The Man Who Kept Walking

THE PRICE OF DUTY

SAANJAY NAYAK



BlueRose ONE .com
Stories Matter
NewDelhi • London

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS
India | U.K.

Copyright © Saanjay Nayak 2026

All rights reserved by author. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author. Although every precaution has been taken to verify the accuracy of the information contained herein, the publisher assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages that may result from the use of information contained within.

BlueRose Publishers takes no responsibility for any damages, losses, or liabilities that may arise from the use or misuse of the information, products, or services provided in this publication.



For permissions requests or inquiries regarding this publication, please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS
www.BlueRoseONE.com
info@bluerosepublishers.com
+91 8882 898 898
+4407342408967

ISBN: 978-81-182484-4-6

Cover design: Sarang
Typesetting: Simran Maurya

First Edition: November 2026

Preface

This is not a story of extraordinary talent or exceptional luck. It is the story of an ordinary man who spent his entire life carrying responsibilities that seemed larger than himself. It is the story of a son, a husband, a father, an employee, an entrepreneur, and above all, a man who refused to abandon those he loved even when life gave him every reason to do so.

Many people measure success through wealth, position, status, and possessions. His life taught him that success is often measured by what one is willing to sacrifice for others. The world may celebrate victories, but few understand the scars left behind by the battles that never make headlines.

This story begins in a small household where poverty was not an occasional visitor but a permanent resident. Yet inside that modest home lived two determined people—a father and a mother whose dreams for their children were far bigger than their circumstances.

His father travelled across India as a salesman, carrying bags filled with cosmetics and sanitary napkins from town to town, village to village who spent endless days in trains and buses, often sleeping in uncomfortable lodges and railway waiting rooms. Every sale represented food on the table and school fees for his three sons.

His mother, though officially a housewife, was the silent backbone of the family business. She manufactured sanitary napkins at home, did screen printing on Plastic packaging products, often working late into the night while managing household responsibilities. Their children became part of this struggle. After school, instead of playing with friends, they helped package products, sort materials, and prepare shipments.

What appeared to outsiders as hardship became their training ground for life.

They learned discipline before they learned luxury.

They learned responsibility before they learned comfort.

They learned sacrifice before they learned success.

Little did he know that these lessons would prepare him for a life filled with extraordinary highs and devastating lows.

This is the story of that journey.

A Journey Through Poverty, Success, Sacrifice, Betrayal and Hope

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Born Into Struggle 1

Chapter 2: The Travelling Salesman - The Man with the Worn-Out Bag..... 8

Chapter 3: Mother's Silent Factory 17

Chapter 4: Three Brothers and One Dream 27

Chapter 5: Engineering Against All Odds 34

Chapter 6: The First Corporate Job 41

Chapter 7: Marriage: When Dreams Meet Reality 48

Chapter 8: When Relationships Become Politics 58

Chapter 9: The Cancer That Changed Everything 67

Chapter 10: The Beginning of the Fall..... 76

Chapter 11: Friends Who Disappeared..... 83

Chapter 12: Fourteen Years of Darkness..... 91

Chapter 13: Creditors, Survival and Humiliation..... 99

Chapter 14: The God Send 109

Chapter 15: A New Life at Tejas Networks..... 114

Chapter 16: Rebuilding From Ruins..... 120

Chapter 17: Sending Sons Abroad..... 127

Chapter 18: The Jewellery, The Debt and the Wound..... 134

Chapter 19: The Long Return to Stability 139

Chapter 20: The Jewellery Conflict and Emotional Distance 145

Chapter 21: The Villa That Never Was: A Story of Dreams, Choices, and Consequences 150

Chapter 22: My Regrets and Lessons Learned.....157

Chapter 23: Reflections at Retirement Age 188

Chapter 24: Final Thoughts: What Life Taught Me 195

Chapter 25: Epilogue — The Quiet After the Journey 200

Chapter 1

Born Into Struggle

I was born in Mumbai when India was still finding its feet as a young nation and life moved at a slower, more deliberate pace. There were no mobile phones, no instant messages, no video calls. News travelled slowly, and every milestone was cherished because it demanded patience, perseverance, and often sacrifice.

When I came into this world, my father was not standing outside the maternity ward waiting anxiously for the nurse to announce my arrival. He was hundreds of miles away on one of his regular business tours, travelling from town to town as a young salesman selling cosmetic products door to door. His job required him to spend weeks away from home, carrying heavy sample bags through crowded trains, dusty bus stations, and unfamiliar streets, knocking on one shop after another in the hope of securing enough orders to provide for his growing family.

To an outsider, he was simply another travelling salesman.

To us, he was a man carrying the weight of an entire family's future on his shoulders.

Long before I was born, life had already demanded more from him than most young men could imagine.

At the age of just sixteen, he lost his father. Overnight, he ceased to be a carefree young man with dreams of higher education and became the head

of the family. As the eldest son, responsibility found him before adulthood did. He sacrificed his own education without complaint so that his younger brothers and elder sisters could continue theirs. While others his age were building careers and pursuing ambitions, he was earning a living to keep his family together.

It was a sacrifice he never spoke about, but one that shaped every decision he made for the rest of his life.

Then fate dealt him another heartbreaking blow.

Only a few months before ITelex was born, his mother, my grandmother also passed away.

Within a short span of time, he had lost both parents, yet there was no opportunity to grieve for long. There were younger siblings who depended on him, a wife expecting their child, and responsibilities that could not wait. Life expected him to keep moving, and he did.

Even my name carries the memory of those extraordinary times.

When the news of my birth reached him, he was still away on tour. The only way he could communicate with the family was through an **STD (Subscriber Trunk Dialling)** call or Telex.In those days, making a long-distance call was a luxury. Calls had to be booked through an operator, often requiring hours of waiting before the connection finally came through. Families would sit near the telephone, hoping the operator would announce that their call was ready.

Across one such crackling line, after hours of waiting, my father suggested the name that I would carry for the rest of my life.

Looking back today, it seems almost unbelievable that something as personal as naming a child depended upon a telephone connection that itself was uncertain. Yet those were simpler times, when patience was woven into everyday life and every conversation carried immense value because it was so difficult to have.

People often say that every child enters the world with equal innocence. What they do not say is that not every child enters a world of equal opportunity.

Some children are born into homes where dreams are discussed over dining tables laden with food. Others are born into homes where dreams survive despite empty plates and unpaid bills.

I belonged to the second category.

My earliest memories are not of toys, vacations, or celebrations. They are memories of struggle. Memories of watching my parents work tirelessly to keep hope alive in a household where money was always scarce but determination was abundant.

We were three brothers growing up in a modest home. Space was limited, comforts were few, and luxuries were non-existent. Yet there was one thing that never seemed to be in short supply—my parents' belief that education could change our destiny.

My father was a travelling salesman.

His life revolved around trains, buses, dusty roads, and endless journeys across India. He sold cosmetics and sanitary napkins to retailers, distributors, and shopkeepers scattered across cities and towns. His work required him to be away from home for days, sometimes weeks.

As a child, I never fully understood the sacrifices hidden behind those journeys.

I only knew that whenever he returned home, he carried two bags.

One bag contained samples, order books, and business papers.

The other carried our happiness.

Sometimes it was a packet of sweets.

Sometimes a small toy for his children.

Sometimes simply a Hug that reassured us that another difficult month had somehow been survived.

Only much later did I realize that those smiles often hid exhaustion, anxiety, and financial pressure.

My mother was officially a housewife, but in reality she was much more than that.

She was my father's partner in every sense except title.

The sanitary napkins my father sold were not entirely sourced from factories. A significant portion of the work happened inside our own home. My mother spent countless hours cutting, assembling, stitching, and preparing products that would eventually be sold in the market.

The house transformed into a miniature production unit.

Bundles of raw materials occupied corners. Packaging supplies were stacked against walls. Work tables replaced what little space might otherwise have been used for comfort.

The boundary between home and workplace disappeared completely.

As children, we naturally became part of the process.

After returning from school, while other children played cricket in open grounds or watched cinemas, we helped package products most of the time in between our studies and sports.

We counted pieces. We folded materials. We sorted packets. We packed boxes.

At the time, it never felt unfair.

It simply felt normal.

This was our family's way of surviving.

My parents never complained or restricted us from playing like other children, but we learned to manage time between all activities.

That remains one of the greatest lessons they taught us.

Even during periods when money was desperately short, they never surrendered to self-pity. Instead, they focused on solutions.

School fees had to be paid. Books had to be purchased. Uniforms had to be arranged. Food had to be placed on the table.

Every rupee had a purpose. Every expenditure was carefully calculated.

I remember hearing conversations late at night after my brothers and I had supposedly gone to sleep.

My parents would sit together discussing expenses or sometimes arguing over cost cutting.

School admissions. Business payments. Supplier dues. Travel costs. Rent, Electricity bills, medical expenses were of daily concern.

The conversations often carried disagreements, but never defeat.

They always ended with another plan.

Another attempt.

Another effort.

Looking back now, I realize how extraordinary they were.

Neither of them possessed great wealth.

Neither had influential connections.

Neither enjoyed privileged circumstances.

Yet they possessed something many wealthy people never develop—the courage to continue despite uncertainty.

There were days when our meals were simple and repetitive.

Days when purchases were postponed.

Days when unexpected expenses created panic.

But there was one expense my parents never considered reducing.

Education.

To them, education was not merely schooling.

It was liberation.

It was the bridge between our present struggles and a better future.

They believed that if their three sons received a good education, the cycle of hardship could finally be broken.

That belief became the foundation upon which our lives would be built.

As children, we could not fully appreciate their sacrifices.

We only saw fragments.

The long absences of our father.

The endless work performed by our mother.

The careful budgeting.

The postponed desires.

The quiet worries.

Years later, those fragments would come together to reveal a complete picture.

A picture of two parents who carried burdens far heavier than we ever knew.

A father who travelled thousands of kilometres so his children could remain in school.

A mother who transformed her home into a workplace so her family could survive.

A family that possessed very little, yet refused to abandon its dreams.

None of us knew what the future held.

We did not know that success would eventually arrive.

We did not know that failures and betrayals would follow.

We did not know that prosperity would come and go.

We did not know that life would test every relationship we held dear.

At that moment, we were simply three boys growing up in a household defined by hard work.

And although poverty lived with us every day, so did something far more powerful.

Hope.

It was hope that woke my father before sunrise for another journey.

Hope that kept my mother working late into the night.

Hope that pushed us toward our studies.

Hope that convinced us that our circumstances did not have to determine our future.

The story of my life did not begin with success.

It began in that small house filled with struggle, sacrifice, and dreams.

And that is where the foundation of everything was laid.

Chapter 2

The Travelling Salesman ~ The Man with the Worn-Out Bag

When people hear the word *salesman*, they often imagine a neatly dressed man carrying a polished briefcase, driving from one appointment to another, shaking hands in air-conditioned offices before returning home in time for dinner.

My father's world could not have been more different.

His office stretched across the length and breadth of India.

His desk was a railway platform.

His waiting room was a crowded bus stand.

His meeting room was a tiny shop tucked away in an unfamiliar market.

And his workday ended only when the last train had departed and the last shopkeeper had said, "Come back tomorrow."

Before dawn had even touched the sky, while the rest of the city still slept, my father would quietly rise from bed. He moved softly so as not to wake us. My mother would already be in the kitchen, packing a simple breakfast—perhaps rotis wrapped around a dry vegetable, sometimes just pickle if money was particularly tight.

There were no grand farewells.

No emotional speeches.

Just a silent understanding between husband and wife.

She knew another difficult journey was beginning.

He knew she would keep the home together until he returned.

He lifted the same worn-out leather travel bag that had become almost an extension of his body.

Inside were neatly arranged cosmetic samples, order books, invoices, receipt books, catalogues, and a few carefully folded clothes.

But the heaviest thing he carried was invisible…….

……Responsibility.

Three young sons.

A wife.

Bills waiting to be paid.

School fees approaching.

And the hope that this journey would earn just enough to keep every dream alive for another month.

The front door would close gently behind him.

Then he would disappear into the darkness.

By the time the first rays of sunlight reached our home, he would already be standing on a crowded railway platform, surrounded by hundreds of strangers, waiting for another train that would carry him to another city where nobody knew his name.

There were no mobile phones.

No internet.

No GPS.

No online reservations.

No instant messages assuring the family that he had arrived safely.

Once he left home, he seemed to vanish into another world.

Days—sometimes weeks—would pass without a single word.

My mother lived in quiet anticipation.

Every knock on the door made her look up.

Every postman's arrival brought hope.

Occasionally, news would arrive through a fellow traveller or a business acquaintance.

And when fortune smiled, an operator would finally connect an STD call after hours of waiting.

The telephone would ring.

Everyone in the house would rush towards it.

The voices were faint.

The line crackled.

Words disappeared into static.

The conversation lasted only a few precious minutes because every second cost money.

Yet those brief conversations carried enough warmth to sustain us until the next call.

As a little boy, I never understood any of this nor my brothers.

I only knew that my father was rarely home.

Their Birthdays came and went but ours were celebrated

School functions ended.

Festivals filled the neighbourhood with laughter.

Other fathers stood proudly beside their children.

My father was usually somewhere between two railway stations.

Sometimes I wondered why. But we never missed the occasion of a simple outing or a trip to our native places in holidays, where he would drop us and continue his travelling for business. He never enjoyed a holiday.

Sometimes I felt hurt.

Only much later did I understand a truth that changed everything.

Every day he spent away from us...

was another day spent for us.

His journeys took him through bustling cities, forgotten towns, dusty villages, and crowded markets across India.

He travelled in second-class railway compartments so crowded that passengers slept wherever they found space—on berths, on floors, near doorways, sometimes even sitting upright through the night.

The air smelled of coal, sweat, steel, and endless cups of chai poured through train windows.

Vendors shouted.

Children cried.

Suitcases clattered.

The train never seemed to stop moving.

Neither did he.

Many mornings for him began before sunrise after nights without proper sleep.

He would wash his face in a railway station washroom, straighten his shirt, pick up his heavy sample bag and begin another day.

Shop after shop.

Lane after lane.

Market after market.

Sometimes a retailer welcomed him with tea.

Many barely looked up.

Some made him wait for hours before saying they weren't interested.

Others promised payment "next week"—a promise that often became next month.

Rejection became as familiar as breathing.

But he never allowed disappointment to linger.

He simply walked to the next shop.

Then the next.

Then another.

Because failure was not merely professional.

Failure meant unpaid school fees.

Unpaid rent.

An empty kitchen.

Three sons whose future depended upon every order he managed to secure.

Whenever he returned home after weeks on the road, I remember running to the door.

His clothes carried the smell of trains, dust, and long journeys.

His face looked darker from the sun.

His shoulders sagged with exhaustion.

But the moment he stepped inside, fatigue disappeared behind a smile.

His first question was never about himself.

"How are the boys?"

"How is their schooling?"

"Were the fees paid?"

"Is your mother managing?"

"Is everyone healthy?"

Only afterwards would he ask whether there was anything to eat.

That was the measure of the man.

His body came home.

His mind had never left us.

Income was never guaranteed.

Some tours ended well.

Others barely covered the cost of travelling.

A delayed payment from one customer could upset the entire household budget.

My parents would sit late into the night with notebooks open, calculating every rupee.

Which bill had to be paid immediately?

Which expense could wait another week?

Could school fees be delayed without embarrassment?

Could the landlord be requested for a little more time?

Those conversations never contained anger.

Only determination. And to my astonishment all his payments were on date.

Looking back, I now realise that my father's greatest battle was not physical exhaustion.

It was uncertainty.

Today many people receive salaries on the same date every month.

They know what their bank balance will be.

My father never had that luxury.

Every train ticket was an investment.

Every journey was a gamble.

Every customer visit carried hope.

And every day began without any guarantee that it would produce enough to support his family.

Yet there was another sacrifice that remained invisible.

Loneliness.

Hotel rooms became temporary homes.

Railway stations became familiar companions.

Meals were eaten alone.

Victories were celebrated alone.

Failures were endured alone.

While families laughed together over dinner, the travelling salesman stared out of train windows watching unfamiliar landscapes disappear into the night.

He missed birthdays.

He missed festivals.

He missed ordinary evenings that most fathers take for granted.

Those moments can never be reclaimed.

He surrendered them willingly because he believed his children's future was worth more than his present comfort.

Whenever one journey ended successfully, the atmosphere inside our little home transformed almost instantly.

He would bring a new Sari for his wife . Some new gadget for entertainment for us

My mother's face would glow and she would value this ordinary gift as if she received a diamond necklace.

For a brief moment, it felt as though life had become easier.

But only for a while.

Soon the worn-out bag would come down from its place.

Fresh samples would be packed.

New order books arranged.

Another railway ticket purchased.

And before dawn, the front door would quietly close once again.

The cycle never ended.

As I grew older, I realised that my father was teaching me lessons without ever intending to.

Not through speeches.

Not through advice.

But through the example of his own life.

Discipline.

Persistence.

Resilience.

Responsibility.

The refusal to surrender when circumstances seemed impossible.

Those qualities entered my life long before I recognised them.

Neither of us knew then that one day I too would travel endlessly.

That I would face crushing debt, failed businesses, humiliation, betrayal, and uncertainty of my own.

But when those storms finally arrived, I discovered something remarkable.

I had seen this battle before.

I had watched it every morning as a little boy standing at the doorway, watching my father disappear into the darkness with his worn-out leather bag.

He thought he was travelling across India to sell products.

He was doing something far greater.

He was building the character of his sons.

His greatest achievement was never the orders he secured or the revenue he generated.

His greatest achievement was showing us that dignity is earned through perseverance, that responsibility is sacred, and that a man keeps walking—not because the road is easy, but because there are people waiting for him at the end of it.

Even today, whenever life places an unbearable burden upon my shoulders, I can still see him.

A lone figure walking towards a railway platform before sunrise. A worn leather bag in one hand & Hope in the other.

And I remember where my own journey truly began.

Chapter 3

Mother's Silent Factory

If my father was the face of our family's struggle, my mother was its silent foundation.

People saw my father travelling across India, carrying heavy sample bags from one town to another, persuading shopkeepers to stock products, and returning home with orders that kept our household alive.

What they never saw was the industry that existed behind those orders.

They never saw the woman who transformed an ordinary home into a workplace.

They never saw the countless hours of invisible labour that made every sale possible.

Nor did they see the quiet sacrifices that never appeared on balance sheets, invoices, or profit-and-loss statements.

Both my parents carried a silent disappointment that life had imposed upon them.

Neither had been fortunate enough to pursue higher education.

My mother had studied only up to the Intermediate (Pre-University) level. She often believed she was not academically gifted enough to continue her studies. In those days, opportunities for young women were limited, and once education was interrupted, it rarely resumed.

My father's story was even more heartbreaking.

He too had completed only his Intermediate studies, but not because he lacked ability. Life had made the decision for him. At the age of eighteen, after losing his father, he was forced to abandon his education and become the earning member of the family. His own dreams quietly gave way to the responsibilities of raising his younger brothers and sisters.

One lost his education because of circumstance.

The other because of circumstance and self-doubt.

Yet neither allowed their own limitations to become the inheritance of their children.

Perhaps because they knew what it meant to lose an opportunity, they became fiercely determined that their three sons would never face the same fate.

They often told us, in different ways, "Education is the one thing nobody can ever take away from you."

Those words were never spoken as philosophy.

They were spoken from experience.

When my father's business began taking shape in Chennai, it was still fragile and uncertain. Every month was a struggle to balance income against expenses. Some months brought hope. Others brought sleepless nights.

Yet, despite living with constant financial uncertainty, my parents made a decision that seemed almost impossible for people in their circumstances.

They enrolled all three of us in some of the best schools in Chennai.

Looking back today, I often wonder how they found the courage.

School fees alone consumed a large portion of our income.

Books, uniforms, notebooks, transport, examination fees—every academic year brought fresh financial burdens.

Many families in similar circumstances would have chosen less expensive alternatives.

My parents never even considered it.

If sacrifices had to be made, they would make them themselves—not at the cost of our education.

My mother never referred to herself as a businesswoman.

She simply called herself a housewife.

Yet today I realise she was far more than that.

She was a production manager.

A quality inspector.

An inventory controller.

A packer.

An accountant.

A homemaker.

A counsellor.

A teacher.

And above all, the emotional centre that held our family together whenever life threatened to pull it apart.

Our home was unlike most homes in the neighbourhood.

While other families used their living rooms for entertaining guests, ours often resembled a miniature factory.

Bundles of cotton occupied corners.

Packaging material was stacked against walls.

Labels, wrappers, cartons and supplies filled every available space.

The dining table served two purposes.

Meals when necessary.

Production when possible.

There was very little room for comfort because survival demanded productivity.

My mother's day began before sunrise.

Breakfast had to be prepared.

Uniforms had to be ironed.

Three growing boys had to be fed and sent to school.

The house had to be cleaned.

Only after completing all those responsibilities would her second shift begin.

She would quietly sit down and begin manufacturing sanitary napkins that my father would later carry across India.

Hour after hour...

Piece after piece...

Packet after packet...

There were no machines.

No conveyor belts.

No automation.

Only her hands.

Hands that measured.

Hands that stitched.

Hands that folded.

Hands that packed.

Hands that slowly grew rough from years of repetitive work.

Every packet represented income.

Every mistake represented loss.

And loss was a luxury our family simply could not afford.

As children, we watched her work almost every day.

Sometimes we returned from school to find her still bent over the table.

Sometimes she continued late into the night after everyone else had finished dinner.

I used to wonder where she found the energy.

Today I know the answer.

It wasn't energy.

It was purpose.

She wasn't simply making products.

She was building futures.

She rarely complained.

Like countless women of her generation, she believed sacrifice was not something to be spoken about.

It was simply what mothers did.

When she was tired, she continued.

When she was worried, she continued.

When life seemed overwhelming, she continued.

Our needs always came before her own.

Whenever we wished for something beyond our means—a better pair of shoes, a new toy, or clothes like our classmates wore—she never scolded us.

She patiently explained the difference between needs and wants.

It was a lesson I would carry into every stage of my life.

The most extraordinary quality she possessed was not business ability.

It was vision.

She understood that poverty could be temporary.

But lack of education could become permanent.

No matter how severe our financial struggles became, one expense remained untouchable.

Education.

School fees would somehow be paid.

Books would somehow be purchased.

Examinations would somehow be written.

Even if it meant postponing every other necessity.

I often wonder today how she carried such an enormous emotional burden.

My father spent weeks travelling.

The responsibility of running the household rested almost entirely on her shoulders.

She managed the home.

Managed production.

Managed finances.

Managed three energetic boys.

Managed uncertainty.

And somehow...

she managed hope.

Perhaps her greatest gift was that she never allowed us to feel the full weight of our poverty.

We sensed it.

But she absorbed much of its pain herself.

One memory remains deeply etched in my mind.

Every evening, after homework was completed, all three brothers would gather around the work table.

Without being asked, each of us knew our role.

One folded.

One counted.

One packed.

Boxes slowly filled the room.

It never felt like child labour.

It felt like family.

Only decades later did I realise that those evenings were our first lessons in entrepreneurship, responsibility and teamwork.

Business schools teach such principles through case studies.

We learned them sitting on the floor of our small home.

Looking back now, I realise that my mother's greatest contribution was never the products she manufactured.

It was the atmosphere she created.

Despite poverty, she created dignity.

Despite uncertainty, she created stability.

Despite hardship, she created hope along with my Father.

She refused to allow our circumstances to define our ambitions.

Little did she know that those quiet lessons would become our greatest strength when life later tested us with challenges far greater than childhood poverty.

The years ahead would bring success.

They would also bring failure.

Prosperity.

Debt.

Joy.

Heartbreak.

Triumph.

Loss.

Whenever those storms arrived, I found myself returning—not to a classroom or a business seminar—but to the image of my mother sitting at that work table, patiently folding yet another packet under the dim light of our modest home.

The world remembers those who stand on stages.

History often forgets those who quietly build the stages upon which others stand.

In our family, that unseen architect was my mother.

That tiny house, crowded with cotton, cartons and dreams, was far more than our home.

It was the first university of my life.

And my mother, without ever calling herself a teacher, became its greatest professor.

Childhood had wrapped us in a comforting illusion that our family was unbreakable. As children, we laughed together, fought over little things, and believed that our parents could solve every problem. But as the years carried us from childhood into adulthood, invisible cracks began to appear in the walls that held our family together.

Being the eldest of three brothers, I was the first to witness the harsh realities hidden behind our home's smiling façade. I saw the mounting financial struggles that weighed heavily on my father's shoulders—burdens that were invisible to my younger brothers but impossible for me to ignore.

My mother never neglected her responsibilities. She worked tirelessly for the family, sacrificing her own comforts. Yet she was deeply influenced by the opinions of her parents, who constantly reminded her of what they believed were my father's shortcomings. They compared him unjudicialy with his co-brother, who enjoyed the security of a well-paying job in a public limited company, regular income, and a life free from the daily uncertainty that haunted our home.

The comparisons wounded my father more than anyone realized.

Unable to escape the relentless pressure of financial hardship, family responsibilities, and constant criticism, he gradually sought refuge in alcohol and cigarettes. They were not pleasures to him—they were temporary shelters from a storm that never seemed to end.

As in many families, relationships between the two sets of in-laws became another battlefield. My mother's family often questioned my father's capabilities, while my mother herself had frequent disagreements with my father's brothers and sisters. Every gathering carried an undercurrent of tension, every conversation the possibility of conflict.

Within our own home, invisible lines of affection also began to emerge. My younger brother naturally became my mother's favourite, while my youngest brother enjoyed a special place in my father's heart. Standing quietly between them, I often felt like the forgotten child—not unloved, but overlooked.

That loneliness changed me.

Long before I was old enough, I realized that I could no longer remain just a son. I would have to become my father's companion in his struggle. Somewhere deep within me grew a silent determination: I would shoulder whatever burden I could, ease his pain, and one day make him proud.

Despite all his hardships, my father loved my mother with extraordinary devotion. Whenever he could spare even a little money, he would surprise her with a small gift—a sari, a piece of jewellery, or something he knew

would bring a smile to her face. Those gifts often came at a price he could scarcely afford, but seeing her happy made every sacrifice worthwhile.

Yet happiness was short-lived.

Instead of appreciation, there was often another complaint, another comparison, another reminder of what he lacked. Each criticism pierced him a little deeper, pushing him further toward the very habits that everyone condemned but few truly understood.

My father was intensely possessive of my mother, not because he wished to control her, but because he loved her with all his heart and feared losing the only person whose acceptance mattered most to him. My mother cared for him too, but she never fully grasped the silent battles he fought every single day—the humiliation of financial inadequacy, the responsibility of raising a family with limited means, and the constant struggle to preserve his dignity.

Looking back today, I do not see villains in my parents. I see two good people, each carrying burdens the other could not completely understand. Between love, pride, financial hardship, and family pressures, there were regular arguments that became fights that would temporarily induce undue tensions between them , while we, their children, silently watched our childhood innocence fade into an understanding that life is rarely as simple as it appears.

Chapter 4

Three Brothers and One Dream

Hardships can affect families in different ways.

In some homes, hardship creates division. Scarce resources become a source of conflict, and family members begin competing against one another for survival.

In other homes, hardship creates unity. Every challenge becomes a shared burden, every achievement a collective victory.

Fortunately, ours was the second kind of family.

My brothers and I grew up in circumstances that offered very little material comfort, but we possessed something far more valuable—we grew up together.

Being three boys in a struggling household meant that childhood was never entirely carefree. We learned early that every member of the family had responsibilities. Yet it also meant that no one carried those responsibilities alone.

We shared everything. We shared books. We shared study tables.

We shared clothes when necessary. We shared work.

We shared dreams. We also fought as brothers for bonding better.

Most importantly, we shared our parents' belief that education would change our lives.

As children, we were not fully aware of how unusual our upbringing was. We simply accepted it as normal.

When there was work to be done, all of us participated.

When packaging had to be completed, all of us helped.

When supplies had to be organized, all of us contributed.

When difficulties arose, all of us witnessed them.

In many ways, we matured earlier than many children our age.

Our parents never encouraged laziness. Neither did they encourage entitlement. They taught us that every privilege came with responsibility.

If they were sacrificing so much to educate us, then we owed it to them to make those sacrifices worthwhile.

That expectation became an unspoken contract within our family.

I remember evenings when all three brothers sat studying under modest conditions.

There were no private study rooms. No expensive coaching classes.

No personal computers. No luxury of individual space.

We learned to concentrate amid noise, activity, and limited resources.

Sometimes one brother studied while another helped with packaging work.

Competition existed among us, but it was healthy competition.

Each of us wanted to perform well academically.

Each of us wanted to make our parents proud.

Each of us understood that success for one brother brought hope for the others.

There were occasions when financial limitations became painfully visible.

School excursions that we could not afford. Activities that required additional expenses. Opportunities that had to be declined because the family budget simply would not allow them.

As children, such moments hurt.

No child enjoys feeling different from classmates.

No child enjoys explaining why they cannot participate.

Yet those experiences taught us resilience.

They taught us to focus on long-term goals rather than temporary disappointments.

Our parents were remarkably consistent in their message.

"We may not be able to give you wealth today, but we will give you education."

That sentence became the guiding philosophy of our family.

The dream was ambitious.

Educating one child through professional studies was difficult enough for a middle-class family.

Educating three sons through professional courses while running a small business and struggling financially seemed almost impossible.

Yet my parents never treated it as impossible.

They treated it as a challenge.

And challenges, in their minds, existed to be overcome.

As we grew older, our understanding of our parents' sacrifices deepened.

We began noticing things we had previously overlooked.

The delayed purchases.

The careful budgeting.

The absence of personal luxuries.

The constant efforts to generate income.

We realized that many of our educational opportunities existed because our parents had denied themselves comforts.

That realization created a sense of responsibility.

Failure was no longer a personal matter.

It would mean wasting sacrifices made by people we loved.

I often think about the atmosphere within our home during those years.

Despite financial pressure, there was surprisingly little bitterness.

There were worries, certainly. There were difficult discussions.

There were uncertain moments.

But there was also laughter.

There was affection. **There was hope.**

We were not rich , but we were not emotionally bankrupt.

The bond between the three brothers became one of the strongest assets in our lives.

We fought occasionally, as all siblings do. We argued over small matters. We disagreed.

Sometimes ,there were disappointments like my younger brother who was the most brightest child did not get the opportunity to join professional course like the other two brothers but he was more determined to compensate for this by pursuing higher degrees and become the most successful of the three brothers .

But beneath those ordinary sibling conflicts existed deep loyalty.

We understood that we were all travelling on the same journey.

A journey our parents had begun long before we understood its significance.

The older we became, the more seriously we approached our studies.

Academic performance became a matter of pride.

Every examination carried importance.

Every result mattered.

Good marks brought encouragement.

Poor marks brought determination to improve.

Our parents never demanded perfection.

What they demanded was effort.

And effort was something they themselves demonstrated every day.

How could we justify laziness when our father spent weeks travelling across the country?

How could we justify complacency when our mother worked tirelessly from morning until night?

Their example became our motivation.

Gradually, the dream of professional education began taking shape.

Engineering.

Technical studies.

Career opportunities.

The possibilities that once seemed distant started appearing attainable.

Of course, attaining them would require even greater sacrifices.

The expenses would increase significantly.

The financial pressure would intensify.

The family business would have to support ambitions larger than anything it had previously faced.

But those concerns belonged to the future.

At that stage, what mattered most was maintaining momentum.

Each examination passed.

Each academic milestone achieved.

Each step forward represented progress toward a shared goal.

Looking back now, I realize that our parents accomplished something extraordinary.

They convinced three young boys to believe in a future that they could not yet see.

They taught us to dream beyond our circumstances.

They taught us that poverty was a temporary condition, not a permanent identity.

Most importantly, they taught us that success achieved through hard work carries a different value than success inherited through privilege.

Those lessons would become invaluable in the years ahead.

Life would eventually take each brother along his own path.

Different careers.

Different challenges.

Different destinies.

But during those formative years, we were united by a single dream.

A dream carried by three brothers and sustained by two remarkable parents.

None of us knew how difficult the road ahead would become.

None of us knew the sacrifices that still awaited us.

None of us knew the triumphs and tragedies that lay beyond the horizon.

For the moment, we were simply three brothers studying under modest circumstances, helping our parents whenever we could, and believing that education would unlock a future our parents had spent their entire lives trying to create.

It was a simple dream.

Yet it was powerful enough to shape the course of all our lives.

And soon, that dream would lead me into one of the most demanding chapters of my journey—the pursuit of an engineering education against overwhelming financial odds.

Chapter 5

Engineering Against All Odds

For many families, securing admission into a Professional college is a moment of celebration.

For our family, it was both a dream fulfilled and a new challenge beginning. I wanted to become a Doctor. There were so many hurdles defying my ambition, from not being able to join coaching classes to the system of reservations for a seat and if not very high donations. The only other option for me was to get into an Engineering college.

The day I learned that I had secured admission to engineering studies remains etched in my memory. I saw pride in my parents' eyes—a pride that had been earned through years of sacrifice, discipline, and unwavering belief in education.

But alongside that pride was concern.

We all knew what engineering education meant.

It meant significantly higher expenses.

It meant tuition fees, books, equipment, travel costs, examination fees, and countless other expenditures that would place tremendous pressure on an already strained family budget.

For many students, college represents freedom from responsibility.

For me and my younger brother , it represented greater responsibility.

We were deeply aware of what our parents had endured to bring us to that point.

Every train journey my father had taken.

Every late night my mother had worked.

Every sacrifice made by the family.

Every postponed personal desire.

All of it had contributed to that moment.

I could not allow their efforts to become an unbearable burden.

The reality was simple.

If I wanted to complete my engineering education, I needed to contribute financially.

Fortunately, our family had already developed an entrepreneurial spirit through years of struggle.

Alongside the sanitary products business, we had begun working with plastic packaging products manufactured through our small factory operations.

What started as a necessity gradually became an opportunity.

While pursuing my engineering studies, I began actively participating in the sale of these products.

My days became a careful balancing act.

College occupied one part of my life.

Business occupied the other.

There was very little room for leisure.

A typical day often began with attending lectures, practical sessions, and laboratory work. Engineering studies demanded concentration and commitment.

The subjects were challenging.

The expectations were high.

The competition was intense.

Many of my classmates could devote their entire attention to academics.

I could not.

Once classes ended, another workday often began.

I would meet potential customers. Follow up on inquiries. Handle orders.

Discuss pricing. Coordinate deliveries.

Look for new business opportunities.

Some evenings extended late into the night.

Assignments and study materials had to be completed after business responsibilities were finished.

Sleep became a luxury.

Time became my most valuable resource.

Yet strangely, I never felt resentful.

I knew why I was doing it.

Every order secured meant additional income.

Every successful sale reduced pressure on my parents.

Every profit earned helped pay fees, purchase books, or cover daily expenses.

For the first time in my life, I experienced the satisfaction of contributing directly to my own education. It was a powerful feeling.

I was no longer merely receiving support. I was becoming part of the solution.

There were occasions when customers looked at me with surprise.

I was still a student, yet I was discussing products, pricing, margins, and business opportunities with experienced businessmen.

Some underestimated me because of my age.

Others appreciated my sincerity and determination.

Each interaction taught me something valuable.

I learned how to communicate effectively.

I learned how to negotiate.

I learned how to handle rejection.

I learned how to build relationships.

Without realizing it, I was receiving a second education—one that no engineering curriculum could provide.

The marketplace became my classroom.

Customers became my teachers.

Experience became my textbook.

There were difficult moments as well.

Managing studies and business simultaneously was exhausting.

There were times when academic deadlines collided with business commitments.

Times when I questioned whether I could continue maintaining both.

Times when physical fatigue seemed overwhelming.

Yet whenever discouragement appeared, I thought about my parents.

Compared to the sacrifices they had made, my challenges seemed small.

That perspective kept me moving forward.

Engineering education exposed me to new ideas and possibilities.

Technology fascinated me.

The world was changing rapidly.

Computers were beginning to transform industries.

Technical expertise was becoming increasingly valuable.

I sensed that opportunities would emerge for those willing to learn and adapt.

At the same time, my involvement in business provided practical insights that many students lacked.

I understood customers. I understood cash flow. I understood risk.

I understood the difference between theory and reality.

Many people spend years acquiring such knowledge after graduation.

I was fortunate to gain it while still in college.

The profits from the plastic packaging business were not enormous.

We were not becoming wealthy.

But they were meaningful.

Every rupee earned carried significance.

I remember the satisfaction of paying portions of my educational expenses from money I had personally helped generate.

It was more than financial support.

It was proof that effort could create opportunity.

Those years transformed me.

The shy boy who had grown up helping with packaging work at home gradually evolved into a confident young man capable of handling responsibilities beyond his age.

My parents noticed the change.

Their confidence in me grew.

So did my confidence in myself.

For the first time, I began believing that perhaps I could achieve something significant in life.

Not because circumstances were favourable.

But because I had learned how to work despite unfavourable circumstances.

That distinction would become extremely important later.

Many people perform well when conditions are ideal.

Life eventually taught me that true character reveals itself when conditions are difficult.

Engineering studies also strengthened my appreciation for education.

The more I learned, the more I understood how knowledge could create opportunities that previous generations never had access to.

I began seeing education not merely as a qualification but as a pathway to transformation.

The dream my parents had carried for years no longer seemed distant.

It was slowly becoming reality.

As graduation approached, optimism filled our household.

There was a growing belief that the years of sacrifice were beginning to bear fruit.

The family had invested heavily in my future.

Now that future appeared within reach.

Like many young graduates, I imagined a straightforward path ahead.

Complete engineering.

Secure a good job.

Support the family.

Build a successful career.

Enjoy the rewards of years of hard work.

Life, however, had its own plans.

The next chapter would bring opportunities beyond anything I had imagined.

It would introduce me to the corporate world.

It would provide early success.

It would elevate me far beyond the modest circumstances of my childhood.

For a brief period, it would seem as though every sacrifice made by my parents had finally been rewarded.

I did not yet know that success can be as fragile as it is exhilarating.

But before life could teach me that lesson, it first allowed me to experience a dream come true.

A dream that began when a young engineering graduate walked into his first professional job, carrying with him not just a degree, but an entire lifetime of struggle, sacrifice, and determination.

Chapter 6

The First Corporate Job

Every person's life contains certain moments that divide time into two parts—the period before and the period after.

For me, one such moment arrived about a year after completing my engineering studies.

Until then, my life had revolved around survival, education, and helping support the family business. Success was something we hoped for but had not yet fully experienced. We were still a family fighting against limitations, trying to convert dreams into reality. Getting a job after completing Engineering was also not easy. In every interview I attended, I got rejected because I did not have the job experience they expected me to have. How could I get that experience. This was my try for the first corporate job. One year had passed attending interviews without success.

Then came my first significant opportunity.

I was offered a position in a small but ambitious computer manufacturing company.

At the time, the company was still finding its place in a rapidly evolving industry. Computers were beginning to emerge as a transformative force. Businesses were adopting technology. Organizations were modernizing their operations. A new era was taking shape, and I found myself entering the industry at precisely the right moment.

I remember the excitement of receiving that opportunity.

For many young engineers, the first job represents independence.

For me, it represented much more . The salary offered was very small but the immense excitement of receiving the first job offer letter was an experience I still cannot forget. This was my first entry into the corporate world. This success meant a lot

It represented validation.

Validation of my parents' sacrifices.

Validation of years spent balancing studies and business.

Validation of every hardship endured during childhood.

The boy who once packaged products in a small home-based factory was now stepping into the professional world.

I approached the job with the same mindset that had guided me throughout life.

Work hard.

Learn quickly.

Never assume anything is beneath you.

Always be willing to do more than what is expected.

Those principles had served me well before, and they served me well again.

The company was growing, and growth creates opportunities for those prepared to seize them.

I immersed myself completely in my work.

I wanted to understand every aspect of the business.

Not only the technical side but also operations, customer relationships, sales, strategy, and management.

My earlier experiences in the family business proved invaluable.

While many technically skilled employees focused only on engineering tasks, I naturally understood the commercial side of business as well.

I understood customers.

I understood deadlines.

I understood accountability.

I understood that every organization ultimately survives by creating value for its clients.

This broader perspective helped distinguish me from many of my peers.

I worked long hours willingly.

Challenges that intimidated others often energized me.

The hardships of my childhood had prepared me to handle pressure.

Compared to the uncertainty of growing up in financial struggle, corporate challenges seemed manageable.

Gradually, my efforts began attracting attention.

Senior leaders noticed my commitment.

Additional responsibilities were entrusted to me.

Projects increased.

Expectations increased.

So did opportunities.

Each new responsibility became a chance to prove myself.

And each success created momentum for the next.

The promotions came faster than I had expected.

What might have taken many years for others seemed to happen within a relatively short period.

I moved through various roles and eventually entered the management cadre.

For a young man who had grown up watching his parents struggle to pay school fees, it felt almost unreal.

I had grown very fast with sheer dedication to my work and with an intent to repay my parents by making them proud of my achievements. Within the first two years from a trainee Engineer to a Branch Manager and then to a Regional manager in India's Largest Computer Manufacturing company at that time called Sterling Computers. I was awarded Best Sales Person and Best Employee for which the company also gave money to buy my first house in Mumbai. There was no seeing back as my next assignment was as the Director of World's fastest growing Networking Company called D-Link and it went on growing from one company to another. The training which I got in my initial days of struggle as a student came to use in this growth.

For the first time in my life, financial stability was becoming a reality.

The family could breathe more easily.

The constant fear of money shortages began to recede.

The sacrifices of previous years appeared to be paying off.

My parents were proud.

I could see it in the way they spoke about me.

I could see it in their smiles.

Their dream of educating their sons had not been in vain.

The transformation was remarkable.

The same relatives and acquaintances who had once viewed our family through the lens of struggle now saw us differently.

Success changes how society responds to people.

Doors that once remained closed begin opening.

Opinions become more favourable.

Respect becomes more readily available.

At the time, I accepted these changes without questioning them.

Only much later would I learn how conditional some forms of respect can be.

But during those years, life seemed to be moving in the right direction.

Professionally, I was growing rapidly.

Financially, I was progressing steadily.

Personally, I felt optimistic about the future.

I began imagining possibilities that had once seemed impossible.

A comfortable home.

Financial security.

The ability to support my parents.

The opportunity to help my brothers whenever needed.

A stable and prosperous future.

The confidence of youth made everything appear achievable.

Perhaps that confidence was not entirely misplaced.

After all, the progress had been earned.

Nothing had been handed to me.

Every promotion represented effort.

Every achievement represented commitment.

Every step forward reflected years of preparation.

There was another important change taking place during this period.

For the first time, I experienced what it felt like to be recognized for my abilities rather than my circumstances.

Growing up, poverty often defined how others perceived us.

Now professional competence was defining how people viewed me.

It was liberating.

My identity was expanding beyond the limitations of my upbringing.

I was becoming known for what I could do, not for where I had come from.

The computer industry itself was an exciting place to be.

Technology was advancing rapidly. New opportunities emerged constantly.

Companies were growing. Innovation was accelerating.

There was a sense that the future belonged to those willing to embrace change.

I embraced it wholeheartedly.

The more I learned, the more ambitious I became.

Not out of greed, but out of possibility.

For the first time, life seemed full of possibilities.

The struggles of childhood felt increasingly distant.

The future appeared bright.

The years ahead seemed destined to be better than the years behind.

Looking back now, I understand that this period represented the first major peak of my life.

It was a time of growth.

A time of confidence.

A time when hard work seemed to produce predictable rewards.

It was a time when I believed that determination alone could overcome any obstacle.

Life had not yet revealed its more complicated lessons.

I had not yet experienced the painful reality that success in one's career does not automatically translate into success in every aspect of life.

I had not yet learned how relationships can become complicated by expectations, loyalties, misunderstandings, and external influences.

I had not yet encountered the difficult choices that force a person to choose between competing responsibilities.

For the moment, however, those challenges remained hidden beyond the horizon.

I was a young man enjoying the rewards of years of sacrifice.

My parents were proud. My career was flourishing.

My future appeared secure.

Everything seemed to be moving exactly as planned.

And then another important chapter began.

Marriage.

Like most young men, I entered it with optimism, hope, and dreams of building a happy family.

I believed I was beginning the next beautiful phase of life.

I had no idea that this chapter would eventually become the turning point that changed everything. I had been enjoying watching Hindi Cinemas where it was always a Happy Ending and presumed that my life would also follow the same process Dreams often end with realization that the cinema had abruptly ended after 3 hours but the next part was yet to come. Life was full of fun and Joy till the day my parents decided to get me married and enter into a life of responsibility. So I allowed them to look for my Life Partner, the heroine of my Cinema. This was the biggest turning point in my life.

Chapter 7

Marriage: When Dreams Meet Reality

There comes a season in every person's life when professional success no longer fills the emptiness within the heart.

There comes a time when promotions, salary increases, and recognition lose some of their shine because another dream quietly begins to awaken—the dream of coming home to someone who is waiting for you.

That season arrived in my life almost unnoticed.

Years of relentless struggle had finally begun to reward me.

The boy who had once worried about tomorrow's meal had transformed into a respected professional. Financial uncertainty was slowly giving way to stability. My parents looked at me with pride, believing their sacrifices had finally borne fruit.

For the first time in my life, the future seemed generous.

It felt as though destiny itself was smiling.

And like every young man standing on the threshold of a new life, my heart began searching for something that no career could ever provide—a life partner.

Growing up in India, I had been nourished on a steady diet of Hindi cinema.

Those films painted love as something magical.

The hero always found the perfect woman.

Families embraced each other effortlessly.

Misunderstandings vanished with a heartfelt conversation.

Parents blessed every decision.

The final scene always ended with smiling faces, joyful music, and the comforting words...

"...and they lived happily ever after."

How innocent we were to believe that real life followed movie scripts.

As my parents began searching for a suitable bride, excitement spread throughout our family.

They weren't merely looking for a wife for their son.

They dreamt of welcoming a daughter.

A young woman who would preserve our traditions, strengthen our family, and become an inseparable part of our home.

On the other side, another family carried equally beautiful dreams.

A daughter who would marry a loving husband.

Parents-in-law who would treat her like their own child.

A home filled with affection.

Respect.

Security.

None of us realized that while wedding processions carry flowers, music, and blessings...

they also carry invisible luggage.

The luggage of traditions.

The luggage of upbringing.

The luggage of expectations.

The luggage of pride.

Every family unknowingly brings these invisible suitcases into a marriage.

And sooner or later...

someone has to unpack them.

When my wife entered our home, she brought with her dreams as delicate as freshly bloomed flowers.

She believed she would be loved exactly as she had been in her parents' house.

She believed I would stand beside her through every challenge.

She believed my family would embrace her as their own daughter.

My parents, too, welcomed her with genuine affection.

But beneath their warmth lived another expectation.

They hoped she would naturally become part of our traditions.

They expected her to think like us.

Live like us.

Adjust like generations before her had done.

No one intended to hurt anyone.

Yet expectations have a strange way of becoming invisible burdens.

In the beginning...

everything appeared perfect.

Laughter echoed through the house.

Blessings flowed endlessly.

Every festival became a celebration.

Every visitor admired the newly married couple.

Outwardly...

we looked like the perfect family.

But beneath the smiles...

tiny cracks had already begun to form.

My wife belonged to a different generation.

Educated.

Independent.

Thoughtful.

She sincerely tried to adapt to our household.

Every day she sacrificed a little of herself to maintain peace.

She learned our customs.

Accepted unfamiliar routines.

Silenced her discomfort.

Smiled even when she felt lonely.

But every compromise silently invited another.

And another.

Until adjustment slowly became expectation.

My mother, shaped by decades of tradition, naturally believed that this was how families functioned.

Neither woman was wrong.

They simply came from different worlds.

Unfortunately...

those worlds existed under one roof.

As often happens in Indian families, relatives became silent participants in our marriage.

Some offered genuine concern.

Others offered opinions.

A few unknowingly sowed seeds of division.

Someone would casually remark,

"In our family we never do things that way."

Another would whisper,

"She should adjust more."

Someone else would quietly observe,

"Your son has changed after marriage."

Every sentence seemed harmless.

Yet each one left behind an invisible scar.

Advice slowly became judgment.

Judgment became interference.

Interference became conflict.

Without realizing it...

our private life was no longer entirely ours.

And in the middle stood me.

A son.

A husband.

Trying desperately to become both.

Believing silence would preserve peace.

How tragically mistaken I was.

I loved my parents .

Everything I had achieved was because of their sacrifices.

How could I oppose them?

At the same time...

I loved my wife as my heroine, one who would care for me more than my parents ever did.

I wanted her to feel secure.

Respected.

Protected.

So I chose the easiest path.

I said nothing.

I convinced myself...

"Time will solve everything."

"Things will improve."

"Every family experiences such problems."

Days became months.

Months became years.

Time healed nothing.

It simply buried unresolved emotions beneath polite smiles.

My wife endured more than I understood.

Out of respect she never confronted my parents.

She remained patient.

She remained silent.

She swallowed disappointment after disappointment.

But silence has a breaking point.

Eventually...

all the hurt she could not express elsewhere found only one destination.

Me.

Every private conversation became an emotional battlefield.

Every hidden wound surfaced behind closed doors.

Not because she hated me.

But because I was the only person with whom she could safely cry.

Unfortunately...

instead of listening...

I defended.

Instead of understanding...

I explained.

Instead of comforting...

I remained neutral.

I believed I was protecting everyone.

In reality...

I was protecting no one.

Looking back today, I now recognize the greatest mistake we ever made.

It was not financial.

It was not emotional.

It was not even one particular argument.

Our greatest mistake was allowing too many people to enter the sacred space that belonged only to husband and wife.

Out of love for our parents...

Out of respect for our elders...

Out of fear of hurting anyone...

we slowly surrendered the privacy of our marriage.

What should have remained conversations between two people became discussions among many.

Every disagreement attracted advisers.

Every misunderstanding produced opinions.

Every opinion strengthened someone's ego.

Until eventually...

my wife and I stopped hearing each other.

We only heard everyone else.

From a distance, our marriage resembled a magnificent ship leaving the harbour.

The sky was clear.

The ocean calm.

Our destination appeared certain.

Then life changed.

Financial hardships arrived like powerful tides.

Unexpected expenses crashed against us.

Bills accumulated.

Responsibilities multiplied.

Children entered our lives, bringing immense joy—but also greater obligations.

Still...

those financial storms were not our greatest danger.

The real storm raged within.

Misunderstandings became violent waves.

Unspoken expectations became towering walls of water.

Pride became strong winds.

Outside interference became hidden reefs beneath the surface.

And whenever life failed to unfold exactly as either of us had imagined...

the sea erupted.

Sometimes those emotional storms resembled a terrifying tsunami.

Words spoken in anger struck harder than any physical blow.

Silences stretched for days.

Meals were shared without conversation.

Two people slept under one roof...separate bedrooms

yet lived in different emotional worlds.

Our ship had not sunk.

But it had lost its compass.

Today, years later, experience has taught me a truth I wish I had understood when I first married.

Parents deserve our deepest respect.

Relatives deserve our affection.

Friends deserve our gratitude.

But a marriage survives only when husband and wife become one united team.

Advice may enter the home.

Decisions must remain inside the marriage.

Boundaries are not acts of disrespect.

They are acts of protection.

Love alone cannot save a marriage.

Love must be guarded by trust.

Strengthened by communication.

Protected by patience.

Nurtured by forgiveness.

And defended by the courage to stand together when the storms arrive.

Had I learned these lessons earlier, many painful chapters of our lives might never have been written.

Yet perhaps suffering is life's greatest teacher.

For it was only after sailing through those violent seas that I truly understood what marriage was never meant to be...

and what it must become if two imperfect people hope to reach the peaceful shore together.

Little did I know that even greater storms still waited beyond the horizon.

Storms that would test not merely my marriage...

but my character...

my loyalty...

and ultimately force me to make the most heartbreaking decision of my life—

a choice between my career...

and my mother.

That decision would change the course of my life forever.

Chapter 8

When Relationships Become Politics

One of the most painful lessons I learned in life is that success does not always strengthen relationships.

Sometimes, it exposes hidden weaknesses within them.

When I look back at the early years of my marriage, I do not remember a single dramatic event that changed everything overnight. There was no major argument, no shocking betrayal, and no sudden collapse of trust.

Instead, the changes were gradual.

So gradual that they were almost invisible while they were happening.

Like tiny cracks forming beneath the surface of a wall, they remained unnoticed until one day the structure itself appeared different.

For a long time, I believed that if a person was sincere, worked hard, fulfilled responsibilities, and treated everyone fairly, relationships would naturally flourish.

Life eventually taught me that relationships are far more complex.

People do not always judge situations based on facts.

They judge them through emotions, perceptions, insecurities, loyalties, and influences.

And those influences can sometimes become stronger than reality itself.

As my career progressed and my family responsibilities increased, I found myself constantly balancing multiple worlds.

There was my role as a son.

There was my role as a husband.

There was my role as a father.

There were responsibilities toward my kin.

There were expectations from relatives.

There were relationships with my in-laws.

Each role carried obligations.

Each obligation demanded attention.

Each relationship required care.

Initially, I believed these responsibilities could coexist peacefully.

Unfortunately, not everyone viewed situations through the same lens.

Gradually, opinions from outside the immediate family began carrying increasing influence.

Advice was offered.

Observations were made.

Comparisons were drawn.

Interpretations were suggested.

Many of these comments appeared harmless on the surface.

But repeated often enough, even harmless comments can begin shaping perceptions.

A small misunderstanding can become a larger grievance.

A difference in opinion can become evidence of unfairness.

An innocent decision can be interpreted as favouritism.

And once perceptions harden, facts often lose their ability to correct them.

I began noticing subtle shifts.

Conversations that once felt natural became more guarded.

Simple family matters became subjects of debate.

Actions were increasingly interpreted rather than understood.

Intentions were questioned.

Motives were examined.

The atmosphere slowly changed.

One of the greatest difficulties for me was that I genuinely cared about everyone involved.

I loved my parents deeply.

How could I not?

Everything I had achieved was built upon their sacrifices.

Every opportunity in my life could be traced back to their efforts.

The thought of neglecting them felt unimaginable.

At the same time, I loved my wife and wanted her to feel secure and valued.

I wanted her to believe that marriage had expanded her family, not isolated her from it.

I wanted harmony. I wanted balance.

I wanted everyone to feel respected.

But maintaining balance becomes difficult when different people define fairness differently.

What appears reasonable to one person may appear unfair to another.

What feels like duty to one individual may feel like neglect to someone else.

I found myself repeatedly standing in the middle.

Trying to explain.

Trying to reassure.

Trying to accommodate.

Trying to prevent misunderstandings.

Yet despite my efforts, the gaps continued widening.

There was another painful development that I struggled to accept.

The gradual emergence of divisions within relationships that had once felt strong and uncomplicated.

The bond between brothers, built through years of shared struggle and common dreams, began facing strains.

Nothing dramatic.

Nothing immediate.

Just subtle changes.

Differences in priorities.

Differences in perspectives.

Differences in expectations.

Life had taken each of us down different paths, and those paths sometimes created distance where closeness had once existed.

I often wondered whether this was simply part of growing older.

Or whether external influences were accelerating the process.

Perhaps it was both.

The reality is that family relationships rarely deteriorate because of a single event.

More often, they weaken through accumulated misunderstandings left unresolved.

Unfortunately, by the time those misunderstandings become visible, considerable damage may already have occurred.

My wife's relationship with her own parents remained naturally strong.

There is nothing unusual about that.

Every daughter remains emotionally connected to the family she grew up with.

I respected that bond.

In fact, I encouraged it but in that process …**I became the** ACCIDENTAL HUSBAND

However, there were times when I felt that advice and opinions from outside our marriage were beginning to influence how situations within our marriage were interpreted.

A husband's actions might be viewed through one lens.

A parent's actions through another.

The same event could generate entirely different conclusions depending on who was explaining it.

Over time, I sensed that my efforts were increasingly being evaluated not by intention, but by perception.

And perception can be a difficult opponent.

You can explain actions.

You can justify decisions.

You can provide facts.

But if someone has already formed a conclusion, facts often arrive too late.

The most frustrating aspect was that I never viewed family relationships as competitions.

I never believed affection should be measured or compared.

Love for parents did not diminish love for a spouse.

Commitment to a spouse did not reduce responsibility toward parents.

At least that was how I saw it.

Unfortunately, not everyone shared the same perspective.

The emotional space between family members slowly increased.

Minor disagreements carried greater emotional weight.

Small incidents triggered larger reactions.

Trust, once taken for granted, required constant maintenance.

The situation did not become unbearable immediately.

Life continued.

My career continued advancing.

Our children continued growing.

Daily routines continued.

Outwardly, everything still appeared normal.

But internally, I was becoming increasingly exhausted.

Managing professional responsibilities was easier than managing emotional tensions.

Business problems could be analysed.

Technical problems could be solved.

Family misunderstandings were far more difficult.

There were no formulas.

No clear answers.

No guaranteed solutions.

Only emotions.

And emotions rarely follow logic.

Looking back, I now recognize that this period represented the beginning of an important transformation in my life.

Until then, I had largely believed that effort guaranteed results.

If you worked hard enough, you succeeded.

If you persisted long enough, obstacles disappeared.

If your intentions were good, people understood them.

Life was about to teach me otherwise.

There are situations where effort does not immediately produce results.

There are sacrifices that go unnoticed.

There are intentions that become misunderstood.

There are relationships that suffer despite sincere attempts to preserve them.

And there are moments when circumstances force impossible choices upon you.

I did not yet know it, but such a moment was approaching rapidly.

The trajectory of my career seemed nothing short of extraordinary.

With every passing year, I was climbing higher, collecting accolades, winning awards, and earning recognition across every corporate organization I became a part of. What began as a journey on the shop floor as a Production Engineer soon transformed into a remarkable ascent. In just seven years, I had risen through the ranks to become a Director, entrusted with immense responsibility, strategic decision-making, and the confidence of industry leaders.

The world around me celebrated my success.

Each achievement opened the door to larger opportunities. Every milestone fuelled greater ambition. Industry stalwarts sought my expertise, organizations valued my leadership, and success appeared to be my constant companion. From the outside, life seemed perfect—a story of determination, growth, and relentless accomplishment.

But while I was busy building an empire of professional success, cracks were silently forming elsewhere.

The long hours, endless travel, and unwavering focus on career advancement gradually pulled me away from the very foundations that mattered most. Family affairs were left unattended. Precious moments with loved ones slipped away unnoticed. Relationships that needed nurturing and attention were postponed for another day—a day that never seemed to arrive.

Everything appeared hunky-dory on the surface.

Yet beneath the applause, the promotions, and the growing reputation, an unseen storm was gathering strength. What looked like a golden chapter of achievement was quietly concealing challenges that would soon alter the course of my life forever.

Then came the turning point.

A series of events unfolded that transformed a journey of success into a battle for survival. The ambitious dreams that once propelled me forward were replaced by unexpected setbacks, painful failures, and significant financial losses. The reputation I had spent decades building came under strain. The image that commanded respect in professional and social circles began to fade. Even among my own kith and kin, questions replaced admiration, and distance replaced understanding.

The fall was not sudden—it was gradual, relentless, and deeply personal.

What followed was not merely a financial crisis or a professional setback. It was a test of character, resilience, and purpose. The years ahead would challenge every belief I held about success, relationships, and life itself,

forcing me to confront realities I had never imagined while standing at the peak of my achievements.

Little did I know that the most difficult chapter of my life was only just beginning

A moment that would eclipse every professional achievement I had ever earned.

A moment that would challenge my priorities, my values, and my identity.

My mother would soon become seriously ill.

The woman who had shaped my life would face a battle far greater than anything our family had encountered before.

And when that happened, I would find myself standing at a crossroads.

One path led toward career, stability, and professional success.

The other led toward duty, gratitude, and the opportunity to stand beside the woman who had stood beside me since birth.

The decision would appear obvious to my heart.

But the consequences would follow me for many years.

The storm that would transform my life was no longer approaching.

It had already begun.

Chapter 9

The Cancer That Changed Everything

There are certain days in life that divide your existence into two parts.

The life before that day.

And the life after it.

For me, one such day arrived when we learned that my mother had cancer.

Even today, after many years, I can remember the feeling that swept through me when the diagnosis became known.

Shock.

Disbelief.

Fear.

Helplessness.

Until that moment, illness had been something that happened to other families. Like most people, we knew cancer existed, but we never imagined it would enter our own home and threaten the very person who had been its strongest pillar.

To imagine her suffering was painful enough.

To imagine losing her was unbearable.

The diagnosis affected everyone in the family.

But each person experienced it differently.

Some responded with concern.

Some with sadness.

Some with practical planning.

As for me, I felt something deeper.

I felt responsibility.

The woman who had stood beside us through every stage of life now needed someone to stand beside her.

And I knew that person had to be me.

At that point in my career, things were progressing well. My wife stood by me as always and it was she who recommended that my mother be treated in the city where we were staying at that time. I owe my sincere gratitude to my wife for this initiative. My sincere gratitude also to my in-laws who attended to her post operation and took great care of her. They were also equally responsible for saving her.

Years of hard work had begun producing meaningful rewards.

I had built a reputation.

I had established myself professionally.

The future appeared promising.

Many opportunities lay ahead.

In purely professional terms, it was one of the most important phases of my career.

Yet suddenly none of that seemed important.

Cancer has a way of changing priorities.

Things that once appeared urgent, lost significance.

Things that once seemed secondary become essential.

Targets. Promotions. Meetings. Business plans. Career growth.

All of it faded into the background when compared with a single question:

How do I save my mother?

The battle began immediately.

Doctor consultations.

Medical tests.

Hospital visits.

Treatment discussions.

Second opinions.

Financial planning.

Emotional support.

Every day brought new challenges.

Cancer does not affect only the patient.

It affects the entire family.

The disease enters every conversation.

Every decision.

Every thought.

Every prayer.

The uncertainty becomes relentless.

You begin measuring time differently.

Not in months or years.

But in reports, treatments, and medical appointments.

I watched my mother face her illness with remarkable courage.

She rarely complained.

Even while suffering, she worried more about her normal daily routine than the seriousness of her disease. Probably she had not understood the after effects of this decease .

That was her nature.

Even as a patient, she remained a mother first.

I often wondered where she found the strength.

Perhaps strength develops naturally in people who spend their lives caring for others.

Perhaps years of sacrifice had prepared her for battles that would have broken weaker individuals.

Whatever the reason, her resilience inspired everyone around her.

But courage alone could not remove the practical realities.

She needed care.

Constant care.

She needed someone present.

Someone available.

Someone willing to prioritize her needs over everything else.

I made my choice.

Looking back, I do not think it was truly a choice at all.

How could I abandon the woman who had spent her life supporting us?

How could I focus entirely on career advancement while she fought for her life?

How could I enjoy professional success knowing that she needed me?

My conscience would never allow it.

So I devoted increasing amounts of time and attention to her care.

Initially, I believed I could manage both responsibilities.

Career and caregiving.

Professional commitments and family obligations.

Like many people, I underestimated how demanding such a balance can become.

Cancer is not a problem that can be addressed occasionally.

It requires continuous involvement.

Continuous attention.

Continuous emotional energy.

Gradually, the demands increased.

Hospital visits became more frequent.

Medical emergencies arose unexpectedly.

Treatment schedules disrupted normal routines.

The emotional strain accumulated day after day.

My focus inevitably shifted.

Professional responsibilities that once received my complete attention now competed with urgent family needs.

Work suffered.

Not because I lacked commitment.

But because my priorities had changed, while others maintained their priorities and occasionally called on her to enquire about her health . This was a battle fought not only by my mother but equally by my father

controlling his emotions, my wife supporting me while I broke down, my in-laws supporting my mother and giving her that emotional strength to fight back, my brothers supporting on financial needs but all others were only spectators.

I was no longer able to dedicate myself entirely to career growth.

Every professional decision had to be evaluated against my mother's condition.

Every work commitment had to accommodate family responsibilities.

The impact became increasingly visible.

Career momentum slowed.

Opportunities passed by.

Professional relationships became strained.

Expectations remained high, but my ability to meet them consistently diminished.

The reality was painful. Success often demands total focus.

Cancer demanded even more.

Eventually the conflict between the two became impossible to ignore.

There are moments in life when every available option carries a cost.

This was one of those moments.

If I focused fully on my career, I could preserve professional growth and financial stability.

But I would sacrifice precious time with my mother during her greatest need.

If I focused on my mother, I would risk damaging the career I had spent years building.

Neither option felt fair.

Neither option felt right.

Yet reality rarely offers perfect choices.

In the end, my heart made the decision.

I chose my mother.

Not because it was financially sensible.

Not because it was strategically wise.

But because it was morally necessary.

I knew I would never forgive myself if I neglected her.

No promotion could replace a mother.

No salary could erase regret.

No professional success could compensate for abandoning a parent in their darkest hour.

So I accepted the consequences.

At first, those consequences appeared manageable.

Then they began growing.

Career setbacks became more frequent.

Professional opportunities diminished.

Financial stability weakened.

The foundation that had taken years to build began showing signs of strain.

Yet during that period, I rarely thought about the financial disaster to follow.

My attention remained fixed on my mother.

We fought alongside her.

We hoped. We prayed. We searched for solutions. We celebrated small improvements.

We feared setbacks. Every day felt like a battle.

A battle against disease.

A battle against uncertainty.

A battle against time itself.

What I did not fully realize was that while we were fighting one battle, another was quietly beginning.

The professional and financial consequences of my decision were accumulating.

The career that had once seemed unstoppable was slowly losing momentum.

The life I had worked so hard to build was becoming fragile.

The cost of my choice would eventually extend far beyond lost opportunities.

It would lead to unemployment.

Financial hardship. Business failures. Debt. Humiliation.

And fourteen long years of struggle.

Would I make the same choice again if given another chance?

Without hesitation……..YES

Because some decisions are not measured by financial outcomes.

They are measured by values. Measured by duty.

Measured by the ability to live with oneself afterward.

I chose to stand beside my mother.

The price would be enormous.

Far greater than I imagined at the time.

But as painful as the consequences became, I have never regretted being there for her when she needed me most.

The tragedy was not the choice itself.

The tragedy was that life demanded such a choice in the first place.

And as my mother's battle continued, the first signs of my own downfall had already begun.

The years of prosperity were ending. But after this hard fought battle which lasted for 5 full years, I got the satisfaction of having saved her. She lived another 18 years after she was first diagnosed with cancer. We had won this battle, my mother was back to her routine duties, she had lost a breast though, which took some time for her to emotionally adjust . Everything except my career was falling in place . I was confident to bounce back from where I had left, but little did I expect …….

A much darker chapter was about to begin

Chapter 10

The Beginning of the Fall

Downfall rarely arrives as a single dramatic moment.

It arrives quietly, disguised as a series of small setbacks that seem manageable at first.

Only later do you realize that those setbacks were not isolated events, but the beginning of a long and painful descent.

For me, the beginning of that descent was already in motion while my mother's treatment was still ongoing.

At the time, I did not recognize it.

My attention was fully consumed by her health, her care, and the emotional weight of watching someone I loved so deeply struggle against a serious illness.

Work continued, but my relationship with work had changed.

I was no longer the same person who could dedicate uninterrupted focus to professional responsibilities.

Even when I tried, my mind often drifted toward hospital visits, medical reports, and the uncertainty of each new day.

In any competitive environment, consistency is crucial.

In my case, consistency had begun to break.

At first, the impact was subtle.

Deadlines became slightly harder to meet.

Certain responsibilities were delegated more often.

Some opportunities were postponed rather than pursued.

I told myself it was temporary.

That once my mother's condition stabilized, I would return fully to my professional path.

But life rarely pauses to accommodate our expectations.

The organization I worked for was growing, evolving, and demanding increasing levels of commitment from its employees.

What had once been a small, emerging company was beginning to operate with greater structure and expectations.

In such environments, performance is continuously evaluated.

Presence matters.

Availability matters.

Focus matters.

And gradually, it became evident that my ability to meet those expectations consistently was declining.

There were discussions.

Subtle at first.

Then more direct.

Concerns about involvement.

Concerns about availability.

Concerns about priorities.

I tried to explain.

I tried to make them understand that my situation was temporary and unavoidable.

Some understood.

Some sympathized.

But organizations, like life, cannot always operate on sympathy alone.

Responsibilities still need to be fulfilled.

Numbers still need to be delivered.

Decisions still need to be made.

And when those expectations are not consistently met, consequences eventually follow.

The inevitable moment arrived.

I lost my position in the company.

Even today, I remember the emotional impact of that moment more than the event itself.

It was not anger that I felt.

It was not even shock.

It was a strange mixture of sadness and numbness.

A sense that something important had quietly slipped away while I was focused elsewhere.

The job that had once represented stability, recognition, and achievement was suddenly gone.

Years of effort, growth, and momentum seemed to dissolve in a short span of time.

But the reality of loss does not end with the loss itself.

It extends into what follows.

After leaving the organization, I expected that I would quickly find another opportunity.

After all, I had experience.

I had skills. I had a track record. I had friends whom I had helped shape their careers, given them the opportunity to establish themselves, but……..

That expectation proved to be far more optimistic than reality.

The professional world had changed in my absence.

Networks that once felt strong had weakened.

Connections that once seemed supportive had become distant.

Opportunities that once appeared accessible now required conditions I could no longer easily meet.

There was another painful realization.

Many of the people who had once appreciated my work were no longer present when I needed support.

Some had moved on.

Some avoided involvement.

Some simply disappeared from contact.

It was a difficult lesson.

Success attracts attention.

Struggle often removes it.

At that stage, I began to understand a truth that life had been preparing me to learn for some time.

Professional relationships are often conditional.

Not necessarily out of malice.

But because people tend to engage more actively with those who are currently visible, successful, or influential.

When circumstances change, so does attention.

The transition from employment to uncertainty was emotionally heavier than I had anticipated.

It was not just a financial shift. It was an identity shift.

For years, I had introduced myself through my profession, my role, my achievements.

Now that structure no longer existed in the same way.

There was a void.

A sense of disorientation.

A question that quietly lingered in the background:

Who am I now?

At the same time, my mother's health continued to demand attention.

Hospital visits did not reduce. Treatment did not pause.

Emotional responsibility did not disappear. If anything, it intensified.

I found myself in a situation where one major pillar of stability had collapsed while another required even more attention than before.

There was no space to recover slowly. No time to rebuild gradually.

Life continued moving forward regardless of my readiness.

Financial pressure also began increasing with responsibilities.

Without a steady income, planning became difficult.

Expenses related to medical care, household needs, and daily survival accumulated.

Savings, once considered sufficient, began reducing faster than expected.

What had once been a stable life was now becoming uncertain in every direction.

Yet even during this phase, I did not regret my earlier decision.

That thought remained constant.

Whatever the consequences, I could not have chosen to ignore my mother's condition.

But knowing that a decision is morally right does not make its consequences easier to endure.

There were moments of quiet reflection during this period.

Moments when I would look back at how quickly life had changed.

A successful professional journey.

A stable income.

A respected position.

And then, almost without warning, unemployment and uncertainty.

It felt as though I was standing at the edge of a cliff that I had not noticed approaching.

And once I had stepped over it, there was no immediate way back.

Still, there was no option but to continue.

My mother needed care.

My family needed stability.

My responsibilities had not disappeared.

They had only changed form.

In the midst of this transition, I began to understand something important about resilience.

Resilience is not about avoiding downfall.

It is about continuing despite it.

It is about adapting when circumstances change without permission.

It is about finding ways to survive when the systems that once supported you no longer exist.

Those lessons were not easy. They were not voluntary.

They were learned through experience.

As days turned into months, the reality of my situation became clearer.

The professional setback was not temporary.

It marked the beginning of a longer period of struggle.

A period where stability would need to be rebuilt from the ground up.

A period that would test patience, endurance, and faith in ways I had not yet experienced.

Looking back now, I understand that this was the true beginning of my fall. Not a single moment. But a transition.

From stability to uncertainty.

From recognition to invisibility.

From confidence to survival.

And from that point onward, the next fourteen years of my life would unfold as a continuous struggle to rebuild what had been lost, while trying to hold together a family already under immense pressure.

The hardest part was not the loss itself.

It was learning how to continue after it.

To continue Walking on the path of destiny…

Chapter 11

Friends Who Disappeared

One of the most unexpected lessons I learned during my difficult years was that people do not always leave loudly.

Sometimes they leave quietly.

Without confrontation.

Without explanation.

Without closure.

Just a gradual fading away, until one day you realize that the presence you once took for granted is no longer there.

After losing my job and entering a period of financial and emotional uncertainty, I expected many things to change.

I expected stress. I expected struggle. I expected hardship.

What I did not expect was how quickly the social world around me would transform.

During my successful years, I had been surrounded by people.

Colleagues.

Friends.

Acquaintances.

People who greeted me warmly.

People who invited me to gatherings.

People who valued my opinions.

People who sought my help and advice.

At that time, life felt full of connections.

It felt as though I belonged to a wide and active circle of relationships.

But circumstances have a way of testing the depth of those connections.

And I soon discovered that not all relationships are built on equal foundations.

When I was professionally stable, communication was effortless.

Phone calls were returned quickly.

Messages received immediate responses.

Meetings were easy to arrange.

Invitations were frequent.

There was a sense of inclusion that felt natural.

But after my situation changed, that rhythm slowly began to break.

At first, I told myself it was coincidence.

People were busy.

Workloads had increased.

Priorities had shifted.

Everyone has their own responsibilities.

There was no need to overthink it.

But over time, patterns become difficult to ignore.

Messages went unanswered for longer periods.

Calls were returned less frequently.

Plans were postponed indefinitely.

Invitations gradually stopped.

Conversations that once felt warm became brief and formal.

The change was not dramatic.

It was subtle.

And precisely because it was subtle, it took time to fully understand what was happening.

It is difficult to accept that respect in many social environments is often closely tied to perceived success.

When you are doing well professionally, people naturally gravitate toward you.

Your presence is valued.

Your opinions are sought.

Your achievements are acknowledged.

But when circumstances change, attention often changes with them.

Not necessarily out of cruelty.

But because human attention tends to follow visibility and influence.

During this period, I began experiencing that reality firsthand.

There were colleagues who had once worked closely with me who now seemed distant.

There were friends who had once shared regular contact who gradually became strangers.

There were acquaintances who would cross the road to greet me warmly in earlier times, but now seemed unsure how to respond.

Some avoided eye contact.

Some offered polite but brief greetings.

Some pretended not to notice.

It was not hostility.

It was absence.

And absence can sometimes be more painful than opposition.

The emotional impact of this realization was difficult to describe.

It was not anger that I felt.

It was a quiet sense of disillusionment.

A gradual understanding that many relationships are influenced by circumstances rather than permanence.

There were moments when I questioned myself.

Had I misunderstood these relationships earlier?

Had I assumed deeper bonds than actually existed?

Or was this simply how social structures function when external conditions change?

Perhaps the truth lay somewhere in between.

There were, of course, a few individuals who remained supportive and concerned.

A small number of people who continued to check in.

Who offered encouragement.

Who did not measure my worth by my current situation.

Those relationships, though few, became extremely valuable.

They reminded me that not all connections are conditional.

But they were exceptions, not the norm.

Most interactions slowly faded into distance.

One of the most difficult aspects of this phase was the contrast between memory and reality.

I could clearly remember how things used to be.

The conversations.

The respect.

The warmth.

The inclusion.

And then I would compare it with what existed now.

The silence.

The distance.

The hesitation.

The difference was stark.

It created a sense of emotional imbalance.

A feeling that the ground beneath social identity was no longer stable.

There is a certain psychological weight that comes with being forgotten by people who once knew you well.

It makes you question not only relationships, but also identity.

If people no longer acknowledge your presence in the same way, what does that say about the nature of those connections?

Was it you who changed?

Or was it the circumstances around you?

These questions do not always have clear answers.

During this time, I also became more aware of how society often responds to success and struggle differently.

Success tends to attract attention.

Struggle tends to isolate.

When someone is successful, people are often eager to associate with them.

When someone is struggling, many quietly step back.

This is not always intentional.

It is often a reflection of human nature.

People prefer association with stability.

They avoid discomfort.

They gravitate toward environments that feel positive and secure.

Understanding this intellectually is one thing.

Experiencing it personally is something entirely different.

There were days when the silence felt heavier than the financial pressure.

Days when emotional isolation felt more difficult than material hardship.

Because financial problems can be measured and addressed.

Emotional absence is harder to define and harder to resolve.

In the midst of this withdrawal from my social circle, my responsibilities at home remained unchanged.

In fact, they had increased.

My mother's health continued to require attention.

Family obligations continued.

Financial challenges continued.

There was little space left for emotional processing.

Life demanded functioning, regardless of internal state.

Slowly, I began adjusting.

I reduced expectations from people except from my immediate family who stood supportive during that period .

I stopped initiating conversations that were unlikely to be reciprocated.

I focused more on immediate responsibilities.

I learned to operate with fewer external interactions.

Not because I wanted isolation.

But because isolation was gradually becoming reality.

Over time, something unexpected happened.

The pain of social withdrawal began transforming into a form of clarity.

I started understanding that not all relationships are meant to last through every phase of life.

Some are tied to shared circumstances.

Some to shared environments.

Some to shared success.

And when those circumstances change, relationships naturally evolve or dissolve.

It does not always indicate betrayal.

Sometimes it simply reflects change.

But even understanding this intellectually did not fully remove the emotional impact.

Human beings are not built on logic alone.

We are built on memory, connection, and experience.

And memories of past closeness do not disappear easily.

As I moved through this phase, I began to rely more on internal strength than external validation.

I stopped measuring my worth through social interaction.

I started focusing on responsibilities that still required attention.

My mother.

My family.

My immediate obligations.

Life had narrowed, but it had also become more focused.

There is a strange kind of strength that develops in isolation.

Not the strength of comfort.

But the strength of necessity.

When external support reduces, internal resilience becomes essential.

This period, though painful, began shaping a deeper understanding of human relationships.

It taught me that not all silence is rejection.

Not all distance is hostility.

And not all absence is permanent.

But it also taught me that dependence on external validation is fragile. Because people change. Circumstances change.

And life rarely guarantees continuity in relationships.

As I continued navigating this difficult phase, I did not yet know that even greater challenges were ahead.

Financial collapse. Business failures.

Mounting Debt.

Years of struggle.

And a complete rebuilding of life from its most basic foundations.

But before those events unfolded, I had already begun experiencing one of the most difficult transitions a person can face.

The transition from being socially included to becoming largely invisible.

And that invisibility would soon become the background against which the next phase of my life would unfold.

Chapter 12

Fourteen Years of Darkness

There are phases in life that do not feel like individual events anymore.

They feel like a continuous stretch of survival, where one day blends into another, and time is measured not by achievement, but by endurance.

For me, that phase lasted fourteen years.

Looking back, it is still difficult to explain how a person can live through such a long period of uncertainty and instability. But when you are inside it, you do not see it as a "period." You simply live day to day, solving immediate problems, trying to prevent the next crisis, and hoping that somehow things will eventually improve.

The downfall that began after my mother's illness and job loss did not reverse quickly. In fact, it deepened before it ever showed signs of recovery.

Financial stability disappeared first.

Then professional identity weakened.

Then savings began to erode.

Then confidence slowly reduced.

And gradually, the structure of a normal life started breaking apart.

I tried to rebuild myself through different small ventures and startup efforts.

At first, there was hope.

The belief that experience, effort, and intelligence would be enough to rebuild what had been lost.

But reality proved more complex.

Business is not only about ideas.

It is about timing.

Trust.

Execution.

And often, luck.

In my case, over trust in partners became one of the biggest challenges.

People I believed would stand with me sometimes did not.

Some commitments were not honoured.

Some expectations were not met.

Some collaborations failed not because of lack of effort, but because of misalignment in intention and execution.

Each failure carried a cost.

Not just financial, but emotional.

Every setback reduced not only money, but confidence.

And slowly, repeated failures began creating a pattern that was difficult to break.

Meanwhile, life at home became increasingly strained.

Rent became a recurring burden.

At times, we struggled even to pay it .

There were moments when we had to move out of houses because we could not manage payments. I was most of the time travelling for building my business and some times even had to stay away from home for months . There were instances where my wife was threatened by land owners to be thrown out of house with my young growing children .She had to beg the land lords for grace periods with great difficulty.

Each such moment carried humiliation.

Not loud humiliation.

But quiet, deeply personal humiliation that stays in memory long after the event has passed.

Standing outside a rented house with belongings packed, knowing that you are leaving not by choice but by compulsion, changes something inside a person.

It makes you aware of how fragile stability truly is. We wished that we had a home of our own where we would not have to face such humiliation.

During this period, my wife and I both went through immense stress.

The pressures of financial instability, uncertainty, and responsibility affected every aspect of family life.

Communication became strained at times.

Emotional exhaustion became common.

And over time, distance began developing where understanding should have been.

We were not enemies.

We were two people trapped in a situation neither of us had created, trying to navigate consequences neither of us fully controlled.

But prolonged stress changes the nature of relationships.

Patience becomes thinner.

Tolerance becomes limited.

Emotions become reactive.

And misunderstandings become more frequent.

At the same time, the responsibility of raising children continued.

That responsibility never paused.

In fact, it became even more important during this period.

Despite financial instability, we were determined that our children should not suffer in terms of education.

Their future had to remain protected, even if everything else was uncertain.

This often required me to do extreme financial adjustments.

Sacrifices.

Borrowings.

Risk-taking decisions that were not always safe, but felt necessary at the time.

One of the most difficult aspects of this period was the constant pressure from multiple directions.

Creditors.

Banks.

Rental obligations.

Family responsibilities.

Emotional stress within the household.

And the internal pressure of trying to rebuild life repeatedly after each setback.

There were days when survival itself felt like a full-time task.

Professional identity had not completely disappeared, but it had weakened significantly.

Attempts to restart career paths or business ideas often faced structural limitations.

CIBIL scores had deteriorated due to financial stress and loan defaults.

This created further barriers to accessing formal financial support.

As a result, options became limited.

Every direction required compromise.

Every opportunity came with risk.

And every decision carried uncertainty.

During this time, I often travelled to different cities searching for opportunities.

Sometimes by bus.

Sometimes by train.

Often in second or third class compartments.

Not as a matter of preference, but necessity.

Those journeys became symbolic of my life at that stage.

Simple.

Uncertain.

Uncomfortable.

But persistent.

Even in the middle of this struggle, there were moments of emotional reflection.

I would sometimes think back to earlier phases of life.

My childhood.

My parents' sacrifices.

My early career success.

And I would wonder how life had transitioned from stability to prolonged instability.

But there were no clear answers.

Life does not always explain its transitions.

It simply moves forward.

And you move with it.

One of the most painful aspects of this period was the emotional contrast between past success and present struggle.

I remembered a time when I was respected professionally.

When life felt structured.

When future seemed predictable.

And then I looked at the present.

Where everything felt uncertain.

The psychological gap between those two realities was often more difficult than the financial gap.

Yet even during these darkest years, there was one constant source of strength.

My children & My wife……..the reason to fight back.

Their education, their growth, their future aspirations became the anchor that prevented complete collapse.

No matter how difficult things became, I knew I could not allow their future to be compromised.

That belief often forced me to continue even when circumstances suggested stopping.

There were moments when I questioned every decision.

Moments when exhaustion became overwhelming.

Moments when the weight of continuous struggle felt almost unbearable. My wife who was a pillar of support for me all this while suddenly stopped trusting my capabilities to bounce back, even my in-laws who had provided me with a lot of emotional support till now started feeling whether they had taken the correct decision of having married their dear daughter to me.

But life rarely offers the option of pause.

Responsibilities continue regardless of internal condition.

And so I continued taking the right and wrong decisions.

Slowly.

Unevenly.

Through repeated setbacks.

Through financial pressure.

Through emotional strain.

Through professional uncertainty.

And through years that felt longer than their actual duration.

Looking back, I now understand that these fourteen years were not just a period of failure.

They were a period of survival.

A period where life was continuously rebuilt in small fragments, often without stability, but with persistence.

There was no single moment that defined the entire phase.

It was defined by endurance.

By repeated attempts.

By continuous adjustment.

And by the refusal to completely give up.

At the time, it did not feel like strength.

It felt like necessity.

But in hindsight, I can see that it was a form of resilience that only difficult circumstances can create.

As this long period continued, I did not yet know that a turning point was slowly approaching.

A moment of unexpected opportunity.

A moment that would come through an old friend.

A moment that would change the direction of my life once again.

But before that turning point arrived, I had to pass through the deepest part of the struggle.

Chapter 13

Creditors, Survival and Humiliation

When financial stability disappears, it does not leave all at once.

It leaves in stages.

First, savings reduce.

Then borrowing begins.

Then borrowing becomes dependence.

Then dependence turns into pressure.

And finally, pressure becomes a constant presence in everyday life.

During those years, my life had reached the stage where pressure was no longer occasional.

It was continuous.

Every morning began with uncertainty about how the day's obligations would be managed.

Every phone call carried the possibility of a reminder, a demand, or a warning.

Every knock on the door created a moment of tension.

Not because we had done anything wrong.

But because we were unable to meet financial expectations consistently.

Creditors do not see your past success.

They see only present obligation.

And when repayment becomes difficult, communication becomes more frequent, more urgent, and often more stressful.

There were bank loans that had been taken during earlier phases of stability and optimism.

There were business loans linked to ventures that had not succeeded.

There were credit card dues accumulated during periods when survival required short-term solutions.

Each one carried its own timeline.

Its own pressure.

Its own consequence.

Managing them simultaneously became overwhelming.

At times, recovery agents would visit or call repeatedly.

Their role was procedural, but their presence was emotionally exhausting.

They were doing their job.

We were trying to survive.

Both realities existed at the same time, but they rarely felt balanced in the moment.

What made it more difficult was the emotional weight attached to these interactions.

It is one thing to know that you owe money.

It is another thing to be reminded of it repeatedly when you are already struggling.

Each interaction reinforced a sense of instability.

Each reminder added to mental fatigue.

Over time, even routine daily life began revolving around avoidance and adjustment.

We began planning our day around potential calls.

Around expected visits.

Around ways to minimize confrontation.

This is not a way of living that most people imagine for themselves.

But it becomes reality when financial systems and personal circumstances collide without alignment.

One of the most painful aspects of this phase was not only the financial pressure itself, but the sense of reduced dignity that accompanied it.

There is a psychological impact that comes when you move from being financially independent to being persistently under pressure from obligations you cannot immediately fulfil.

You begin to notice changes in how conversations feel.

How interactions unfold.

How confidence within yourself fluctuates.

Even simple social exchanges start carrying an internal weight.

During this time, I became extremely conscious of how I appeared to the outside world.

Not because I was ashamed of effort or struggle.

But because repeated financial stress creates a quiet erosion of self-assurance.

You begin to measure your words more carefully.

You begin to avoid situations that might lead to uncomfortable questions.

You begin to withdraw slightly from environments where comparison becomes inevitable.

Yet despite all of this, life at home continued.

Responsibilities did not pause.

Children continued to grow.

Education continued.

Daily needs continued.

And through all of this, survival remained the central objective.

There were days when managing basic expenses required careful planning.

Prioritizing essential needs over everything else.

Delaying certain payments.

Negotiating timelines.

Adjusting expectations repeatedly.

Each decision required mental calculation.

Not of growth.

But of survival.

I often found myself travelling again between cities in search of opportunities.

Each journey carried hope.

Each return carried uncertainty.

Some efforts resulted in temporary relief.

Others ended without outcome.

But stopping was never an option.

Because stopping would have meant accepting collapse completely.

One of the most difficult realities during this phase was the emotional contrast between inner experience and outer expectation.

From the outside, people often assume continuity.

They assume that past success naturally leads to continued stability.

They assume that experience guarantees recovery.

But inside, reality is often very different.

Recovery is not linear.

It is fragmented.

Slow.

Uncertain.

And often dependent on factors beyond personal control.

During these years, I also became more aware of how society interprets financial struggle.

There is often sympathy at a surface level.

But sustained understanding is rare.

Over time, people move on.

Their attention shifts.

Their priorities change.

And those going through prolonged difficulty often find themselves navigating most of it internally.

There were moments of emotional fatigue that were difficult to describe.

Not dramatic breakdowns. But quiet exhaustion.

A sense of repeated effort without visible progress.

A feeling of walking through the same terrain again and again without reaching a destination.

Yet even in this phase, there were small anchors that prevented complete despair.

My children remained focused on their education.

Their progress gave meaning to continued struggle.

My responsibility toward them remained clear and non-negotiable. My wife dedicated herself fully to ensure that both my children received the best of education, initial coaching support and while I was busy travelling

for money , she worked like a single parent to bring them up in the most difficult of time we were going through.

I often reminded myself that I had already chosen this path when I decided to prioritize my mother during her illness.

There was no point in regretting what could not be changed.

Only in continuing forward.

Still, the weight of continuous financial instability creates its own psychological environment.

It affects sleep.

It affects concentration.

It affects emotional balance.

It becomes a background presence in every decision.

And over time, it changes how you view stability itself.

You stop taking it for granted. You begin to see it as something fragile.

Something that must be earned repeatedly. Not something permanent.

Despite all this, I continued trying to rebuild.

Even when results were not immediate. Even when setbacks repeated.

Even when motivation fluctuated.

Because somewhere within me, the belief still existed that circumstances could change.

Not quickly. But eventually.

And life, even during its most difficult phases, rarely remains static forever.

Change eventually arrives.

Sometimes as relief.

Sometimes as opportunity.

Sometimes unexpectedly, through people you have not seen in years.

At the end of this long period of struggle, such a moment was beginning to form quietly in the background.

A reconnection.

An opportunity.

A door that had previously seemed closed.

But before that door opened, I had to pass through one more critical phase of survival.

A phase that would test not just financial endurance, but emotional strength in its most basic form. There was a time in my life when I had lost almost everything.

There were days when I had to travel by local buses and trains in second- and third-class compartments—not because I preferred a simpler life, but because I could no longer afford anything else. I had reached a point where every penny I had was gone. My bank accounts showed **zero**. There was nothing left to fall back on, no financial cushion, no certainty about tomorrow.

After losing my job, I took the courage to start a business in India with an American partner company. I believed that this could be my opportunity to rebuild my career and create something of my own. But the support I received from the American company was simply not enough to establish the brand equity required to survive in an intensely competitive Indian market.

And then, without warning, the American company pulled down its shutters in India—almost overnight.

I was left carrying not only the financial losses, but also the burden of having to somehow survive and support my family.

With nowhere else to turn, I swallowed my pride and approached the person who had once been my first boss. I pleaded with him to give me a job—any opportunity that would allow me to survive. Thankfully, he did.

He gave me a senior position in the company that had established monopoly in Internet Services in South India

For a brief period, I believed that my nightmare was finally over. I had found my footing again. I had a respectable position, responsibilities and, most importantly, hope.

But life had other plans.

My boss eventually sold the company to VSNL. The new management did not want people associated with the earlier management, and gradually, the corporate politics began. My efforts were undermined. Doors were quietly closed. I was repeatedly frustrated and sidelined until I was eventually pushed into resigning.

And once again, I found myself without a job.

This time, it was even more frightening.

My children were young. They were studying. There were responsibilities that could not wait for circumstances to improve. Bills and School Fess had to be paid. Food had to reach the table. Education had to continue.

I approached people whom I had once helped build businesses.

I went back to dealers and distributors whom I had appointed during the earlier and better years of my career. Many of them had grown into substantial and successful companies. I had played a part in their journeys. I had helped create opportunities for them.

But when I needed an opportunity myself, most of them turned away.

That was one of the hardest lessons of my life.

I learned that success attracts people, but adversity reveals them.

During the day, I worked in small companies, often far away from my family. Whatever little I could earn, I would send home. And when that was not enough, I would sing at marriages and other functions to earn some additional money….of course , I was a good Singer.

Imagine the emotional distance between the person I once was and the person I had become.

A senior corporate executive, once travelling across countries and negotiating major business opportunities, now travelling in crowded local

trains and buses, working wherever work was available, and singing at marriage functions simply to earn enough to send money back to his family.

There was no glamour left.

There was no ego left.

There was only **survival**.

And this period did not last for a few months or even a couple of years.

It lasted for **almost fourteen years**.

Fourteen years of uncertainty. Fourteen years of humiliation, struggle, rejection and rebuilding. Fourteen years during which I learned to live without the privileges and comforts that I had once taken for granted.

But those fourteen years also taught me something that no business school, corporate position or professional success ever could.

They taught me who my real friends were.

They taught me who genuinely cared.

They taught me that many people will stand beside you when you are successful, but very few will stand beside you when you have nothing to offer them.

They taught me humility.

They taught me resilience.

And above all, they taught me that **falling down is not failure—refusing to get up is.**

Looking back today, I realise that those fourteen years were not merely the darkest chapter of my life. They were my greatest learning curve.

And then, when I had almost begun to believe that perhaps my professional life was finished, something extraordinary happened.

An **Angel—perhaps God Himself in human form—entered my life.**

Someone saw something in me when I had almost stopped seeing it in myself.

That person gave me my first real corporate opportunity after the disaster that had consumed so many years of my life.

That opportunity did much more than give me a job.

It gave me my dignity back.

It gave me confidence.

It gave me hope.

It gave me a reason to believe that my story was not over.

In many ways, it gave me a **second life**.

And perhaps that is the greatest lesson my journey has taught me: sometimes life takes everything away from you—not to destroy you, but to show you what you are truly made of.

I lost money.

I lost positions.

I lost businesses.

I lost people whom I thought were friends.

I lost years.

But I never completely lost the one thing that ultimately mattered—the ability to get back up and begin again.

I had once reached zero. But from zero, I rebuilt my life.

And that is why, whenever I look back at those fourteen difficult years, I do not see only pain.

I see the making of the person I eventually became.

And that is where the story continues.

Chapter 14

The God Send

Some people enter your life, stay for a while, and then drift away with time.

And then there are a few who may disappear from your daily life, but never truly leave your story.

For me, one such God Send was my friend Shirish Purohit who was instrumental in giving me a chance to rebuild my career and the other was my very old friend Jayant Salian who had resurfaced from no where who helped me survive the most challenging trauma in my life when I was in dire straits.

During the long years of struggle, survival, and uncertainty, life had reduced my world significantly. Contacts had faded. Conversations had stopped. Even familiar names had become distant memories. In that silence, I had slowly accepted that many connections from the past belonged to a different phase of life. Not out of bitterness, but out of experience

I had stopped expecting help from anyone though my younger would pitch in with some timely help that would pull me out temporarily but that was not sufficient to get me out of the debt.

When you go through prolonged hardship, expectations gradually reduce. You learn to depend more on your own effort than on external support.

And yet, life has a way of surprising you when you least expect it.

The reappearance of Shirish did not come with drama or announcement. It was simple, almost ordinary at first—an enquiry, a message, a reconnection after a long gap.

But behind that simplicity was something far more meaningful.

Concern. Awareness.

And a willingness to understand what had happened over the years.

When we spoke after a long time, I did not present my life in dramatic terms.

That is not how I had been living it.

For me, it was just survival.

One challenge after another.

One attempt after another.

One adjustment after another.

But as I spoke, it became clear that he was listening differently.

Not as a casual acquaintance.

But as someone who genuinely cared about the trajectory of my life.

And sometimes, that alone makes a difference.

When you are inside long-term struggle, you stop seeing your situation from the outside. You normalize difficulties. You adjust expectations. You begin to believe that this is simply how life is meant to continue.

But an external perspective can sometimes reveal possibilities you have stopped considering.

Shirish did not respond with sympathy alone.

He responded with clarity. With practical thinking.

And with a willingness to act.

He understood both my background and my capabilities.

He knew I was not someone who lacked effort or intent.

But rather someone who had been caught in a prolonged phase of setbacks and circumstances beyond control.

That understanding mattered more than words of comfort.

What followed was not immediate transformation, but a gradual opening of possibilities.

Conversations about work.

About opportunities.

About where I could potentially restart professionally.

At that stage of life, even the idea of restarting felt distant.

Years had passed since my stable corporate role. The industry had evolved.

Networks had weakened. Confidence had eroded.

And yet, something within me responded to the possibility of re-entry into structured professional life.

Not as a return to the past. But as a chance to rebuild.

Shirish played a crucial role in bridging that gap.

Not by promising outcomes. But by enabling access.

By connecting possibilities.

By encouraging me to step back into a professional environment that still valued experience and capability.

It is easy to underestimate how important such intervention can be during prolonged struggle.

Because when you are outside the system for too long, re-entry becomes psychologically as well as practically difficult.

You begin to question your own relevance.

You begin to assume that opportunities no longer exist.

You begin to accept stagnation as permanent.

A single supportive push at that stage can alter the direction of an entire life trajectory.

For me, this was that moment.

It did not immediately solve financial problems.

It did not erase years of difficulty.

It did not restore everything that had been lost.

But it created movement.

And movement is often the first sign of recovery.

Soon, discussions progressed toward a concrete opportunity.

A professional environment that was growing.

A company that valued technical capability and practical experience.

A chance to re-establish myself in a structured role.

This opportunity eventually led to my association with Tejas Networks Ltd.

When I joined, I did not enter as the person I once was during my earlier career peak.

I entered as someone who had been shaped by years of struggle.

Years of financial instability.

Years of emotional pressure.

Years of survival-based decision-making.

That experience changed my perspective completely.

In earlier years, I had seen success as growth.

Now I saw it as stability that must be carefully maintained.

In earlier years, I had taken progress for granted.

Now I understood its fragility.

At Tejas Networks, accompany that was growing and trying to establish itself as India's only Telecom products R&D and manufacturing company ….I began rebuilding step by step.

Not with the same speed as before.

But with greater awareness. Greater caution.

And deeper appreciation for stability.

Every small improvement felt meaningful.

Every opportunity felt valuable.

Every step forward carried weight.

This phase was not just a professional return.

It was an emotional recovery.

A slow rebuilding of confidence that had been worn down over years of uncertainty.

And at the centre of this transition was the quiet intervention of a friend who chose to reappear not at a convenient time, but at a critical one.

Looking back, I realize that life-changing support does not always come in grand forms.

Sometimes it comes as a message.

A conversation.

A willingness to reconnect.

And a decision to help when it matters most.

For me, that decision marked the beginning of the end of a very long period of darkness.

It did not erase the past. But it created a path forward.

And for the first time in many years, that path felt visible again.

Chapter 15

A New Life at Tejas Networks

Starting over is often more difficult than starting for the first time.

When you begin your career as a young person, you carry innocence, ambition, and limitless belief in the future. But when you restart after years of struggle, you carry something very different—memory.

Memory of failure.

Memory of instability.

Memory of loss.

Memory of survival.

By the time I joined Tejas Networks Ltd, I was not the same person who had once stepped confidently into a growing computer manufacturing company years earlier. I had changed in ways that were not immediately visible to others, but were deeply embedded within me.

I had learned caution.

I had learned patience.

I had learned to value stability more than speed.

And I had learned that life does not always move in a straight line upward.

My entry into Tejas Networks did not feel like a continuation of my earlier success.

It felt like a restart from a different foundation.

The environment was structured, dynamic, and technically driven. There was a clear sense of purpose and growth within the organization. For someone like me, who had experienced both corporate success and prolonged uncertainty, this environment felt both familiar and new at the same time.

Familiar because I understood how organizations functioned.

New because I was returning after a long and difficult gap.

Initially, I focused on understanding everything again.

Processes.

Systems.

Teams.

Expectations.

The industry had evolved during the years I was away from stable corporate work. Technology had advanced. Workflows had become more refined. Expectations had become sharper.

I had to adapt quickly.

But experience from earlier years helped me.

Not just technical experience, but life experience.

I understood pressure. I understood deadlines. I understood responsibility.

And most importantly, I understood what it meant to lose stability—and how important it is to protect it once it is regained.

Slowly, I began settling into my role. There was no sudden transformation. No dramatic rise. No immediate recognition.

Just steady participation. Steady learning. Steady contribution.

And gradual rebuilding of professional credibility.

Each day brought small improvements.

Each week brought increased confidence.

Each month brought better alignment with the organization's expectations.

It was not the rapid rise I had experienced in my early career.

It was something more grounded.

More deliberate.

More cautious.

But also more meaningful.

Because this time, I was not building from ambition alone.

I was building from experience.

From hardship.

From the awareness of how easily stability can be lost.

Financially, things began to improve gradually.

Not instantly. Not dramatically.

But enough to reduce constant pressure.

For the first time in many years, the daily stress of survival began to ease slightly.

It did not disappear completely.

But it no longer dominated every decision.

That alone felt like a major change.

With stability returning slowly, I also began rebuilding confidence.

Confidence that had been eroded over years of setbacks, uncertainty, and repeated effort without consistent success.

In earlier years, confidence had come naturally.

During struggle, it had to be rebuilt deliberately.

At Tejas Networks, I was not trying to prove anything to the world.

I was trying to restore balance in my own life.

To create a foundation that could support both present responsibilities and future obligations.

As I continued working, I began observing something important.

Success feels very different when it comes after loss.

It is quieter.

Less emotional.

More grounded.

There is less excitement and more gratitude.

Less ambition-driven urgency and more stability-driven focus.

I no longer viewed professional growth as a race.

I viewed it as continuity.

A way to ensure that the years of struggle had not been meaningless.

A way to support my family with consistency.

A way to rebuild what had been disrupted.

At home, the situation also began to stabilize gradually.

The extreme uncertainty of earlier years reduced.

Basic financial pressures became more manageable.

There was still responsibility, still challenges, but the constant sense of crisis began to fade.

This change affected the entire household.

Not suddenly, but slowly.

Like a long night giving way to early morning light.

There was still distance to cover, but visibility improved.

One of the most important realizations during this phase was that recovery is not a single moment.

It is a process.

It is not defined by one job or one opportunity.

It is defined by consistency over time.

By sustained effort.

By gradual rebuilding.

During this period, I also reflected more deeply on the role of people who had supported me during difficult times.

Among them, Shirish Purohit and Jayant Salian remained a significant presence in my thoughts.

Because it was not just the opportunity he helped create—it was the timing.

In life, timing often determines impact.

Support given too early may not be absorbed.

Support given too late may lose relevance.

But support given at the right moment can change everything.

Tejas Networks became more than just a workplace.

It became a symbol of recovery.

A place where professional identity and personal stability began to reconnect.

Where years of fragmentation slowly started forming a coherent structure again.

I did not forget the past. I did not erase the struggle.

But I also did not allow it to define the future.

Instead, I carried both with me.

The memory of hardship.

And the reality of rebuilding.

As time passed, I began to see life from a different perspective.

Earlier success had taught me how to grow.

Struggle had taught me how to survive.

But this phase was teaching me something different.

How to sustain.

How to maintain stability.

How to protect what has been regained.

And how to move forward without losing balance again.

This second beginning was not about becoming someone new.

It was about becoming whole again.

And slowly, step by step, that wholeness began returning.

Not as a destination.

But as a process that was still unfolding.

Chapter 16

Rebuilding From Ruins

Recovery does not feel like victory.

It feels like reconstruction.

Slow.

Careful.

Uncertain at times.

And always aware that the foundation beneath you was once broken.

By the time stability had begun returning through my role at Tejas Networks Ltd, I was no longer thinking in terms of ambition or rapid progress. My focus had shifted to something more fundamental—rebuilding what had been lost over years of instability.

Rebuilding income stability.

Rebuilding financial discipline.

Rebuilding confidence.

Rebuilding trust in the future.

The first noticeable change was the reduction in constant pressure.

For many years, financial stress had been a background noise that never stopped. It influenced every decision, every conversation, every plan.

When that pressure began easing, even slightly, it felt like breathing after a long period underwater.

Not complete freedom. But relief.

With a steady job, income became predictable again.

Predictability itself was a major transformation.

It allowed planning. It allowed structure.

It allowed long-term thinking, something that had been nearly impossible during the darkest years.

One of my first priorities was to stabilize the most critical responsibilities that had accumulated during the years of struggle.

Loans.

Dues.

Family obligations.

Commitments that had been delayed not out of negligence, but out of necessity.

Repaying them was not just a financial process.

It was an emotional one.

Each repayment carried a sense of closure.

A step away from a difficult past.

A step toward restoring dignity that had been stretched thin over time.

At home, the atmosphere also began to change gradually.

Not dramatically.

Not suddenly.

But perceptibly.

The constant urgency that had defined earlier years reduced.

Daily conversations became less tense.

Planning became more possible.

Even small improvements in financial stability created emotional breathing space within the family.

During this phase, I began to understand something important about resilience.

Survival teaches you how to endure pain.

Recovery teaches you how to live beyond it.

The transition between the two is not immediate.

It takes time for the mind to stop operating in crisis mode.

Even when external conditions improve, internal habits of worry, caution, and expectation of instability take longer to fade.

I found myself still being overly careful.

Still expecting setbacks.

Still mentally preparing for uncertainty even when things were stable.

This is a residue of long struggle.

A kind of emotional memory that takes time to dissolve.

Professionally, I continued to rebuild step by step.

My approach was no longer driven by urgency.

It was driven by consistency.

I focused on delivering steadily rather than rapidly.

On maintaining reliability rather than chasing visibility.

On contributing meaningfully rather than seeking recognition.

Ironically, this approach brought its own form of quiet respect within the organization.

Not through loud achievements.

But through dependability.

One of the lessons I had learned from earlier years was that reputation is not built in moments of success alone.

It is built over time through consistency, especially after setbacks.

People remember not just performance, but reliability during sustained periods.

As financial stability returned, I also began revisiting long-delayed responsibilities in my personal life.

These were not new obligations.

They were postponed ones.

Obligations that had been temporarily impossible to fulfil during years of crisis.

Addressing them brought a sense of closure.

Not complete closure.

But partial restoration.

It was important to me that the past should not remain an unresolved burden.

Even if it could not be erased, it could be managed, structured, and gradually resolved.

There were moments during this phase when I would reflect on how dramatically life had shifted over the years.

From early success.

To sudden downfall.

To long struggle.

And now to slow recovery.

It no longer felt like a single journey.

It felt like multiple lives lived within one lifetime.

Each phase had its own identity.

Its own challenges.

Its own lessons.

One of the most significant internal changes during this period was emotional healing.

During years of struggle, emotional energy is consumed almost entirely by survival.

There is little space for reflection, peace, or processing of past experiences.

But when stability returns, those unprocessed emotions slowly surface.

Not all at once.

But gradually.

Memories of hardship.

Moments of humiliation.

Years of pressure.

They do not disappear.

They become part of internal history.

I had to learn how to carry them without being defined by them.

That is not an easy process.

It requires acceptance.

Not acceptance of failure.

But acceptance of reality.

What happened, had happened. What was lost, was lost.

What remains can still be built.

Family responsibilities continued to remain central to my life.

My children's' education remained a priority.

Their future became a continuation of the dream my parents had once started for me.

In many ways, I felt I was now living the second half of a generational journey.

My parents had built the foundation through sacrifice.

I was now trying to restore and extend that foundation under different circumstances.

One of the most profound realizations during this phase was that life does not offer complete resets.

It offers transitions.

From one phase to another. From one condition to another. From one identity to another.

But the past always remains part of the structure.

It shapes perspective. It influences decisions. It strengthens caution.

It deepens gratitude.

As stability increased, I also became more aware of the fragility of what had been rebuilt.

Having lost stability once, I understood how easily it could be lost again.

This awareness created a balanced mindset.

Not fear. But respect for stability.

Respect for effort. Respect for time.

Gradually, life began to feel more structured again.

Not perfect. Not without challenges.

But stable enough to plan beyond immediate survival.

And for someone who had lived through years of uncertainty, that stability itself felt like a significant achievement.

It was not dramatic.

It was not visible to the outside world in a striking way.

But internally, it represented something very important.

A return to normalcy.

And from normalcy, the possibility of growth again.

The ruins had not disappeared. But they were no longer collapsing.

They had become the foundation upon which something new could be built.

And slowly, life began moving forward once again

Chapter 17

Sending Sons Abroad

There are certain responsibilities in life that feel both like achievement and sacrifice at the same time.

Supporting a child's higher education is one of them.

When my sons reached the stage of pursuing advanced studies, I found myself standing once again at a familiar crossroads—between aspiration and limitation, between what I wanted for them and what was financially comfortable for us at that time.

By then, life had stabilized compared to the darkest years, but it had not reached complete ease. There was still recovery underway. There were still obligations being cleared. There was still financial discipline being maintained carefully after years of instability.

Yet, when it came to my children's future, hesitation was never a serious option.

Because I had seen both extremes of life.

I had seen what lack of opportunity could do.

And I had also seen what education and support could create.

My sons were bright, disciplined, and committed to their studies. As they progressed academically, it became clear that they had the potential to

pursue education in institutions that could open global opportunities for them.

The idea of sending them abroad was not sudden.

It was gradual.

It emerged through conversations. Through academic progress.

Through aspirations they began expressing.

And through the recognition that their generation would operate in a more global environment than mine ever did.

But recognition does not remove financial reality.

International education is not only about tuition fees.

It includes living expenses, visas, travel, and ongoing financial commitments that extend over years.

At that stage of life, even though stability had returned, financial capacity was still being carefully rebuilt. There was no excess. Every major decision required calculation.

And yet, emotionally, the decision was already made.

Because this was not just about education. It was about opportunity.

It was about ensuring that my sons did not have to fight the same battles I had fought to reach stability.

It was about breaking a cycle of struggle.

So I moved forward.

The process itself was emotionally intense.

Applications. Admissions. Visa procedures. Documentation.

Financial planning.

Every step carried both hope and pressure.

Hope, because it represented a new beginning for them.

Pressure, because it involved committing resources that had taken years of effort to rebuild.

When the admissions were confirmed, there was a mix of pride and anxiety within me.

Pride, because my children had earned their place through their hard work.

Anxiety, because I knew the financial responsibility that would now follow.

The day they left for their studies abroad is something that remains deeply imprinted in memory.

It is a moment that many parents experience, but each experiences it differently.

For me , it was not just departure.

It was transition.

From daily presence to distance.

From direct guidance to remote support.

From physical involvement to emotional encouragement.

Watching them leave created a silence that is difficult to describe. Not an empty silence.

But a reflective one.

A silence filled with years of effort, dreams, and expectation condensed into a single moment.

There was pride in their independence.

But also a quiet awareness that the nature of my responsibility had changed again.

Now, it was no longer about daily upbringing.

It was about sustained support.

Financial consistency.

Emotional reassurance.

And being present whenever required, even from a distance.

The financial commitment that followed was significant.

It required careful management.

Planning.

Prioritization.

And continuous effort to ensure that obligations were met without disrupting the fragile stability that had been rebuilt over years.

There were moments when it felt like walking a tightrope.

Balancing personal stability.

Ongoing recovery.

And new educational responsibilities.

But I reminded myself repeatedly why this was necessary.

Because education is not an expense in the traditional sense.

It is an investment in the future.

And in my case, it was also a way of ensuring that the hardships of the past did not repeat in the next generation.

At times, the pressure was heavy.

But it was different from earlier struggles.

Earlier, pressure came with uncertainty and instability.

Now, pressure came with purpose.

That difference mattered.

My wife, too, experienced this transition in her own way.

Like any parent, she felt the emotional weight of distance from children.

But also the pride of seeing them pursue higher goals.

There were emotional adjustments required from both of us.

Because when children move abroad, the family structure changes.

Daily interaction reduces.

Physical presence disappears.

Communication becomes scheduled rather than spontaneous.

It requires emotional maturity to adapt to that change.

And over time, we adjusted.

One of the important realizations during this phase was that parenting does not end when children leave home.

It evolves.

It becomes less about direct control and more about guidance.

Less about immediate correction and more about long-term support.

Less about presence in every moment and more about stability in the background.

During this period, I often reflected on my own parents.

On their struggles.

On their sacrifices.

On how they managed to raise children under far more difficult financial conditions than what I was experiencing at that time.

It gave me perspective. And gratitude.

Because despite all the difficulties I had faced in life, I had still been able to provide my children with opportunities that were beyond what I had received at their age.

That realization brought a sense of quiet fulfilment.

Not dramatic satisfaction.

But steady acceptance that effort across generations does eventually create progress.

Financially, supporting their education required continued discipline.

There were careful decisions about expenses, priorities, and commitments.

But the system that had been rebuilt after years of struggle was now stable enough to sustain this responsibility.

That in itself was a major shift from earlier years.

Looking back, I see this phase as a turning point in the meaning of struggle.

Earlier struggle was about survival.

This phase was about building continuity.

Earlier struggle was reactive.

This phase was intentional.

Earlier struggle was about getting through the day.

This phase was about shaping the future.

Even though challenges still existed, the nature of life had changed.

There was direction again.

There was purpose again.

And most importantly, there was hope that the sacrifices of the past were now contributing to something larger than individual survival.

As my sons moved forward in their studies and began adapting to life abroad, I began to understand something fundamental.

Success is not a single event.

It is a chain.

Each generation builds upon the previous one.

Each sacrifice becomes a stepping stone for the next opportunity.

And even though my journey had been marked by long periods of difficulty, it was now contributing to a different outcome for the next generation.

That realization gave meaning to everything that had happened before.

Not as justification.

But as understanding.

Life was still not simple.

But it was no longer directionless.

And that alone marked a significant change from the years that had come before.

Chapter 18

The Jewellery, The Debt and the Wound

There are certain financial decisions in a family that begin as practical solutions, but later become emotional symbols of everything that went wrong during difficult times.

For us, the issue of pledged jewellery became one such burden.

At that stage of life, supporting our children's education abroad had become the highest priority. The financial requirements were significant, and although there was a degree of stability compared to earlier years, the demands were still heavy and continuous.

Bank loans were not always sufficient or flexible enough to cover every requirement. In such situations, families often turn to personal assets as temporary support systems. In our case, that included jewellery that my wife had received from her parents.

It was never an easy decision.

And it was never treated lightly.

The intention was simple—use it as a temporary arrangement, clear the obligations, and restore it once financial stability allowed.

That was the understanding.

That was the plan.

At that moment, it felt like a necessary step to ensure that our children's education would not be interrupted.

The jewellery was pledged to secure loans that helped manage urgent expenses related to education and family responsibilities. For a period, it served its purpose. It helped us move forward during a phase when options were limited and timing was critical.

But what financial stress gives in urgency, it often takes back in complications.

As months passed, repayment became more complex than initially expected. Not because of neglect, but because financial recovery was still in progress and commitments were layered across multiple responsibilities—loans, education costs, household needs, and past obligations that were still being cleared.

Gradually, the process of redeeming the pledged jewellery became delayed.

And delay, in financial matters, slowly transforms into emotional weight.

My intention remained consistent throughout—that everything pledged would eventually be cleared. But life does not always move in straight timelines. There were competing pressures, limited liquidity, and ongoing responsibilities that required prioritization.

In the meantime, the emotional meaning of the jewellery began to change.

What was once a financial instrument became a symbol.

A symbol of security.

A symbol of sacrifice.

And eventually, a symbol of loss.

When part of the pledged jewellery could not be redeemed within the required timeframe and was ultimately retained by the bank, the situation became emotionally significant in a way that extended far beyond its monetary value.

For me, it was a financial setback within a larger struggle.

For my wife, it became something deeper.

A sense of irreversible loss attached not only to the object itself, but to the emotional value it carried from her parents.

And that difference in perception created distance.

What was intended as a temporary financial measure gradually transformed into a long-standing emotional point of pain.

Over time, this issue resurfaced in moments of stress and disagreement. Not constantly, but repeatedly enough to leave an imprint on the relationship.

It became part of a larger narrative of financial hardship, sacrifice, and unmet expectations.

In some moments, it was expressed as disappointment.

In others, as frustration.

And in some moments, it took the form of blame.

Being labelled as careless or responsible for the loss was deeply painful. Not because of the material aspect, but because I knew the intention behind every decision made during that period.

There was no comfort in explanation during emotional moments. Facts and timelines rarely reduce emotional impact when the wound is tied to personal value and memory.

Over time, this issue became more than a financial matter.

It became part of the emotional distance that had already begun forming during years of struggle.

Because prolonged hardship does not only affect finances.

It affects trust.

It affects communication.

It affects how past decisions are remembered and interpreted.

At the same time, I also understood something important.

My wife had carried her own emotional burden through those years.

She had lived through uncertainty, instability, and social pressure in her own way.

She had managed the household during difficult periods.

She had adjusted expectations repeatedly.

And she had experienced the emotional weight of watching plans change under financial constraints.

So even though we experienced the same situation, we did not always process it in the same way.

That difference in emotional interpretation became one of the silent challenges in our relationship.

As time passed, the jewellery issue remained unresolved emotionally, even as financial stability gradually improved in other areas.

It was not just about repayment anymore.

It was about meaning.

About memory.

About what was lost during a period that neither of us could ever fully separate from.

I often thought about how financial stress creates lasting emotional echoes.

Money problems may be temporary in practical terms, but their emotional impact can remain long after circumstances improve.

Because they are not only about money.

They are about trust in decisions made under pressure.

They are about sacrifices that feel unequal in hindsight.

They are about moments when survival overrides comfort, and later those choices are viewed through a different lens.

Despite all this, life continued.

Responsibilities did not stop. Children's education continued.

Work continued. Daily life continued.

But underneath that continuity, there were unresolved emotional layers that time had not fully healed.

I carried my own perspective of having acted out of necessity.

She carried her own perspective of loss and disappointment.

And between these two perspectives, understanding was sometimes incomplete.

Not because of lack of care.

But because pain interprets memory differently for everyone.

As years moved forward, I realized that not all financial decisions are measured in repayment alone.

Some are measured in emotional consequence.

And those consequences can last far longer than the financial transaction itself.

This was one such situation.

A situation where intention, necessity, and outcome did not align in a way that could fully satisfy either side.

And so it remained—part of our shared history, part of our unresolved emotional landscape, and part of the long journey we were still navigating together.

Life had improved in many ways by then.

But some wounds do not disappear simply because circumstances change.

They remain as reminders of the years when survival required choices that were never easy.

And this was one of those reminders.

Chapter 19

The Long Return to Stability

Recovery after prolonged struggle does not feel like a dramatic transformation. It feels like a slow return to normalcy, where life begins to resemble something familiar again, but with deeper awareness of how fragile that normalcy can be.

By this stage, my professional life at Tejas Networks Ltd had become steady enough to provide continuity. The earlier phase of adjustment had passed, and I was no longer constantly adapting to new systems or rebuilding lost confidence. Instead, I was functioning with consistency.

And consistency, after years of instability, feels like restoration.

Financial pressure had also reduced compared to earlier years. Not completely eliminated, but structured in a way that could be managed. Loans, education commitments, and past obligations were still part of life, but they were no longer overwhelming the present moment.

For the first time in a long time, I could think beyond immediate survival.

That shift itself was significant.

Because when you spend years in survival mode, your mind becomes conditioned to focus only on short-term needs. Long-term thinking slowly disappears. Even simple planning becomes difficult because uncertainty dominates every decision.

Now, gradually, that began to change.

There was space again to plan.

To organize.

To anticipate.

To stabilize.

At home, life was also beginning to settle into a more structured rhythm. The intensity of earlier years had appeared reduced. But Daily life still revolved around crisis management.

Stability after long struggle does not immediately erase emotional memory.

It only creates room for reflection.

And reflection often brings mixed emotions.

During this phase, I often found myself thinking about the journey in its entirety.

From early childhood in poverty.

To the sacrifices of my parents.

To my own early career growth.

To marriage and family building.

To professional success.

To sudden collapse.

To fourteen years of sustained struggle.

And now, to gradual recovery.

It no longer felt like a straight narrative.

It felt like multiple lifetimes experienced within one life.

Each phase had shaped the next in ways that were not always visible at the time.

One of the most important realizations during this period was that stability is not just financial.

It is psychological.

For years, even when circumstances improved slightly, my mind remained conditioned for instability. I would expect problems before they arrived. I would prepare for setbacks even when things were stable.

That is what prolonged hardship does—it trains the mind to remain alert even when danger is no longer present.

Slowly, I had to unlearn that.

I had to allow myself to trust stability again.

Not blindly.

But gradually.

Professionally, I began focusing more on sustainability than ambition. Earlier in life, growth had meant rapid progress, promotions, and expansion. Now, it meant maintaining reliability, contributing consistently, and ensuring long-term presence in a stable environment.

This shift was not a decline in ambition.

It was a change in definition.

Ambition after struggle becomes different. It becomes less about proving capability and more about preserving balance.

Financially, this phase allowed for gradual rebuilding of savings and reduction of long-standing liabilities. It was not fast progress, but it was steady.

And steady progress, after chaos, feels deeply valuable.

But at home, the relationships were based on larger expectations from me as the initial phase of difficulties had lessened and my wife began to feel that problems were over once for all as she was part of this journey of uncertainties and disappointments and now started believing that if I can come out of such dumps then I am also capable of fulfilling her wishes. Initially conversations became less reactive. Emotional distance that had formed during earlier years began to soften slowly. There was still memory of past strain, but it no longer dominated daily interaction in the same way.

Time does not erase everything.

But it reduces intensity.

One of the most meaningful changes during this phase was the build up of self confidence and internal peace.

Not complete peace.

But partial peace.

The kind that allows you to sleep without constant financial anxiety.

The kind that allows you to plan without fear of immediate disruption.

The kind that allows you to reflect without emotional overwhelm.

I also began to understand something important about the nature of long-term struggle.

It does not end suddenly.

It fades gradually.

Like a long winter slowly giving way to spring.

You do not notice the exact moment it changes.

You only realize later that the worst is behind you.

There were still responsibilities.

Still obligations.

Still challenges.

But they were no longer overwhelming the entire structure of life.

They had become manageable parts of a larger, more stable system.

During this time, I often reflected on the people and events that had shaped my journey.

My parents, whose sacrifices created the foundation of my life.

My friend Shirish Purohit, whose intervention played a critical role in my professional recovery.

My children, whose education gave meaning to continued effort.

My younger brother Vijay who regularly called up on to check my progress and wellbeing and also helped me on many occasions with meaningful contributions.

My wife was my biggest critic and she still is which has been giving me the drive to keep Walking towards what I want to finally achieve.

And even the difficult phases themselves, which, despite their pain, had shaped resilience and perspective.

One of the quiet lessons of this phase was gratitude.

Not in a superficial sense.

But in a deep recognition of continuity.

That despite everything that had gone wrong, life had not stopped.

It had continued.

It had rebuilt.

It had allowed recovery.

Another realization was that stability is not a destination.

It is a responsibility.

Once you regain it after losing it, you treat it differently.

You protect it.

You respect it.

You do not take it for granted.

As years passed, life began to feel structured again in a way that was sustainable. There was still work, still responsibility, still challenges—but now I have the courage to face it with my experience and now I prioritize the essentials stable framework rather than chaotic uncertainty.

Looking back at this phase, I understand it as the quietest but most important transformation in my life.

Not dramatic.

Not emotional in the same way as struggle.

But deeply important.

Because it marked the transition from survival to living.

From reacting to planning.

From instability to continuity.

And from fragmentation to a sense of wholeness that had slowly begun returning after many years of being lost.

The journey was not over.

But the direction had changed.

And that, in itself, was enough to define a new chapter of life.

Chapter 20

The Jewellery Conflict and Emotional Distance

Even when life begins to stabilize, some issues do not resolve simply because the external conditions improve. They continue to exist internally, shaped less by present reality and more by memory.

The jewellery issue was one such matter.

By this stage, financial stability had improved compared to the darkest years. Loans were being managed more systematically, responsibilities were under control, and the constant pressure of survival had reduced significantly.

Yet emotionally, the jewellery remained unresolved.

Because it was never only about money.

It was about meaning attached to something deeply personal.

In earlier years, when financial pressure was at its peak, pledging the jewellery had been a practical necessity. It was a means to ensure that children's education continued without interruption, and that critical responsibilities were met during a time when options were limited.

At that moment, it felt like the only workable decision.

But time changes how decisions are remembered.

What was once seen as necessity gradually became associated with loss.

And loss, when it is personal, does not behave like a financial entry in a ledger.

It becomes emotional memory.

Over time, the inability to fully redeem the pledged jewellery within expected timelines became a recurring emotional point.

Not constantly discussed.

But not forgotten either.

It resurfaced during moments of stress.

During disagreements.

During reflections on past hardship.

And each time it resurfaced, it carried emotional weight that was difficult to separate from the original event.

For me, the experience remained tied to a period of survival. Every decision made during that time was influenced by urgency, responsibility, and limited resources. There was no intention of loss, only an attempt to manage impossible circumstances.

But emotional interpretation does not always follow intent.

For my wife, the jewellery represented something more personal. It was linked to her parents, her past, and a sense of security that had been disrupted during difficult years. The inability to fully recover it created a lasting sense of disappointment.

And this difference in perspective created a gap.

Not a sudden one. But a slow, persistent one.

Because in relationships, unresolved issues do not remain isolated. They influence tone, communication, and emotional response over time.

Even when not directly spoken about, they remain present in the background.

During this phase of partial recovery, I began to notice that while financial pressure had reduced, emotional distance had not completely disappeared. It had softened in some areas, but certain boundaries remained.

Conversations were functional, but not always deeply expressive.

Daily responsibilities were managed, but emotional alignment was not always complete.

There was coexistence, but not always full emotional convergence.

This is one of the subtle realities of long-term relationships that have gone through sustained stress: recovery in one dimension does not automatically restore all dimensions.

Financial stability can return faster than emotional healing.

Trust can take longer to rebuild than income.

And shared history can carry both connection and residue at the same time.

At times, I would reflect on how the same event can be experienced in completely different ways by two people living under the same circumstances.

For me, the jewellery issue was one part of a much larger survival story—one decision among many made under pressure, without ideal conditions.

For her, it became a symbol of loss that represented emotional sacrifice during a difficult phase of life.

Neither perspective was entirely wrong.

But they were not identical either.

And that difference became the root of ongoing emotional distance.

There were moments when this distance became more visible, especially during discussions about past financial hardship. What I viewed as necessary decisions were sometimes viewed through a lens of regret or disappointment. What I considered unavoidable constraints were sometimes felt as personal loss.

These differences were not always openly debated.

But they influenced emotional tone.

Over time, I also began to understand something important: some emotional wounds do not heal simply with time or improvement in circumstances. They require shared reinterpretation of the past.

Without that, the memory remains fixed in its original emotional state, even if present conditions have changed.

Despite these challenges, life continued to move forward.

Responsibilities were being managed more effectively.

Children's education and progress remained a source of pride and purpose.

Financial stability, though not perfect, was no longer in crisis mode.

From an external perspective, life may have appeared largely stabilized.

But internally, there were still layers of unresolved emotional history.

This duality became part of everyday life.

Stability in structure. Complexity in emotion.

One of the quieter realizations during this phase was that not all recovery is visible.

Financial recovery is measurable. Emotional recovery is not.

It exists in degrees, in moments, in fluctuations.

Some days feel balanced. Some conversations feel strained. Some memories feel settled. Others feel active.

It is not a straight line.

It is a gradual adjustment process that continues over time.

As I reflect on this period, I understand that the jewellery conflict was not an isolated issue. It became a representation of a larger truth—that prolonged hardship leaves emotional imprints that persist even after external conditions improve.

It also highlighted how two people can live through the same difficult years and yet carry different emotional interpretations of those years.

That difference does not necessarily create separation.

But it does require understanding.

And understanding, in such contexts, is often the hardest part to achieve fully.

Life had moved forward in many ways by then.

But some parts of the past were still quietly present.

Not as active conflict. But as unresolved memory.

And that memory continued to shape the emotional landscape of the present, even as stability slowly returned. The thought of losing the jewellery given to her by her mother and father with so much love can never be erased from the memory of my wife and I rightly admit this grave mistake done by me for which my wife may never forgive me lifetime. Will I ever be able to justify this is the guilt that I will carry even after I may be able to compromise with a suitable replacement, because like I have stated earlier, it is impossible for a child to forget the love , the emotions and the sacrifices of the parents .

Chapter 21

The Villa That Never Was: A Story of Dreams, Choices, and Consequences

Part 1: The Dream of a Home

Every family carries a dream of a perfect home. For my wife, that dream was simple and unwavering: a villa surrounded by open space, preferably in Goa or perhaps Pune, where she could enjoy the freedom and independence that apartment living could never provide.

For me, the dream was slightly different. My primary objective was security. Having spent years working and providing for my family, I wanted to ensure that we finally owned a home of our own. While I appreciated the attraction of a villa, I was also bound by practical realities—income, loan eligibility, repayment obligations, and the limitations imposed by financial institutions.

At the time when this decision had to be made, we possessed only about Rs. 20 lakhs in savings. This amount was insufficient to purchase a desirable plot of land, construct a house, and simultaneously maintain financial stability for our family. Nevertheless, the dream remained alive, and discussions about buying land versus purchasing a ready property became increasingly frequent.

What began as a difference of opinion slowly evolved into one of the defining disputes of our marriage.

Part 2: The Financial Reality

Many people assume that property decisions are made purely on desire. In reality, they are often determined by constraints.

When I approached banks for financing, I encountered a series of challenges. Certain banks, including HDFC and various NBFCs, were willing to consider financing but only under repayment tenures that would have resulted in monthly EMIs exceeding what was realistically affordable from my salary.

Other institutions, including Axis Bank and Canara Bank, were unwilling to extend the required financing because of concerns related to my CIBIL profile and other lending criteria prevailing at that time.

An even greater obstacle was that many banks were reluctant to provide loans against plots of land unless construction plans met specific conditions. The dream of buying land first and constructing a villa later, while emotionally appealing, was financially difficult and practically uncertain.

After numerous discussions and applications, only one bank offered terms that appeared sustainable. Punjab & Sind Bank agreed to a repayment structure extending over ten years, creating EMIs that could be managed without placing the family under unbearable financial pressure.

I repeatedly requested my wife to examine the sanction letters, understand the lending conditions, and review the constraints under which the decision was being made. However, the emotional desire for a villa remained stronger than any explanation of banking realities.

Part 3: Choosing Lodha Belmondo

The decision to purchase a flat at Lodha Belmondo was not driven by preference alone. It emerged from a combination of necessity, affordability, location, and opportunity.

At that stage of life, my professional commitments were centred around the Mumbai region and its outskirts. Relocating permanently to Goa was

simply not feasible. Such a move would have required sacrificing career stability, income certainty, and future financial security.

Pune, particularly the outskirts, offered a workable balance between professional commitments and residential aspirations.

The property we ultimately purchased was not an ordinary apartment. It was situated within one of Pune's most prestigious and sought-after developments. Over time, the property's value appreciated significantly, validating the financial rationale behind the decision.

Initially, there was happiness. We celebrated the achievement of finally owning a home. Together, we planned interiors, selected furnishings, and transformed the apartment into what we hoped would be our dream residence.

For a brief period, it seemed as though the conflict had ended.

Unfortunately, it had only been postponed.

Part 4: The Return of the Villa

As years passed, the dream of a villa returned to dominate our conversations.

The appreciation of our property, the quality of our residence, and the stability it provided were unable to replace the vision my wife had carried in her heart. To her, the villa represented not merely a house but an unfulfilled promise.

Gradually, the issue transformed from disappointment into resentment.

For more than seven years, hardly a day passed without some reference to the decision I had made. The purchase of the apartment became symbolic of every compromise she believed she had been forced to accept.

No amount of explanation regarding financial limitations, loan refusals, or practical constraints seemed capable of altering her perception.

The narrative had become fixed: I had deprived her of her dream.

Part 5: Life Under Constant Judgment

The most painful aspect of the dispute was not the disagreement itself but the persistence with which it resurfaced.

Arguments no longer remained confined to property matters. Small disagreements acquired larger meanings. Everyday issues became opportunities to revisit past grievances.

Incidents that should have remained minor developed into evidence supporting a broader accusation that I had failed as a husband.

Over time, I found myself being judged not only for one property decision but for perceived shortcomings accumulated across decades.

The emotional cost was enormous.

I often felt that years of sacrifice, hard work, and dedication toward my family's well-being had become invisible. Instead of being viewed as someone who had made a difficult decision under constrained circumstances, I was increasingly portrayed as the person responsible for ruining another person's vision of life.

Such accusations slowly eroded my confidence and self-worth.

Part 6: The Weight of Disillusionment

There are moments when a person begins questioning the value of his achievements.

I reached a stage where I wondered whether purchasing a home had actually improved our lives. Sometimes it seemed that remaining tenants might have preserved greater peace than becoming homeowners.

Despite continuing to work hard, explore new projects, and search for opportunities that could one day make a villa possible, I found my efforts being met with scepticism rather than encouragement.

Projects which were mostly government tenders based were delayed or cancelled for various reasons

Opportunities were postponed.

Plans required more time than anticipated.

Yet my belief remained that persistence would eventually produce results.

My wife, however, wanted certainty immediately. My wife's dream of a Villa was mostly for the benefit of our most beloved pet who has been growing older with every passing day which is also making me feel guilty for not being able to give him a place where he would have enjoyed the most on a green lawn which he really enjoys the most. Gradually, she lost faith in my promises, my plans, and perhaps even my abilities.

That loss of trust became more painful than any financial setback. The repeated failures in my business deals that has been delaying this Villa dream has been frustrating me all the time.

Part 7: A Question Beyond Property

With the passage of time, I came to realize that the dispute was never entirely about land, villas, apartments, or money.

The real questions were deeper.

How should a family balance dreams against practical limitations?

Can love survive repeated disappointment?

How much should a spouse be blamed for circumstances beyond his control?

Is financial success meaningful when emotional harmony is absent?

Most importantly, is material achievement more valuable than peace of mind?

I do not claim to possess definitive answers. But one things is for sure that my dog loves to be where only ,we are present , be it a Villa, a Flat of a hut.

I only know that every decision I made was based on what I believed was possible at that moment. I did not choose between a villa and an apartment. I chose between an achievable reality and a financially dangerous aspiration.

Whether that choice was right or wrong may remain a matter of opinion.

But it was never made out of neglect, indifference, or lack of love.

Part 8: Looking Forward

Today, I continue to hope for reconciliation, though hope has become more fragile than before.

I still wish to provide more for my family. I still wish to fulfil dreams where circumstances permit. Yet I have also learned that no amount of property, wealth, or appreciation in asset values can compensate for the absence of mutual understanding.

Relationships flourish when both partners recognize not only each other's successes but also each other's struggles.

Perhaps the greatest home any family can build is not made of land, concrete, or luxury. It is built from trust, gratitude, patience, and shared purpose.

Without those foundations, even the grandest villa may feel empty.

With them, even an apartment can become a palace.

My message for my dear wife which has been dwelling in my heart throughout this journey of uncertainties, falls, resurrection is in the form of a poem I would dedicate herein.

A Bond Beyond Doubt

Our marriage is an investment, in love, faith and trust, A precious bond we built together, one we never should let rust.

Through years of joy and times when the road has not been clear, I still believe in what we built, and hold our journey dear.

Some moments when doubts arise and questions fill the mind, When words are misunderstood, and answers are hard to find.

But love is not the absence of doubt, nor life a perfect way— It is choosing one another, even on a difficult day.

Silence speaks much louder than the words we choose to say, And hurt can build a distance where affection used to stay.

Yet beneath the doubts and anger, beneath every tear and pain, There remains a bond worth fighting for, worth finding once again.

Let patience be our shelter, let understanding be our guide, Let honesty rebuild the trust that hurt may push aside.

For when two hearts choose forgiveness instead of walking away, Even the darkest clouds of doubt can slowly fade away.

I don't ask for perfection, nor a life without a fight, I only ask that we remember what first made our hearts unite.

For every storm that tests us, there is still a choice to make— To protect the love between us, rather than let it break.

And if at times you question me, or I have questioned you, Let patience give us time to see what love can still renew.

For doubts may test a marriage, but trust can make it strong, And hearts that choose to stay together can find where they belong.

So let us not allow the rust of doubt to claim what we have made, Nor let a passing moment make our lifetime love afraid.

For marriage is an investment no wealth could ever match— And when love is joined with patience, no doubt can break the bond we have latched.

If we can overcome the doubts that sometimes come our way, With faith, forgiveness, patience—and the courage to stay, Then whatever lies before us, through every joy and strife, The victory will be ours—because our love will choose our life.

Chapter 22

My Regrets and Lessons Learned

The Love I Failed to Understand

There are some mistakes in life that we remember.

There are some mistakes that we regret.

And then there are some mistakes that remain buried somewhere deep inside us, quietly reminding us that we failed someone who trusted us completely.

For me, one such regret is connected with dogs.

It is strange that the greatest lesson of my life did not come from a successful career, a difficult business negotiation, a financial crisis, a professional achievement, or even from the people I met along the way. It came from four-legged creatures who could never speak to me in words, yet communicated more honestly than most human beings ever could.

Looking back today, I realize that I did not always deserve the love that my dogs gave me.

They loved me without conditions.

I loved them with conditions.

They waited for me.

I was busy with myself.

They accepted me whether I was successful or struggling.

I often treated them as something I possessed.

They never measured my worth by my income, my position, my achievements, my failures, or my social standing.

I did.

And that difference took me many years to understand.

The most painful realization is that I was given love long before I understood what love really meant.

I simply did not recognize it.

Today, when I look back at those years, I do not try to defend myself by saying that I was young, ambitious, inexperienced, busy, or unaware. Those things may explain some of my actions, but they do not erase their consequences.

I was responsible for those lives.

And I failed them.

That is my regret.

But it is also one of the greatest lessons life has ever taught me.

*

A Young Man and His First Pet Dog

I had just completed college and started working.

Like many young people at that age, I was excited about beginning my professional life. There was a sense of freedom, ambition and possibility. I wanted to build a career, become financially independent and create a life of my own.

And somewhere in that phase, I decided that I wanted a pet dog.

My parents were hesitant.

They understood something that I did not.

A dog was not simply something you brought home because you liked the idea of having one.

A dog was a responsibility.

A dog needed time.

A dog needed attention.

A dog needed care.

A dog needed patience.

And most importantly, a dog needed love.

At that age, I understood the first part very poorly.

I wanted a dog because I wanted to own a dog.

I wanted the companionship, the feeling of having a pet and perhaps even the status that came with having a beautiful animal around me.

I did not understand that the moment you bring a dog into your life, you become responsible for a living being whose entire emotional world can revolve around you.

My parents hesitated, but eventually I adopted a small puppy.

I remember the excitement of bringing him into my life.

What I did not understand then was that while I was thinking, *"I have got myself a pet,"* the little puppy was thinking something completely different.

For him, I was not an owner.

I was his world.

He did not know that my understanding of love was immature.

He did not know that I considered him a possession.

He did not know that my priorities would change.

He simply loved me.

And he continued to love me.

That is what makes the memory so difficult today.

**

He Grew With Me, But I Did Not Grow Enough for Him

My first dog stayed with me for approximately seven years.

Those seven years covered an important part of my early adult life.

I was moving from one place to another.

I was building my career.

I was learning how difficult professional life could be.

I was experiencing the freedom and uncertainty of bachelorhood.

Eventually, I got married.

My life changed again.

But through all these changes, my dog remained constant.

He did not care where I lived.

He did not care what job I had.

He did not care whether I was earning more or less.

He did not care whether I was successful.

Wherever I was, he simply wanted to be close to me.

Today, I understand how extraordinary that kind of loyalty is.

At that time, I took it for granted.

That is perhaps one of the greatest mistakes human beings make with love.

When someone loves us without conditions, we assume that their love will always be there.

We become careless.

We stop appreciating it.

We stop making an effort.

And because the other person—or in my case, the dog—continues to love us anyway, we convince ourselves that everything is fine.

But it is not necessarily fine.

Love can remain even when the heart is hurting.

A dog cannot complain about emotional neglect.

He cannot tell you:

"I waited for you today."

"I missed you."

"Why did you not spend time with me?"

"Why did you leave me alone?"

"Why are you too busy for me?"

He simply waits.

And waits.

And waits.

That waiting is perhaps the saddest language of a dog.

***

Marriage, Another Pet Dog and the Life We Were Living

After I got married, I also gifted a pet dog to my would-be wife.

Now there were two dogs in our lives.

On the surface, it probably looked wonderful.

A young couple.

Two Pet dogs.

A new life.

A growing career.

The appearance of a happy household.

But today I know that appearance and reality can be very different.

We were not really worthy of being their owners.

That is a hard sentence for me to write.

But it is the truth as I understand it today.

Our own way of living was casual.

Our priorities were largely centred around ourselves, our careers, our plans, our ambitions and our success.

The dogs were there, but they were not at the centre of our lives.

We treated them too much like animals and, to some extent, like possessions.

We did not understand the emotional depth of what they were giving us.

They wanted our attention.

They wanted our presence.

They wanted affection.

They wanted to belong.

And they did not ask for much in return.

But even the little they wanted, we often failed to give.

Looking back, I realize something painful:

A dog does not measure love by what you spend on him. A dog measures love by whether you are there.

We may believe that feeding an animal is enough.

We may believe that providing shelter is enough.

We may believe that because we call the dog our pet, we automatically love him.

But love is not a word.

Love is an action.

Love is time.

Love is attention.

Love is responsibility.

Love is being there.

I understood none of this properly then.

****

The First Loss

The dog I had gifted to my wife died very early She was only 5 years old that time waiting to be loved.

And today, I cannot separate that loss from our negligence.

Perhaps that is what hurts the most.

I cannot blame fate.

I cannot blame circumstances.

I cannot blame somebody else.

I have to look at myself and acknowledge that we did not take proper care of them.

When an animal dies because of circumstances beyond our control, grief is painful enough.

But when you believe that your own negligence contributed to the loss, grief becomes something different.

It becomes guilt.

You replay things in your mind.

You remember the animal.

You remember the moments when you could have done more.

You wonder whether you should have noticed something earlier.

You wonder whether you should have been more attentive.

You wonder whether you could have prevented what happened.

There is no answer that can change the past.

That is the cruellest part.

You can learn from a mistake.

You can apologize.

You can change.

But you cannot go back and give the animal another day.

You cannot return the time you failed to give.

You cannot rewrite the ending.

That realization stayed somewhere inside me.

But even then, I had not completely understood the lesson.

My first dog was still alive.

And I eventually made another decision that I regret deeply.

*****

The Seven-Year-Old Dog I Left Behind

After approximately seven years, I relocated my first dog to a caretaker's farm.

At that point, I told myself that I was doing something reasonable.

Perhaps I believed he would be taken care of.

Perhaps I convinced myself that this was the practical thing to do.

Perhaps my own life circumstances made the decision easier to justify.

But whatever the reasons were, the fact remains:

I left him there and did not see him again.

That is something I have never been able to forgive myself for.

A dog who had grown with me.

A dog who had been there during my bachelorhood.

A dog who had seen my life change.

A dog who had given me unconditional loyalty.

A dog who had never asked what I could do for him.

I simply moved on.

I do not know what he felt when I stopped coming.

And perhaps that is the question that hurts me most.

Did he wait for me?

Did he look for me?

Did he think I would return?

Did he wonder why the person he trusted was no longer there?

I will never know.

And perhaps that uncertainty is my punishment.

Because if I knew he had forgotten me, perhaps it would hurt less.

But dogs do not forget easily.

They remember voices.

They remember footsteps.

They remember smells.

They remember affection.

They remember people.

And I had been his person.

Today, when I think about those seven years, I realize that I had received something extraordinarily precious and treated it as though it were ordinary.

I had been loved by a creature who expected nothing from me except my presence.

And I failed to understand the value of that love.

******

Success Can Make Us Blind

There is another dimension to this story that I now understand.

At that stage of my life, I was ambitious.

I wanted to succeed.

I wanted to build a career.

I wanted financial security.

I wanted recognition.

I wanted progress.

There is nothing wrong with ambition.

But ambition becomes dangerous when it convinces us that everything else is secondary.

We can become so focused on achieving something that we stop noticing what we are losing along the way.

That is what happened to me.

I was so involved in building my own life that I failed to recognize the lives that were already depending upon me.

My dogs never asked me to become less successful.

They never asked me to give up my career.

They never asked me to sacrifice my ambitions.

They simply asked me to remember them.

And I could not even do that properly.

That is why I now believe that success without compassion is incomplete.

A person can build a career and still fail.

A person can earn money and still be poor.

A person can achieve status and still have no understanding of love.

I had to experience the consequences before I understood this.

****

When My Own Life Began to Collapse

Life has a strange way of teaching lessons.

Sometimes it teaches us gently.

Sometimes it teaches us through loss.

And sometimes it takes away the very security we thought we could depend upon.

After the period in which I had enjoyed a relatively secure professional life, I was misled into another promising job opportunity.

What appeared to be an opportunity became the beginning of a long downfall.

For the next fourteen years, my life entered a phase that I can only describe as an extraordinary struggle.

The security I had known disappeared.

My professional life changed.

My financial situation deteriorated.

The confidence that comes with success was replaced by uncertainty.

Eventually, I entered a situation of absolute poverty.

It was during this period that I began to understand something about life that success had never taught me.

When you have money, people may surround you.

When you have position, people may respect you.

When you are successful, opportunities seem to appear everywhere.

But when everything disappears, you discover what really matters.

And you discover what kind of person you really are.

The fourteen years that followed were not simply a financial struggle.

They were a struggle of identity.

A struggle of survival.

A struggle to understand where I had gone wrong.

And somewhere within that long journey, my earlier mistakes with my dogs began to acquire a completely different meaning.

****

The Third PET Dog

During that difficult period, I adopted another dog.

Perhaps somewhere inside me, I wanted to make up for the mistakes of the past.

I wanted to give love.

I wanted to do better.

I wanted to prove to myself that I could care for another animal properly.

But life was still difficult.

I was struggling financially.

I was struggling to survive.

And despite my intentions, I was not able to provide the kind of care that the dog deserved.

This time, the failure was different.

Earlier, I had failed because I did not understand.

Now, I wanted to do better, but circumstances were overwhelming me.

Eventually, I was forced to give my third dog to another family.

That decision was painful.

But there was one blessing in the situation.

The family took genuinely good care of him and looked after him until his death.

That gave me some comfort.

It also taught me another important lesson:

Sometimes loving someone means accepting that someone else can give them what you cannot.

Giving him away was not what I wanted.

But keeping him when I could not care for him properly would have been selfish.

That distinction took me time to understand.

Love is not ownership.

Love is wanting the other being to be safe and happy, even when that means letting go.

****

Fourteen Years of Darkness

For nearly fourteen years, my life remained difficult.

Fourteen years is a long time.

People who have not experienced prolonged hardship often cannot understand what it does to a person.

One difficult year can be called bad luck.

Two difficult years can be called a setback.

But when struggle continues year after year, it begins to change the way you see everything.

You become more cautious.

You become more humble.

You begin to understand the difference between wants and needs.

You discover that possessions can disappear.

Jobs can disappear.

Money can disappear.

Relationships can change.

Status can disappear.

But the memories of how you treated others remain.

During those years, I had plenty of time to think.

And slowly, I began to understand my dogs differently.

I started realizing that perhaps they had given me one of the purest forms of love I would ever experience.

They had never judged me.

They had never asked me how much I earned.

They had never cared about my professional position.

They had never cared about my failures.

They simply wanted me.

And I had been too busy trying to become somebody to appreciate the beings who already loved me.

****

When Life Gave Me Another Chance

After approximately fourteen years, another phase of my life began.

My circumstances started improving.

My professional life began moving forward again.

Opportunities returned.

Hope returned.

I began to see light after a very long period of darkness.

And then something happened that changed me more deeply than any professional success ever could.

A little pet entered my life for the fourth time.

I sometimes feel that this was not merely a coincidence.

It felt like life—and perhaps God—had given me another chance.

A chance to understand what I had failed to understand earlier.

A chance to love without conditions.

A chance to care.

A chance to be present.

A chance to repay, in whatever small way I could, the debt I carried toward these beautiful creatures.

And this time, something inside me was different.

I was different.

I no longer saw a dog as a possession.

I saw a life.

I saw a soul.

I saw a companion.

I saw a friend.

I saw a teacher.

I saw someone who had entered my life not because he needed me as much as I needed him.

****

My Fourth Pet Dog

My fourth dog changed my understanding of life.

Today, he is not simply my pet.

He is much more than that.

He is my teacher.

He is my friend.

He is my companion.

He is my partner.

He is my family.

And in many ways, he has become my life.

My life revolves around him now.

I cannot imagine my daily life without him.

The relationship is completely different from what it was when I was young.

Earlier, I thought:

"I have a dog."

Today, I think:

"He has me."

That difference may sound small, but it represents a lifetime of learning.

Earlier, I thought I owned a dog.

Today, I understand that I have been entrusted with a life.

Earlier, I thought feeding was enough.

Today, I understand that companionship matters.

Earlier, I thought providing shelter was enough.

Today, I understand that emotional security matters.

Earlier, I thought a dog needed me.

Today, I know that I need him.

He has taught me patience.

He has taught me responsibility.

He has taught me compassion.

He has taught me to notice small things.

He has taught me that love does not need language.

And perhaps most importantly, he has taught me to be present.

****

What My Dog Teaches Me Every Day

There is something extraordinary about the way a dog loves.

A dog does not hold grudges in the way human beings often do.

A dog does not calculate.

A dog does not maintain a balance sheet of your mistakes.

A dog does not ask whether you deserve another chance.

If you come home after a difficult day, he is happy to see you.

If you are successful, he is happy to see you.

If you have failed, he is happy to see you.

If you are financially comfortable, he is happy to see you.

If you are struggling, he is still happy to see you.

He does not care about your external identity.

He cares that you are his person.

That is an extraordinary lesson.

Human beings spend so much of their lives trying to prove themselves.

We want people to know our achievements.

We want recognition.

We want respect.

We want status.

Dogs teach us something completely different.

They say, without words:

"I don't care what you have achieved. I am simply happy that you are here."

That is love.

And I wish I had understood it forty years ago.

****

My Greatest Regret

If I were to identify the greatest regret of my life, it would not be a failed business decision.

It would not be a lost professional opportunity.

It would not be money I lost.

It would not even be the fourteen difficult years I had to endure.

My greatest regret is that there were these pets who loved me completely, and I did not love them with the same understanding.

I regret the first pet dog I left behind.

I regret not seeing him again.

I regret the Second Pet dog I lost because of our failure to care properly.

I regret the third Pet dog whom circumstances forced me to give away.

I regret every moment when they waited for me and I was too busy with myself.

Most of all, I regret that I understood their value only after losing them.

But regret, if it remains only regret, serves little purpose.

The only meaningful way to honour the past is to change the present.

That is what I have tried to do.

****

The Meaning of Karma and Grace

I have often wondered whether the difficult years of my life were connected in some way to the mistakes I had made.

I cannot claim to know God's plan.

I cannot say that every hardship was punishment.

But I do know that the timing of my life taught me something.

When I was successful, I failed to understand love.

When I lost almost everything, I began to understand humility.

When I struggled, I understood what dependence meant.

When life gave me another opportunity, I began to understand gratitude.

And when my fourth Pet dog entered my life, I finally understood unconditional love.

Perhaps that was God's way of teaching me.

Perhaps it was simply life.

Perhaps it was coincidence.

But I choose to see it as grace.

Because I was given another chance.

Not everyone gets that.

Some mistakes cannot be corrected.

Some people leave us before we can apologize.

Some animals die before we understand how much they meant to us.

I was fortunate enough to receive another opportunity to love.

And I do not want to waste it.

****

What I Would Tell My Younger Self

If I could travel back to the day when I brought my first puppy home, I would sit beside my younger self and tell him something very simple.

I would say:

"This is not a possession."

"This is a responsibility."

"This little creature is going to love you more than you can imagine."

"Do not take that love for granted."

"Your career is important, but it is not everything."

"Money is important, but it is not everything."

"Your success matters, but it is not everything."

"There will be days when you think you are too busy."

"Do not use those days as an excuse."

"Because one day, you may desperately wish for one more day with him."

I would tell that younger version of myself to sit on the floor with the dog.

To spend time with him.

To watch him sleep.

To play with him.

To understand his habits.

To notice when he was happy.

To notice when he was lonely.

To recognize that every day of his life was a day that would never come back.

Most importantly, I would tell him:

"Do not wait until you lose him to understand what he means to you."

****

The Difference Between Owning a Dog and Loving a Dog

There is a profound difference between owning an animal and loving an animal.

Ownership is about possession.

Love is about responsibility.

Ownership says:

"This is my dog."

Love says:

"This life has been entrusted to me."

Ownership asks:

"What does the dog give me?"

Love asks:

"What can I give the dog?"

Ownership is convenient.

Love is committed.

Ownership ends when circumstances become inconvenient.

Love finds a way.

I learned this difference painfully.

It took me four dogs and many decades of life to understand something that perhaps should have been obvious from the beginning.

A dog is not a status symbol.

A dog is not an accessory.

A dog is not something you keep because it looks good.

A dog is not something you discard when life becomes difficult.

A dog is a living being capable of deep attachment, fear, joy, loneliness, loyalty and love.

Once you accept that responsibility, your relationship with the animal changes completely.

****

The Four Pet Dogs and Four Lessons

When I think of the four dogs who have been part of my life, I do not see four separate chapters.

I see four lessons.

The First Dog taught me loyalty.

He stayed with me through my formative years.

He accepted me through changes in my life.

He gave me loyalty before I understood how valuable loyalty was.

I failed to honour it.

The Second Dog taught me responsibility.

His early death forced me to confront the consequences of negligence.

I learned that good intentions are not enough.

Care has to be real.

The Third Dog taught me humility.

When I could not provide what he deserved, I had to accept that another family could care for him better.

I learned that love sometimes requires letting go.

The Fourth Dog taught me unconditional love.

He entered my life when I was finally ready to understand.

He became my teacher.

He became my companion.

He became my family.

And through him, I learned to appreciate what I had once taken for granted.

****

What Success Means to Me Today

My definition of success has changed.

When I was young, success meant career growth.

It meant earning.

It meant position.

It meant recognition.

It meant building something.

Today, those things still have importance.

But they are no longer enough.

I now believe that success also means being kind.

It means being responsible for those who depend upon you.

It means not abusing trust.

It means being present.

It means being grateful.

It means helping those who cannot help themselves.

It means understanding that strength comes with responsibility.

And perhaps most importantly, it means reaching the end of a day knowing that the beings who depend upon you are safe, cared for and loved.

My fourth dog has become part of that definition.

When I look at him, I am reminded of my past.

I am reminded of my failures.

But I am also reminded that life gives us opportunities to change.

He is therefore not only my companion.

He is my reminder.

****

The Debt I Can Never Fully Repay

I often feel that I owe my dogs a debt.

It is not a financial debt.

It is not something that can be measured.

It is the debt of love.

The first dogs gave me love before I knew how to appreciate it.

The third gave me another opportunity to understand responsibility.

And the fourth gave me the opportunity to finally live differently.

I know I cannot go back and change what happened.

I cannot bring the first dog back.

I cannot change the circumstances surrounding the second.

I cannot undo the decision involving the third.

But I can change the way I live today.

That is the only repayment available to me.

If I can care for the life that is with me today, perhaps I can honour the lives that are no longer with me.

If I can give my fourth dog the love and attention I failed to give the first three, perhaps their memories can become something other than guilt.

Perhaps they can become lessons.

****

My Dog Is My Teacher

People often imagine that a teacher must be someone older, more educated or more experienced.

My teacher has four legs.

He cannot speak.

Yet he teaches me every day.

He teaches me that happiness can be simple.

He teaches me that loyalty should not be conditional.

He teaches me that forgiveness can be immediate.

He teaches me to live in the present.

He teaches me to appreciate companionship.

He teaches me to care.

He teaches me that love does not require an explanation.

And perhaps the greatest lesson he teaches me is this:

Do not postpone love.

We often tell ourselves that we will spend time with someone tomorrow.

We will call tomorrow.

We will visit tomorrow.

We will show affection tomorrow.

But tomorrow is never guaranteed.

For a dog, a lifetime is much shorter than ours.

Every day matters.

Every walk matters.

Every meal matters.

Every moment of affection matters.

Every time they look at us matters.

One day, there will be silence where there was once a wagging tail.

One day, the place where they slept will be empty.

One day, we will wish for one more morning.

One more walk.

One more look.

One more moment.

That is why I no longer want to postpone love.

****

The Lesson I Want Others to Learn

If there is one lesson I want someone reading this story to take away, it is not that they should feel sorry for me.

I do not want sympathy.

I want people to think about the animals in their own lives.

If you have a dog today, look at him differently.

Do not see only a pet.

See the trust.

See the dependence.

See the loyalty.

See the vulnerability.

Understand that to your dog, you may be the most important person in the world.

You may be his entire world.

Your dog does not know whether you are a successful businessman, a senior executive, a labourer, a professional, a student or unemployed.

He does not know your bank balance.

He does not know your social standing.

He does not know your failures.

He only knows you.

And that is perhaps the purest compliment any living being can give another.

When you walk through the door, he is happy.

When you leave, he waits.

When you return, he welcomes you.

He does not demand an explanation.

He simply loves you.

Do not make the mistake I made.

Do not wait until the end of his life to understand what he gave you.

****

Today

Today, my life is very different.

My fourth dog is not an accessory to my life.

He is part of my life.

My life revolves around him.

He is my friend when I am alone.

He is my companion when I travel through the ordinary routines of life.

He is my partner in the quiet moments.

He is the one who reminds me that affection does not need words.

He is the one whose presence can change the atmosphere of a room.

He is the one who can make an ordinary day meaningful.

I cannot imagine anything beyond him now.

He is everything to me.

And perhaps that sounds excessive to someone who has never experienced this kind of relationship.

But I understand it.

Because I have lived the opposite.

I know what it feels like to have a dog and not understand his value.

I know what it feels like to lose one.

I know what it feels like to carry regret.

And therefore, I know what it means to receive another chance.

I will forever remain indebted to this little soul who came into my life at a time when I was finally ready to understand him.

The summary-

The Four Dogs Who Changed My Life

If I look back at my life, I see many chapters.

There were years of ambition.

There were years of achievement.

There were years of failure.

There were years of financial hardship.

There were years of uncertainty.

There were years of rebuilding.

But alongside all of them were four dogs.

Four lives.

Four relationships.

Four opportunities to learn.

The first came into my life when I was young and ambitious. He gave me unconditional loyalty, but I did not understand its value.

The second came into our family and left too soon, teaching me through loss that responsibility cannot be taken casually.

The third came during one of the most difficult periods of my life. I wanted to do better, but circumstances forced me to give him to another family who cared for him until his death.

And then came the fourth.

The one who changed everything.

The one who arrived when I had finally learned enough to understand.

The one who taught me that love is not possession.

That responsibility is not a burden.

That companionship is a privilege.

That caring for another life is an honour.

That unconditional love is perhaps the greatest gift God can give us.

When I think about the first three dogs today, there is still sadness.

There is still guilt.

There is still regret.

But there is also gratitude.

Because without them, I might never have become the person I am today.

They taught me through their presence.

They taught me through their absence.

They taught me through my mistakes.

And my fourth dog continues to teach me every day.

Perhaps that is why he means so much to me.

He is not simply the fourth dog in my life.

He is the culmination of everything the other three taught me.

He is my second chance.

He is my redemption.

He is my reminder that it is never too late to learn what love really means.

I cannot change my past.

I cannot bring back the dogs I lost.

I cannot undo the moments when I failed them.

But I can make sure that the lessons they gave me were not wasted.

And so, every day that I have with my fourth dog, I try to give him what I failed to give the others:

my time, my attention, my care, my presence and, above all, my unconditional love.

I now understand something I wish I had understood when I was young:

A dog's life may be only a small part of our lifetime, but to that dog, we are his entire lifetime.

That realization has changed me forever.

And if there is one sentence I want to carry with me for the rest of my life, it is this:

Never take unconditional love for granted.

Because one day, when the wagging tail is gone and the silence begins, you may realize that the greatest gift you ever received was the love of a creature who asked for nothing except that you love him back.

I was fortunate enough to learn that lesson.

I only wish I had learned it sooner.

“They are my Silent Teachers “

Chapter 23

Reflections at Retirement Age

The Burden of a Soul

They say that before a soul is granted the rare privilege of a human birth—the highest and most precious form of existence—it must wander through millions of life cycles , inhabiting countless forms of life. Every birth, every death, every experience becomes another page in the endless ledger of karma.

To be born human is not merely a gift; it is perhaps God's final act of mercy—a sacred opportunity to break free from the relentless wheel of birth and rebirth. It is the one chance to redeem the soul, to settle the debts accumulated through innumerable past lives, and to attain eternal peace—Moksha, where suffering ends and the soul merges with the Divine.

Sometimes I cannot help but wonder what I must have been in a previous life. Was I cruel? Selfish? Did I leave behind wounds that time itself could not heal? There are moments when the weight of my present life feels too heavy to be explained by chance alone.

From the innocence of childhood to the struggles of youth, from the burdens of responsibility in parenthood to the loneliness and uncertainty of retirement, every stage has brought its own trials. Every joy has been shadowed by pain, every success tempered by sacrifice. It often feels as though life itself has become a relentless purification—a furnace designed to burn away the impurities of countless forgotten lifetimes.

Perhaps these hardships are not punishments but purification. Perhaps every disappointment, every betrayal, every tear shed in silence is washing away the stains of past karma. Each obstacle becomes another step toward cleansing the soul, another opportunity to rise above anger, attachment, and ego.

If this is indeed the price for the mistakes of lives long forgotten, then I pray I have the strength to endure it with dignity. For beyond the suffering lies the hope that, when this final chapter closes, the soul will no longer be bound by the chains of karma. Instead, it will find the eternal peace it has sought through countless births—the bliss of Moksha, where the journey finally ends, and the soul rests forever in the embrace of the Divine.

There comes a point in life when you stop measuring days by urgency and start measuring them by reflection.

Not because life becomes suddenly easy.

But because time forces you to look back more often than forward.

At this stage of my life, after years of struggle, rebuilding, and gradual stabilization, I find myself naturally reflecting on the journey that brought me here.

It is not a single story.

It is a collection of phases layered on top of each other.

Childhood shaped by poverty and sacrifice.

Early education supported by parents who gave everything they had.

A young adulthood marked by ambition and effort.

A phase of early professional success that felt like breakthrough.

A sudden descent into instability that lasted for years.

A long period of survival where every day required adjustment.

And finally, a slow and steady return to stability.

When I look at this journey as a whole, I realize that it cannot be summarized in simple terms like success or failure.

It is more complex than that.

It is a story of continuity under changing conditions.

One of the strongest realizations at this stage of life is that success is not permanent, and neither is failure.

Both are phases. Both are temporary.

What remains constant is the ability to continue moving forward despite them.

In earlier years, I used to believe that stability was something you achieved once and then maintained effortlessly.

Life corrected that assumption.

Stability must be maintained continuously.

It requires attention. It requires discipline.

And it requires awareness of how quickly it can change.

Looking back at my professional journey, I can now see that each phase taught something different.

Poverty taught resilience. Early success taught capability.

Failure taught humility. Struggle taught endurance.

Recovery taught balance.

Each lesson came at a cost.

But each lesson also shaped understanding.

Family life, too, appears differently when viewed from this stage.

The relationships that once felt simple and direct became more layered over time.

Roles evolved.

Expectations changed.

Emotional dynamics shifted through different phases of financial and personal stability.

There were moments of closeness.

Moments of distance.

Moments of misunderstanding.

And moments of silent understanding that required no words.

No family remains static through decades of shared experience.

It evolves with circumstances.

One of the most important reflections at this stage is about decisions made under pressure.

There were decisions that I once questioned deeply during their immediate aftermath.

Decisions related to career, family, finances, and responsibilities.

But with time, I have come to understand that most decisions were not made in ideal conditions.

They were made under constraint.

Under urgency.

Under responsibility.

And often under emotional weight that cannot be fully understood in hindsight without context.

That understanding does not erase consequences.

But it brings perspective.

Another realization that has become clearer with age is that human relationships are deeply influenced by circumstances, but not entirely defined by them.

People behave differently under stability than under stress.

Perception changes with time.

Memory reshapes itself based on emotion and experience.

What remains important is not perfection in relationships, but continuity.

The ability to remain connected even through difficult phases.

When I think about my children now, I feel a sense of quiet fulfilment.

Their journeys have taken them beyond the limitations of my own early life.

Their opportunities are broader.

Their exposure is greater.

Their challenges are different from mine, but their foundation is stronger.

That, in many ways, feels like the most meaningful outcome of all the years of effort.

Not personal achievement.

But generational progress.

One of the most profound reflections at this stage of life is about meaning.

What does it mean to have lived a successful life?

Is it professional achievement?

Is it financial stability?

Is it social recognition?

Or is it something more subtle?

For me, meaning has shifted over time.

Earlier, I associated it with success and progress.

Now, I associate it more with endurance, relationships, and contribution.

Endurance through hardship.

Contribution to family and responsibilities.

And the quiet persistence of continuing despite setbacks.

There are also reflections about loss.

Not just financial loss, but emotional and experiential loss.

There were years that cannot be recovered.

Moments that cannot be revisited.

Emotions that cannot be fully reconstructed.

But even those losses have become part of understanding.

They have shaped how I view life today.

At this stage, I do not carry anger toward the past.

Nor do I carry idealized nostalgia.

What remains is acceptance.

Acceptance that life contains both fairness and unfairness.

Both reward and struggle.

Both clarity and confusion.

And that no single phase defines the whole journey.

As retirement or the later phase of life approaches, priorities naturally change.

The focus shifts from building to maintaining.

From expansion to stability.

From ambition to reflection.

From urgency to peace.

There is also a deeper awareness of time.

Not in a fearful sense.

But in a realistic one.

Time becomes something to be used meaningfully rather than chased endlessly.

Looking back, I see that my life has been shaped not by one defining moment, but by many transitions.

Each transition required adjustment.

Each adjustment required effort.

And each effort contributed to the person I have become today.

If there is one conclusion I can draw from this long journey, it is that life is not linear.

It does not move only upward or downward.

It moves in cycles.

And within those cycles, the only constant is change.

As I reflect now, I no longer see my life in terms of what was lost or what was gained.

I see it as a continuum of experiences that collectively shaped understanding.

And in that understanding, there is a quiet form of peace.

Not perfect peace.

But enough to look back without regret dominating thought.

Enough to look forward without fear dominating imagination.

And enough to remain present with a sense of balance that was not always available in earlier years.

This, perhaps, is what later life truly offers.

Not answers to every question.

But acceptance of the journey as it unfolded.

And that acceptance, after everything that has happened, feels like the most stable ground I have ever stood on.

Chapter 24

Final Thoughts: What Life Taught Me

When you live long enough through different phases of life, you begin to understand that most answers are not found in moments of success or failure, but in the space between them.

In the quiet stretches of time where nothing dramatic happens, but everything slowly changes.

As I reach the final reflections of this journey, I do not look at my life as a series of achievements or setbacks alone.

I see it as a continuous learning process shaped by circumstances, people, decisions, and time.

One of the first lessons life taught me is that nothing remains permanent.

Not poverty. Not success. Not struggle. Not stability.

Each phase arrives, stays for a while, and eventually transforms into something else.

When I was young, I believed stability was permanent once achieved. Later, life showed me that stability must be continuously protected.

When I experienced success, I believed it would continue as long as effort remained consistent. Later, I learned that circumstances can change even when effort does not.

When I faced failure and hardship, I believed it might never end. Later, I learned that even prolonged darkness eventually gives way to change.

This understanding changed how I view life entirely.

Another important lesson is that human relationships are deeply influenced by time and circumstances.

People change not only because they choose to, but because their situations change.

Expectations evolve. Priorities shift.

Emotional responses adjust based on experiences.

This does not necessarily make relationships false or real in absolute terms.

It simply makes them human.

During my journey, I experienced both closeness and distance within relationships.

I experienced support and silence. Understanding and misunderstanding.

Over time, I realized that expecting perfect consistency from human relationships is unrealistic.

What matters more is continuity, effort, and shared willingness to remain connected despite change.

One of the most difficult lessons was about decisions made under pressure.

Many of the choices I made during difficult years were not made in ideal conditions.

They were made in situations where options were limited, resources were constrained, and responsibilities were unavoidable.

At times, those decisions were later viewed differently through the lens of time and emotion.

But I have learned that judgment without context is incomplete.

Only when you understand the circumstances behind decisions can you begin to understand their intent.

Another major lesson is about resilience.

Resilience is often misunderstood as strength displayed during crisis.

But true resilience is what continues after crisis.

It is the ability to rebuild when everything has been disrupted.

To continue functioning when conditions are unfavourable.

To maintain responsibility when personal stability is uncertain.

And to slowly restore balance even when progress feels slow.

My life taught me resilience not as an abstract idea, but as daily practice over many years.

One more important realization is about success.

Success is not a final destination.

It is not a fixed state.

It is a temporary condition that requires maintenance.

And more importantly, success is not always visible externally.

Sometimes success is simply the ability to survive a difficult phase without losing one's sense of responsibility.

Sometimes it is the ability to continue supporting family despite hardship.

Sometimes it is the ability to rebuild after loss.

These forms of success are not always recognized, but they are deeply meaningful.

As I reflect on my journey from poverty to professional life, from success to struggle, and from struggle back to stability, I realize that every phase contributed to shaping who I am.

Even the painful ones. Especially the painful ones.

Because they forced growth in ways comfort never could.

They created awareness. They built patience. They deepened understanding.

They removed illusions. And they taught acceptance.

Today, I do not look at life with the expectation that everything will be perfect. I look at it with the understanding that everything will change.

Some changes will be favourable.

Some will not.

But all will contribute to the larger journey.

If there is one message I would leave behind from this entire experience, it is this:

Life is not defined by how smoothly it progresses.

It is defined by how you respond when it does not.

There is also a lesson about forgiveness.

Not just toward others, but toward oneself.

There were moments in life when I questioned my own decisions deeply.

Moments when outcomes were not what I had hoped.

Moments when consequences were difficult to accept.

But over time, I have learned that most decisions are made with the information, capacity, and circumstances available at that moment.

Understanding that reduces unnecessary self-judgment.

It allows space for peace.

Finally, there is acceptance.

Acceptance that life cannot be fully controlled.

Acceptance that relationships cannot be fully predicted.

Acceptance that outcomes are not always proportional to effort.

And acceptance that despite all of this, life is still meaningful.

Because meaning does not come only from outcomes.

It comes from experience.

From connection.

From responsibility.

From persistence.

From simply continuing forward.

As I conclude these reflections, I do not see my life as extraordinary.

I see it as human.

A life shaped by common struggles, common hopes, and common responsibilities.

What makes it meaningful is not the absence of difficulty, but the presence of continuity through it.

And if there is any final thought I wish to leave with, it is this:

Life does not need to be perfect to be meaningful.

It only needs to be lived with awareness, responsibility, and acceptance of its many phases.

That, in the end, is enough.

Chapter 25

Epilogue — The Quiet After the Journey

After a long journey, silence feels different.

It is no longer empty. It is full of everything that has already happened.

When I look back now, from a distance shaped by time, I do not see my life as a sequence of problems that needed solutions. I see it as a long unfolding of circumstances that required adaptation, patience, and persistence.

There were years when life felt like it was moving too fast in the wrong direction.

There were years when it felt like it had stopped completely.

And there were years when it slowly began moving again, almost without announcement.

What remains now is not the noise of those phases, but their echo.

A quiet understanding that everything I went through—poverty, struggle, early success, collapse, rebuilding, emotional distance, financial recovery—was not separate from life.

It was life itself.

One of the deepest realizations that comes at the end of such a journey is that closure is not an event. It is a gradual acceptance that nothing truly needs to be closed in the way we once imagined.

The past does not disappear. It integrates.

It becomes part of perception, not pressure.

Part of memory, not burden.

There were times in my life when I believed that if I could just fix one situation, resolve one conflict, or recover one loss, everything would become complete again.

But life rarely works that way.

Completion is not achieved through resolution of individual events.

It is achieved through understanding the continuity of all events together.

Even the unresolved parts begin to feel different with time.

Not erased. But softened. Not forgotten. But placed in context.

As I sit with these reflections, I realize that people often search for a defining meaning in their journey.

A single lesson. A single turning point. A single explanation.

But my experience has taught me that meaning is not singular.

It is layered.

It changes depending on where you stand in life. In struggle, meaning is survival.

In stability, meaning is continuity. In reflection, meaning is understanding.

And in silence, meaning is acceptance.

I think about the people who walked through this journey with me in different ways.

My parents, whose sacrifices formed the foundation of everything that followed.

My friend Shirish Purohit, whose timely intervention altered the direction of my professional life at a critical moment.

My children, whose growth gave purpose to continued effort even during the most difficult years.

And even the relationships that carried both connection and distance, shaped by circumstances that none of us fully controlled.

Each of them contributed something to the whole.

Some through support.

Some through challenge.

Some through presence.

Some through absence.

As time passes, what remains is not the intensity of individual moments, but the overall shape they created together.

Looking back, I no longer divide my life into success and failure.

I see it as movement.

Sometimes upward.

Sometimes downward.

Sometimes sideways.

But always forward in time.

One of the final understandings I carry is that peace is not the absence of history.

It is the ability to carry history without being consumed by it.

There were moments in my life when I thought peace would come after solving everything.

After resolving financial issues.

After stabilizing family relationships.

After achieving certain milestones.

But peace did not arrive as a result of external completion.

It arrived slowly, through internal acceptance.

Acceptance that not everything can be resolved.

Not everything can be corrected.

Not everything needs to be carried forward with emotional intensity.

Some things simply become part of who you are, without needing to be actively held anymore.

As I reflect now, I feel a quiet gratitude—not for the absence of difficulty, but for the endurance that allowed continuation through it.

Because continuation, in itself, is a form of victory that is often underestimated.

Life did not unfold in the way I once imagined.

But it unfolded in a way that taught me depth, resilience, and perspective.

And perhaps that is its own kind of completeness.

There is no dramatic ending to this story.

No sudden resolution.

No perfect closure.

Only a gradual settling.

Like dust after a long journey finally resting on the ground.

What remains is clarity.

Not about everything.

But about enough.

Enough to understand.

Enough to accept.

Enough to move forward without looking for answers that no longer need to be found.

And so, I do not end this story with certainty.

I end it with understanding.

That life was never meant to be fully controlled or fully explained.

It was meant to be lived.

And in being lived fully—through its joy, its hardship, its confusion, and its recovery—it becomes complete in its own imperfect way.

That is all.

And that, in itself, is enough.

The Journey CONTINUES……