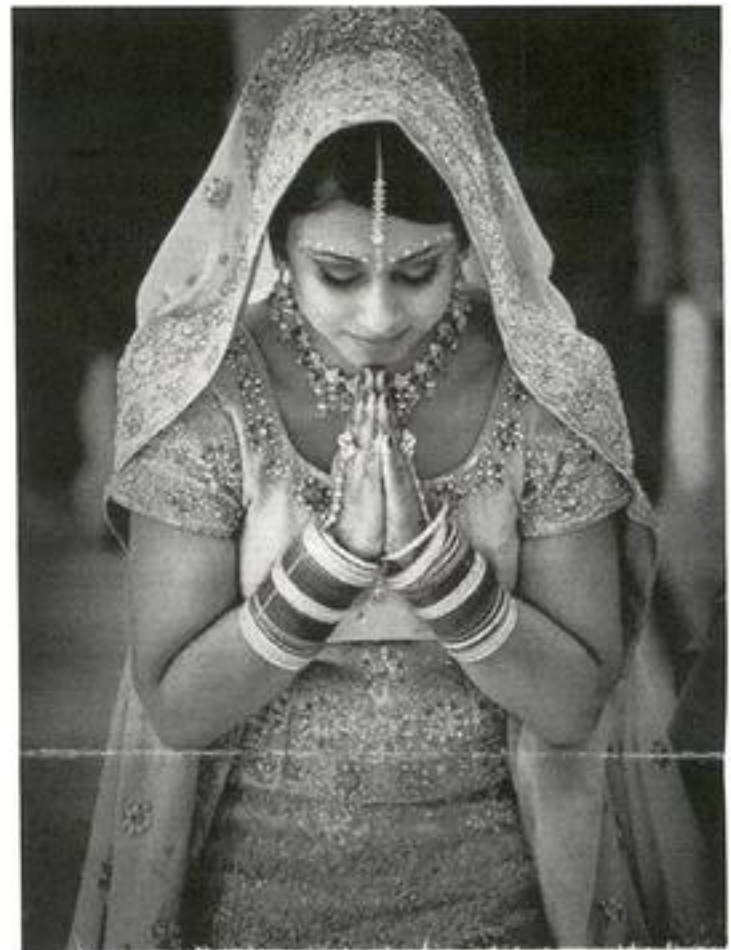


Reply I.D. w6gi

Camille,

This is a short tale I wrote, inspired by the below copyright-free photo. It's pretty awesome, I thought, so please post it on my page. Sends a beautiful, humane, hopeful message. Don't know how I was capable of coming

Picture Theme January 2018



Mobius Karma by Nate A. Lindell

There once was a young girl who lived in the outskirts of a large city in India. Because of the family she was born into, she began working at age six. She worked every day, helping her family wash clothes. That was the caste she was born into; and, because most Indians accepted that, that is the way their society is, that is the way their society was.

She would never learn to read, never have nice clothing, never own a car, never have a vacation- she *might*, when she is an adult, someday have a pair of shoes.

Because of her bleak life, the girl was often sad.

Sometimes she cried.

Sometimes she dreamed she was a princess.

Everyday she trudged in bare feet to and from a well, carrying a bucket in each hand and balancing a third on her head. She trudged through narrow, winding, muddy paths, between the shacks and tents of low-caste Indians. She did this several times each day to get water that her family needed to wash clothes.

On her way, she would pass an old blind man who'd beg passerbys for food or money. She could clearly see each of his ribs, and his eyes were milky. The girl felt bad for him because nobody ever gave him anything, and sometimes people spat on or cursed at him.

One day, while on her way to the well, she saw an actual princess!

It was on a holy day. The princess was in a gilded, ornately decorated carriage, with velvet curtains, carried by a dozen large, strong men wearing fancy uniforms. Armed guards cleared her way as the beautifully dressed princess gently threw coins, candies, and other gifts from her carriage.

The girl looked at the princess in awe. Just then, the princess looked in the girl's direction; their eyes met, and the princess felt pity for the girl. The princess called to one of her guards, gave him something, spoke to him, and pointed at the girl. The guard looked, nodded, and walked towards her.

"The Princess wants you to have this," the guard said to the girl, then handed her a golden ring with a large ruby in it.

"Thank you!" the girl said bowing, her hands clasped in prayer. When she accepted the ring, it surprised her how heavy it was.

She's never seen such an expensive piece of jewelry, and the most money she'd ever handled was a couple rupees she would use to buy soap or food. She ~~had~~ had no understanding of the immense value of the ring relative to her family's usual income; she only knew it was valuable. Happy about the gift, the young girl smiled as she went on her way to the well.

Soon she was approaching where the beggar sat. As she neared him, she saw and heard a tall man looming over the beggar. The tall man was shouting down to the beggar, "Why should I give you my money without you working for it? Here," the tall man said, lifting up his foot, "Clean the bottom of my sandal with your tongue! Then I'll give you a penny!"

For a moment, the girl was stunned by the cruelty she witnessed. Then, she dropped her buckets and ran up to them.

"Sir," she said to the tall man, "I beg you, please don't be so cruel to this man, who is obviously blind, starving, and old."

"Ahhhhh." growled the tall man, looking back and forth at the girl and the beggar. Finally, he made up his mind, spat on the beggar, and stomped away.

The girl's heart ached for what she saw, which was the miserable life of the old man.

"Thank you, child." the beggar faintly said.

Wiping tears away, the girl looked at the ring she'd been given, then at the beggar. She handed him the ring. "What's this?" the beggar asked excited, turning the ring in his hands, lifting it, feeling it.

"The princess gave it to me. Now, you won't need to beg," said the girl. Then she turned, beginning to walk away, sad about no longer having the ring, but glad that she helped the beggar.

"Wait my child," said the beggar, "I have something for you."

The girl stopped and turned back. "Yes?" she asked.

The beggar held out his gnarled, calloused hand. In it was what looked like a small, smooth, normal stone. "It's a wishing stone," he said, offering it to her. "If you hold it tight and wish for something hard enough, your wish will happen." he said, smiling so broadly that she could see his toothless gums.

"Thank you," she said, doubting him. She then turned and continued her journey to the well, realizing that her parents would be upset if she told them about the ring. So, she didn't tell them.

Back at home, as night approached, she thought more and more about the beautiful princess, imagined how wonderful her life must be-wearing the finest clothes, eating the finest foods, wearing expensive jewelry and perfumes. As she drifted off to sleep, she desperately gripped the stone, wishing that she were the princess.

When morning came, the girl rubbed her eyes as she woke up, looking around. She thought she was still asleep and dreaming, for she was in the royal palace, in the princesses bed, wearing a brightly colored silk nightgown, lying between fine cotton sheets, smelling the sweet odor of fresh-cut flowers, surrounded by luxuries she previously couldn't imagine.

"I'm the princess!" she thought.

Soon, servant girls entered. They dressed her, perfumed her, and braided and decorated her hair with jewelry. She was taken to a large dining room and fed exquisitely prepared foods that, previously, she'd never imagined existed.

After eating, a servant girl informed her that her teacher would soon arrive. When he entered, smiling so all of his teeth gleamed, the Princess felt that she'd seen him before, when she was the washer girl. She closely examined him, then realized that he'd been the old, blind, starving beggar-looking healthy, well-dressed, with teeth made it difficult for her to recognize him.

"Sir?" she asked, stunned by the strange events.

"Yes, Princess?" he responded.

"Why- ? How- ?" she tried to ask.

"Ahhh, Princess," he said, "now you understand." He paused for a moment, looking at her. She remained silent. "You asked me what life was like for the lowest castes, what your life would be like if you had been born into a low caste, I gave you a ring, with a stone created by Ganesh, the Ruby of Understanding. Now you understand, don't you?"

Frowning, she said, "Yes.. But I feel terrible knowing what their lives are like. You-you were there, an old man, a beggar, blind."

"Hahahaha," he softly laughed, smiling, knowing, pleased at her enlightenment. Maybe in a past life."

Considering the life she'd lived as a washer girl, the princess was overwhelmed with pity for the lives allotted for the lower castes. "Have my carriage prepared." she announced. "Our studies will have to wait."

Still grinning, her teacher bowed, turned, and left.

The princess looked around. She gathered up her jewelry, her loose money, fancy combs and brushes, and all small, valuable items. She put them all in a trunk. "Gather all the sweets, pastries, and loaves of bread. Have them loaded onto my carriage." she said to a servant girl.

An hour later she was in her carriage, being carried through the narrow winding, muddy streets in the poverty-stricken outskirts of the city. She gave the food and other items to those who seemed most in need.

Looking into the crowd, she saw a young washer girl, barefoot, carrying three buckets. Looking at her hand, the princess removed a large gold ring that had a large ruby set in it. She called to a guard, handed it to him, and said something to him while pointing to the girl.

The guard looked at the girl, nodded, then left.