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LOVE AND GENEROSITY

Making the world a better place

Be charitable and kind; there are many causes to share our time and wealth with to ease the pain of those in need

My friend Ansari was in his post-Ramadan fast when he heard that the imam of the mosque he frequents had been taken gravely ill.

Despite the discomfort of the fast, he spring with alacrity to action. Ansari hurried to the home of the imam to lend a helping hand. Quickly, he took charge of the operations and had the imam sent to Selayang Hospital. There, the imam was diagnosed with a heart attack. Relying on his vast network of connections, Ansari had his beloved imam despatched quickly to the cardiac centre of UTM (Universiti Teknologi Mara) at the hospital. All's well that ends well. Ansari is now making preparations to send the imam to India for further treatment and recuperate in the care of his family.

Ansari's exemplary conduct contrasts with a gruesome incident that I witnessed some years ago. It happened along a stretch of the Federal Highway. Four gangsters stopped their car in front of one car right in the middle of that busy thoroughfare. They got out with thick firewood in their hands, dragged the unfortunate driver out of the car behind and mercilessly bludgeoned him till he bled profusely. Traffic stopped both ways to witness this scary spectacle. None came to the driver's rescue.

Human beings can be categorised into three types – the takers, keepers and givers.

The takers' mantra is, "What is yours is mine; I am going to take it away". These are the robbers, the murderers and the thieves who come and rob us of our lives and property. We may say, "Thank God that I am not one of them". But hang on, pal, not so fast. What about people stealing their employers' time by doing unrelated work during office hours? What about those who cheat on their taxes and of those who engage in false or misleading advertisement?



A volunteer checking the teeth of a woman at the Victory Elderly Home in Jalan Puchong, Kuala Lumpur. Many Malaysians generously offer time, money and effort to comfort the needy. FILE PIC

"What is mine is mine; no one is going to take it away", is the mantra of keepers. These tight-fisted are indifferent to the cares of their neighbours – not just the brother next door, but those in need anywhere. They are akin to the spectators witnessing the perpetration of a crime at the Federal Highway. Perhaps, it is rather unfair to lump those spectators in this category. They froze as they were confronted with a dangerous situation. And, to be fair to them, they rushed to the victim's aid once the gangsters had sped away.

The givers believe it is more blessed to give than to receive – the case of Ansari. Who are we? There is an immutable and immanent universal law of nature. And that is what you sow is what you reap. That law works in an asymmetrical way. What we receive in return invariably far outweighs our charity. Well-pressed, fully shaken and flowing over will the blessings be from an act of charity. I can vouch, and I am sure the reader would, too, that this law of nature is infallible.

Malaysians are largely a generous lot. Take the case of the soup kitchens and nursing homes and caregivers who relieve the misery of drug addicts, orphans and the homeless. Malaysians willingly and generously offer their time, money and effort to comfort the needy. Or take the case of the many charities that receive an overwhelming response from the donating public. We do not hesitate to share our blessings with others with no expectation of any gain. The law of nature will take care of that.

There are too many causes to share our time and wealth with to ease the pain and suffering of the poor in our midst. Sure, we have eliminated poverty. But, a tiny fraction of our population still remains trapped in abject poverty. And, there are the needy all around us. If we take the world as our home, the scourge of poverty has not been eliminated. Take India for example. One-third of the people live below the poverty line if that line is one US dollar a day. The proportion leaps to two-thirds when the poverty line is raised to two dollars a day.

As Sasha Azevedo, a US entertainer, once said: "The world is not interested in what we do for a living. What they are interested in is what we have to offer freely – hope, strength, love and the power to make a difference!"

We came into this world bringing nothing. We shall return to our creator bringing nothing with us as well. On the day when the Grim Reaper comes to collect us from our death bed, we may have a moment of regret. That regret will not be that we did not give, but that we gave too little. Let us not then have any regrets. Let us be encouraged by Ansari's good gesture and by what Etienne de Grelet, a Quaker missionary, said many years ago: "I shall pass this way but once; any good that I can do or any kindness I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

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DATUK DR JOHN ANTONY XAVIER



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