

SHARE THE LOVE

ALL HEART

One subject, different perspectives: Three popular authors write about the moments when they realised the true meaning and power of the joy of giving.



FALGUNI KOTHARI
Author of *Soul Warrior: Age of Kali*,
BY OM BOOKS INTERNATIONAL

The world was a predawn watercolour, the morning Papa woke me. “Ready for our adventure, baby?” he whispered in my ear, Mama watching us with sleepy eyes.

Eagerly, my five-year-old feet tried to keep up with Papa’s lanky strides, eating up the pavement, his face quivering with laughter. When I lagged, he carried me in his capable, gentle arms. I wrapped pudgy ones around his neck. He smelled of coconut oil and baby powder. My hero.

We reached the temple on a yawn. I frowned. Praying wasn’t an adventure! But, we didn’t go inside. We marched past a line of a hundred beggars, their hungry backs pressed against God’s wall. They greeted Papa. Joked with him! He introduced me as his joy, his blessing. I stared, open-mouthed. We reached a *chaiwallah’s* shop. Smiling, Papa set me down, handed me contraband. “Mama will be angry if I drink *chai* and have *pav*,” I said primly, though secretly thrilled. Papa guffawed, sunrays kissing his face. “It’s for them,” he said, another *chai* glass and *pav* plate in his hands. “Go on! Serve them, baby.” Their hero.

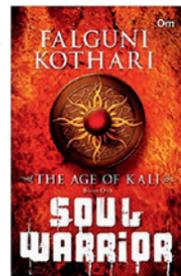
My limbs were twigs quivering in the wind

as I walked in Papa’s shoes. My arms, mirrors of his, stretching forward and retreating. Stretching and retreating like Mama’s did when she practiced yoga. They spoke like old friends—Papa and these poor people. My ears were parched dry earth, soaking up the stories raining from their mouths. A good man. A promise-keeper. A God’s man. Our hero.

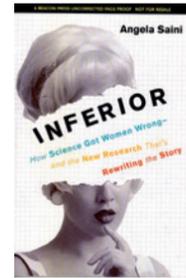
At last, we sat, my lap overflowing with a plate of *pav* and a glass of *chai* that was our secret. But worry kept me from taking a bite from my good fortune. Who serves them when you travel for work, Papa? Was that why they looked feeble? Did no one take care of them when he was away? I needed to understand. Papa laughed, his eyes shining with an emotion that made my chest swell with joy. I adored when Papa looked at me with hearts in his eyes. I will have this party every morning, Papa, I promised solemnly.

That morning I realised that joy was an adventure, too. More, it was a privilege.

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ILLUSTRATIONS: SHUTTERSTOCK



We would return home from school to occasionally find **TINY** gifts for us at the foot of the stairs. Nothing expensive, but **ALWAYS** in the same spot.



ANGELA SAINI
Author of *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong and the New Research That's Rewriting the Story*, BY FOURTH ESTATE

“Maybe God left it for you,” my mother suggested. My sister and I were 4 and 5 years old, respectively, when we would return home from school to occasionally find tiny gifts for us at the foot of the stairs. Nothing expensive, but always in the same spot. Sweets, perhaps, or little plastic trinkets. This would happen so unexpectedly, my mother’s face so innocent when we told her what we had found, that we believed her. As far as we knew, these tokens spontaneously materialised through some supernatural force.

My parents weren’t ones for presents or parties as we grew older, which made the memory of these moments endlessly precious. I continued to believe her long past the age at which I should have been less credulous. I think a part of me believed her into adulthood, even as the rational side of me would laugh at her love for astrology and superstition. I still believed her.

It is only when I look back that I understand the gift she gave us with that small, simple act of love was far more than the object itself. It was a belief in magic, that anything was possible.



our time seems the hardest to part with. Giving our time—to chat with an elderly grandparent, to listen to a long description of someone’s day, to put aside work, emails and social media to play a board game with your child. To give our time instead of money to an NGO. To mentor someone. To take the time to share knowledge we have gained through our experiences. To take a leisurely stroll, breath deep and meditate. To give time to yourself.

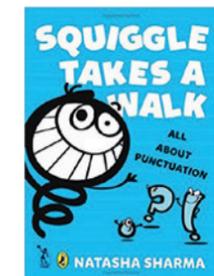
I’ve been fortunate to come across people in my professional life as a children’s book writer who have taken the time to help me find my path, who have given me meaningful feedback even when I may not be publishing with them and who have helped me develop a germ of an idea into a full story.

While festivals or a week dedicated to the joy of giving are great reminders, they also highlight the bit we most often miss, caught up in our day-to-day existence. Through life, I hope I do justice to all those who have taken the time to mentor, guide, listen and who have lent their ear or shoulder when all I needed was to vent. ■



NATASHA SHARMA
Author of *Squiggle Takes a Walk*,
BY PENGUIN INDIA

In an age where technology has hastened every action, reaction, decision and response, and we are constantly on call, time seems to have become the one thing we have the least. It is the one thing we can’t control. It is the one thing that seems to go by faster each year. Increasingly,



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