



SAINTHOOD (Short Story)

Mamta Sharma

Asst. Professor, Department of English
Ansal Technical Campus, Sushant Golf City
Lucknow (UP)

**“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.”**

‘Robert Frost’

I love the above stanza which I have extracted from the poem ‘Stopping by the Woods’ written by Robert Frost, a well-known American poet. The poem is about how the poet reminds himself of his duties over the worldly beauty. If we all have the sense of our duties...no pleasure or enjoyment can drift us from our path of ‘Karmas’. However in this insensitive and materialistic world which is full of selfish, practical and self-centered people, we hardly find anyone, who renders his service and affection to others selflessly. Yet there are still people around us, who keep themselves detached even leading to a life in this materialistic world and their perceptions are beyond religion, race, caste and creed as they believe in humanity. Though a very few in number, yet they exist and what I feel that the goodness prevails because of them only. However their deeds remain unrecognized many a time, but they keep working silently and continue to head on the self-carved path, which leads them to sainthood.



Now let me introduce KAKU whose character encouraged me to write this story. He is a retired Public Works Department employee who lives in my neighborhood with his simple and homely wife. The childless couple seems to be made for each other. Kaku, the embodiment of simplicity, is a scraggy and feeble old man, always attired in a white kurta- pyjama, with a sleeveless jacket and a Gandhi cap on his head. There seems nothing extraordinary in this story but there is a magnetic power in Kaku, which is because of his goodness.

My morning is never fulfilled without getting his blessings in the response of my 'Namaste' to him. But since past few days, I didn't see him. This made me utterly perturbed. So after entire one week passed, I decided to visit his house. I bonged the doorbell and after few minutes there came Kaku's frail wife with a familiar smile on her face. I smiled back and asked her where Kaku was since I had not seen him for the past one week. She ushered me to his room where he was lying on an old charpoy. He had not been feeling well because of biting cold of Lucknow. I was thankful to God to know that there was nothing to worry and he was down with fever only.

So Kaku is such a person whose heart flows with the immense love for humanity and all the other creatures of the earth. His morning starts with offering water to the sun, the Lord of light and energy. Then he travels a long and arduous journey on foot, with a huge bag, dangling on his left shoulder. After I rented a flat in that locality, it was beyond my imagination, why early morning, Kaku left for a certain destination with his cloth bag and why the smoke kept coming out of the kitchen chimney when there are only two members in his family. It was much later when I learnt that the toil was made not for him or his family but for those creatures who keep roaming unnoticed. In order to feed animals such as ants, sparrows, parrots, monkeys, dogs, cows and buffaloes, he has various small cloth bags of food grains, flour, *chapattis* and breads inside a huge bag. Today when the entire world is pondering about how to save the sparrows that are at the verge of extinction, and Kaku's house can be heard echoing with the chirps and twitters of this tiny sweet bird.



Life was never a bed of roses for Kaku. He's a candid and straightforward fellow who always listened to his heart and never cared for the consequences. During his job, once he had an argument with his officer and for was suspended for such a petite reason. For twenty long years, he had to lead to a wretched and miserable life, but this turmoil strengthened his determination and he kept on fighting against the unjust happened to him. During this span of time, he had to work as an electrician and a salesman in an *Ayurvedic* medical store to meet his daily expenses.

Nevertheless, feeding the mute and dumb animals was still the integral part of his routine. No blow of brutal time could budge him away from performing his duties that he'd been making since his boyhood. Like a Pole star, he was determined to fulfill his resolution.

Destiny had to give in at last to his stern and staunch character, he won and got his job back but his precious twenty years had flown away to never to come back.

Still Kaku can be seen wandering on foot, prescribing people Ayurvedic treatment for their ailments. Even sometimes he himself gives the medicines to them free of cost with the precaution to be taken while having them.

What a life of devotion and sacrifice! What a work that desires no appreciation, no recognition! But the tremendous contribution of his wife should also be considered that supported Kaku in each and every decision of his. It is not his nature to talk too much about his ordeal but after having been nudged, once he told me how people started avoiding him when he was jobless. But people's bizarre behavior couldn't make his life negligible.

Kaku's wrinkled face reveals the story of his unbearable plight and his tough struggle with time and penury but still many secrets are unraveled. How he would have fed the animals when he himself did not have enough to eat? What would have made him so strong to devote his life to the unnoticed creatures? What would make him keep going?

I pay my reverence to Kaku. When there's chaos everywhere and people hardly trust anyone, people like him usher us to the winding but right path which leads to humanity.