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To Siri, with love



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When a household pet turns out to be more than just a pet over a period

Dear Siri, you turned one today. Happy Birthday Gelhu, Dholu (as bhai, my son, calls you), Mama (as mummy, or I, call you) and Sira (as papa, my husband, calls you).

THE HINDU

send me a picture of you sitting in the lap. You were a tiny white cushion. But at that time, honestly speaking, I was scared and my mind was confused. “Why did they bring him home, how will I manage when they leave for office and college respectively?”

Then you came home. Bhai was holding you, and he told me, “Mummy, please hold him and feel how soft he is, he won’t do anything to you.” I wasn’t expecting this. I ran to the bedroom and climbed atop the bed. Bhai came in and placed you on the floor below the bed. I had decided that after a few days I would ask them to get rid of him.

We didn’t know what we should feed you with, and so you mostly had a branded cereal and curd rice. While both papa and bhai used to play with and cuddle you, I maintained my distance.

I told bhai that at night you won’t be allowed to stay inside the home and would need to be in the balcony. He reluctantly agreed. But that night you didn’t sleep. You were sitting near the balcony door and looking into the bedroom, waiting to see if someone would take you inside.

I also couldn’t sleep. I was looking at you from my bed. Something inside me told me it’s not fair to treat a tiny animal in such a manner. He has just come away from his mother and I have left him alone in the balcony? What harm had he done?

The next morning the ordeal started. You had messed up the whole balcony. My heart, which had started melting overnight, again hardened and I started scolding bhai.

This went on for three days. Then bhai left for his hostel and papa, as usual, went to office. So it was only you and me at home. Before leaving, papa had tied you with a leash near the balcony.

But that day you fell sick. You didn’t have any food and were asleep. By evening I felt bad. I don’t know what happened but something made me come near you. I sat next to you. I gathered courage and gently lifted you up (you were indeed so soft) and placed you on my lap. You were half-awake. When I put you on my lap, you looked at me and went back to sleep. I held you, stroking you.

And today, a year later, you have become one of us, from a nuclear family of three we have become four. All this happened with time. You started going with us on long drives, started sleeping on our bed, going with us to the bazaar.

Slowly, you became familiar with friends, neighbours and relatives, something of a crowd-puller. Everyone started accepting you as part of our family. You are no more a puppy; you’ve become a young, smart retriever. A happy, joyful, energetic and playful dog. Our

THE HINDU

For papa at the door for him to come back from work is worth watching.

You are a blessing, and more. Thanks for coming into our life and making it more joyful. You taught us many things, including how to live without any conditions attached. Now, a life without you is just unimaginable.

On your birthday, I pray to god to keep you healthy and make you smart and happy.

It's not only your birthday, it's a birthday for all of us too. You have given us a happier new life. Thank you very much, Siri.

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