roads of their lives. They have been married for over forty years. They are the proud parents of two grown children. One is a doctor and the other is a History professor. Both have nestled away and are raising their own families. Abhijit and Nandita worked in brokerage house in Wall street. Then one day all of a sudden the rug was pulled from under when their employer filed for bankruptcy.

Along with their jobs they also lost their retirement money. The serious financial problems they faced invaded every aspect of their lives. Finding a decent job was hard. The unemployment check could barely keep them afloat. Their house was paid but not their vacation home in Upstate New York. They tried their best to find solutions to their problems but continued to hit walls.

The stress was overwhelming their marriage as well. The frustration of unemployment and a sense of unhappiness with life itself was too difficult to handle. They knew their life style and spending habits were under assault but did not know how to make the adjustments. They could not soothe their anxiety to reduce their misery. They did not wish to burden their children either. They lived in the lap of luxury and in an orgy of consumerism. They were like millions living on borrowed money to acquire more than they needed to buy material happiness.

Abhijit and Nandita knew that the time of personal reckoning had come and to change their attitude towards money, material wealth as well as their life style. They could not live in denial, they have to learn to navigate to a new path of hope and

happiness. All of a sudden they knew that this crisis also brought a great opportunity to salvage their lives, their marriage and happiness. They could not afford to wallow in their problems and fail to see a chance for something meaningful in the situation.

They learned to live on less. They saw themselves in the new reality which was far removed from their past. They saw no need to keep up appearances. They wanted no erosion of their marriage and family. They had to adjust to live a life of abundance on less. They also stopped measuring their success in terms of their possessions and financial status. They knew that status symbols were not essential for happiness. In short they learned to live a life of abundance on less in a manner that did not make them miserable. On the contrary the changed mind set brought them a sense of calm, a true personal identity and happiness.

The pilgrimage through life is a constant learning process and the best source of a healthy happy life is in the following lesson. Love what you possess, procure what you need and be happiest with the quality of what you have and not the quantity. ■

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