An Optionless Choice

A rich, old man with no offspring decides to hold a competition to determine who should get his inheritance. He summons all the poor people in the locality, and gives each one a seed. “Plant this seed and nurture it. In one year, bring back the flower that grows from it. Whoever brings me the most beautiful flower is capable of nurturing my wealth, and will, therefore, inherit it.”

One young woman plants her seed in a pot and waters it every day, but nothing grows out of it. At the end of the year, she is devastated. However, on the day set for inspection, she picks up her pot and carries it to the old man.

All the other competitors bring colourful, vibrant flowers, but the old man only glances at them. He walks straight to the young lady and smiles. “All the seeds I gave were dead. Only you were honest enough to bring back the original seed I gave you. You will handle my wealth responsibly.”

Sometimes, it is difficult to be honest. Yet, idealism is the right approach.

The woman puts the inherited wealth to good use by opening a hospital for the poor. As fate would have it, the woman falls terribly ill and is admitted in her own hospital. Her roommate, sadly, is a teenager battling a life-threatening disease and is bed-ridden for several months. The treatment has taken a toll on the youngster’s mind, and she has lost her will to fight any longer.

The woman’s bed is next to the room’s only window. All day long, she peeps outside the window curtain, and diverts the youngster’s mind by describing everything that she sees—beautiful sunsets, lush green gardens, and the hustle-bustle of people. The teenager grows very fond of the young woman, and excitedly looks forward to the narrations of the outside world.

In a twist of fate, the teenager has a miraculous recovery while the young woman succumbs to her disease. On the day of her discharge, the heartbroken teenager opens the curtains of the window to admire the view she had heard so many stories about. And all she finds is a bare wall!

Sometimes, it is easy to be honest. Yet, realism is the right approach.

The same woman. Exhibiting contradictory traits—idealism and realism. Still,

both of her traits are equally lovable. Why?

Because her clashing approaches are bound by the same motive: to keep others' interests above her own. In the first incident, she wants to honour the intention of the old man. In the second incident, she wants to ignite the aspirations of the sick youngster.

Our approach is a matter of a choice. Our motive, however, is a matter of our character.