

Stairway to Heaven

A little boy goes to a pet shop to buy a puppy and discovers that they cost around Rs. 5,000 each. "I have only 100 rupees," he says. "May I please at least see them for that much money?" The shop owner smiles and whistles. Out come five playful puppies, running gleefully towards him. One puppy is lagging behind, his tail not wagging. "What's wrong with that puppy?" the boy asks.

The shop owner explains that the puppy has a missing hip socket and will probably always limp. The little boy is excited. "That is the puppy I want to buy!" The shop owner says, "He is not worth it; but if you really want him, I'll give him to you for free." The little boy is upset. He says, "That puppy is worth every bit as all the others and I'll pay the full price. In fact, I'll give you Rs. 100 now, and then Rs. 50 a month till the entire amount is paid for."

The shop owner warns him: "He is never going to be able to run and play with you." The little boy rolls up his trousers to reveal a damaged leg in a brace. "Well, I can't run either, and the puppy will need someone who understands this!" Over time, the boy and the puppy help each other overcome massive odds and excel. The puppy grows into a beautiful golden Labrador, and the little boy into a very handsome and successful man. And yes, they both are able to run well.

When we are weak, and still care for others, we become strong.



Years roll by. One day, the man finds himself walking through the clouds alongside his Labrador. Realization dawns on him that both he and his pet have passed on! They reach a pair of big, pearly gates with a signboard on top saying 'Heaven'. The man approaches the gatekeeper in a royal uniform, and says, "I am very thirsty." "Come on in", says the guard, "there is plenty of water and exotic beverages served in silverware inside." The man says his

Labrador is thirsty too. The guard politely informs him that pets are not allowed inside. The man refuses to leave his Labrador outside, and continues to walk.

Soon, he comes across a simple iron gate with a casual caretaker. "My companion and I are thirsty—may we have some water please?" "Sure", comes the reply, "there is a water pump inside, come in and help yourself, pump as much refreshing water as you both need." Touched by the gesture, the man asks the caretaker, "What place is this?" "Heaven", comes the reply. The man is baffled, "But I thought my prior stopover was Heaven." The caretaker laughs, "That's the screening stop. It acts as a filter to ensure only the deserving ones make it to the real Heaven."

When we are strong, and still care for others, we become stronger.

Perhaps then, Heaven is not a gift from the powers above. It is a gift that we give ourselves, right here on earth. When we pump our own water, and help quench our own thirst and that of others. This principle applies to personal, family, and business realms.