

PEANUTS FOR MONKEYS

Anup and Kapil studied in the same school in the same class. Among other childish pranks that they got involved in, they also skipped school every once in a while to take a trip to the Swayambhu Stupa. They did this when they got a little money. They would take a bus to the Swayambhu bus stop and would walk up all the way to the stupa counting the steps as they walked. Sometimes they would play a race to find out who would get to the top first. And once they reached the hill top with the stupa, the view of the city below never failed to amaze them. Sometimes they went around the stupa ringing bells and turning the prayer wheels. Then they would buy themselves cheap ice cream from the hawkers and sit down watching the monkeys.

They monkeys were always fun to watch. Sometimes they would jump from prayer wheel to prayer wheel. Sometimes a mother would scramble away with a baby clinging to her back. And sometimes one would cleverly run away with a chunk of sliced coconut from the fruit seller's.

Sometimes the two friends bought peanuts or a few bananas and gave them to the monkeys. It was a lot of fun watching them nibble at the food. And the boys enjoyed such conversations:

“Do you know monkeys have special cavities in the mouths where they store food?”

“Yes. I wish we had such cavities. We wouldn't have to carry lunch boxes to school.”

“Or we could make the great food at Aruna *Didi's* wedding party last forever!”

Then they would laugh.

The two boys grew up and finished school. They went to different colleges but were still close friends. After some time Kapil, who came from a family with a better financial background decided to go abroad for his further studies. Anup stayed back in Kathmandu. Years passed and Anup got over with his studies and got a job in a private

firm. He married Kamala, his childhood sweetheart. Living in Kathmandu can be expensive and difficult especially if there is only one earning member in the family. After some time they were parents of two children.

One summer afternoon Anup received an email from his old friend who had not been in touch for years. The mail read:

Dear Anup,

How are you? It's a shame that we are such good friends and yet have not been in touch all this while. I heard that you got married. Congratulations. I work as a computer engineer in a software company in New York. I think I make a decent income. I recently got engaged to Christina, a wonderful girl. She is an artist. I talk a lot to her about you.

I really miss you. I think a lot about our school days. Do you remember we used to skip school and run away to Swayambhu? We used to feed the monkeys. Do you still do that..... I mean feed the monkeys?

Stay in touch,

Kapil.

Anup was pleased to hear from his old friend and instantly replied.

Dear Kapil,

Good to hear from you. Yes I am married to Kamala. You remember her, don't you? And now we have two lovely children. Great to hear about your wonderful job and Christina. Congratulations.

And yes, I do go and feed the monkeys sometimes.

Anup.

Forget feeding the monkeys, it had been years since Anup had been to Swayambhu. But he still wanted to keep the childhood spirit alive by saying that he did go feed the monkeys. The next day he received another email from Kapil.

Dear Anup,

Thanks for getting back. I have been thinking. You know what, I have been so busy with life that I have been missing out on a lot of things. This will sound absolutely crazy but can I send you a little money every month as my contribution to feed our monkeys. I really miss those days. Can I send say about three thousand rupees a month. And we could feed our monkeys. I know I sound insane but I don't want the monkeys to feel bad and I have been wanting to do something good for a while. So what do you say?

Kapil.

Anup went to his wife and said, “Kamala, he has gone crazy.... this Kapil! I bet he is earning too much and so he probably doesn’t know what to do with the money.” He burst out laughing and told her about the email.

“But we could make a proper use of the money.” Kamala blushed a little.

“Yes, finally we can send our children to a good English school.”

“How about *Brilliant Stars*? I have heard it is a great school and I have gone through the prospectus. The three thousand is going to be just enough to pay the monthly tuition fees for both of our kids.”

So Anup emailed Kapil saying that it was “a crazy but a sweet idea” and the three thousand rupees started coming in every month. Kapil was punctual and the money arrived every first week of the month. The children got admitted in *Brilliant Stars*. Anup never went to see the monkeys.

One day Anup got back from his office and saw that one of his children was climbing a tree next to his house to get hold of a kite entangled in the branches.

“Get down you brat!” Anup shouted. “What do you

think you are? A monkey?”

Kamala who was inside ironing some clothes heard her husband and couldn't help laughing.

