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Acknowledging house-help

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Kuttappan, our house-help, joined our service as a young man of 20 years of age, and continued to serve us for 20 years thereafter.

In the 20 years that he assisted us, he witnessed the passing on of my father.

When my father was critical and dying, Kuttappan sat by his bedside without a break for the five days that my father was ailing. He wiped him with swabs, collected and disposed off excreta that my father was not able to withhold, and did for him as much as a trained nurse would, yet was actually uneducated.



When my father passed on and family members became busy with the formalities, Kuttappan without murmur resumed house duties. Not one of those who had seen him serve my father relentlessly, thanked him.

Many years have lapsed, and as I remember Kuttappan, I realise that most of us assume the house-help we hire are paid to serve in whatever manner they are called upon to do so. Rarely do I thank my house-help, when for example they stay up late to serve my guests who are partying with us in our house, or when they wake at an absurd hour in the morning after a late night to make me my tea, for I have to leave town and must have a cup of tea before going.

Some gesture, some expression of thanks may help in telling them that we value them, and in so doing, perhaps they will stay with us longer, for we have invested in them with the currency of our heart; tenderness, warmth and gratitude.

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