

The Value of One Gift Box



Vijay, a successful businessman, was travelling in his car to Bangalore. He was very excited since he was going there to meet his school time friend Samay after one long year.

Samay had Artisan Chocolate business in Bangalore, which he started five years ago. After initial hiccups, he established himself well in the business and today he was selling his chocolates to various corporate and individuals in all the major cities of India.

On the way, Vijay was passing a village, when on the side of the road he saw a teenage boy selling some handicraft items. Since the items looked attractive, he stopped to check those items. While he liked all the items, one particular item grabbed his attention. It was a small gift box made of dry leaves and small tree branches. He was amazed to see that such a beautiful item could be made from something as useless as dry leaves and tree branches. He was equally amazed to find the price of the item. The young boy was selling it for twenty rupees per box. When Vijay told the young boy he wanted 10 boxes, the boy reduced the price to fifteen rupees per box. Vijay bought ten gift boxes and continued his journey.

After reaching Bangalore, Vijay showed the gift boxes to Samay and told him that he should use these boxes for packing artisan chocolates. He felt that by using these boxes, Samay could charge a premium for the chocolate gift box and make more money. Vijay told Samay that each box cost him fifteen rupees only but Samay

could easily charge two hundred rupees extra per chocolate box. He told Samay that he could even brand that his company is supporting rural art and buying these chocolates, customers are directly contributing to the noble cause. This way the sale will pick up big time because of association with a social cause. Samay liked the idea and quickly calculated that if buys the gift boxes in bulk, the price per box will be much less and hence his profit margin will be much higher. Samay asked his friend Vijay to procure twenty thousand gift boxes for him immediately.

While travelling back, Vijay stopped at the same village and talked to the young boy. He asked him the price of each gift box if he bought twenty thousand boxes from him. The young boy asked Vijay to wait there so that he could go home and ask his grandmother to find out the price for each gift box for such a big order. Vijay willingly accepted to wait there for the boy to get the price from his grandmother. The boy left the place under Vijay's custody and went home riding his bicycle as fast he could. After half an hour, the young boy came back and said, "Sir, the price of each gift box will be ten thousand rupees."

"What! Ten thousand rupees for one gift box?" Vijay was surprised to hear the price.

"Yes Sir, this is the price my grandmother gave me for each gift box."

"But, for such a big order the price of each gift box should be lower, not higher." Said Vijay.

"Sir, I do not know that. I am telling what my grandmother told me." Responded the boy.

“Can I meet your grandmother to understand the rationale for such a high price?” asked Vijay.

“Sure Sir, I can take you to meet my grandmother.”

Vijay asked the young boy to sit inside the car and drove him to his village. After driving for a kilometer, the width of the road reduced to half and the tarmac road changed into the dusty road. But on each side of the dusty road, he could see green fields and many trees. The air smelled fresh. He felt that the air was cool. The sight of greenery took his attention from the dusty road to the countryside beauty. He felt relaxed and relieved. After driving for another five kilometers, they entered the boy’s village. The village housed around fifty huts but it had a lot of greenery. The entire village was clean, he saw no garbage, polythene, or any litter. He compared the scene with that in the city where these days it is common to see tetra packs, polythene, and other litter almost everywhere.

The boy’s hut was surrounded by trees and green fields. The front side of the hut had a big, open compound. One side of the compound had a cow shelter with 2 cows, in the middle of the compound a charpoy was placed. One end of the compound had a water well. There were no heavy fixtures and furniture. There was no air of show-off about the place.

Vijay greeted the boy’s grandmother and introduced himself and his reason for visiting her. The old lady asked him to sit on the charpoy and asked the young boy to get some jaggery and water for Vijay. It was their custom to offer water and something sweet to the guest. After Vijay drank water, he asked the old lady why the price of each gift box was so high whereas he had already bought ten pieces for fifteen rupees a piece.

The old lady said, “The Young Man, Look around! You can see how the people in the village live. We have a cordial relationship with the Mother Nature. We believe that she is capable of fulfilling all our basic needs as long as the need does not convert into greed. Mother Nature gives us water, food, air, wood, medicines, and all that is required for every human and animal to survive and live peacefully.”

Vijay was perplexed to hear this and asked her how this has any relationship with the higher price of a gift box. The old lady said, “When a tree shed its dry leaves and branches, we collect it and make beautiful items with those leaves and branches. We do not damage or cut trees to make these items. But if I have to make twenty thousand gift boxes, I will have to cut many trees in my village. This will affect the entire ecosystem of the place. Birds will lose their nests, various insects living on and in the root of the trees will lose their homes. The rain cycle will be affected, the soil of this village will be loosened. And many other damages will occur because of which our livelihood will be affected. To compensate for the future livelihood, I need to charge you more so that after all the trees are cut, I still have money to survive.”

Vijay was stunned to hear the old lady’s logic. She was right. She knew and understood the relationship between nature and humans so much that she could elaborate the outcome if the relationship was tweaked. He understood the old lady’s message clearly. He realized his mistake. His greed to make more money was detrimental to the survival of Mother Nature and thus those inhabiting the earth.

He left the village. Though he was returning empty handed, his understanding was enriched.

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