

Unsung Heroes Amongst Us



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My sisters and I are like friends. Some days ago, I was waiting for my sister, outside a shop nearby the roadside (she was late as usual). It was noon. Felt like the Sun god was overly generous with it's heat and sat right above my head. It was getting hotter-I was sweating- becoming impatient and angrier. During that moment, a man and a little girl holding hands, walking on the roadside without an umbrella caught my attention. I thought they were walking towards me. I forgot I was standing outside a shop beside a big box, which had plenty of beautiful umbrellas at display.

People would have found my behaviour uncanny if they had noticed me observing them that closely and smiling subconsciously. From their interaction, I found the man was the father of the little girl. They were too cute. By this, I don't mean their physical appearances only. The father had sun-tanned skin color, tall, lean, wore simple, loose-fitting T-shirt, and jeans. It looked worn out. He exuded as a person who's skilled in hard labour. On the other hand, the daughter (somewhere around aged 5- 6 years) wore a frock—not an expensive one but beautiful.

That little girl didn't seem to notice anything or anyone around her. At that moment, it seemed her world revolved around her father and the umbrellas. I can't say how poor or rich he was, but he definitely was able to afford an umbrella for her daughter in the scorching heat. She was overly excited with so many options of colourful Disney characters printed umbrellas. She seemed indecisive. Neither was she able to choose one nor was her father. With each umbrella, she'll ask him for confirmation, "Abo (father), is this beautiful"? "What about this one"? "Is this good"? "This is beautiful, right"? Funnily, for every question, he patiently replied, "Uum (yes) this is good", "this is beautiful". They were adorable. He caught me smiling and we exchange a knowing smile of how children can be sometimes. This went on for few minutes. He went inside to pay for the umbrella. Outside, the girl was still talking, mostly to her father (whom she thought will be able to hear her out, somehow).

I am not sure if it was her first ever umbrella. But, her excitement for it was infectious. I saw them walking away—he holding her hand and she holding the umbrella beside her- still marvelling at the images.

This encounter was just for few minutes. It, however, is imprinted in my memory. It reminds me, how often we overlook heroes in our daily life and search for it in movies, news, award functions etc. Some heroes are just mothers and fathers. Some heroes doesn't receive validation or a certificate from the society. Some heroes are wrinkled and old and living amongst us.

Sometimes, these heroes are seen in the kitchen chopping vegetables—snoring at the living room wearing a torn vest and shorts—sometimes, they have emotional breakdown—they cry—they are angry—frustrated—some are out casted—declared failure by society— some are physically and emotionally weak—some are seen marketing household stuffs—some at the construction site—at the offices - in the agriculture field—on the roadside with their little ones etc.

They don't always have to be supremely strong or rich. I have seen the helplessness of certain parents for not being able to provide the basic needs for their children. I have seen a shop owner, who has been mending his tiny shop for years now, so to provide a better future for his children. I have seen some selling off their only property to be able to educate their children (as they were not educated themselves). I have sensed sheer fear in some as their children were getting distracted in life. Some heroes live in constant fear and they are just human.

Yes, there are many days when we argue/ fight. In my case, there are few things my father and I don't agree with each other. Some days, it takes just few hours to reconcile and other times it's stretched to days. But, during all this time I have never stopped loving my father. I approach him with "sorry" and he with lots of eatables (his way of apologising, I guess).

And that little girl and her father may not even understand the heroship of a father or a mother. But, I am certain no Disney or Marvel characters will come to her rescue when she is in pain and afraid. It'll be her parents who would stand by her side, protect her, embrace her, nurture her, make her strong enough to be able to stand for herself in life. I see heroes every day.

Picture: From a Oscar-Winning animated short film, ' Father and Daughter'.

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