

Published: Monday May 28, 2018

Rag pickers

T. T. SRINATH

My mother-in-law was returning from a discourse that she had attended, given by her teacher and spiritual mentor. In the course of his talk, he mentioned that everything has value, however small or insignificant it may seem. The lesson was well-received by the audience, and after the talk the gathering dispersed.

Driving back from the talk, the car in which my mother-in-law was travelling stopped at an intersection, where the traffic light was red. As she looked out of her raised window, she noticed a rag picker rummaging amongst what seemed to be a heap of disposed waste and plastic.



The sight, initially for her, was disconcerting; for, the rag picker was surrounded by a pack of street dogs, pigs, and a large mound of what seemed unclean waste. The rag picker was unmindful and dug into the mound. My in-law's co-passenger remarked with mild distaste about how we were polluting the environment.

My in-law remembered her teacher's talk and told her co-passenger that what they imagined was useless and disposable waste did not seem so to the rag picker. He seemed to be finding value in his search and it seemed important to him.

I realised when my mother-in-law recounted this to me that I sometimes overlook the value in small things. I seem to want to only relish what I believe are substantial gifts that I receive. Yet it is small things, little acts that go unnoticed, that actually make the difference. When someone holds the door open for me, even if he is a poorly paid doorman, or a tea vendor gives me a cup of tea, these are acts of love. Acknowledging these small acts will truly help us appreciate life's bounty.

As Mother Teresa said, 'We cannot do great things, yet we can do small things with great love'.

(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@gmail.com)