

Affection

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This story compares parental love for their children and children's love for their parents. It concludes that parental love transcends children's love for their parents.

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Ashish had a refreshing shower and was busy getting ready to go to his office. He was a computer engineer ageing 26. As he put on his shirt, his mother's call chimed in his ears. "Ashish, have your breakfast". Ashish walked to the dining hall dreamily humming a pop tune. His father who was reading the newspaper glanced at his son. A ray of joyous pride was writ on his countenance. He was a retired bank manager. Ashish was his only son. Ashish folded his shirt sleeves, dragged a chair and settled down for his breakfast. The father and the son had a hearty chat as they savoured the jasmine soft steaming *idly** and *pongal**.

In the middle of their conversation, Ashish's father espied a parrot peering through the window. Fondly offering some scraps of fruits to the tiny bird, the father said to Ashish, "What's that?" With apparent nonchalance, Ashish casually replied, "It's a parrot". Once again, the father wistfully repeated his question and the son said in a plain, clear voice that it was a parrot. The third time, the father pointed his finger at the bird and silently questioned what it was. Ashish suppressed his surging temper and spoke in stiff politeness, "It's a parrot, dad". The next time when the father opened his mouth to repeat his question, Ashish exploded petulantly, "Don't you hear me. It's a parrot, parrot, parrot!"

*idly** - a savoury steamed cake made of rice and dal. It is a traditional breakfast in South

Indian households.
*pongal**- a popular rice dish in South India

Mrs. Anjali stood watching the spectacle silently. Observing the serene face of her husband as well as the scornful expression of her son, she beckoned Ashish to her room. She rummaged her rusty trunk and took an old diary. Turning a few leaves, her thin fingers rested on a particular page. She handed the diary to her son and asked him to read the contents. Ashish found his father's handwriting on the yellowed paper. He went through it silently. "Today, I was playing with my darling child in the garden. A bright looking parrot perched on our young mango tree. Looking at the bird, my cutie lisped, "What's that?" "It's a parrot", I said. Again, my son said, "Daddy, what's that?" Delightfully, I replied, "It's a parrot, my child". Little Ashish kept on repeating his question a score of times. Without losing my temper, I patiently answered his query that it was a parrot.

Ashish stood apparently disturbed. Strange emotions welled up from the depth of his heart and tear drops rolled down on his rosy cheeks. Suddenly, he hated himself for his impervious behaviour. No sooner did he realize his brash impudence than he ran to his dad and fell at his feet. His father lifted him and held him in a tight embrace. Mrs. Anjali watched both of them with tear-filled eyes.