

A Summer Chore

I felt angry. I complained. I thought of it as a chore. But in the end, I had to go. It was my brother's first summer of high school and my last summer of middle school, and my brother was being confronted by my parents. At first, I laughed at him, because he had to finish his forty hours of volunteering in order to graduate, but then, my older sister walked in. "Hey, you're in grade eight, right? Yea, it turns out they're letting middle school kids complete their hours too." My dad hopped on the idea of "many hands make light work." And so, that is how I got sucked into finishing my volunteer hours early.

My brother and I decided that we would go really early to the temple we were volunteering at, so we could eat, pray and then get to work, so the next day, I woke up at 6 o' clock, got ready, and went to the temple. The first thing I felt was anger, for having to wake up early, and I felt it for a long time. When we got to the temple, my dad introduced me to the headmaster of the temple. That's right, a headmaster. I had no clue what was going on in my place of prayer, and now that I think about it, I learned a lot about my culture. The headmaster explained to us what we needed to do; we could clean the dishes, make food, clean shoes (for blessings), and we could even take a break if we wanted to. So, my brother decided we should go down to the kitchen first.

There, we met a middle aged man cleaning dishes, and also, the first friend we made. He told us about how he met his wife, and about his two kids who go to university. Surprisingly, he was really interesting. He also introduced us to the owner of the kitchen, 'Bappu'. Now, I never in a million years thought that I would be friends with people so much older than me, but that week, I was wrong. He showed us how to run the kitchen, and how to greet elders politely, and the nicest parts of the day would be when his wife, the owner of the second kitchen, would bring all of us tea and sweets, and we would sit by the open window frame, and talk about everything. I also asked if he worked at the temple.

He said no. He said that the only reason the temple is running is because of the blessings of the lord, and the donations from the people who visit. The people who work to make food, clean, calculate profit, and just keep everything organized, are volunteers. They do not get paid, yet they wake up every single morning and go to the temple. I even met people who lived there, who woke up, worked, and slept there.

I loved the hospitality of the temple as well, because no matter where you've been, where you come from, what you've done, your background, race, culture, ethnicity, you are welcome inside, which isn't something you see nowadays.

So, it may have seemed like a drag before, but the experience of watching people get married, learning about culture, just listening to people's stories, making friends, and feeling welcomed by our people gave me the feeling of belonging. It makes me miss that summer. But now, I am glad that I can say that I truly believe that volunteers are selfless and responsible, and the fact that they work just for the sake of helping, makes them even more amazing.