

Raising a
TODDLER IN A
3BHK WORLD



Arjun Setia



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

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

www.BlueRoseONE.com

info@bluerosepublishers.com

+91 8882 898 898

+4407342408967

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Dedication

**To Kiki,
my little miracle.**

You arrived quietly, but you changed everything loudly. Before you, I searched for stories. After you, stories found me; in your laughter, your stubborn “no,” your tiny victories, your chaos, your comfort, your endless curiosity.

You turned ordinary mornings into adventures, messy nights into memories, and exhaustion into a kind of joy I never knew existed.

This book exists because of you.

***Da-Da loves you...
more than words will ever manage to hold.***

**To Anu,
my partner, my calm, my constant.**

*While I wrote about moments, you lived them fully.
While I found words, you held the world together.*

*You believed in my voice when I doubted it.
You gave me space to write by filling our home with love,
patience, and strength.*

*You carried more than your share...
quietly, gracefully, without ever asking to be seen.*

This book may carry my name, but its heartbeat carries yours.

Thank you for being my home, every single day.

To Richa Di, Mom, and Dad

Richa Di,

You have always been my steady voice of reason, my quiet sanity in loud moments.

Whenever life felt overwhelming or uncertain, your encouragement arrived exactly when I needed it most - calm, reassuring, and unwavering. You believed in me long before outcomes, milestones, or results ever showed up.

Mom,

Your love shaped the man I became.

Through you, I learned warmth without conditions, resilience without bitterness, and faith without fear. Long before I understood life's complexities, your presence taught me how to stand tall, stay kind, and keep going - even on the hardest days.

And Dad...

I know you're watching.

From somewhere quieter, kinder, infinite. I often imagine you looking on with that familiar calm, that silent pride. I wish I had written this sooner so I could place it in your hands, sit beside you, and say, "Look, Dad... I finally did it."

*"This book carries pieces of all of you—
in its values, its voice, its heart.
and I hope that it makes you all proud."*

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Prologue

Before We Knew What We Were Doing

Before the routines.

Before the opinions.

Before the endless advice that starts with

“Hamare time pe...”

There was just a baby.

Small. Loud. Determined.

And two parents standing in the middle of their living room,
wondering how something so tiny could change everything
so quickly.

Those parents were us - Anu, and me.

This book doesn't begin with a plan.

Because there wasn't one.

It began with sleepless nights, half-remembered Google
searches and the quiet realization that parenting doesn't
arrive with instructions - it arrives with responsibility.

And love.

A lot of love.

Somewhere between the first laugh and the hundredth

“No,”

between spilled food and scattered toys,

between songs played on repeat and mornings that started
far too early...

life shifted.

Days stopped being measured in hours
and started being measured in naps.

Time sped up.

Patience slowed down.

And the smallest moments...

a warm hug, a tiny hand, a familiar voice calling out -
began to matter more than the big ones ever did.

This book is not a guide.

It's not a rulebook.

It won't tell you how to raise a toddler "right."

It's a collection of moments.

The kind that feel exhausting while you're living them, and
priceless the moment they pass.

If you're reading this while tired, welcome.

If you're reading this while smiling, you're already
remembering.

If you're reading this wondering whether you're doing
enough - you are.

These pages are for the parents living in the middle of it.

The ones figuring things out one day at a time. The ones
learning that perfection was never the goal - presence was.

So, before we get into the snacks, the songs, the chaos, and
the joy...

This is your reminder:

You don't need to have it all together.

You just need to be there.

The rest?

You'll learn along the way.

Introduction

The People Behind the Chaos

Every story needs a cast.

Let's meet the humans who make this tiny universe function (mostly).

Kiki — The Main Character Energy

A 20-month-old bundle of curiosity, confidence, and chaos. Runs on zero fear, maximum enthusiasm, and a belief that everything belongs to her.

Special skills include:

- Turning routines into adventures
- Saying “No” like a philosophy
- Making her parents (Anu and Arjun) question their life choices — lovingly.

Arjun (aka Da-Da) — The Chief Chaos Coordinator

The narrator.

The snack runner.

The official carrier of humans, bags, toys, and emotional responsibility.

Believes he's helping. Often is. Sometimes... learns the hard way.

Anu (aka Mumma) — The Real Boss

Strategic. Calm. Always three steps ahead.

The architect of routines, schedules, and sanity.

If parenting were a startup, she'd be the founder, CEO, and crisis manager, while making it look effortless.

Daadi — The Silent Authority

Arjun's mother. Kiki's Daadi.

Speaks little. Observes everything.

Drops wisdom mid-conversation without warning.

Usually right. Sometimes annoying.

Always loving.

Pooja — The Invisible Superpower

House help. Emergency responder. Problem solver. Appears exactly when things are about to go wrong. Keeps the household running while pretending she's "just doing her work."

Together, they form a unit bonded by love, laughter, and chronic sleep deprivation.

And this book?

It's a front-row seat to their everyday adventures — told with honesty, humor, and a lot of heart.

Welcome to their world.

Statutory Warning

Read responsibly. You May End Up Falling in Love
with Them

Chapter 1

Snacks, Spoons And Small Victories

Because tiny tummies have BIG opinions

Snacks, Spoons And Small Victories

Because tiny tummies have BIG opinions



It's 6:30 PM in Chandigarh and while most households are wrapping up the day, Arjun and Anu are entering a battleground.

A toddler snack battleground.

Kiki sits in her royal high chair – the Queen of Indecision – gently tapping the tray like a food critic preparing to deliver her harsh review.

Arjun arrives, armed with confidence and a bowl of Kiki's favorite potato mash.

He spoons a tiny bit toward Kiki's mouth.

Kiki: dramatically shakes head, like he just offered her crocin drops.

Next snack attempt → Steamed apple slices with a pinch of cinnamon appear.

She picks one. Looks at it thoughtfully.

Drops it like a mic on the floor. 🎤

Anu then brings banana avocado smoothie.

Rejected like a bad audition.

Suddenly... Daadi enters with her epic, timeless wisdom,
“*Chikoo de do. Chikoo,, tera bhi favorite tha bachpan mein,
dekhna kaise lapak k khayegi.*”

Arjun mutters under his breath, “Let’s see what magic supplement chikoo has...?”

Pooja, meanwhile, stands behind like a nurse in the emergency room - bib ready, a fresh fork sterilized, wipes on standby.

Finally, Anu places a small bowl of chikoo in front of Kiki.

Kiki... pauses.

Then nods — slowly — as if this decision was hers alone.

Arjun and Anu exchange a silent look that says:

“Don’t... Move... A... Muscle.”

But chaos has only just begun.

Kiki grabs the pink fork, because of course she will do it HER way.

She lifts it up with confidence...

...aaaand smears chikoo on her forehead.

Daadi gasps.

Anu's eye twitches.

Pooja quietly fetches a mop.

Then Kiki laughs.

She scoops another bite.

Some goes in her mouth.

Some goes on the table.

Some is offered lovingly to Arjun like a peace treaty.

And honestly?

He accepts.

Because parenting isn't about clean plates -

It's about tiny victories.

Like three spoons eaten without drama.

Like a toddler choosing something.

Like a moment where love wins over frustration.

As Kiki finishes her chikoo, she looks around proudly.

Anu whispers, "We survived snack time."

Arjun replies, "Barely."

And, everyone smiles realizing this is the kind of chaos that makes a toddler home feel alive.

Little Brain Insights – Why Snacks Feel Like War?

- **Toddlers crave independence, and food is their first experiment in control**

Between 1–2 years, the brain’s prefrontal cortex develops rapidly. This fuels the “I do it!” phase where self-feeding helps them practice autonomy and motor coordination.

- **Appetite genuinely fluctuates from day to day**

Growth spurts, activity levels, and sleep quality all influence hunger hormones (leptin and ghrelin). It’s normal for a toddler to eat like a champ one day and barely nibble the next.

- **Repetition builds familiarity not boredom**

Studies show it can take 10–15 neutral exposures before a child accepts a new taste. A “food rejection” today often just means the brain hasn’t logged it as safe yet.

- **Mess is part of the learning process**

Touching, smearing, and dropping food helps toddlers develop sensory integration, fine-motor skills, and body-brain coordination. (Yes, that chikoo in the hair is early science in action.)

- **Their attention span = roughly two minutes per year of age**

For a toddler, that’s barely three minutes. Short mealtime focus isn’t defiance, it’s developmental reality. Keeping snacking sessions light and brief protects positive associations with food.

Parenting Hacks: Snack-Time Survival

- Offer 2-3 small choices (not the whole fridge)
- Tiny portions first → reduces overwhelm
- Let them touch, squish, experiment - it's learning
- Eat together → modeling healthy habits
- Respect trusted foods: chikoo today, maybe banana tomorrow

Parenting Truth

One day, meals won't need negotiations.

One day, spoons won't be thrown or debated.

But today?

Three happy bites matter.

A calm ending counts.

And a smile over chikoo is a win worth celebrating.

And honestly,

that's more than enough for now.

Chapter 2

The Great Bath Escape: Morning Edition

Because toddlers + water = a comedy show

The Great Bath Escape: Morning Edition

Because toddlers + water = a comedy show



8:30 AM.

Kiki's mornings don't begin.

They launch.

The moment her eyes open, she's already running around the house like a tiny rocket with unlimited fuel.

Meanwhile, Anu is calmly preparing for the day's first mission: Kiki's bath.

Towel ready.

Clothes ready.

Soap ready.

Strategy ready..

Bath preparation is easy.

Catching the toddler is the real challenge.

And, that job belongs to Arjun.

He stretches.

Cracks his back like an athlete about to enter the arena.

Scans the house for the tiny runner.

And then announces with full confidence, “Bath time, Kiki!”



Kiki hears it... and freezes.

Her soft straight dark brown hair moves ever so slightly as she shakes her head in disbelief.

And then...



⇒ Zoom! Gone!

The Great Bath Escape begins.



Mission 1: Kitchen Quick Disguise

She grabs a sieve and wears it like a helmet...because why not?

Hiding behind Daadi’s chair like a warrior in exile.

Anu spots her and laughs, “*Pakad liya!*”

But before the catch happens, Kiki slips through...



Mission 2: Sofa Fortress

Kiki crawls deep into a fort that she made on the sofa from cushions and her soft toys.

Her tiny giggle gives away her exact GPS location.

Arjun leans in, “Found youuu!”

She squeals - makes another escape attempt.

The Final Trap

Anu uses her clever emotional manipulation superpowers,
“Kiki! Water splash! There are fishies waiting!”

Kiki gasps...and runs into the bathroom herself.

Anu and Arjun exchange a victorious high-five.

Inside the Bathroom = Pool Party

Splashing Anu 

Splashing the bucket 

Splashing Arjun 

Splashing herself → shocked → tiny tears 

→ then splashing again 

Anu, “Eyes shut!”

Kiki: shuts her mouth instead 

Shampoo appears → Drama appears:

“NOOO BUBU NOOO!”

Yet seconds later...

Bubble moustache.

Bubble crown.

Bubble happiness.

Toddler logic = unpredictable.

Toddler joy = priceless.

Wrapped in a towel burrito 🥪, Kiki steps out royally clean (trying to escape again).

Arjun lifts her, warm and soft in his arms.

She gently rests her head on his shoulder and whispers:

“Da-Da...”

And just like that ...

the chaos becomes the sweetest moment of the day.

Little Brain Insights — Why Bath-Time Battles Happen?

- **Bath = a major transition moment, and toddlers resist transitions**

Psychologists call this “task-switching resistance.” At 1–2 years, the brain’s executive functions are still maturing, so stopping an activity to do something else (like bathe) triggers protest.

- **They want control over body sensations**

Autonomy peaks around 18–24 months as toddlers learn that their body belongs to them. Saying “no” to washing, wiping, or rinsing is an early way of asserting bodily autonomy.

- **Water can feel “too much”**

Toddlers’ sensory systems are hypersensitive while still calibrating. The temperature, sound, and movement of water can feel unpredictable - what we call “fun” may register as overstimulating for toddlers.

- **Fear of water on the face is 100% normal**

Experts say that sudden water near eyes, nose, or ears can trigger a startle reflex. So, it’s quite natural for toddlers to resist bath time.

- **Joy returns once they feel secure and involved**

When toddlers are allowed to pour, splash, and control small parts of the routine, their sense of safety increases and fear drops. Participation transforms anxiety into play.

Parenting Hacks – Bath Edition

- Warm water + bathroom first
- Let them choose toy/towel/shampoo
- Use fun goals: “3 splashes → rinse time!”
- Show them how to tilt head back playfully
- Soft cloth / headgear over eyes during rinse

Post-bath cuddles = calm connection

Parenting Truth

One day, she won't run away from soap.

One day, shampoo won't feel like a battle.

But today?

She runs, and then runs back.

For the warm towel.

For familiar arms.

For a sleepy Da-Da or Mumma.

*And honestly,
that's exactly how love looks right now.*

Chapter 3

The Orange Shoe Superpower

Because toddlers believe

style = shoes first, clothes maybe later

The Orange Shoe Superpower

Because toddlers believe style = shoes first, clothes may be later



Sunday morning plans for Anu and Arjun were simple:

Brunch with Kiki's Maamu and Maami → Quick grocery run → Back home.

But they forgot a crucial detail: Toddlers don't believe in simple plans.

Kiki spots her favorite shoes the moment she comes out of the bathroom: Bright, bold orange shoes that look like sunshine dipped in glitter.

She brings them to Da-Da like a royal request:

“Da-Da... shoes!”

(A demand disguised as a suggestion)

Arjun laughs, “First clothes, then shoes.”

Kiki stares straight into his soul:

“Shoes. Now.”

Threat level rising.

Meanwhile, Anu arrives with beautiful outfit choices, like a fashion stylist on a mission.

Option 1: Yellow frock with daisies 🌼

Option 2: Denim dungarees 👖

Option 3: Pink top + floral skirt 🌸

Kiki scans the options.

Her verdict:

“Nooooo!” 😞

Arjun tries his charm, “Look! Butterfly dress! Da-Da also loves butterflies!”

Kiki looks straight into his soul...

and walks off barefoot like a Bollywood heroine exiting a bad scene.

Arjun tries distraction...

“Shoes need a dress partner!”

Kiki:

“No. Only Shoessss.”

Anu tries logic...

“We can’t go out without clothes.”

Kiki:

“No. I go.”

(She literally said this. Bold.)

Pooja and Daadi just watch — enjoying the free entertainment.

Finally, Anu deploys The Ultimate Parent Trick:

“Kiki... YOU pick. Which dress with your shoes?”

This gives Kiki the power she craves.

She runs to the laundry basket (because of course) and picks:

Inside-out T-shirt

Pajama with a mysterious stain

And yes — the hairband necklace that was discarded last night

The orange shoes though?

Perfectly matched (in her world).

Daadi nods, “Bilkul baap pe gayi hai, wo Ranveer Singh aur ye Kiki Kumari.”

Final outfit: Pajama not matching anything 😓, T-shirt inside-out 😊, Hairband necklace 🧑‍🚀, Orange shoes shining like a superhero accessory ✨

Confidence = Unshakeable

Kiki looks herself in the mirror, with glittering eyes and claps like she just won India’s Next Top Model - Toddler Edition.

Arjun sighs,

Anu smiles,

Daadi blesses,
Pooja tries not to laugh out loud.
“Mall!!” — Kiki screams.
And the adventure officially begins.
Honestly? Those shoes may just be her superpower.

Little Brain Insights — Why Shoes Matter More Than Clothes?

- **Shoes = symbols of independence and movement**

Developmentally, around 18–24 months, toddlers experience a surge in gross-motor confidence. Putting on shoes of her choice here means “I can go explore!” — a tangible link between autonomy and adventure.

- **Toddlers genuinely prioritize comfort over coordination**

Their sensory feedback systems are still developing. If a fabric feels “scratchy” or tight, it can override all aesthetic logic. Choosing familiar, comfy shoes supports sensory comfort and predictability.

- **Self-dressing builds confidence and identity**

When toddlers participate in dressing, they strengthen fine-motor skills, body awareness, and emotional self-efficacy — all while learning “I can do things myself.”

- **When toddlers choose their shoes, they’re exercising autonomy**

Around 18–24 months, growing motor confidence and self-awareness drive a strong need to control movement and choices. Selecting their own shoes supports independence, body ownership, and the desire to explore — all essential milestones in early development.



Parenting Hacks — Fashion Without Fights

- Let them choose 1 item (like shoes!) → you choose the rest
- Keep “approved” mix-n-match clothes accessible
- Try dressing games: “Find the sleeve!” 
- Give 10 extra minutes - they move on toddler time
- Praise effort — confidence > coordination



Parenting Truth

One day, she'll stop insisting on orange shoes.

But today?

She walks with pride, joy...

and two bright shoes leading the way.

And honestly,

that's perfect too.

Chapter 4

Da-Da, Don't Move!

*Because toddler emotions arrive faster than
Da-Da's cab to office*

Da-Da, Don't Move!

Because toddler emotions arrive faster than Da-Da's cab to office



Another week begins.

Arjun is dressed for office, wearing a crisp white shirt that survived the morning food battle. He grabs his laptop bag... kisses Anu and Kiki buh bye, and takes one step toward the door...

And then...

Kiki.

Eyes narrow.

Radar activated. 🎯

She senses something terrible...

Da-Da is leaving for OFFISShhh.

Her tiny feet rapidly tap tap tap toward him.
Both arms rise up dramatically.

“Da-Daaaa... *godi!!*”

This isn’t a suggestion.
This is toddler law.

The Cling Mode: Activated

Arjun tries logic:

“Da-Da will come back in a couple of hours, Kiki.”

Kiki: NO. 

Logic denied.

He tries distraction:

“Look! Orange shoes!”

Kiki hugs tighter: Shoes useless.

He tries food:

“Banana?”

Kiki whispers the rules of engagement:

“Da-Da... *godi...* banana.”

Meaning:

-  Da-Da must pick up Kiki
-  While peeling banana
-  With zero movement
-  Until further notice

If he even tries to sit?

Sirens.

Meltdown.

Drama that could win awards. 🦖

Anu tries to help:

“Come to Mumma?”

Kiki turns away like,

“No offense, but my heart belongs to Da-Da.”

Daadi watches fondly, “*Chhod ke jaayega toh pakad ke rakhegi na.*”

(It’s sweet. And true.)

😓 **The Tricky Part**

Arjun’s cab arrival notification pops up.

Kiki hears the phone buzz and tightens her grip like a koala with superpowers.

Arjun whispers to Anu, “How is she this strong? She weighs like... 10 kilos!”

Anu, “10 kilos of pure emotion.”

❤️ **Then Comes the Tender Part**

After a few more cuddles, her tiny head rests gently on his shoulder...

She snuggles into his shirt, breathing slow, soft, safe.

Arjun’s rushing heart slows too.

Because in this moment...he is home.

Her little voice mumbles, “Da-Da stay...”

And he wishes he truly could.

He finally passes Kiki into Anu's arms (with the skill of diffusing a bomb)

and quickly heads for the door...

"Da-Daaaaa!"

echoes behind him.

He turns... blows a kiss...buh byeee

And she smiles through remaining tears. Holding the banana like a trophy of love.

Little Brain Insights — Why They Cling Hardest When You Leave?

- **Separation anxiety naturally peaks between 18–24 months**

At this age, the toddler's brain is developing object permanence — the understanding that people exist even when unseen. Until that concept fully matures, every goodbye feels like a possible disappearance.

- **Toddlers genuinely fear you may not return**

Their prefrontal cortex (which manages logic and reassurance) is still immature, while the amygdala (which triggers fear) is highly active. The emotional imbalance amplifies distress during separations.

- **Toddlers often cling hardest to the parent who's leaving**

When a toddler senses separation, their brain activates its threat-detection system. As object permanence is still developing, their brain can't fully trust that "gone" means "coming back. So, their brain protests, not because of preference, but to prevent a loss it doesn't yet know how to manage.

- **Clinging helps the brain calm down**

Touch and proximity trigger the release of **oxytocin** — a bonding hormone that lowers cortisol (stress levels) and helps the brain return to a calm, regulated state.

Parenting Hacks — Surviving Goodbye Moments

- Create a “bye-bye ritual” (hug → kiss → wave at window)
- Narrate your plan: “Da-Da office → Da-Da come back.”
- Keep it short — long goodbyes = harder for both
- Comfort object handover: toy, book, shoes 😊
- Tag-team with partner for distraction

Most importantly → Always return with joy 🟡

Parenting Truth

One day she'll run to school without looking back.

But today?

*She wants Da-Da so close
that even gravity can't pull her away.*

*And that's the kind of love
worth being late to office for.*

Chapter 5

Park Day: The Big Red Ball Chase

Because toddlers always choose their own game

Park Day: The Big Red Ball Chase

Because toddlers always choose their own game



It's a beautiful Sunday morning.

Sunshine. Light breeze.

And Sunday morning means, Kiki will go to the PARK!!!

Arjun and Anu arrive with high expectations and one legendary item:

● The Big Red Ball

You know, Kiki was named because she kicked nonstop in the womb – tiny feet practicing football even before birth.

“I’ll call her Kiki!” Arjun would proudly announce every time Anu felt a kick in her tummy.

Little did Anu know that Arjun was actually serious about naming her that.

It’s 11AM. Anu, Arjun, and Kiki are in the park after a fierce battle with Kiki still wearing her favorite Orange shoes...

But just before entering, something much more important catches her eye.

Across the road stands a cow, peacefully chewing grass.

Kiki freezes.

Her eyes widen.

“Moooo!” she announces with great authority, pointing excitedly.

The cow looks up briefly...

completely unimpressed.

Kiki waves enthusiastically as if greeting an old friend.

“Moo! Moo! Moo!”

Arjun nods seriously.

“Yes, Kiki. That is indeed a moo.”

Anu smiles.

For the next thirty seconds, nothing else in the universe matters.

Not the park.

Not the swings.

Not the slides.

Just Moo.

Eventually, Moo loses the audience and wanders away.

Kiki watches carefully... making sure the cow leaves safely.

Only then does she turn back to the real reason they came here.

The park.

Arjun places the ball gently on the grass and declares, “Kick it, Kiki!”

Kiki looks at the ball. Her eyes sparkle.

She picks it up. Holds it tight.

And RUNS.

Fast.

Not a single kick. Not even by accident.

Just a toddler, sprinting like she stole it.

Arjun chases behind her, “Kiki! Let’s kick the ball... don’t run!”

Anu tries to track steps on her smartwatch while catching her breath.

Soon, other toddlers join the chase.

Red ball = treasure.

Park = racetrack.

Parents = confused cheerleaders.

Anu and Arjun feel like they signed up for a marathon they did not prepare for.

After 10 laps

(Arjun insists it was 50)

the ball slips...

Kiki rushes toward it, tries to stop dramatically—

...and slips on the grass, landing on her tiny bottom.

For one second there's silence.

Then she bursts into giggles.

Arjun collapses beside her — far more dramatically than necessary.

Anu finally gives up and drops onto the grass too, pushing her spectacles back up after the chase.

And there they are.

One tiny human laughing at absolutely nothing.

Two exhausted parents trying to catch their breath.

The red ball resting quietly between them.

Nobody planned this moment.

But somehow...

it ends up being the best part of the day.

Little Brain Insights – Why Toddlers Don’t Follow the Plan?

- **Play is self-led exploration, not rule-following**

According to developmental psychologists like Piaget and Vygotsky, toddlers learn best through autonomous play. It’s how they test cause and effect, build creativity, and make sense of the world – not by following adult-designed rules.

- **Running is a milestone in motor-skill development**

Between 16-24 months, children refine balance, coordination, and leg strength. Every sprint, stumble, and recovery trains their brain’s motor cortex and builds body confidence.

- **New environments trigger curiosity, not compliance**

When toddlers enter new spaces (like a park), their dopamine system lights up. The brain prioritizes exploration over instruction – because novelty fuels learning far more effectively than repetition.

- **Toddlers choose excitement over logic**

Their prefrontal cortex (decision-making and impulse control) is still developing, while their limbic system (emotion and reward) runs the show. What looks “illogical” is actually instinct-driven discovery.

- **They live entirely in the moment – fearlessly**

Toddlers haven’t developed the adult tendency to overthink or anticipate judgement. Their attention is pure presence, and their joy is immediate.

Parenting Hacks — Winning Park Days

- Bring a toy they choose — but expect surprises
- Dress for running (parents too 😊)
- Set safety boundaries (“Grass only!”)
- Cheer effort, not outcomes
- Let them lead the game
- Keep snacks + water ready (ALWAYS)

And yes... carry a backup plan for tired parents 🤖

Parenting Truth

We think toddlers need instructions.

But they actually need space.

To run.

To laugh.

To decide their own next move.

One day she'll kick that ball.

But today?

She's kicking happiness into the world.

Chapter 6

The Comedy of Wiggles

Because diaper changing should be an Olympic sport

The Comedy of Wiggles

Because diaper changing should be an Olympic sport



A regular evening in the Setia home.
Sunlight peeks in, birds are chirping,
and Arjun foolishly believes:

“Today’s diaper change will be quick.”

He gently places Kiki on the changing mat, speaking like a
calm parenting guru,

“Just 10 seconds, Kiki.”

Oh Arjun.

He has forgotten yesterday.

And every day before it.

The Naked Escape Artist

The moment the diaper comes off...

WIGGLE MODE ON ⚡

She flips left.

Rolls right.

Slides down like butter on a hot paratha.

Arjun tries positivity, “Stayyyy... almost done!”

Kiki: 😏

More wiggles.

The used diaper gets kicked across the room —

Arjun dodges like a goalkeeper.

The wipe box flies.

The changing mat becomes a slide.

The Failed Distraction Attempt

Arjun points at the window:

“Look! Pigeon! Tweet-tweet!”

Kiki freezes.

Smiles.

Pretends to cooperate...

AND THEN

turbo wiggles activate 🚀⚡

Tag Team Parenting

Anu arrives like backup in a wrestling ring.

She grabs the top half.
Arjun holds the bottom half...
with the face of a man questioning his life choices.
Suddenly...

Kiki performs her signature move:

The Baby Bridge Pose 

Arjun gasps, “Is she training for the circus?!”

Anu whispers, “No, I think the Olympics....”

The Final Victory

After 7 intense minutes,
3 near-escapes,
countless giggles...

 Fresh diaper 

 Anu Arjun exhausted 

 Kiki clapping proudly 

Anu wipes rash cream off her t-shirt.
Arjun collapses on the floor, laughing.

Because somehow, this tiny human turns chaos into comedy
and love — every single day.

Little Brain Insights — Why the Wiggles Happen?

- **Toddlers are biologically wired to move - not stay still**

At 18–24 months, the brain’s motor cortex and cerebellum are in rapid development. Movement helps strengthen neural pathways for balance, coordination, and spatial awareness. Stillness feels unnatural because their bodies are literally programmed to practice motion.

- **Diaper changes interrupt exploration — their favorite “job”**

From a developmental view, toddlers are in the sensorimotor stage (Piaget). Any pause in play feels like losing control over their discoveries — hence the sudden protests mid-wipe.

- **Their bodies are still mastering balance and coordination**

Core muscles, vestibular senses (balance), and proprioception (body position awareness) are still syncing. Rolling, kicking, and twisting during diaper time are natural calibration exercises.

- **Giggles = sensory excitement overload**

Laughter often signals overstimulation, not just amusement. Tactile sensations, temperature shifts, and attention from parents all flood the nervous system — producing that contagious, squealy joy.

Parenting Hacks – Diaper Time Made Easier

- Keep a special toy only for diaper time
- Sing + narrate steps (“Wipe-wipe → new diaper!”)
- Offer choices: “Lion diaper or teddy diaper?”
- Rotate distraction tricks (mirror, rattle, song)
- Quick wrist hold for safe rolling control
- Praise cooperation: “Wow, you helped!”

Pro tip: Set everything before opening diaper 😊

Parenting Truth

One day she'll run to the bathroom by herself...

But today?

*She wiggles, rolls, fights, and laughs –
while Da-Da and Mumma chase every move.*

*And honestly,
you'll miss this circus someday.*

Chapter 7

Everything Is a Toy (Except Toys)

*Because in a toddler's world, curiosity doesn't need
batteries – only imagination*

Everything Is a Toy (Except Toys)

Because in a toddler's world, curiosity doesn't
need batteries - only imagination



The sun wasn't fully awake yet, but Kiki was.

Arjun slid open the balcony door so she could watch the pigeons. Fresh air. Morning calm. A rare peace... for exactly four seconds.

Because within those four seconds, Kiki located her first target — the flower pot.

With the precision of a scientist, she dipped her tiny fist into the soil.

Then another.

Then she looked up, eyes shining with pride, and announced:

“Mitti!”

Arjun nearly choked on his tea.

“Maa! Dekho—she’s eating mitti!”

Daadi, who was already in the balcony reading newspaper, peeked over, unfazed.

“Hmmm... immunity strong hoti hai,” she said, clearly amused.

Arjun sprinted inside, Kiki giggling on his shoulder, leaving behind a Hansel-and-Gretel trail of muddy footprints across the living room.

And just like that, the day’s first adventure was complete.

Unfortunately for the parents...

it was only the beginning.

Because when you live with a toddler, one tiny incident is never the full story.

It’s just Episode One.



The Safari Continues — Zone by Zone



Destination 1: The Shoe Rack

Barely an hour had passed since the Mitti Incident...

...and Kiki’s next adventure had already begun.

Kiki grabbed a chappal like it was a trophy and waved it around.

“Mummaaa, smell!”

Anu froze in horror.

“Noooo! We don’t smell shoes, Kiki!”

(Kiki, of course, took that as an invitation to sniff harder.)

Destination 2: Switchboards & Tech Temptations

Kiki spotted a button.

“*Light! Off! On! Off! On!*”

Anu dashed in like a superhero, swiftly covering every switch.

“*Kiki, yeh wala nahi. It’s dangerous!*”

Which, naturally, made it ten times more exciting.

Destination 3: The Bathroom Heist

The sound of a bucket filling is music to a toddler’s ears.

Before Anu could shout,

Kiki had already made a grand entrance — splashing, squealing, and summoning a miniature tsunami.

Daadi chuckled: “*Humare time pe toh bachche nal ke paas se uthte hi nahi the.*”

Anu, drenched and defeated: “*Aapke time pe bachhe shareef hote the...*”

Kiki, meanwhile, continued splashing happily — completely unaware that she had just turned the bathroom into her personal water park.

Because to a toddler, it wasn’t a mess.

It was simply the best game ever invented.

Little Brain Insights — Why Everything Becomes a Toy?

- **Curiosity is their learning engine**

At 18–24 months, a toddler's brain forms over a million new neural connections per second. Touching, tasting, and tossing are how they map textures, weights, and cause-and-effect relationships.

- **“No fear” mode is actually neurological**

The brain's amygdala, which detects danger, develops slower than their motor skills, so they act before assessing risk. Exploration comes first; caution arrives later.

- **They love dramatic parent reactions**

Mirror neurons make them acutely aware of adult emotions. A strong “NO!” feels like an exciting social signal — not a warning.

- **Touch equals understanding**

The somatosensory cortex (responsible for touch processing) is in overdrive during this age. Everything they grab — shoes, switches, even soil — is sensory data collection.

Parenting Hacks — Surviving the Curious Phase

- Turn curiosity into a game — “Let’s explore this instead!” works far better than a firm “No.”
- Create safe “yes zones” with soft items and low shelves
- Model curiosity: show how to touch gently or explore safely
- Keep explanations short and calm - consistency beats volume
- Celebrate safe exploration instead of punishing curiosity

Parenting Truth

This phase won’t last forever.

One day, she will walk past the shoe rack without caring.

She’ll leave stuff where it belongs.

She’ll know which buttons not to press.

But today?

Today, these tiny adventures are her way of learning.

And your way of collecting stories you’ll laugh about later.

Chapter 8

The ‘Naani Morni’ National Anthem

Because toddlers believe one song can save the universe

The “Naani Morni” National Anthem

Because toddlers believe one song can save the universe



Every toddler has a favorite song.
But Kiki's love for music is... exclusive.

It began like any normal day.

Breakfast time.

Anu casually asks Alexa to play nursery rhymes.

Song #1: “Naani Teri Morni Ko Mor Le Gaye.”

Huge. Hit. Instantly.

Little did they know...

They had awakened a musical dictator.

Kiki, The DJ of Doom

Hours later...

“Aaaalaxaaa... Naaaaani Mooonni!”

Her voice trembling with emotion — like she’s calling upon a national pride moment.

Alexa, bless her confused circuit board:

“Playing: Why This Kolaveri Di.”

Wrong move.

Very wrong move.

Kiki’s face tightens.

Tiny foot stomps.

“NAAAAANI MOOOONIII!!!”

Arjun leaps up like a soldier, “Alexa! Play Naani Teri Morni!”

Order restored 

Peace treaty signed 

The Schedule of the Anthem

Breakfast? ✓

Bath time? ✓

Car ride? ✓

Mall? ✓

Grand escape from naps? ✓✓✓

Even at 2:42 AM...

Kiki, in her sleep, whispers:

“Naani Moorniiii...”

Arjun dreamt of giant peacocks chasing him.

Parents vs Song, Episode 103

By the next evening, “Naani Teri Morni” had officially become the national anthem of the house.

Alexa had played it so many times that even she sounded tired..

That’s when, Anu whispers to Arjun:

“Can we listen to ANY other song? I’ll even take your random Punjabi songs...”

But then...

Kiki looks up with those hopeful puppy eyes:

“Aeelkaa... Nani Moni peesss...”

Shockingly cute.

Impossible to deny.

Music plays.

She smiles.

She sways.

Then she rests her head on Da-Da’s chest,
humming along softly...

And suddenly,
this noise becomes nostalgia.
This chaos becomes love.
This moment becomes forever.

Little Brain Insights — Why One Song Rules Them All?

- **Repetition builds neural pathways**

According to studies on early childhood cognition, repetition strengthens synaptic connections that help toddlers anticipate patterns – making them feel safe and in control in a world full of surprises.

- **Predictability calms nervous system**

Familiar sounds trigger the parasympathetic response – lowering stress hormones and helping emotional regulation.

- **Music enhances language development**

Songs with rhythm and rhyme improve phonological awareness and speech clarity by engaging both brain hemispheres.

- **Repetition improves memory retention**

Hearing the same lyrics again and again boosts working memory, sequencing skills, and recall speed, laying groundwork for future learning.

- **Shared music deepens attachment**

Singing or dancing together releases oxytocin – the “bonding hormone” – strengthening emotional connection between parent and child.

🎵 Parenting Hacks — Surviving Musical Obsession

- Use playlists — mix the favorite track between others
- Sing along — toddlers love shared joy
- Add movement — claps, sways, or simple dance steps
- Transition trick — same song before nap or bath = routine cue
- Set Alexa limits (or... hide Alexa 😊)

❤️ Parenting Truth

You'll get tired of that one tune.

You'll beg for silence.

You'll wonder if "Naani Teri Morni" will play at your own retirement party someday.

But years from now —

when the house is quiet,

and your baby is grown —

one stray note of that song

will take you right back

to this messy, musical, magical age.

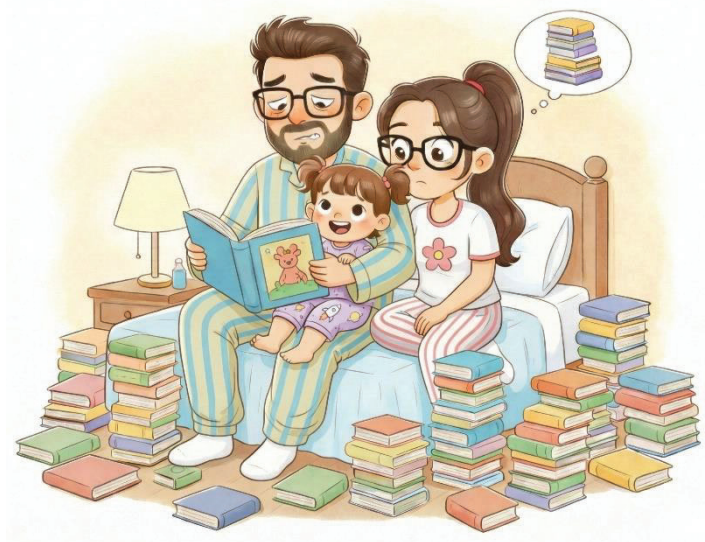
Chapter 9

Bas Last Book! The Midnight Book Marathon

*Because toddlers believe bedtime means storytime...
unlimited edition*

Bas Last Book! The Midnight Book Marathon

Because toddlers believe bedtime means storytime... unlimited edition



Saturday night.

Netflix cued. Popcorn ready.

Anu and Arjun finally entering “weekend mode.”

Kiki was already asleep.

Or at least... they thought she was.

Then...

A tiny whisper slices the silence:

“Bok... bok!”

The Book Boss has awakened. 📖👑

Kiki pops up like a jack-in-the-box, pointing at the bookshelf with military authority.

Arjun and Anu look at each other.
Then at the bookshelf.
Then at the popcorn.
Then at their cancelled weekend plans.

Anu tries to make her fall asleep:
“Kiki it’s night time.. sleep sleep.”

Arjun attempts logic:
“Baby... only one book.”

Kiki, offended:

“Bokssss!”

Plural.

Non-negotiable.

The Reading Relay Begins

Book #1 - Giraffes Can’t Dance

Kiki dances like a tipsy baby giraffe.

Arjun instantly regrets showing the moves.

Book #2 - Goodnight Moon

The most useless title ever because Kiki refuses goodnight.

Book #3 - The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Kiki tries feeding the caterpillar actual banana.

(Sorry, book.)

Book #4 - My First Body Book

She discovers Papa’s belly button.

And pokes it like a button that launches rockets.

The Parents Breakdown

By Book #12...

Anu & Arjun look like tired kabaddi players after a hard day of practice.

The Sweetest Surrender

Halfway through Book #17...

Her voice slows...

Eyes droop...

Tiny head rests on Anu's shoulder...

She falls asleep mid-story, clutching a book upside-down.

Anu and Arjun look at each other.

Both exhausted.

Both too tired to even celebrate that bedtime has finally happened.

The remote is right there.

The snacks are ready.

But somehow...

Netflix can wait.

The popcorn can go soft.

Watching her breathe feels like the only show they need tonight.

Because some nights...

Love doesn't look like rest.

It looks like showing up again with a story book.

Little Brain Insights — Why Books Feel Like Magic?

- **Repetition = Language Growth**

Hearing the same story over and over strengthens neural circuits for vocabulary, sequencing, and comprehension. Predictable patterns help toddlers anticipate words — a key step in early language development.

- **Stories = Emotional Safety Blanket**

Familiar storylines provide a sense of structure and predictability. As per experts, this helps lower cortisol levels and reinforces emotional security before sleep.

- **Bedtime = Craving Connection**

As melatonin rises, toddlers instinctively seek closeness. Reading together releases oxytocin — the bonding hormone — turning bedtime into emotional reassurance.

- **Books Help Process the Day**

Stories mirror real-life emotions and experiences, helping toddlers label feelings, understand routines, and make sense of new events in their world.

- **Your Voice Is the Ultimate Lullaby**

A parent's voice activates the limbic system (the brain's emotional center), calming the nervous system and signaling safety, better than any song or white noise machine ever could.

Parenting Hacks — For Late-Night Readers

- Set a clear book limit (2–3 works well)
- Whisper reading → sleepy vibes
- Let them hold a book for comfort
- Create a “last page ritual” (“Good night book... good night Kiki...”)
- Celebrate yawns like medals 🏅

Pro tip: Keep super short books at the top of the pile 😊

Parent Truth

One day she'll stay up late texting friends instead of asking for “bok.”

One day your stories won't be needed to fall asleep.

But tonight?

You are her favorite book.

And she wants to read you... again.

Chapter 10

The **5AM** Wake-up Party: When Sleep Schedules Go Rogue

*Because toddlers believe dawn is when
all the fun people wake up*

The 5 AM Wake-up Party: When Sleep Schedules Go Rogue

Because toddlers believe dawn is when all the fun people wake up



By the end of her eighteenth month, Kiki had entered a new, an even more powerful phase: the early morning party starter.

And on this particular day, at exactly 5:00 AM, she decided to host a full-blown concert.

The 5 AM Opening Ceremony

Chandigarh was asleep.

Pigeons asleep.

Street dogs asleep.

The entire universe asleep.

Except one tiny human.

Kiki shot up like a spring-loaded toy...
eyes wide, hair wild, energy at 300%.

She looked around...

found her target...

and screamed her first command of the day:

“Dadaaaa... NAAANI MORNI!”

Arjun, half-dead and half-dreaming, whispered,

“Beta... nani bhi so rahi hai...”

But Kiki was already bouncing like a nightclub DJ warming up the crowd.

Anu pulled a pillow over her face.

She had once wished Kiki would “wake up early like successful people.”

Life has a sense of humor.



Daadi Joins the Madness

At 5:07 AM,

Daadi entered like she'd been waiting her whole life for this moment.

She had been awake since 4:30 AM —

Not because of discipline.

Not because of yoga.

Just because at a certain age, sleep quietly resigns from the job.

She beamed at her granddaughter.

“Aao Kiki, hum morni sunte hain!”

Before anyone could protest, she played the song at full volume, proudly holding the phone like a torch in the Olympics.

Arjun groaned, “Maa... volume kam karo...”

Daadi, “*Bachche ko sikhne do. Music se dimag tez hota hai.*”

Even Alexa would’ve rolled her eyes.

The house was fully awake.

Two hours ahead of schedule.

Against everyone’s will... except Kiki’s.

And just like that, sleep was officially cancelled.

Music played and Kiki danced in the middle of it all — clapping, swaying, completely convinced that 5:00 AM was the perfect time to celebrate life.

Arjun sat on the edge of the bed, defeated but smiling.

Anu watched through half-open eyes, torn between exhaustion and disbelief.

Daadi hummed along proudly.

And somewhere between the lyrics of *Naani Teri Morni* and the first light of morning, they all realized something:

This wasn’t a sleep problem.

This was a phase.

A loud, early, slightly unhinged phase.

Little Brain Insights — Why Toddlers Wake Up Early?

- **Brain development spurts**

During rapid growth phases—especially language, mobility, and emotional development—the brain becomes more active during sleep. This heightened neural activity often leads to early or fragmented wake-ups.

- **Short sleep cycles**

Toddlers cycle through lighter stages of sleep more frequently than adults. Because they spend less time in deep sleep, they wake up easily between cycles.

- **Early hunger cues**

Toddlers have small stomachs and fast metabolisms. Their blood sugar drops sooner, so early morning hunger can trigger wake-ups like a natural internal alarm clock.

- **Sensory excitement & memory activation**

Toddlers process sensory memories (like songs, outings, new words) during sleep. Even recalling a fun rhyme or activity can stimulate early waking because their brain wants to “practice.”

Parenting Hacks for Unplanned 5 AM Wake-Ups

- Stick to a calm, predictable evening routine
- Keep the room darker in the early mornings
- Avoid high-energy play at night
- Offer quick comfort (hug, soft voice) when they wake
- Shift to low-energy activities instead of stimulation
- Keep a small “early morning basket”: books, soft toys, picture cards

Tools that help:

- White noise / fan
- Portable blackout curtains
- Pre-prepped milk or snack
- Soft morning playlist

Parenting Truth

One day, she'll sleep in.

One day, she'll wake up on her own.

One day, these concerts will end.

But today?

*These chaotic, musical, sleepy mornings
are the memories that fill your heart –
long after the fatigue fades.*

Chapter 11

The Talking Tom Era

*Because toddlers don't repeat words...
they weaponize them*

The Talking Tom Era

Because toddlers don't repeat words...
they weaponize them



Kiki had always been expressive, but one fine morning, she unlocked a brand-new superpower.

Not walking.

Not counting.

Not singing.

She entered the Talking Tom Era...

the phase where every word spoken in the Setia household came back with more drama, more enthusiasm, and absolutely zero warning.

It began innocently.

Anu was setting her drawer.

Arjun was pretending to help.

Kiki was quietly staring like a tiny detective.

Anu lifted stuff from the drawer and yelled, “*Arjun, yeh bilkul ulta pulta ho rakha hai.*”

Kiki froze.

Eyes widened.

Mouth opened in slow motion.

Then she yelled—

“OOOTA! POOOTA!”

With both hands thrown up like she was announcing a world cup victory.

Arjun blinked.

Anu burst out laughing.

Kiki, thrilled by the audience reaction, repeated it—

“OOOOTA! POOOOOOOTA!”

and started flipping things around the room to match her chant.

A panda.

A pillow.

Arjun’s iphone.

Arjun, “*Mujhe lagta hai yeh AI model ban rahi hai.*”

A little later, Daadi tried to stop Kiki from running near the bathroom.

“*Kiki, thehar ja zara!*”

And just like that, Kiki transformed into Mini-Daadi.

Tiny hand in the air. Eyebrows raised. Voice full authority -
“TEHAAAAR JAAA!”

Even the tone was identical.

Anu whispered to Arjun,
“*Daadi ki copy-cat version aa gayi hai.*”

Daadi, proud as ever, said,
“*Dekha? Bilkul mere jaise bolti hai.*”

Arjun sighed, “*Bas, ab ghar mein do-do Daadi.*”

In the evening, Anu was feeling playful and tried the classic tongue-twister with Arjun:

“*Kaccha papad, pakka papad...*”

Before she could finish, Kiki puffed her little cheeks and announced:

“PACCHA PACHA PAPAAAAD!”

She wasn’t even close, but she said it with such confidence, it deserved applause. Then she paraded around the living room chanting it like a political slogan:

“PACHA PAPAAAAD! PACHA PAPAAAAD!”

Pooja peeked in, confused, “*Kya ho raha hai, didi?*”

Anu, “*Papad parade.*”

A little while later, Arjun, hopeful and exhausted, tried the world's oldest trick during diaper time.

“Kiki... statue!”

She froze.

Perfectly still.

A miracle.

Arjun began fastening the diaper with the speed of a trained ninja.

Suddenly..

very softly, almost angelically...

Kiki whispered:

“Stachooooo...”

And BURST into giggles, rolling right off the mat like a baby seal on a waterslide.

Arjun covered his face.

“I give up. Talking Tom ko uninstall kaise karte hain?”

By evening, the echoing hadn't slowed down.

Kiki repeated everything — instructions, reactions, random phrases — each one with her own twist, her own drama, her own sparkle.

Little Brain Insights — Why Toddlers Repeat EVERYTHING?

- **Echolalia strengthens neural circuits for speech**

Toddlers repeat words because it activates the brain's language centers (Broca's & Wernicke's areas), helping build pathways for pronunciation, rhythm, and sentence structure.

- **Copying is a sign of secure attachment**

Children imitate the adults they feel safe with. Neuroscience calls this social referencing — mimicry is their way of bonding and staying connected.

- **Repetition increases confidence & mastery**

Repeating phrases gives toddlers a sense of control over sounds. Each successful attempt reinforces the brain's reward system, boosting confidence to speak more.

- **Echoing helps them understand social cues**

When they repeat your words and observe your reaction, they're studying cause-and-effect, emotion reading, and conversational timing — early social communication skills.

- **Repetition strengthens memory encoding**

Saying the same word again and again shifts it from short-term into long-term memory. This is how toddlers rapidly expand vocabulary between 18–24 months.



Parenting Hacks – Making the Echo Phase Fun

- Respond with the correct version softly
- Add one new word to expand sentences
- Use repetition games – whisper, rhyme, freeze
- Don't react dramatically (it fuels mischief 😏)
- Praise attempts ("Good try! Again?")
- Be patient – this phase skyrockets language abilities



Parenting Truth

One day she'll talk fluently, confidently, clearly.

But today... these little echoes are the soundtrack of your home.

A soundtrack you know you'll miss someday.

Chapter 12

Authorized Personnel Only: When Toddlers Assign Jobs

*Because toddlers run the house like a CEO with very
specific departments*

Authorized Personnel Only: When Toddlers Assign Jobs

Because toddlers run the house like a CEO with
very specific departments



Every house has rules.

Every toddler has... preferences.

But Kiki?

She has departments, job roles, and strict assignments — like
a tiny HR manager who hires only one candidate per task.

And once a job is assigned...

No one else is allowed to apply.

The Exclusive Kiki Job Assignments

Da-da: The Water Minister

It could be midnight.

It could be 42°C outside.

It could be that Arjun's hands are literally full.

Doesn't matter.

Because in Kiki's world, water must only be served by Da-da.

If Anu tries to give water:

Kiki: "DA-DAAA!"

As if Mumma is offering poison and Da-da is the Royal Hydration Officer.

Arjun: holding laptop → holding water

Arjun: carrying groceries → holding water

Arjun: in the bathroom → "DA-DA WATERRRR!"

The job must be done.

Mumma: The Official Storyteller

Morning books.

Night books.

Side books.

Upside-down books.

But only Mumma.

Always Mumma.

Anu tries to pass the book to Arjun once:

Kiki snatches it back dramatically -

like Mumma holds a doctorate in Storytelling and Papa never cleared 1st grade.

Activities and Art Work: Mumma Only!

Painting? Mumma.

Stickers? Mumma.

Coloring? Mumma.

One time Arjun tried to help her stick a star on a page.

She politely took his hand...

removed it... and handed the sticker to Anu instead.

Arjun whispered, "I'm being replaced..."

Anu shrugged, "Welcome to my world."

Pooja: The Chief Fun Officer

If it's energy-based, messy, fast, or potentially dangerous?

"Poooojaa!"

Pooja is the unofficial Chief Fun Officer.

Ball time? Pooja.

Chasing games? Pooja.

Cushion-jumping? Definitely Pooja.

One day Arjun tried to join.

Kiki looked at him like:

Sir, stick to your department.

Car Toy – Da-Da's Permanent Department

The tiny red car is Da-da's department.

No substitutes accepted.

Anu tries to push it:

Kiki physically turns it around → "DA-DA RACE!"

Meanwhile Arjun hasn't driven his real car in days but he has driven the toy car around the entire house.

The Daadi Medicine Bureau

Nobody else is allowed.

Nobody else is trusted.

Kiki could be running away from the entire family during medicine time, but the moment Daadi walks in with that medicine box...

she freezes.

Daadi: “*Aao Kiki, bas ek dropper.*”

Kiki, dramatic but obedient: “*Ekkkkkk...*”

She makes the funniest sour face, shivers like she tasted electricity, but accepts it.

Daadi triumphantly announces,
“*Dekha? Mera naam chalega yahan.*”

Daadi = Medicine Mafia Boss.

Wardrobe & Styling Department — Mumma Only

Clothes are strictly Mumma's department.

Not Da-da.

Not Daadi.

Not even the person who actually bought the clothes.

Only Mumma.

Arjun once tried to help.

He proudly picked a T-shirt and shorts and said,
“Come Kiki, Da-da will get you ready.”

Kiki looked at the clothes...

looked at Arjun...

...and immediately walked away.

Straight to Mumma.

“Mummmaaa... kapppddeeee.”

Like she had just discovered a serious quality control issue.

Arjun’s role in the wardrobe department is now limited to watching the process from a safe distance.

The Funniest Part?

These “assignments” don’t change.

At all.

Ever.

You could offer bribes, beg, dance, or do a full puppet show... but if Kiki has decided, then that rule is locked in like a government-issued license.

No negotiations. No amendments. No democracy.

Little Brain Insights — Why Toddlers Have ‘Specific Person’ Preferences?

• **Predictability = Nervous System Safety**

Toddlers’ brains crave patterns. When the same parent handles the same task (water, books, bedtime), their nervous system feels calmer and more secure. Stable routines reduce stress hormones and increase cooperation.

• **Attachment Drives Preference**

Around this age, toddlers rely heavily on attachment cues. They choose the person who currently feels:

- most soothing (for comfort tasks)
- most exciting (for play tasks)
- most patient (for tricky tasks)

It’s their biology guiding them toward emotional safety.

• **Control Builds Autonomy**

Assigning roles lets toddlers feel a sense of agency in a world where adults run everything. Neuroscience shows that when toddlers influence actions, their prefrontal cortex lights up — boosting confidence and self-regulation.

• **Early Role Categorization**

Toddlers are forming the building blocks of social understanding. Their brain sorts people as:

Da-Da: The Water Minister

Mumma: The Official Storyteller

Activities and Artwork: Mumma Only!

Pooja: The Chief Fun Officer

Car Toy: Da-Da's Permanent Department

The Daadi Medicine Bureau

This cognitive organizing helps them predict outcomes — a major developmental milestone.

- **Comfort-Based Neural Mapping**

Toddlers repeat what feels emotionally rewarding. They keep choosing the parent whose voice, touch, tone, or response brings comfort during that specific activity. It's not bias — it's how the brain wires emotional security.



Parenting Hacks — Handling the “Only Mumma / Only Da-da” Phase

- Offer gentle alternatives: “Da-da is busy, but Mumma can help.”
- Don’t take preferences personally, they’re developmental, not emotional rejection.
- Share roles gradually: allow the preferred person to start the activity, then pass it.
- Celebrate small wins: “Yay! You took water from Mumma today!”
- Use humor to diffuse frustration: “Da-da will apply for water job again tomorrow!”
- Keep routines stable; consistency reduces clingy preferences.



Parenting Truth

One day, she won’t need specific hands for specific tasks.

She’ll drink water herself.

Read alone.

Give medicine a fight.

Play ball with anyone.

But right now?

These tiny preferences are her way of saying:

“You are my safe place for this thing.”

And that?

That is the sweetest honor in the world.

Chapter 13

Toddlers Vs Technology

Because in a toddler's world, what's yours... is also theirs

Toddlers Vs Technology

Because in a toddler's world, what's yours... is also theirs



Kiki didn't just use technology.

She adopted it.

Loved it.

Owned it.

Slowly... silently... sweetly...

every gadget in the Setia home realized something important:
their new boss had arrived.

Kiki Setia – 20 months old, 2.5 feet tall,
Official Button-Presser, Switch-Toggler, and Supreme Ruler
of All Things Beeping.

The Great Gadget Heist Begins!!!

Arjun's iPhone – The Crown Jewel

One morning, Arjun reached for his iPhone.

It wasn't on the bedside table.

Not on the sofa.

Not even in the shoe rack (its usual kidnapping location).

It was with Kiki.

Held proudly.

Upside down.

Selfie camera open.

She was singing “AU REVOIRRR!” (*the French song Arjun had accidentally played yesterday*) into it like a French rockstar at a toddler concert.

“Baby, that's Da-da's phone.,” Arjun whispered softly.

Kiki stared back with CEO-level authority and declared,
“KIKI PHONE!”

Case closed. Board meeting adjourned.

She proceeded to take 127 photos of...
her forehead and occasional nostrils.

Anu's Laptop – The Work-from-Home Victim

Anu opened her laptop to work while Kiki was still around.

Big mistake.

Huge.

The screen looked like someone had:

- typed AA BB CC DD across 32 tabs
- emailed half-typed alphabets to three random contacts

- changed the wallpaper to a zoomed-in picture of Kiki's own ear

- turned on a shortcut even Microsoft has no documentation for

And the best part?

Kiki shouted each key she pressed:

"BBBBBB!"

"CCCCCC!"

"MUMMA SEEEEE!"

Anu sighed.

Her daughter had become her unofficial, unpaid, and extremely loud co-worker.

Anu's iPad + iPencil = Modern Art Destruction

The moment Anu uncapped the iPencil, Kiki's eyes sparkled.

"COLORRR?"

It wasn't a question.

It was a royal demand.

And the iPad surrendered instantly.

In 10 seconds, the screen displayed:

- loops

- angry circles

- purple tornadoes

- strange scribbles that looked like the stock market crashing

- one accidental swipe attempt that almost bought a ₹7,900 add-on app

Kiki held up the iPad proudly:

“colorrrrrrr!”

Anu clapped like an art critic who had lost all hope.

Arjun’s AirPods – The Mechanical Surgery

Arjun made the mistake of leaving his AirPods case open.

Fatal error.

Kiki spotted them.

Her expression became serious.

Professional.

Focused.

She pulled one AirPods out like a tiny mechanic removing an engine bolt.

“NO NO KIKI—”

Too late.

She inspected it.

Twirled it.

Shook it.

Tapped it.

Tried inserting it into Bella’s ear (Kiki’s crochet doll).

Then her belly button.

Then the sofa corner.

Finally, she announced:

“AIRPODDDDDD!”

(Toy)

Arjun placed a hand on his heart.

His soul left his body temporarily.

The Living Room Tech Headquarters

Within 15 minutes, the home looked like a modern tech war zone:

Arjun's iPhone held hostage

Anu's laptop restructured into a new system of chaos

Anu's iPad painted like a discount Picasso

Arjun's AirPods disassembled for "research"

TV remote hidden behind a cushion

Alexa bullied into playing "Naani Morni" on loop

Anu sighed, "Our house looks like a Cyber Crime scene."

Arjun nodded, "But she looks so happy..."

Kiki stood proudly on the sofa, holding Arjun's iPhone high above her head like Simba from Lion King, shouting:

"AU REVOIRRR!!!!"

Toddlers.

Chaos.

But somehow...

pure joy.

Little Brain Insights — Why Toddlers Love Tech?

- **Screens stimulate the reward system**

Bright colors, movement, and sounds activate the brain's dopamine pathways — the same circuits used for curiosity, exploration, and motivation.

- **Imitation is their primary learning style**

The toddler brain uses mirror neurons to copy behaviors of the adults they bond with most. If Da-da and Mumma use gadgets, the brain registers: “This must be important — I must try it too.”

- **Tech supports cause-and-effect learning**

Swipe → object moves

Tap → sound happens

This strengthens early cognitive pathways for problem-solving, prediction, and understanding consequences.

- **Tools increase their sense of autonomy**

Using a phone or laptop makes toddlers feel powerful and competent — matching the developmental need for independence at this age.

- **Curiosity is stronger than rules**

The toddler prefrontal cortex (logic + self-control) is still immature. Their brain prioritizes exploration, novelty, and sensory learning over compliance.

Parenting Hacks — Tech Edition

- Give them an old keyboard/remote (battery removed!)
- Keep expensive tech out of reach unless supervised
- Narrate your actions: “Mumma typing. Kiki coloring.”
- Keep AirPods in a witness protection program

Parenting Truth

One day she'll have her own gadgets, passwords, playlists, and emails.

She'll know more shortcuts than you ever will.

She'll type faster than you.

Swipe smarter than you.

Operate everything effortlessly.

But today?

She just wants to be like you.

To copy you.

To explore your world.

To belong.

To participate.

To connect.

Chapter 14

The Cardboard Kingdom

*Because in a toddler's world, imagination has no user
manual*

The Cardboard Kingdom

Because in a toddler's world,
imagination has no user manual



Some kids are obsessed with toys.

Some love gadgets.

Some food.

Kiki?

Kiki loves boxes.

Cardboard boxes.

Delivery boxes.

Shoe boxes..

Even the cardboard divider from inside Mumma's Amazon parcel.

If it folds, flaps, opens, shuts, slides, or crinkles —
it is immediately declared:

“MINEEEE!”

Arjun once joked, “We should just gift-wrap a cardboard box for her birthday.”

Anu didn’t laugh.

She knew Kiki would actually love it.



The Day the “Gaadi” Was Born

It began with a delivery box Anu left near the sofa.

Before he could blink, Kiki climbed inside it, sat like a queen, pointed ahead and yelled:

“GAADIII!! CHALO!!”

No ignition.

No wheels.

No safety standards.

Just pure toddler horsepower.

Then she stood up, grabbed the sides, and started pushing the box across the living room with dramatic grunts:

“Huuuhh! Huuuhh!”

She pushed it for one whole hour, stopping only to announce:

“Mumma gaadi! Da-Da gaadi! Daadi gaadi!”

as if everyone had booked a ride on her cardboard Uber.

Arjun followed her like a tired traffic cop.

Kiki followed her dreams — non-stop.

The H&M Packaging That Became a Staircase

One afternoon, a thin grey H&M parcel arrived.

Arjun tossed it casually on the bed. Big mistake.

Kiki dragged it down, placed it on the floor like a royal mat and declared:

“UP-ERR!! NICHEEE!!”

Up.

Down.

Up.

Down.

Crinkle-crackle with every step.

She ran her personal staircase marathon for 27 straight minutes, while Anu and Arjun stood there, equal parts shocked and impressed.

Forget gyms.

Toddlers train on packaging material.

The Cardboard Slide Partner

Another day, another box story.

Kiki brought a sturdy cardboard box out of the store room—the one that once held a mixer grinder.

Arjun tried warning her, “Beta, slide with this is not—”

Too late.

She sat inside the box, positioned herself at the top of the slide like a stunt double, and shouted:

“SLIDEEEEEE!!!”

Before any adult could react, she zoomed down like a mini bullet train.

Pooja screamed.

Daadi prayed.

Arjun sprinted.

Anu almost fainted..

Kiki,, well she just giggled.

“Agaennn!! (Again!!)”

Of course.



Welcome to the Cardboard Kingdom

Within days, the Setia household transformed into:

- A cardboard parking lot
- A cardboard fort
- A cardboard spaceship
- A cardboard kitchen
- A cardboard meditation area (invented by Daadi)
- A cardboard office (invented by Kiki)

Every new box was assigned a role.

Every role was non-negotiable.

When Anu once tried to throw one away,

Kiki gasped in betrayal:

“NOOOO! BOXXX MERAAAAA!”

hugging it like an abandoned puppy.

Arjun whispered, “Don’t anger the Queen.”

He wasn’t joking.

Little Brain Insights — Why Toddlers Love Boxes?

- **Unstructured objects boost imaginative play**

Cardboard boxes have no fixed purpose. This activates the prefrontal cortex and symbolic play networks, allowing toddlers to turn a single object into endless roles — car, house, bed, tunnel, rocket. This is foundational for creativity and abstract thinking.

- **Massive motor-skill development**

Pushing, climbing, crawling, dragging, lifting — boxes naturally encourage gross motor skills, balance, spatial awareness, and body coordination. These activities strengthen the vestibular and proprioceptive systems.

- **Problem-solving & cognitive flexibility**

Figuring out “How do I fit inside?” or “How do I move this?” engages executive function, early logic, experimentation, and cause-effect learning — which are crucial building blocks for future STEM learning.

- **Autonomy and emotional control**

A box comes with zero rules. Toddlers decide how it works, which boosts autonomy, confidence, and self-directed learning. This is especially important at 18–24 months when the need for independence peaks.

- **Cognitive transformation & neural growth**

Using one object in many different ways strengthens neural plasticity — the brain’s ability to create new pathways. This supports creativity, flexible thinking, and innovative problem-solving later in childhood



Parenting Hacks — Keeping Box Play Safe & Fun

- Tape edges and remove staples
- Keep 1-2 boxes and rotate the rest
- Introduce pretend play ideas (“Is it a spaceship today?”)
- Use boxes for safe climbing and pushing
- Create a “yes zone” for open-ended exploration
- Capture photos — they love seeing their creations later

Parenting Truth

*One day she'll open boxes only to grab what's inside.
But today?*

She opens a box — and builds a world.

*A world where imagination rules, adults follow orders, and
every cardboard square holds possibility.*

*Because in these messy little moments,
she isn't playing...*

She's creating childhood.

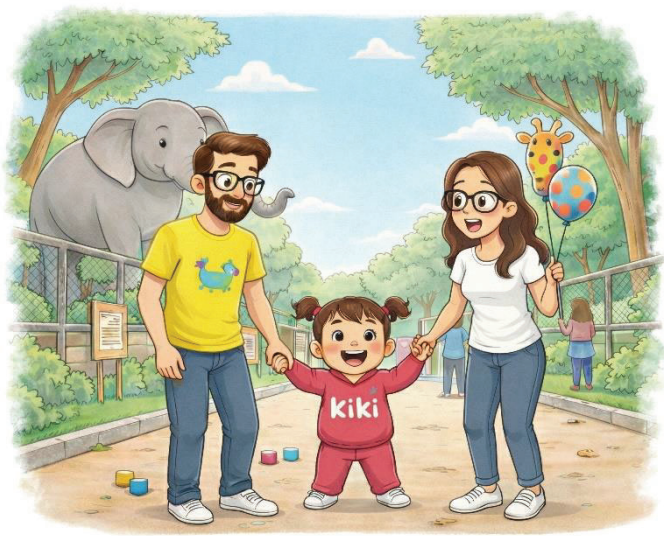
Chapter 15

The Zoo Trip That Turned Into “Nooo!”

*Because toddlers can feel excitement and protest at the
same time*

The Zoo Trip That Turned Into “Nooo!”

Because toddlers can feel excitement and protest at the same time



Anu and Arjun had been preparing for this day like it was Project Chandrayaan 4.

Weeks of planning.

Weather monitoring.

Mental rehearsal.

“Thodi garmi kam ho jaaye...”

“Mausam theek ho jaaye...”

“Crowd kam ho... toh sahi rahega.”

And finally – Sunday, 16th November –

Kiki’s First-Ever Zoo Trip

Mission launch successful. ✓

Morning Prep – The Pre-Zoo Fashion Week

Kiki's outfit for the day?

Pink joggers + pink sweatshirt = FULL Bollywood child artist energy.

She walked around with so much attitude, even the house plants looked intimidated.

Meanwhile...

Pooja was in the kitchen making the holy grail of all Indian travel foods: Daal ke paranthe.

(Every Punjabi trip runs on fuel, emotions, and paranthe.)

Water bottles? Packed.

Wipes? Packed.

Diaper bag? Loaded like a mini-ambulance.

Toys for the way? Selected by Kiki herself (5 rejects, 3 approvals).

Arjun clapped dramatically, "LET'S GOOOOOO!"

Kiki squealed back: "GOOOO! GOOOO! GOOOO!"

Everyone was vibing.

Nobody knew what was coming.

En Route: The Delusion Stage

Arjun and Anu, glowing with optimism, made a deal:

"We won't take too many pictures."

"Let's focus on showing her the animals."

"We'll save time for the dinosaur park too!"

Aww.

Cute.

SO cute.

Kiki sat chewing air and humming imaginary songs.

A perfect child.

For now.



Act 1: The Monkey Madness

The first enclosure – MONKEYS.

Kiki's reaction?

Pure joy.

Eyes widened.

Mouth opened.

Finger pointed dramatically:

“MONKEYYYYYYY!”

“OOO! AAA! EEE!”

(She said it exactly like an unpaid background actor in a jungle movie.)

The monkey scratched its head.

Kiki scratched her head.

The monkey jumped.

Kiki jumped.

For a full 3 minutes, she was having a spiritual connection with her new hairy cousins.

Arjun whispered, “Worth the ticket price already.”

He celebrated too early.

Act 2: The 'No' Safari Begins

Next stop: Tiger enclosure.

Arjun: “Kiki, tiger dekhoge?”

Kiki (without breaking eye contact with her *parantha*):

“No.”

Okay... maybe elephant?

Anu, “Kiki, elephant!”

“No.”

Leopard?

“No.”

Hippo?

“No.”

Lion?

“NOOOO.”

At this point she wasn't even looking. She was rejecting animals on principle. Her enthusiasm died faster than a phone at 2%.

It became a full-blown anti-zoo protest led by a toddler.

Even the animals looked confused.

Arjun stared at Anu.

Anu stared at Arjun.

Both silently asked the same question:

“Is our child allergic to animals?”

Meanwhile Kiki marched forward, not even pretending to look sideways.

She had bigger plans.

The “Paranthe Wali Swag Queen” Walk

Kiki refused to watch the animals.

But she happily grabbed her *parantha*...

...and began walking like she owned the entire Zoo Authority of India.

One hand up.

One hand holding *parantha* like it was a luxury clutch.

Eyes forward.

Zero expression.

Maximum attitude.

People turned to look at her.

She didn’t blink.

She was like Nora on tour.

The Running Olympics Begin

Then she saw her trigger:

A toddler girl running toward her parents.

Kiki’s brain:

RUN.

NOW.

As Arjun tried to lift her, she flipped in Arjun's arms like a fish and screamed her battle cry:

"NEECHEEEEEEEEYYY!!!"

Translation: I want to walk. Alone. NOW.

The moment her feet touched the ground...

ZOOOOOOOOOOMMMM.

Then she saw a baby boy wearing light-up shoes, just like the one she was wearing.

Approved.

So she ran again.

Arjun was panting.

Anu was confused.

Kiki was unstoppable.

The zoo was officially her racetrack.

Animals: 0

Steps on iWatch: 11,493



Unexpected Comeback — The Otter Show

Just when her parents accepted defeat...
they stumbled upon the otter enclosure.

The otters jumped.

Kiki gasped.

The otters slid.

Kiki clapped.

The otters squeaked.

Kiki squeaked louder.

Suddenly she was the cheerleader of the otter kingdom.

“MORE! MORE! OTTA! OTTA!”

Arjun whispered, "She said no to tigers, but yes to wet rats."

Anu elbowed him.

The Grand Finale — Godi Return

After a couple of hours of running, swinging, paratha-swagging, and rejecting 95% of the zoo...

Kiki slowed down.

Her steps got smaller.

Her swagger softened.

The paratha drooped.

Arms up.

Eyes big.

Voice soft.

She melted into Anu's chest — sweaty, warm, smelling proudly of dal-parantha and toddler victory —and let out the cutest little sigh.

“Mumma... godi.”

Translation: My battery is now officially 1%.

And just like that...

Adventure over.

Arjun looked at Anu and whispered, “Finally... she's in power-saving mode.”

A few minutes later, they walked out of the zoo
laughing, tired, feet hurting, shoulders sore —
but hearts ridiculously full.

Arjun drove back saying, “*Animal dekhne gaye the...but hamara
hi animal sabse active nikla.*”

And despite their earlier plan of
‘No pictures, focus on the experience’...They took pictures.
Many pictures.
Because deep down they knew—
this was one of those days they’d want to relive again
someday.

Little Brain Insights – Why Toddlers Act Like This at the Zoo?

- **New environments = sensory overload**

Zoos are full of new sounds, smells, crowds, and large moving animals. A toddler's immature sensory system can get overwhelmed quickly, so their brain shifts into “shut-down and protect” mode, which often looks like refusing or avoiding things.

- **Autonomy Development Peak**

Around 18–24 months, toddlers experience a major independence surge. Saying “No” isn't defiance — it's their earliest tool for self-identity, decision-making, and emotional control. Their brain is actively learning “I am separate from you,” and every refusal becomes a way to test boundaries and express that individuality.

- **Movement regulates their nervous system**

Toddlers have underdeveloped impulse control and very high sensory-seeking needs. Walking, running, and moving actually calm their brain far more than quietly observing animals. So “No” to tiger, “Yes” to running.

- **Selective attention is normal**

Their attention span is short and highly selective. They latch onto 1–2 things that feel familiar or exciting (like monkeys or otters) and filter out everything else — a natural cognitive defense against overstimulation.

- **Peer-triggered imitation**

When toddlers see other kids running, their mirror neurons activate, making them instantly want to copy the action. This is one of the strongest forms of early learning and social bonding.

Parenting Hacks for the “NO” Zoo Phase

- Start with the most exciting animal (monkeys are always safe bets!)
- Keep snacks handy – hunger = more NO’s
- Follow their lead instead of the zoo map
- Take breaks – overstimulation hits fast
- Celebrate even tiny wins (“She looked at an otter for 4 seconds? AMAZING.”)
- Don’t force viewing – the goal is joy, not checklist completion

Parenting Truth

One day she’ll go to the zoo and actually watch the animals.

But today?

Today the animals watched her.

And honestly...

they were lucky.

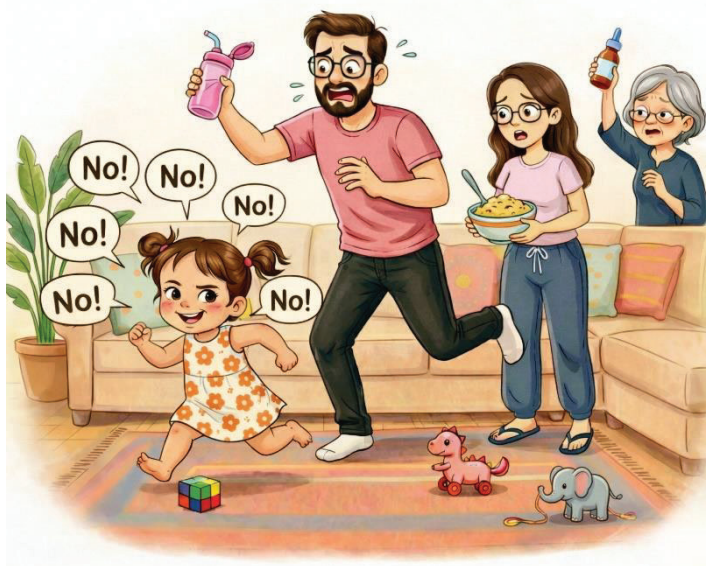
Chapter 16

The No-No Symphony

Because every toddler's first full sentence is "No!"

The No-No Symphony

Because every toddler's first full sentence is "No!"



It began at the zoo.

That day of: "NOOOOOOO!"

Little did Anu and Arjun know...

That day was anything but a coincidence.

It was the launch event of Kiki's new favorite word.

A Morning Full of "No" Energy

Kiki woke up with her usual dramatic stretch...

blink-blink...

hair everywhere...

and the sweetest greeting:

"Da-da... GODIIIIII."

Arjun lifted her like a baby koala, still half-asleep himself.



Breakfast: The First Official NO of the Day

Anu placed a banana piece in front of her.

Kiki: “No.”

Smoothie?

“No.”

Dates dalia?

“NOOO.”

Parantha?

She pushed it away dramatically...

like a judge rejecting a talent show contestant.

Arjun sighed,

“Phir kya chahiye?”

Kiki: “No.”

Because obviously.



Supplements — The Negotiation Fails

Anu, “Kiki, multivitamin?”

Kiki: “NO.”

Arjun, “Iron drops?”

“No.”

Anu and Arjun: “It will make you strong”

“NOOOO!”

Kiki yelled, even before they could finish their sentence.

Pooja walked by, whispered, “*Aaj bhi No-day lag raha hai.*”

Everyone nodded.



Bath Time – The Tragic Comedy

Anu cheerfully announced,
“Bath time!”

Kiki ran.

Fast.

“No bath! No water! No bubble!”

Arjun finally cornered her near the cupboard.

He picked her up.

Kiki clung to him like an infant about to be relocated.

Inside the bathroom, where Anu was patiently waiting for this chase to end:

Anu, “Face wash?”

“No.”

“Hair wash?”

“NO!”

“Leg wash?”

“NOOOOOOOO!”

But the moment bubbles appeared...
she poked them softly and whispered...

“More.”



Getting Dressed – The Fashion Rejection Show

Anu held up outfit option #1 - Blue denim shorts with white t-shirt

Kiki: “No.”

Option #2 - Black pajama set with planet print

“No.”

Orange jumpsuit?

“NO.”

Diaper?

“No.”

Socks?

“Noooooo.”

Finally, she agreed to one random pajama from the laundry pile and the same orange shoes...

because orange shoes are not optional - they are a part of her identity now.



The Day Continues... and So Does the “No”

Snack time?

“No.”

Water?

“No.”

Going for walkie?

“Yes!”

Then immediately,

“Nooooo walkiiiie!”

Da-da sitting?

“No.”

Mumma eating?

“No.”

Dog barking?

“Noooo bow-bow!”

Even when she liked something...

she said “No” first. Just to keep her brand strong.

By evening, Anu held her head in her hands, “Does she know any other word?”

Arjun burst out laughing, “Of course she does.

But ‘No’ is her TED Talk right now.”

The Final NO of the Night

While putting her in bed, Anu whispered, “Kiki, sleep time?”

Kiki yawned, stretched her arm...

“No...”

Then cuddled into Anu’s chest

and drifted off in 10 seconds.

Anu and Arjun looked at each other.

This kid.

This tiny tornado.

This walking-talking NO-machine...

was still the softest, sweetest, funniest part of their day.

Little Brain Insights – Why Toddlers Say “No”?

- **Independence Surge**

During this stage (18-24 months), the brain undergoes a major autonomy leap. Saying “No” becomes a toddler’s simplest tool to express control over their decisions and environment.

- **Early Boundary Formation**

“No” is often the first word toddlers use to assert personal space and preferences. It’s a foundational skill for understanding limits and self-protection.

- **Cause-and-Effect Learning**

When toddlers say “No,” they closely watch how adults respond. This helps them learn social rules, emotional cues, and communication patterns.

- **Developing Emotional Regulation**

Their prefrontal cortex – the part responsible for impulse control – is still immature. So, when they feel overwhelmed, confused, overstimulated, or rushed.. the easiest response their brain can produce is: “No.”

- **Consistency Testing**

Toddlers repeat “No” to figure out which boundaries are firm and which are flexible. This is how they learn how their world works – safely, experimentally, and loudly.

Parenting Hacks: Surviving the NO Phase

- Offer 2 choices instead of open-ended questions
- Use humor (“Oh! Did you just tell the banana NO?”)
- Model calm “No” responses
- Validate their feelings before giving direction
- Convert “No” moments into play (like silly voices)
- Build routines so fewer surprises = fewer Nos

Parenting Truth

One day, she won't say “No” to everything.

One day, she'll dress herself, eat by herself, decide for herself.

But today?

“No” is her way of learning who she is.

Her choices.

Her boundaries.

Her voice.

It's not rebellion – it's growth.

And watching that unfold is its own kind of magic.

Chapter 17

The Evening Swag Parade

*Because every toddler has a time of day when they
become a full-blown Bollywood star*

The Evening Swag Parade

Because every toddler has a time of day
when they become a full-blown Bollywood star



Evenings in Chandigarh have a routine.
Lights fade, breeze cools, birds return home...

And inside the Setia house?

Showtime.

The moment Kiki wakes from her evening nap, her eyes pop open like a toy robot rebooting.

She stretches.

She blinks.

She scans the room.

And then—

“Da-daaaa... walkiiiiieeee!

“Neecheeeey!!”

Show begins. 🎬



Act 1: The Pre-Walk Drama

First struggle: diaper change.

Arjun, “Kiki, bas 2 seconds. Change kar lete hain.”

Kiki: runs like she’s training for a wildlife documentary chase scene.

“Walkiiiiie! Walkiiiiie!”

Then comes the sacred ritual:

The Orange Shoes.

Orange shoes = Non-negotiable.

She puts one shoe on... stands proudly... then runs off with only one foot done.

Swag is a state of mind.



Act 2: Daadi’s Dramatic Denial

Arjun calls out, “Maa chalo! Walk pe jaate hain!”

Daadi, sitting like a queen on a throne of pillows, “Aaj nahi jana.”

Arjun sighs, “Fine.”

But then...

Kiki walks to Daadi slowly, like a tiny politician convincing a voter.

“Daadi... Daadi... Daadi... DAADIIII...”

Repeat till success.

Finally, Daadi gives up.

“Chalo baba, taiyaar ho jaati hoon!”

Kiki: Mission accomplished face. 😊

Act 3: The Swag Walk Begins

They reach downstairs.

The guard smiles.

Neighbors greet.

Kids wave.

Kiki...

ignores everyone like she’s a celebrity protected by emotional sunglasses.

She looks around...

Observing every scooter, auntie, dog, plant, leaf, ant, car, cloud, molecule.

Focused. Busy. Professional.

“Da-daaa... neecheee!” she yells again, even though they are already on the ground.

It’s part of the ritual.

Act 4: Tiny Fanclub Attempts Handshake

Every evening, 4-5 slightly older kids run toward her.

“Hi Kiki!”

“Shake hand?”

“Kiki come play!”

She glides past them.

Left hand behind her back.

Right hand holding orange shoes dignity.

Her attitude says:

“I am booked and busy.”

Except... one.

Jiya.

Her only approved friend.

Jiya arrives on a bicycle, braking like she’s entering a dramatic scene.

Kiki’s face softens.

She walks up.

Offers a tiny handshake.

Bond sealed.

The other kids: confused but loyal fans.



Act 5: The Temple Tour

Every walk ends at the society temple.

Kiki marches in like a mini saint on a mission.

Step inside.

One bell ring.

Two bell rings.

Fifteen bell rings.

Then she goes to each deity one by one:

“Jai Jai.”

“Jai Jai.”

“Jai Jai.”

Arjun tries to keep up.

Daadi pretends she’s controlling everything.

Passersby smile at the adorable devotion.

The Grand Finale — Walking Home

After all the swag, the attitude, the temple bells, and the dramatic rejections of her fan club...

The diva finally slows down.

The wind settles.

The sunlight softens.

And tiny Kiki, who had been walking like she owns the whole society...

...suddenly looks up.

Her expression changes.

Eyes droop.

Cheeks puff softly.

Energy bar: 5%.

She toddles toward Arjun with the gait of a tired superstar after a world tour.

“Da-da... hommee.”

Arjun melts instantly.

He offers his hand.

She grabs just one finger — her signature style — and holds on like it’s her anchor to the universe.

Daadi chuckles, “*Bas hogaya swag. Ab asli bachchi wapis.*”

They walk home slowly — one tiny step, one grown-up step — perfectly in rhythm.

Then, just as they are about to reach home, she stops and looks at Anu, who is standing at the balcony waiting for them to return.

Kiki lifts both arms, and screams with full force...

“*Mumma... godi.*”

The diva drops her act.

The baby returns.

As soon as they enter home, Kiki curls into Anu’s chest — warm, soft.

Her head rests on Anu’s shoulder.

One shoe slightly loose.

One hand clinging to Mumma’s collar.

And in that tiny hug.....the whole walk makes sense.

Little Brain Insights — Why Evening Walks Bring Out Peak Toddler Swag?

- **Movement boosts dopamine**

After a nap, toddlers wake with high stored energy. Physical movement helps regulate mood, release dopamine, and restart their sensory system.

- **Routines = emotional security**

When the routine is predictable (same shoes, same route, same people), the toddler brain feels safer. Consistency stabilizes their nervous system.

- **Selective socializing is normal**

Toddlers usually connect deeply with just one or two familiar peers. This is an early attachment stage, not shyness — it's how they build trust.

- **Exploration strengthens neural pathways**

Scanning surroundings, watching dogs, noticing people, observing patterns — all of this fires multiple cognitive circuits and boosts brain development.

- **Temple routines act as sensory grounding**

Bell sounds, repeated actions, and rhythmic chants offer sensory regulation. Repetition helps toddlers feel centered and emotionally calm.

Parenting Hacks — To Make Evening Strolls Stress-Free

- Never say “Last 5 minutes.” It’s never 5 minutes.
- If they run, don’t panic — just walk fast with dignity.
- Let them walk slowly. The world isn’t closing.
- Expect at least one dramatic “I don’t want to go home” tantrum.
- Create a ritual ending (see you tomorrow, goodbye road) – closure reduces resistance.

Parenting Truth

One day she’ll walk anywhere without holding your hand.

One day she’ll run ahead without looking back.

But today?

Today she chooses orange shoes.

Today she chooses Da-Da and Daadi.

Today she chooses “walkiiiiie.”

And these tiny evening strolls will someday be the memories that walk with you forever.

Chapter 18

The Watering Can Wake-Up Call

*Because toddlers believe every morning
needs a splash of chaos*

The Watering Can Wake-Up Call

Because toddlers believe every morning needs a splash of chaos



The sun was still yawning.
The breeze was still sleepy.
But inside the Setia household...

A tiny dictator had risen.

Kiki shot up from her nap like a jack-in-the-box, pointed straight at the balcony and announced:

“Da-da! Waterrrrr!”

Not “good morning.”

Not “hug.”

Straight to business.

Arjun rubbed his eyes.

Anu tried to go invisible under the blanket.

But Kiki stomped like a miniature drill sergeant toward the balcony:

“Come. NOW.”

And thus began the sacred morning ritual.



The Watering Routine — Yellow vs Blue Edition

While Anu began preparing for Kiki’s breakfast...Arjun handed her the yellow watering can. Her face lit up like she’d just been promoted to CEO of Gardening.

Then she spotted the blue spray bottle in Arjun’s hand.

She froze.

She pointed.

“Da-da. Bottle.”

Arjun: “*Yeh mera hai—*”

Kiki: “NO. Mine.”

And the negotiation ended before it began.

So, the official sequence became:

- Water with Yellow Can
- Spray with Blue Bottle
- Steal both
- Refuse to return either



Big Plant, Small Plant Logic

Arjun explained patiently, “These big plants need more water, and small plants need little water.”

Kiki nodded with great seriousness.

Then turned around and:

Big plant → one drop

Small plant → full waterfall

Arjun → defeated sigh

Kiki → “DONE!” (claps for herself)

She watered the big plants like she was conserving water for the entire society. She watered the tiny plants as if they were thirsty since 1947.

Then she sprayed the balcony, the railing, the air, Arjun’s face...

Arjun, “Kiki! Not Da-da!”

Kiki: one more spray “ hee hee.”

And honestly, you can’t argue with that confidence.

The Pigeon Paani Attack

Just as Kiki finished overwatering a completely innocent money plant, two pigeons landed on the railing like VIP guests arriving uninvited.

Kiki froze.

Pointed dramatically.

“Pigeeeeooooonnn!”

The pigeons cooed.

Kiki cooed back.

A meaningful conversation was clearly happening.

Arjun whispered,

“*Dekho Kiki, pigeon—*”

But before he could finish, Kiki lifted the blue spray bottle like a superhero unlocking her final power mode.

“Pigeon... PANI!”

Arjun lunged in slow motion:

“Noooooooo—”

But it was too late.

Spritz! Spritz! Spritz!

The pigeons took off in panic, waving their wings like they were filing an official complaint.

Kiki looked extremely satisfied.

She waved proudly, as if she had just completed a noble civic duty.



The School Baby Commentary

As she watered, kids walked past on their way to school.

Kiki paused mid-spray.

Stared at them intensely.

Then yelled at full volume:

“BYE BABYYYY! SHCCOOOOL...”

While doing a dramatic queen-wave.

One girl looked confused.

One boy ran faster.

Kiki felt very powerful.

Arjun?

He was wiping water off his glasses.

Little Brain Insights – Why Toddlers Love Watering?

- **Sensory play fuels rapid brain development**

Water, mud, pouring, spraying – these sensory inputs activate multiple parts of the brain at once, strengthening pathways for coordination, focus, and problem-solving.

- **“Heavy work” boosts balance & body awareness**

Carrying even a small watering can provides proprioceptive input – helping toddlers understand where their body is in space and improving strength and stability.

- **Repetitive chores create emotional security**

Doing the same simple task every day builds predictability, which reduces anxiety and helps the toddler brain feel safe and regulated.

- **Imitation builds confidence & competence**

When toddlers copy adult tasks (watering, cleaning, wiping), it activates mirror neurons and boosts their sense of capability: “I can do this too.”

- **Nature time calms the nervous system**

Fresh air, greenery, textures, sunlight – these environmental stimuli naturally reduce stress hormones and support emotional regulation.

Parenting Hacks — For the Water Ritual

- Give a small can (and a backup bigger one)
- Let them “finish the job” their own way
- Teach gentle watering with fun sound cues (“tip-tip”)
- Keep a towel ready (or three)
- Divide balcony into “safe splash” zones
- Expect your clothes to get wet — it’s destiny

Parenting Truth

One day she’ll water plants neatly.

One day she’ll understand “gentle.”

One day she won’t soak Dada by mistake (or on purpose).

But today?

Her yellow-can pride,

her bossy “NO,”

her dramatic school-baby waves...

These are the moments Arjun and Anu never want to forget.

Because childhood isn’t calm —

it’s wonderfully, splashfully wild.

Chapter 19

The Dustbin Detective

Because toddlers believe the dustbin is a magical portal

The Dustbin Detective

Because toddlers believe the dustbin is a magical portal



In most homes, things get misplaced.

In this home, things got... relocated.

Not by accident.

Not by forgetfulness.

But by a tiny human with a growing curiosity

and a very specific skill set.

A skill that involved picking things up...

walking with purpose...

and dropping them into places no one would think of.

Anu's Lost Pen Drive

Anu had finally carved out 27 uninterrupted minutes to finish an important file.

Kiki was fed.

Kiki was hydrated.

Kiki was temporarily distracted with stacking cups that would absolutely not survive the next five minutes.

Laptop open.

File ready.

Email drafted.

All she needed was the pen drive.

She reached for it.

Empty table.

She checked the side drawer.

Nothing.

She checked her handbag.

Lip balm.

Three rubber bands.

A tiny sock.

But no pen drive.

“Arjuun... where is my pen drive?”

Arjun, from the sofa, in the tone of a man who has never lost anything in his life, “It must be where you kept it.”

Helpful. Very helpful.

Anu checked the study shelf.

Under the cushion.

Inside Kiki's toy basket (because experience).

Meanwhile, Kiki was walking around unusually calm.

Red flag.

She had both hands behind her back.

Face innocent.

Eyes glittering with quiet accomplishment.

Anu crouched down.

"Kiki... kya hai haath mein?"

Kiki grinned and giggled.

"Mm-mm."

Translation: Classified information.

Anu gently opened her fist.

Nothing.

Anu blinked.

Five minutes later, after scanning the house like a forensic officer, she did what every seasoned toddler parent eventually learns.

She walked to the room.

Lifted the dustbin lid.

And there it was.

Her pen drive.

Lying diagonally between a used tissue and half a banana peel.

Anu:

“KIKIIII!”

Kiki ran in proudly.

Kiki clapped like she had just solved climate change.

“*Maine CLEAN kiyaaaaaa!*”

In her world, small loose objects = clutter.

Clutter = dustbin.

Dustbin = order restored.

Anu just stood there... holding her pen drive like it had survived a natural disaster.



Arjun's Vanished Credit Card

It was one of those “I’ll just quickly step out” evenings.

Needed his credit card before heading out. He clearly remembered keeping it on the table a few minutes ago while he ordered something online.

He walked confidently toward it.

Table = empty.

He checked his wallet.

No card.

He checked his laptop bag.

No card.

He checked under the sofa cushions — because now we don’t trust surfaces.

Nothing.

“Kiki... *Da-da ka card dekha?*”

Kiki was sitting on the floor, playing with a plastic bowl and spoon like she owned a restaurant.

She looked up.

Blink. Blink.

That mysterious toddler mumble that means: *Yes, but I refuse to elaborate.*

Arjun scanned the room.

Then — instinct.

He walked to the kitchen.

Lifted the dustbin lid.

There it was.

His shiny credit card. Resting peacefully on top of a crumpled biscuit wrapper.

He closed his eyes.

“Kikiiii...”

She ran toward him proudly.



The Anklet Tragedy

By evening, Kiki’s anklet disappeared.
Completely vanished.

Arjun: “Kiki, where’s the anklet?!”

Kiki: “BYE PAYAL!”

Terrifying answer.

They searched for 20 minutes.
Pooja finally said the magic words:

“Dustbin check kiya?”

And yes.

Of course.

There it was.

Shining proudly inside the bin, like it was auditioning for a detergent commercial.

Kiki waved sweetly:

“BYE PAYAL BABYYYY!”

Arjun almost cried.



Daadi's Medicine Box Disaster

And, later at night, the entire house shook with Daadi's scream:

“Meri dabbi kahan gayiiii!?!?”

Everyone froze.

This was serious.

Arjun sprinted to the dustbin.

Lifted the lid like a soldier on a battlefield.

And there it was -

the medicine box.

Covered in flour.

Sitting like a villain who got caught.

Kiki proudly declared:

“DAADI SICK! THROW!”

Daadi: "HAWWWW!"

Arjun: "OH GOD."

Anu: "WHY US."

Kiki: HAPPY DANCE...

How it all began?

Last Sunday, Kiki watched Pooja throw a used tissue into the dustbin.

Kiki's eyes widened.

Her life changed.

Everything she saw, she threw. Her commentary through everything:

"Clean!"

"Throw!"

"Dustbeeeen!"

"BYE BYE!"

They shrugged it off like a one-time thing.

But, now they realized: This wasn't a one-time thing.

By night, after rescuing the pendrive, the credit card, the anklet, and Daadi's entire medical future...

Arjun and Anu sat on the sofa, defeated.

Kiki walked past humming,

"Dusstbeeeen... byeeee..."

like a proud municipal worker of Chandigarh.

And that's when the truth hit them:

From today onwards...

if anything in the house goes missing...

ANYTHING...

there is only one place to check first—

💀 THE DUSTBIN 💀

Little Brain Insights — Why Toddlers Throw Everything?

- **Cause-and-Effect Learning**

Toddlers repeat actions that give clear outcomes. Drop → fall → sound → reaction. Dustbins provide an instant feedback loop, which strengthens cognitive mapping.

- **Mimicry = Natural Learning Mechanism**

They learn by copying the adults they trust the most — parents... and especially house-helpers they see doing real tasks. Throwing things “like Pooja” is actually social role play.

- **Early Categorization Skills**

Their brain is experimenting with sorting and grouping. But because categories aren't mature yet, pen drive + banana peel + credit card all fall under one brilliant toddler category: “THROW!”

- **Sensory Feedback Regulates the Brain**

Dustbins offer sound, motion, weight, and vibration — all calming or stimulating the sensory system in helpful ways.

- **Autonomy Practice**

Choosing what to “clean” and what to “discard” makes toddlers feel capable and powerful, building early decision-making confidence.



Parenting Hacks – Surviving the Dustbin Era

- Create a “pretend dustbin” for safe throws
- Narrate rules: “Only dirty things go in the bin”
- Keep a daily habit: Check the dustbin before panicking
- Let them help empty the bin (supervised!)
- Praise every correct throw loudly
- Store valuable items HIGH – very high



Parenting Truth

One day, she'll know what belongs in the bin...

and what belongs in Mumma's laptop bag or Da-da's wallet.

One day she'll stop discarding valuables like vegetable waste.

One day the dustbin won't hold all your missing treasures.

But today?

She's learning.

Experimenting.

Debugging the world in her own ways.

And Arjun & Anu?

They're collecting stories they'll laugh about forever...

...even if they're laughing while digging through the dustbin. 😊

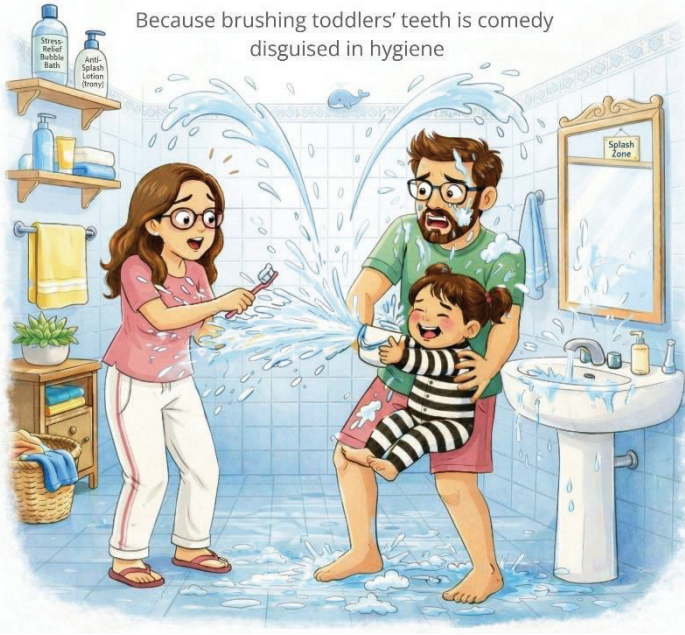
Chapter 20

The Kurli Chronicles

*Because brushing toddler's teeth is comedy show disguised
in hygiene*

The Kurli Chronicles

Because brushing toddlers' teeth is comedy disguised in hygiene



Kiki had finally grown her four adorable rabbit teeth — shiny, sharp, slightly dangerous weapons. And Anu, who had been planning The Toothbrushing Routine for months, finally declared:

“Bas. Aaj se brushing shuru.”

Arjun nodded like a supportive co-parent.

Kiki nodded like she understood nothing.

And so... the mission began.

Scene 1: The Blinkit Entry – Featuring OTP Queen

Arjun ordered the toddler toothbrush and toothpaste instantly.

“Chicco toothbrush. Chicco toothpaste. Minty? Nah. Strawberry? YES.”

Blinkit arrived in 10 minutes, which is exactly the time Kiki needs to create one small disaster.

The doorbell rang.

Kiki froze.

Eyes widened.

The OTP Demon awoke.

She sprinted to the door shouting:

“BEEP BEEP! OTP!!”

Arjun opened the door.

But before he could say anything—

Kiki proudly recited:

“ONE... TWO... THREE... EIGHT... FIVE... NINE!”

The Blinkit guy laughed,

“Sir, *baby ka OTP hamesha ready rehta hai!*”

Kiki showed all four teeth and clapped.

Scene 2: The Great Toothbrush Launch

The following morning, Anu woke up with Kiki clung on her lap like a baby monkey.

“Kiki, *brush karenge. Let’s goooo.*”

Kiki sweetly said:

“lessss gooooo...”

Anu brought the brush closer—

“Kiki open your mouth, aaaa...”

SHUT.

Her mouth closed tighter than an ATM vault.

Repeat:

Aaaa → Shut

Aaaa → Shut

Aaaa → Faster Shut

Aaaa → Olympic-level Shut

Anu sighed, “*At this rate, dentist ko bhi appointment cancel karna padega.*”

Scene 3: The Kurli Epidemic Begins

That night, just as Kiki was about to sleep Arjun, thinking of building a brushing routine, said the forbidden word:

“*Chalo Kiki, kurli karenge.*”

Kiki’s soul left her body and returned with full energy.

“KULLIIII!!”

“KULLIIII!!”

“KUL-KUL-KULLIIII!!!!”

Talking-Tom Mode: Activated.

Volume: Stadium.

Water entered her mouth...

and the kurli began.

Targets hit:

- ✓ Her feet
- ✓ Da-da's T-shirt
- ✓ Mirror
- ✓ Anu's shoulder

Target missed:

– The sink.

Kiki celebrated:

“KULLIIII BABYYYY!!”

Arjun wiped his face.

Anu cried internally.



Scene 4: Toothpaste War

Anu managed to smear one microdot of toothpaste on the brush.

“Okay Kiki, *aaaa...*”

Kiki said “Aaaa...”

Then chomped the brush like a hungry rabbit.

“No Kiki, don't eat the toothbrush!!”

Watching her tantrums Arjun playfully yelled,

“Kiki, *yeh muh brush ho raha hai ya kamra paint?*”

Anu, “Don't even ask.”



The Toothbrushing Conclusion

After 15 minutes of:

- wrestling
- chanting aa-ee-o
- dodging toothpaste missiles
- wiping kurli from random surfaces

...Anu finally brushed her teeth.

For exactly 4 seconds.

Because Kiki announced:

“AGAAAIN! KULLIIII AGAIN!”

Anu collapsed dramatically.

Arjun whispered:

“Bas, hygiene quota full for today.”

Kiki walked away with her toothbrush like she had just been crowned:

Miss Dental India – Under 2 Category.

And thus began...

The Kurli Era.

A mess.

A memory.

A milestone.

All mixed together...

Little Brain Insights — Why Toothbrushing Turns Into Comedy?

- **Oral sensory sensitivity is highest in toddlerhood**

The mouth, tongue, and gums have dense sensory receptors. A toothbrush introduces new textures + new sensations, which can feel overwhelming or exciting.

- **Mouth control = early autonomy milestone**

Choosing when to open or close their mouth gives toddlers a sense of body control, which is crucial during the 18-24-month independence phase.

- **Imitation is the #1 learning tool at this age**

Toddlers copy what they see adults do — including kurli, spitting, and even your brushing movements. It's how they practice social routines.

- **Language bursts activate repetition loops**

When they learn a new word (like “kurli”), the brain repeats it automatically to strengthen speech pathways.

Repetition = practice = mastery.

- **Messy actions regulate the nervous system**

Pouring, spitting, splashing, tasting — all are forms of sensory exploration that help them understand texture, temperature, and movement. The mess looks chaotic...but it's actually brain-building work.

Parenting Hacks — Toothbrushing Without Tears (Mostly)

- Let them brush your teeth first — builds trust
- Sing a “brush brush brush” rhythm to keep mouth open
- Use tiny amounts of toddler-friendly toothpaste
- Switch roles — “Kiki’s turn, Da-da’s turn”
- Let them hold one brush while you use another
- End with a silly kurli ritual to keep it positive

Parenting Truth

One day, she’ll brush and rinse like a pro.

One day, toothbrushing won’t need wrestling moves, three towels, and a mop.

One day, she won’t shout “KULLIIIIII!” at 120 decibels.

But tonight?

Tonight, she’s learning.

Exploring.

Growing.

And creating stories her parents will laugh about for years.

Because childhood is messy...

and that’s exactly what makes it magical. 

Epilogue

And, This Is How It Looked from Here

By the time you reach this page,
you've probably read about snacks that never ended,
songs played on repeat,
baths negotiated like treaties,
and nights that refused to stay quiet.

On paper, it might look chaotic.
In real life, it was.
And that's what makes it special.

This book was never meant to capture *perfect parenting*. It was
written to capture real parenting -
the kind that happens in between deadlines, diaper changes,
half-drunk cups of tea,
and conversations that get interrupted by tiny voices
shouting,
“Da-Da!” or “Mumma!”

Every chapter here is a moment that once felt endless.
And now already feels distant.

Because toddlers don't stay toddlers.

The child who demanded the same song at 5 a.m.
will one day roll their eyes at your playlist.
The one who claimed every toy as “mine”
will eventually learn to let go — slowly, imperfectly,
beautifully.

The little feet that ran everywhere
will one day walk ahead of you.

And the house?

It will get quieter.

Cleaner.

More organized.

Less dramatic.

But it will also miss something.

It will miss the chaos that had a heartbeat.

The mess that came with laughter.

The noise that meant life was happening loudly.

If you're reading this while exhausted —

you're not failing.

You're parenting.

If you're reading this while smiling —

you're already nostalgic.

And if you're reading this thinking,

"I wish someone had told me this sooner" —

Now you know.

These years are not meant to be mastered.

They're meant to be lived.

Imperfectly.

Loudly.

With love.

This book ends here.

But the story?

That continues every single day.

And one day — sooner than you think —
you'll look back at this phase
and realize:

You didn't just raise a toddler.

You survived a season that quietly raised you too.