

## **A Place Where You Can Hang Out and Pay What You Like**

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A good cup of coffee while reading a book is something everybody desires and deserves. The problem, however, arises when this dream becomes a burden on one's pocket.

Now imagine this. You enter a small café whose walls are adorned by beautiful photographs and books. You sit for long, have coffee or tea with delicious cookies and in the end when you signal for the bill, you receive a smile instead. Believe it or not, such places really do exist. This dream scenario comes to life at places that follow the concept of “pay what you like”.

Nothing new, the concept of “pay what you like” started with street performances where people could enjoy the performance and pay what they felt it was worth. The concept became popular after English rock band Radiohead sold one of their albums this way. The album made news not for the songs, but for its marketing strategy. Few theatres too use this concept on selected nights.

The “pay what you like” concept, however, has existed in the food industry since long.

Annalakshmi restaurant, which first started in Malaysia in 1984, encourages customers to pay what they believe is fair. The restaurant, which now has branches in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and India, not only follows this concept but has also been a success for over two decades now.

Annalakshmi restaurant, part of a larger organisation called Temple of Fine Arts institutions, follows the policy of *atithi devo bhava*. Customers often refer to this place as “the temple of South Indian food”. Customers not only fall in love with the concept and delicious food, but also go home happy after eating a meal in a beautiful setting, waited upon by smiling volunteers.

Another such place is Seva Café in Gujarat. After having your meal at Seva Café you are served with a bill that reads Rs.0. The footnote adds: “Your meal was a gift from someone who came before you. To keep the chain of gifts alive, we invite you to pay it forward for those dine after you”.

Driven by smiling volunteers and polite staff, the meals here are served with love and a beautiful smile. All costs and income here are made transparent, and the profits used to support various social service projects.

Squeezed in the posh and buzzing lanes of Hauz Khas Village in Delhi is the Kunzum Travel Café, which too follows the policy of “pay what you like”. Serving since 2007, the café is a fine example of what happiness looks like.

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Originally published in ‘The Hindu’, August 1, 2015