SEPTEMBER 2026

BOOKWAVE

E-MAGAZINE

VOL 1 ISSUE 4

Bonds • Values • Human Relationships

Stories connect hearts...

One page at a time.

INSPIRING STORIES

Real people...
Real emotions...
Timeless lessons...

THOUGHTFUL ARTICLES

Ideas that touch hearts and open minds...

CREATIVE WRITINGS

Stories, poems, and more... from talented writers...

CHILDREN'S ZONE

Fun, learning and big imaginations...



Where stories find a home, writers find a voice, and readers find themselves.

www.bookwave.net

From Our Hearts to Yours

BookWave – Vol. 1, Issue 4 | September 2026

Dear Readers,

Four issues.

It may sound like just a number, but for us at **BookWave**, it carries a much deeper meaning.

Four issues mean four months of dreams, words, stories, emotions, sleepless hours, countless corrections, creative ideas, and most importantly, the love and encouragement of our readers and writers.

When we started BookWave, we had a simple thought in our hearts—to create a small space where stories could breathe, where writers could find a platform, and where readers could discover something meaningful in every page.

Today, as we bring you our **fourth issue**, that small thought has slowly begun to take shape.

Every story we receive reminds us of one beautiful truth: **every person has a story worth telling.**

Some stories make us smile.

Some make us think.

Some take us back to memories we had forgotten.

Some introduce us to people we have never met.

And some quietly touch a corner of our heart and remain there long after we finish reading.

That is the magic of stories.

At BookWave, we believe that reading is not simply about turning pages. It is about travelling through another person's emotions. It is about understanding lives different from our own. It is about discovering kindness, sacrifice, love, relationships, pain, hope and courage through words.

In a world that is becoming increasingly fast, we hope BookWave can be a place where you can **slow down for a while**.

Put aside the noise.

Forget the rush.

Take a few minutes.

And simply read.

This issue once again brings together stories and articles that celebrate the things that truly matter—**Bonds, Values and Human Relationships**.

Our writers have put a piece of themselves into their words. We hope you will give those words the time they deserve.

And to every writer who has trusted BookWave with your story—**thank you.**

You may never know how far your words can travel.

A story written quietly at a desk can make a stranger smile somewhere else.

A few sentences about a mother can bring tears to someone's eyes.

A story about a father can remind someone of a voice they deeply miss.

A story about friendship can make someone pick up the phone and call an old friend.

And a story about hope can sometimes give someone the strength to continue.

That is why we believe writing matters.

And that is why **BookWave exists.**

We also want to encourage those who are still hesitating to call themselves writers.

Perhaps you have written something in a notebook.

Perhaps you have a story in your mind that you have never shared.

Perhaps you keep telling yourself, *“One day I will write it.”*

Maybe that day is today.

Don’t worry about whether your writing is perfect.

Don’t worry about whether your story is extraordinary.

Write honestly.

Write from your heart.

Because sometimes the simplest stories are the ones that touch us the most.

Discover the writer in you and introduce yourself to the world.

BookWave will always be happy to provide a space for your voice.

As we enter our fourth issue, our journey is still young. There is a long road ahead, and we know there will be challenges. But we also know that every journey becomes meaningful when there are people willing to walk alongside us.

Our readers are those people.

Our writers are those people.

Everyone who has shared BookWave, recommended it to a friend, sent us a story, given us feedback, or simply spent a few minutes reading our magazine has become a part of this journey.

So, as you turn the pages of this September issue, we have only one request:

Don’t just read the stories. Feel them.

Laugh with them.

Cry with them.

Think about them.

And perhaps, somewhere between one page and another, find a little piece of yourself.

Because ultimately, that is what stories do.

They remind us that although our lives may be different, **our hearts often speak the same language.**

Thank you for being with us through our first four issues.

Thank you for believing in BookWave.

And thank you for keeping the beautiful habit of reading alive.

There are many more stories waiting to be told.

Many more writers waiting to be discovered.

And many more pages waiting to be turned.

The journey has only just begun.

With warm wishes and gratitude,

Team BookWave

Bonds • Values • Human Relationships

www.bookwave.net

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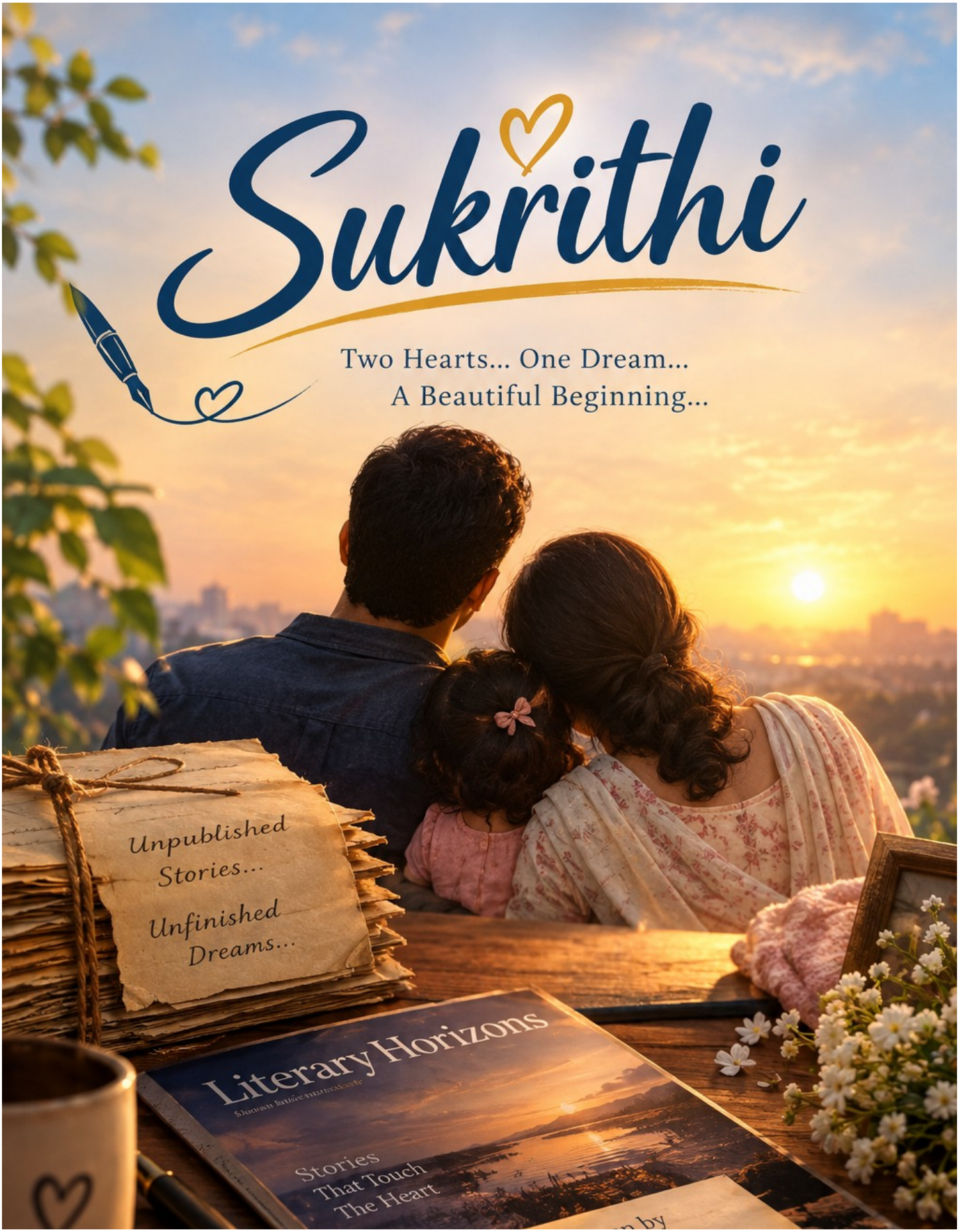
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Sukrithi
Two Hearts... One Dream...
A Beautiful Beginning...
Unpublished Stories...
Unfinished Dreams...
Literary Horizons
Stories That Touch The Heart

The Name Beneath the Title

There are some dreams that never really die.

They may become silent. They may be buried beneath responsibilities.

They may be locked inside an old suitcase and forgotten in a corner of a house.

But they wait.

They wait patiently.

And sometimes, after years have passed, they return to us—not to remind us of our failure, but to prove that perhaps the dream had never failed us.

It was we who had stopped believing in it.

Surya had once been a dreamer.

Not the kind of dreamer who spent his days imagining impossible things.

He was an ordinary young man with an ordinary family, an ordinary education and, eventually, an ordinary job.

But inside that ordinary young man lived something extraordinary.

He wanted to become a writer. From a very young age, Surya loved stories. He loved the smell of paper.

He loved the sound of a pen moving across a page.



He loved the strange happiness that came when a thought inside his mind became words on paper.

While his friends were busy discussing cricket matches, movies and college outings, Surya sometimes sat alone with a notebook.

He wrote.

He wrote about people.

He wrote about relationships.

He wrote about mothers waiting for sons.

He wrote about fathers hiding their tears.

He wrote about friendship, love, sacrifice and loneliness.

He wrote about ordinary people because he believed ordinary people had extraordinary stories hidden inside their lives.

And one dream slowly took shape in his heart.

He wanted to see his story in a magazine.

Not just the story.

He wanted to see his name beneath the title.

Written by Surya.

That was all.

He did not dream about becoming famous.

He did not imagine becoming a bestselling author.

He did not dream of sitting on a stage receiving an award.

His dream was much smaller.

And perhaps because it was so small, it became even more precious.

He wanted to hold a magazine in his hands one day and point to his name.

"This is my story."

That was enough.

The First Rejection

The first story he sent to a magazine came back after several weeks.

Surya opened the envelope with trembling hands.

His heart raced.

He imagined the editor's letter.

"Dear Mr. Surya, We are pleased to inform you..."

But the letter said something else.

The story was not selected.

There was a small handwritten note at the bottom.

“The story is too lengthy. Please try again.”

Surya stared at those words for a long time.

Then he smiled.

“Too lengthy,” he whispered.

“That means the story needs to be shorter.”

He was not disappointed.

Not yet.

He rewrote it.

He shortened it.

He improved it.

He sent another story.

It came back.

This time the comment was:

“The writing shows immaturity.”

Surya frowned.

“Immaturity?”

He read the story again.

He could not find the immaturity.

But perhaps the editor was right.

He wrote another story.

Then another.

And another.

Each time he waited and each time he hoped.

Each time the postman brought an envelope.

And each time Surya opened it with a little less excitement.

The reasons changed.

“Characterization needs improvement.”

“The ending is weak.”

“The story lacks depth.”

“The concept is good, but the execution needs improvement.”

“Not suitable for our magazine.”

“We regret that we cannot publish this story.”

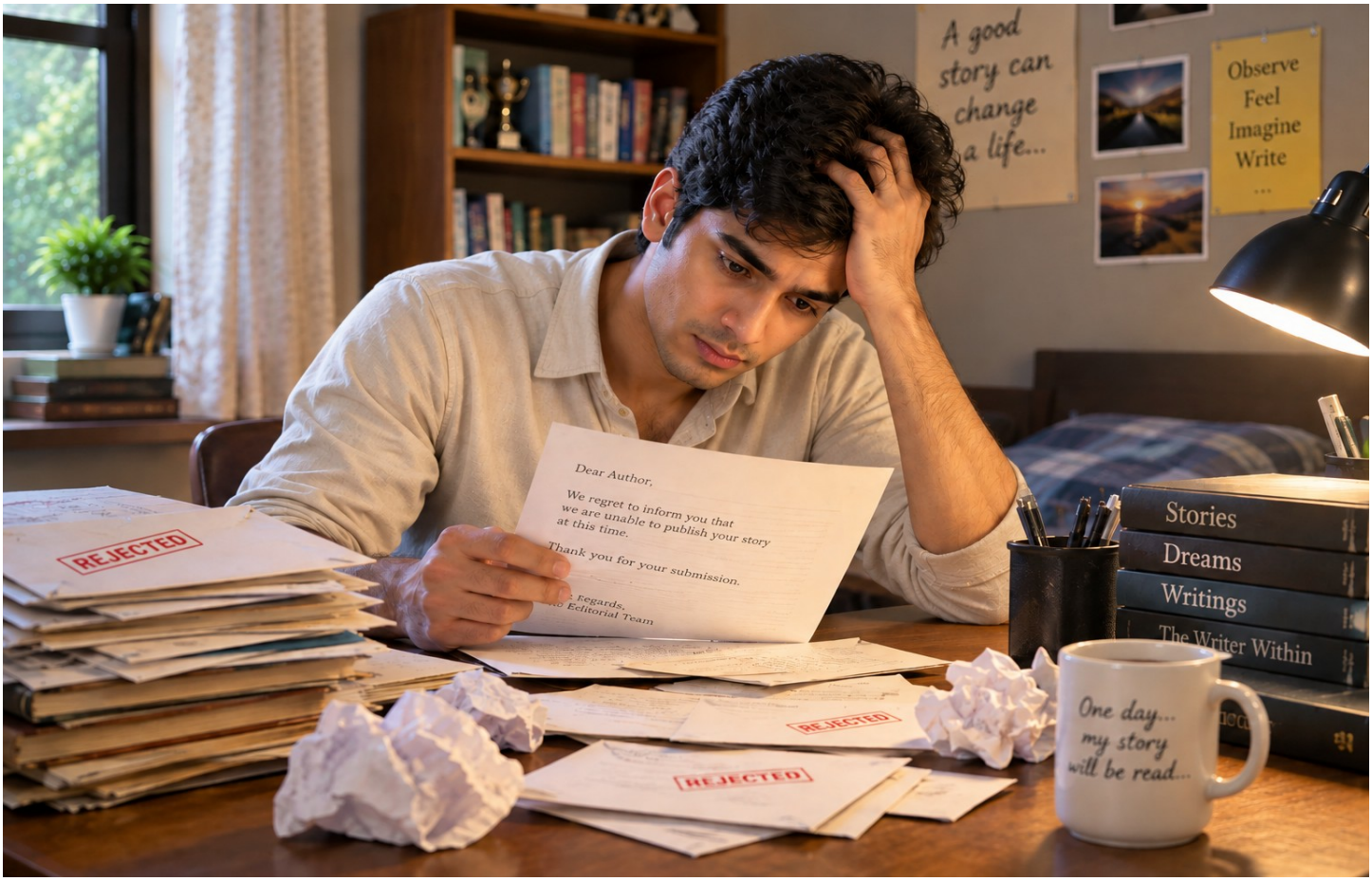
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The words were different.

The result was the same.

His stories kept coming home.

And slowly, the envelopes began to hurt.



The Raddiwala

Some friends knew about his attempts.

A few encouraged him.

“Don’t stop, Surya. One day you will definitely get published.”

Others smiled.

Some joked.

One friend laughed and said,

“At least your stories have a guaranteed reader.”

Surya looked at him.

“Who?”

“The raddiwala!”

Everyone laughed.

“Think about it,” his friend continued. “One day the raddiwala will become rich by selling all the papers of your stories!”

Everyone laughed again.

Surya smiled too.

He had to.

But that night, when he went home, the joke remained inside him.

He opened his cupboard.

There were several rejected manuscripts.

Some were folded. Some were tied together.

Some had pencil corrections. Some had coffee stains.

Some had dates written on them.

He touched the papers.

The pages were silent. But they carried years of his life.

He had written some of them at two in the morning.

Some on Sunday mornings while everyone else slept.

Some sitting on a bench in a park.

Some on the terrace while watching the sunset.

Some while watching rain through the window.

Some while staring at a rainbow.

Some before sunrise.

Some after midnight.

Every story had a memory.

Every page had a piece of him.

Yet none of them had been accepted.

For the first time, Surya wondered whether his friend was right.

Perhaps all those pages would finally become waste paper.

Perhaps the raddiwala really would be the only person who would ever value them.

He closed the cupboard.

The Day He Gave Up

One evening, after another rejection, Surya sat alone on the terrace.

The sun was disappearing.

The sky was painted in orange and gold.

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Normally, such a sunset would have made him think of a story.

That day, it did not.

He looked at the notebook beside him.

He closed it.

“I am done,” he whispered.

Nobody heard him.

But he meant it.

“I don’t want to write anymore.”

The next morning, Surya stopped.

No notebook.

No stories.

No envelopes.

No waiting for the postman. No checking magazines.

No dreams of seeing his name in print.

He moved forward with life. He got a job in a bank.

The job demanded time.

Customers, files, targets, accounts, meetings and responsibilities slowly occupied the space where stories once lived.

Years passed.

Then came marriage. Her name was Keerthi.

And perhaps life had quietly given Surya something far more precious than the dream he had abandoned.

A companion.

Keerthi was a kind-hearted woman.

She did not expect perfection from him. She encouraged him and respected him.

She laughed with him. She stood beside him.

And most importantly, she understood that marriage was not about one person winning and the other losing.

It was about two people learning when to hold on and when to let go.

Surya loved her deeply.

But there was one part of his past he never told her.

His writing.

His failures. His rejected stories.

The dream he had once carried.

He never told her. Not because he did not trust her.

But because he was ashamed of the failure.

He believed some things were better left buried.

The Suitcase

After marriage, Surya was transferred to another city.

He and Keerthi moved into their new home.

One and a half years passed.

Their life settled into a comfortable rhythm.

One day Surya received a message from his mother.

“We are vacating the old house. There is an old suitcase of yours here. Take it when you come.”

Surya immediately knew which suitcase it was.

His heart sank. The old stories.

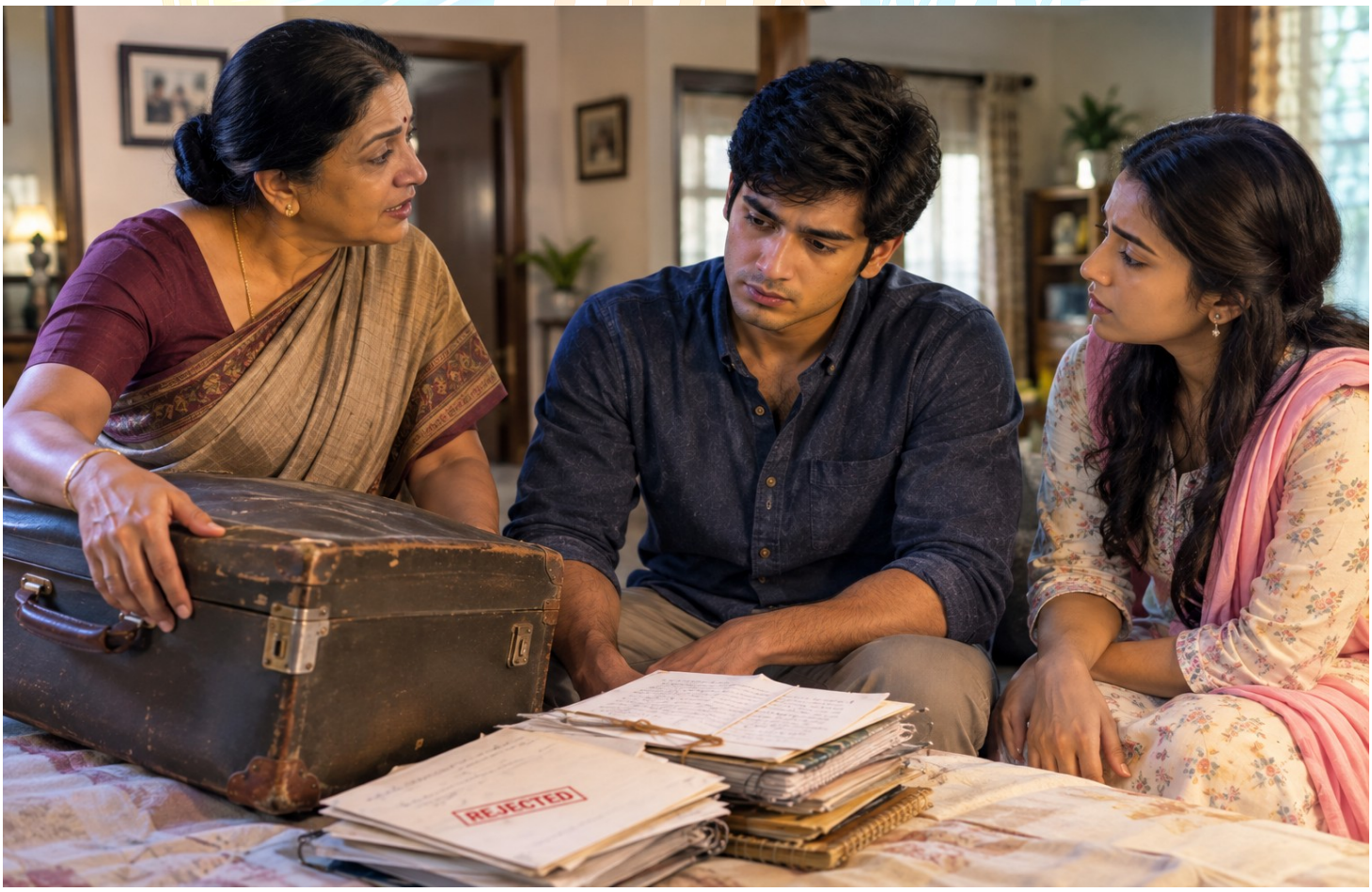
His past. His failure.

He stared at the message. He could almost hear the sound of those pages.

He didn’t want them. He didn’t want to see them again.

But his mother insisted.

When Surya and Keerthi visited his parents, his mother brought out the suitcase and gave to him.



It was old.

Dusty.

The edges were worn.

Surya looked at it as though he were looking at an old wound.

His mother smiled.

“Take it.”

“Amma, what is the need?”

“You wrote all those things with so much interest. How can we throw them away?”

Surya didn’t answer.

His mother put the suitcase into their car.

Keerthi looked at him.

“What is inside?”

Surya avoided her eyes.

“I’ll tell you after we reach home.”

She noticed something unusual in his voice.

But she did not question him.

The Truth

When they reached home, Surya carried the suitcase inside.

He kept it in the bedroom.

For several minutes he simply stared at it.

Finally he opened it.

Keerthi stood beside him.

Inside were papers.

Hundreds of pages.

Some old notebooks.

Some handwritten stories.

Some typed manuscripts.

Some rejection letters.

Keerthi picked one up.

“What are these?”

Surya took a deep breath.

“I used to write stories.”

Keerthi looked at him.

“You?”

He nodded.

“Long ago.”

“You never told me.”

“I stopped years ago.”

“Why?”

Surya smiled painfully.

“Because I failed.”

He explained everything.

The magazines.

The rejections.

The comments.

The jokes.

The dream.

The disappointment.

The day he stopped writing.

Keerthi listened quietly.

Then she asked,

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

Surya looked down.

“If I had succeeded, I would have told you.”

Keerthi frowned.

“What does that mean?”

“I felt success can be shared. Failure need not be shared.”

Keerthi stared at him.

“Why?”

“Because it was my failure.”

She shook her head.

“No, Surya.”

He looked at her.

“A husband and wife cannot divide life into successful things and unsuccessful things. If happiness belongs to both, disappointment also belongs to both.”

Surya remained silent.

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“You should have told me,” she continued softly. “Not because I could have changed your past. But because I could have stood beside you while you remembered it.”

Those words hurt him. Not because they were harsh.

Because they were true.

“I am sorry,” he said.

Keerthi did not respond.

“I am really sorry.”

Still silence.

“I should have told you.”

She looked at him.

“I forgive you.”

Surya felt relieved. Then, suddenly, he said,

“Tomorrow I’ll call the raddiwala.”

Keerthi turned.

“What?”

“I’ll give all these papers to him.”

“No.”

Surya was surprised.

“No?”

“I won’t give them.”

“Keerthi, they are useless.”

“Maybe.”

“They were rejected by every magazine.”

“Maybe.”

“They have been sitting in a suitcase for years.”

“I know.”

“Then why keep them?”

Keerthi looked at the papers.

“Because I haven’t read them.”

Surya almost laughed and said, “There is nothing to read.”

“Let me decide that.”

“You’ll waste your time.”

“That’s my decision.”

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“Keerthi…”

“I will read them.”

Her voice was firm. Surya knew that voice.

Keerthi was gentle most of the time.

But when she made up her mind about something, arguing with her was like arguing with a mountain.

He smiled helplessly and said “Fine.”

That night, Surya remembered one of the rules they had created for their marriage.

Their First Rule

They had once discussed what would make their relationship healthy.

Together they had created three rules. The first was simple.

“Conversations should never become arguments.”

If a conversation was turning into an argument, one of them had to become quiet.

Not surrender.

Not defeat.

An Adjustment.

Because winning an argument could sometimes mean losing peace.

Surya remained silent.

Keerthi began reading.

The Pages Came Alive

The next morning Surya went to work.

Before leaving, he reminded her,

“Don’t spend too much time on those stories.”

She smiled and said,

“Go to work.”

“After you finish reading, we’ll give them to the raddiwala.”

She looked at him and said, “Go.”

Surya left.

Keerthi sat of on sofa.

She opened suitcase…..

With lot of anxiety….

she opened the first story….

She started to read……

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She read.

Then the second.

Then the third.

She slowly began to understand the man she had married in a completely different way.

There were stories about fathers.

Stories about daughters.

Stories about old mothers waiting at doors.

Stories about friendships that broke because of pride.

Stories about people who sacrificed their dreams for their families.

Some were weak.

Some were too long.

Some had poor endings.

Some characters needed more depth.

But some…

Some were beautiful.

Keerthi stopped reading.

She read one paragraph again.

Then another.

She smiled.

“This man really could write.”

She turned the page.

Then she saw the date.

It had been written fifteen years earlier.

She imagined young Surya sitting somewhere alone, writing those words.

Perhaps everyone else was sleeping.

Perhaps he had a small lamp beside him.

Perhaps he was dreaming about the day a magazine would publish his story.

Keerthi’s eyes became wet.

She whispered,

“Why did you give up?”

The Three Months

Life soon gave Keerthi time.

She became pregnant.

The happiness in their home was beyond words.

Surya became extraordinarily careful.

“Don’t climb those stairs.”

“Don’t carry that.”

“Have you eaten?”

“Are you tired?”

Keerthi laughed.

“I am pregnant, Surya. I am not made of glass.”

But she loved his concern.

Her company permitted her to work from home for three months.

During those months, she had more time.

And she returned to the suitcase.

But this time she didn’t read as Surya’s wife.

She read as a reader.

She read critically.

She began studying articles about writing.

How to structure a story.

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How to develop characters.

How to create emotional scenes.

How to improve endings.

How to make dialogue natural.

How to remove unnecessary words.

How to make a story flow.

Slowly, something beautiful happened.

Keerthi became the editor Surya had never had.

She typed his handwritten stories.

She shortened some.

Expanded others.

Strengthened characters.

Improved dialogue.

Changed weak endings.

Removed unnecessary portions.

She polished them.

One story became two.

Two became three.

And the rejected manuscripts slowly transformed into beautiful stories.

One evening Surya asked casually,

“Finished reading?”

“Almost.”

“Then I can call the raddiwala.”

Keerthi looked at him.

“Forget the raddiwala.”

Surya smiled.

“What?”

“The stories are mine now.”

“Yours?”

“Yes.”

He laughed.

“How?”

“I read them.”

“That doesn’t make them yours.”

“It does now.”

Surya knew better than to argue.

He remembered Rule Number One.

He became quiet.

The First Submission

One afternoon, Keerthi selected one story.

She read it three times.

Then she made one final correction.

She opened her email.

She attached the story.

She entered Surya’s name.

Her finger hesitated above the Send button.

She smiled.

“Your dream deserves one more chance.”

She pressed Send.

Then she closed the laptop.

She did not tell Surya.

She wanted to surprise him.

Ten Days Later

Ten days passed.

Then an email arrived.

Keerthi opened it.

She read the first sentence.

Her eyes widened.

She read it again.

The magazine liked the story.

They wanted to publish it.

Not only that.

They said they were willing to publish one of Surya’s stories for the next six months.

Keerthi covered her mouth.

Her eyes filled with tears.

She looked toward the bedroom.

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The suitcase was still there.

She whispered,

“Surya…”

Then she smiled.

“Your stories came home for years.”

“Now they are going somewhere.”

She decided to wait.

She wanted to give him the magazine in his hands.

She wanted to see his face.

She wanted to watch the moment his forgotten dream came alive again.

The Day Came

Time moved quickly.

Keerthi’s delivery date approached.

Then one night, she was admitted to the hospital.

Surya was nervous.

He held her hand.

“Everything will be fine.”

Keerthi smiled.

“I know.”

Hours passed.

Then finally…

A baby’s cry filled the room.

A baby girl.

Their daughter.

Surya stood frozen.

The nurse placed the tiny baby near them.

Keerthi looked at her.

Surya’s eyes filled with tears.

He touched his daughter’s tiny fingers.

“She is so small.”

Keerthi smiled.

“Our whole world is so small.”

Surya bent down and kissed his daughter’s forehead.

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For the first time in his life, he understood a different kind of writing.

Some moments could never be written properly.

They could only be lived.

The Magazine

Two days later, another moment arrived.

The magazine issue was released.

Keerthi had ordered a hard copy.

It arrived at the hospital.

She waited until Surya was alone.

She handed it to him.

“What is this?”

“Open it.”

He opened the magazine.

He turned the pages casually. Then suddenly…

He stopped. His fingers froze.

His eyes remained fixed on one page.

There it was.

The title of his story.

And beneath it…

Written by Surya.

For several seconds he couldn’t breathe.

He looked again.His name was still there.

Not in his imagination. Not in an old notebook.

Not on a rejected manuscript.

Not in a dream.

It was printed and Published.

Real.

His name….Below his story.

His eyes filled with tears.

After some times with lot of happiness.

He went to out side of the room.

Sat in the corridor and watching his name in the magazine for 10-15 minutes.

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He felt it like a dream.

Years came rushing back.

The first story.

The first rejection.

The second.

The jokes.

The nights.

The terrace.

The park bench.

The rain.

The sunrise.

The sunset.

The rainbow.

His mother’s shouting.

His friends’ laughter.

The envelopes returning home.

The day he stopped writing.

And then… Keerthi.

His wife.

The woman who had picked up the dream he had thrown away.

He couldn’t speak. Keerthi watched him.

Surya slowly reached for her hand. He held it tightly and said,“Thank you.”



Keerthi smiled.

He shook his head.

“No.”

His voice broke.

“Not like that.”

Tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Thank you from the deepest part of my heart.”

Keerthi wiped his tears.

He looked at the magazine again.

“I waited for this moment for years.”

“I know.”

“I thought I would never see it.”

“I know.”

“I gave up.”

Keerthi squeezed his hand.

“You gave up.”

She smiled.

“I didn’t.”

Surya cried.

Not because he was sad.

Because sometimes happiness carries all the pain of the past with it.

And when that pain finally finds a place to rest…

tears come.

Two Gifts

Their relatives soon learned that Surya had become a published writer.

Friends called.

Messages arrived.

“Congratulations!”

“Your story is published!”

“And congratulations on your baby girl!”

One friend called and laughed.

“Surya! Finally the raddiwala lost!”

Surya laughed through his tears.

“Yes.”

He looked at Keerthi.

“The raddiwala never came.”

And perhaps that was the sweetest sentence he had ever spoken.

Within two days, Surya had received the two greatest gifts of his life.

A daughter.

And his name beneath a story.

Sukrithi

That evening, when the hospital room became quiet, Surya looked at his daughter.

“What shall we name her?”

Keerthi smiled.

“I already have a name.”

“What?”

“Sukrithi.”

Surya looked at her.

“Sukrithi?”

“Yes.”

She looked at him.

“Surya…”

Then she smiled.

“Keerthi…”

“Together.”

He understood.

Their names had become one.

Their lives had become one.

And now their daughter would carry that name.

Sukrithi.

A name born from two people who had learned that life was not about whose dream succeeded.

It was about whose hand held yours when you were ready to give up.

Six More Stories

A few weeks later, when they were home, Surya remembered something.

“You told me the magazine accepted the story.”

“Yes.”

“They said something else too, didn’t they?”

Keerthi smiled.

“What?”

“Six more stories.”

Surya stared at her.

“What?”

“They want six more.”

“Six?”

“One every month.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yes.”

He couldn’t believe it.

Then he asked,

“Where are those stories?”

Keerthi smiled.

“Here.”

She showed him the manuscripts.

Surya looked at them.

Then he looked at her.

“Keerthi, you should write them under your name.”

She frowned.

“Why?”

“Because you polished them.”

“You wrote them.”

“But you made them publishable.”

“That doesn’t change who wrote them.”

The conversation began moving toward an argument.

Keerthi noticed it.

Surya noticed it too.

They both remembered Rule Number One.

Suddenly Keerthi smiled.

“I have an idea.”

“What?”

“We won’t use your name.”

“Then yours?”

“No.”

“Then?”

She looked toward the baby.

“Sukrithi.”

Surya became silent.

“Our daughter’s name?”

“Yes.”

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“The pen name?”

“Yes.”

Surya smiled.

Their stories would be published under **Sukrithi**.

A name created from both of them.

A name carried by their daughter.

A name born from love.

A New Beginning

After that, life changed.

Not dramatically.

They still had jobs.

They still had responsibilities.

They still had bills.

They still had arguments.

They still became tired.

They still had difficult days.

But there was something new in their home.

Stories.

Surya and Keerthi began discussing ideas.

Sometimes Surya would say,

“What if we write about an old father who waits for his son?”

Keerthi would say,

“No. Make the father wait for his daughter.”

Sometimes Keerthi would suggest a character.

Surya would develop the plot.

Sometimes he typed.

Sometimes she typed.

Sometimes they sat together for editing.

Sometimes one would say,

“This ending isn’t good.”

The other would disagree.

Then one of them would remember the rule.

And become quiet.

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Because peace mattered more than winning.

Their stories kept going to the magazine.

And this time…

they never came back.

Their Second Rule

They followed another rule too.

Never dig into each other's past.

The past was already written.

Nothing could be edited.

Nothing could be changed.

Why keep reopening old pages?

They decided to focus on the present.

And build the future.

Surya never again asked Keerthi why she had done something years earlier.

Keerthi never used Surya's old failures against him.

They understood something important.

A marriage cannot grow if two people keep using yesterday as a weapon against today.

The past should teach.

It should never torture.

Their Third Rule

Their third rule was perhaps the most important.

No third person should enter their marriage to make decisions for them.

Parents were respected.

Siblings were loved.

Relatives were valued.

But their marriage belonged to them.

If a problem came, they would discuss it.

If they disagreed, they would talk.

If they needed advice, they would ask.

But the final decision would always be theirs.

They had learned that outsiders could love a marriage and still misunderstand it.

Only the two people living inside it knew what was happening behind closed doors.

So they protected their relationship.

Not with walls.

With trust.

Years Later

Sukrithi grew.

She became a cheerful little girl.

One evening she found an old suitcase in a cupboard.

“Amma, what is this?”

Keerthi looked at Surya.

They smiled.

Surya opened it.

Inside were the old manuscripts.

Sukrithi picked up a page.

“Who wrote this?”

Surya looked at her.

“I did.”

“You?”

“Yes.”

“Are you a writer?”

Surya smiled.

“Now I am.”

Sukrithi looked at the magazine lying nearby.

She saw the name.

Sukrithi.

She looked confused.

“Why is my name here?”

Keerthi laughed.

“Because once, a very important dream was born before you.”

“What dream?”

Surya looked at his daughter.

“A dream about a name.”

“What name?”

He pointed to the magazine.

“That one.”

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Sukrithi smiled.

And Surya suddenly remembered the young man he had once been.

A young man who only wanted one thing.

To see his name beneath a story title.

He had waited years.

He had failed.

He had given up.

And yet, somehow, life had brought the dream back to him.

Not through success.

Through love.

The Raddiwala Never Came

The old suitcase remained in their house.

It was never sold.

Never thrown away.

Never given to the raddiwala.

The papers that once looked like failures became the foundation of a new beginning.

Some dreams take years.

Some take decades.

Some disappear for a while.

But that doesn't always mean they are dead.

Sometimes they are only waiting for the right person to believe in them.

For Surya, that person was Keerthi.

She didn't tell him that he was a great writer.

She didn't blindly praise every story.

She read them honestly.

She saw the weaknesses.

She saw the possibilities.

And instead of saying,

"You failed."

she silently said,

"Try once more."

That was love.

Not merely holding someone's hand when they succeed.

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But picking up the dream they dropped when they were too tired to carry it.

The Name

Years later, Surya still kept that first published magazine safely.

Sometimes he opened it.

Sometimes he touched the page.

Sometimes he looked at his name.

And every time, his eyes became wet.

But he never looked at that page alone.

Beside him was usually Keerthi.

And somewhere in the house, Sukrithi would be laughing.

Surya would smile and say,

“Do you remember the suitcase?”

Keerthi would laugh.

“Yes.”

“And the raddiwala?”

“Yes.”

“He never came.”

“He shouldn’t have.”

Surya would look at her.

“Why?”

Keerthi would answer,

“Because some papers are not waste paper.”

“They are pieces of someone’s heart.”

Surya would hold her hand.

And there would be no need for words.

Because after all those years, he had finally understood something.

A dream does not always need applause.

Sometimes it only needs one person who refuses to let you throw it away.

And sometimes that one person changes your entire life.

Epilogue

There are many kinds of success in this world.

Some people measure it in money.

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Some in awards.

Some in positions.

Some in fame.

But Surya measured his success differently.

He had once wanted his name beneath a story.

He got it.

But that was not his greatest achievement.

His greatest achievement was the woman who believed in him when he no longer believed in himself.

His greatest achievement was the little girl who carried a name created from the two people who loved her.

Sukrithi.

And perhaps the greatest story Surya ever wrote was not the one published in a magazine.

It was the life he built with Keerthi.

A life in which they learned to adjust.

A life in which they refused to turn conversations into battles.

A life in which they never weaponized the past.

A life in which they protected their marriage from unnecessary interference.

A life in which two people learned that love was not about being right.

It was about being together.

And somewhere in an old cupboard, the suitcase still remained.

Inside it were the stories that had once returned home.

Stories that had once been rejected.

Stories that had once been called immature.

Stories that had once been considered too lengthy.

Stories that had once been laughed at.

But they were no longer failures.

They were memories.

They were lessons.

They were proof that Surya had once dared to dream.

And perhaps that was why Keerthi never allowed the suitcase to leave their home.

Because every time they looked at it, they remembered something precious:

A dream may be rejected by the world.

It may even be abandoned by the person who dreamed it.

But if someone who loves you believes in it, the dream may still find its way home.

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The raddiwala never came.

The stories never became waste paper.

They became something far more valuable.

They became the beginning of **Sukrithi**.

And the name beneath the title was no longer merely **Surya**.

It was a reminder of two hearts that had learned to beat together.

SUKRITHI.

Some dreams are written with ink.

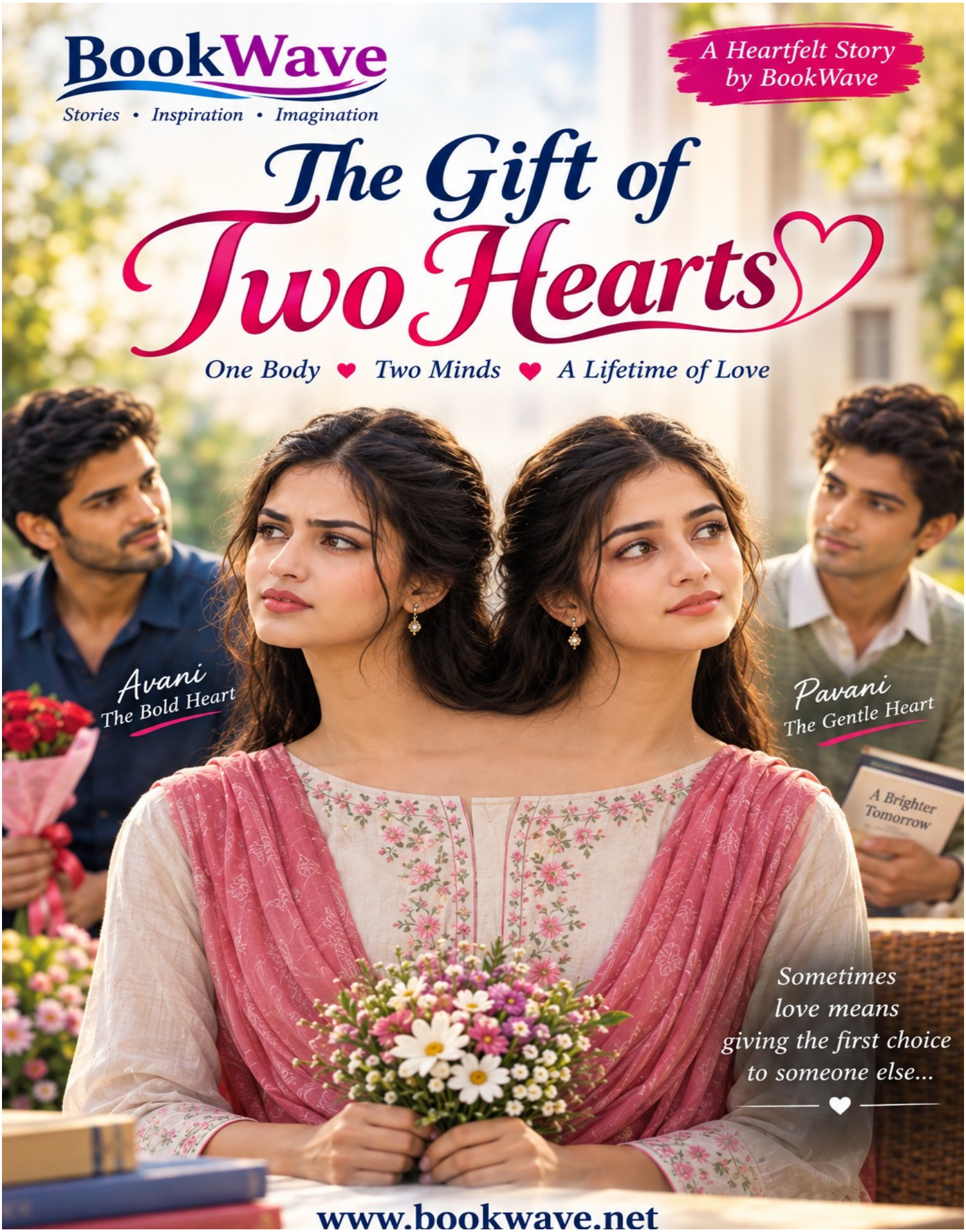
Some are written with tears.

And the most beautiful ones are written together.

****

Comments can be sent to : touchingwaves@gmail.com

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BookWave
Stories • Inspiration • Imagination
A Heartfelt Story by BookWave
The Gift of Two Hearts
One Body ♥ Two Minds ♥ A Lifetime of Love
Avani
The Bold Heart
Pavani
The Gentle Heart
A Brighter Tomorrow
Sometimes love means giving the first choice to someone else...
www.bookwave.net

Chapter 1: Two Names, Two Hearts

When Avani and Pavani were born, the entire hospital fell silent.

Doctors spoke in low voices.

Nurses moved carefully.

Their parents, Raghav and Meera, stood outside the room, holding each other's hands with fear they had never known before.

The babies were alive. They were healthy.

They cried loudly. But they had been born as conjoined twins.

For several hours, the doctors discussed possibilities. There were examinations, scans, consultations, and long conversations.

Finally, one senior doctor called Raghav and Meera into his office.

"There is something you must understand," he said gently. "Your daughters are two separate individuals. They have separate minds, separate personalities, separate dreams. But their bodies are joined in a way that makes separation medically impossible without an extremely high risk to both their lives."

Meera sat silently. Her eyes filled with tears.



Raghav asked only one question.

“Will they live?”

The doctor smiled softly.

“Yes. And they can live meaningful lives. But the world may not always make it easy for them.”

That night, Meera held her daughters close.

One baby cried loudly and refused to sleep.

The other remained unusually calm.

The nurse laughed.

“The first one seems ready to fight the whole world.”

Meera smiled through her tears.

“Then she will be Avani.”

“And the quiet one?”

“Pavani.”

Nobody knew then how accurately those two names would come to represent two completely different personalities.

Avani grew up like a storm.

Pavani grew up like the silence after rain.

Avani argued.

Pavani listened.

Avani demanded.

Pavani adjusted.

Avani wanted the window seat.

Pavani gave it to her.

Avani wanted the blue dress.

Pavani said she liked the blue one too—but then quietly chose another colour.

Avani wanted to watch cartoons.

Pavani wanted to read.

Usually, the cartoons won.

Their mother would often notice Pavani quietly closing her book.

“Pavani,” she would ask, “don’t you want to read?”

Pavani would smile.

“I can read later, Amma.”

And Avani would immediately say, “See? She doesn’t mind!”

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Pavani never complained.

That was the problem.

Because when a person never complains, the world slowly begins to believe that they never need anything.

Chapter 2: The Girl Who Always Won

By the time they entered school, Avani had become famous for one thing.

She could win almost any argument.

If a teacher said they were late, Avani would explain why it wasn't their fault.

If another student teased them, Avani would fight back with words so sharp that nobody dared to repeat the insult.

Pavani secretly admired her sister.

Avani had something Pavani did not.

Fearlessness.

Once, during lunch break, a group of children stood at a distance and whispered.

"They are strange."

"How can two people live like that?"

"Do they think the same thoughts?"

Avani immediately turned toward them.

"No," she said sharply. "And thank God for that. Imagine having to think like you people!"

The children ran away.

Pavani tried not to laugh.

"You shouldn't have said that."

"They deserved it."

"Maybe."

"You're smiling."

"I didn't say you were wrong."

Avani looked at her proudly.

"Of course I wasn't wrong."

That was Avani.

She always had the last word.

But as the years passed, Pavani began to understand something.

Avani wasn't always strong.

She simply hated appearing weak.

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One night, when they were thirteen, they watched themselves in a mirror.

For a few seconds, neither of them spoke.

Avani suddenly looked away.

Pavani noticed.

“What happened?”

“Nothing.”

“Avani.”

“I said nothing.”

Pavani remained silent.

A few moments later, Avani whispered, “Do you ever wonder what it would have been like?”

“What?”

“To walk alone.”

Pavani’s eyes filled with emotion.

Avani continued.

“To run without worrying whether the other person is tired. To wear exactly what you want. To go somewhere without discussing it first.”

Pavani looked at her sister.

Then she smiled.

“But then you would have missed me.”

Avani turned toward her.

For a moment, the aggressive girl had no answer.

Then she pushed Pavani gently.

“Don’t become too emotional.”

Pavani laughed.

But that night, after Pavani fell asleep, Avani remained awake.

She knew something Pavani didn’t.

Pavani had sacrificed much more than she ever admitted.

Chapter 3: The Unspoken Compromises

Their teenage years brought a new kind of difficulty.

Every decision involved both of them.

College.

Clothes.

Friends.

Timetables.

Careers.

Even simple things became discussions.

Avani wanted to study media and communications.

Pavani loved literature and wanted to become a writer.

Their parents worried.

“How will you manage two completely different courses?” Raghav asked.

Avani immediately responded.

“Why can’t we?”

Pavani looked at her.

Avani continued.

“Just because we share a body doesn’t mean we should share every dream.”

That was one of the rare moments when Avani fought for Pavani.

Finally, they found a college where their schedules could be managed.

Avani attended classes filled with presentations, discussions and activities.

Pavani spent hours surrounded by books.

And slowly, their personalities became even more different.

Avani made friends everywhere.

Pavani had only a few.

Avani loved speaking.

Pavani loved listening.

Avani wanted to be noticed.

Pavani was happiest when nobody noticed her at all.

Yet, every evening, they returned home together.

And every night, they shared the same room.

One day, Avani found Pavani crying quietly.

“What happened?”

“Nothing.”

“Don’t use my dialogue against me.”

Pavani smiled weakly.

“I got selected for a writing workshop.”

“That’s wonderful!”

“It’s in Bengaluru.”

“So?”

“It is for three days.”

Avani’s face changed.

They both understood immediately.

The workshop was designed for one participant.

But Pavani could not physically go anywhere alone.

Avani looked at the letter.

“Call them.”

“I already did.”

“What did they say?”

Pavani looked down.

“They said they could make arrangements for both of us.”

“Then what is the problem?”

“They asked whether you would be interested in attending the sessions too.”

Avani laughed.

“I don’t even understand half the poetry you read.”

Pavani smiled.

But her smile disappeared.

“The programme begins at seven in the morning. You would have to wake up early. Sit through sessions for three days. Miss your college project meeting.”

Avani remained quiet.

For once, she understood.

Pavani was ready to give up her dream because it was inconvenient for Avani.

“Go,” Avani said.

Pavani looked surprised.

“What?”

“We’re going.”

“Are you sure?”

Avani looked away.

“Don’t make me repeat myself.”

That workshop became Pavani’s first important step as a writer.

Years later, when Pavani received an award for her first novel, she would remember those three days.

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And she would remember Avani sitting beside her through poetry sessions, literary discussions and writing exercises.

“Did you enjoy it?” Pavani asked afterward.

Avani stretched her arms dramatically.

“I deserve an award for surviving it.”

They both laughed.

But Pavani knew.

Her sister had given her something precious.

Time.

Chapter 4: Karthik

Karthik first met them at a bookstore.

Pavani was looking for a novel that had been moved to a higher shelf.

Avani had already become impatient.

“Why do you need this particular book? There are five thousand books here.”

“Because I want this one.”

“Take another one.”

“No.”

Avani folded her arms.

“You are impossible.”

The man standing nearby smiled.

Pavani noticed him.

He reached up, took the book from the shelf and handed it to her.

“Here.”

“Thank you,” Pavani said.

“I’m Karthik.”

“Avani,” said Avani immediately.

“And Pavani,” Pavani added softly.

Karthik looked at them.

“I know.”

Avani raised an eyebrow.

“Really?”

“I’ve seen you in the college literary magazine.”

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Pavani looked surprised.

“You read it?”

“Every month.”

Avani smiled mischievously.

“Then you must be one of Pavani’s ten loyal readers.”

Karthik laughed.

“I think she deserves more.”

Something changed in Pavani’s face.

It was a small change.

So small that nobody else would have noticed.

But Avani noticed.

For the first time, someone had looked at Pavani—not as Avani’s quieter half, not as one of the twins, but simply as Pavani.

Over the next few months, Karthik became their friend.

He discussed books with Pavani.

He argued with Avani.

He listened patiently when Pavani spoke.

And he fought back when Avani tried to dominate every conversation.

“You’re wrong,” he would tell Avani.

Avani would stare at him.

“Excuse me?”

“I said you’re wrong.”

“Nobody says that to me.”

“Then everyone around you is dishonest.”

Pavani would burst into laughter.

Avani would pretend to be offended.

But secretly, she liked him.

He wasn’t afraid of her.

More importantly, he understood Pavani.

Chapter 5: Arjun

If Karthik was calm, Arjun was completely different.

He entered their lives through Avani’s work.

Avani had become a communications consultant for a growing company. She was ambitious, confident and successful.

During one important meeting, she strongly disagreed with a presentation.

The presenter was Arjun.

For ten minutes, Avani destroyed every point he had made.

Everyone in the room became uncomfortable.

Arjun simply looked at her.

“Are you finished?”

Avani stared.

“No.”

“Good. Take another ten minutes. You seem to be enjoying yourself.”

The entire room became silent.

Then Pavani, who had accompanied Avani that day, began laughing.

Avani looked at her.

“Whose side are you on?”

“His.”

Arjun smiled.

That was how their friendship began.

Arjun admired Avani’s courage.

Her intelligence.

Her energy.

Her refusal to surrender.

Avani admired Arjun because he never treated her differently.

He challenged her.

He argued with her.

And slowly, he fell in love with her.

Avani did too.

One evening, Arjun said it directly.

“I love you.”

Avani became silent.

For perhaps the first time in her life, she did not know how to respond.

Arjun continued.

“I know our lives will never be ordinary.”

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Avani's eyes filled with tears.

"Arjun..."

"I am not asking for an answer now. I only want you to know."

Avani looked toward Pavani.

Pavani had heard every word.

And her eyes were full of emotion.

That night, after Arjun left, Avani asked, "What are you thinking?"

Pavani smiled.

"You look happy."

"I am."

"Then that's enough."

Avani suddenly held Pavani's hand.

"Are you happy?"

Pavani looked away.

"Yes."

But Avani knew that answer.

She had heard it many times throughout their lives.

It was Pavani's answer whenever she wanted to hide something.

Chapter 6: The Impossible Question

Years passed.

Karthik remained close to Pavani.

Arjun remained close to Avani.

Both relationships became deeper.

And then, one day, the question that everyone had silently avoided finally arrived.

Marriage.

Their parents were terrified.

Not because they didn't want their daughters to be happy.

But because happiness itself had become complicated.

One evening, Arjun came to their house with his parents.

He spoke honestly.

"I want to marry Avani."

A few weeks later, Karthik came with the same intention.

“I want to marry Pavani.”

Raghav sat silently. Meera began to cry.

Both men understood the situation.

Avani and Pavani were two individuals.

Two women.

Two minds.

Two hearts.

But their physical lives could not be separated.

Marriage to one of them would inevitably affect the other.

There was no simple answer. No simple arrangement.

And for the first time in their lives, Avani and Pavani faced a decision that neither argument nor compromise could easily solve.

They were in dilemma about what to do..



That night, they did not sleep.

The room was dark.

Avani stared at the ceiling.

Pavani remained silent.

Finally, Avani spoke.

“What do you want?”

Pavani immediately replied.

“You first.”

Avani laughed bitterly.

“Of course.”

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“What do you mean?”

Avani turned toward her.

“Pavani, your whole life has been like this.”

“What?”

“You always say, ‘You first.’”

Pavani remained silent.

Avani continued.

“You wanted to read. I wanted television.”

Pavani looked away.

“You wanted the red dress. I wanted it too.”

Pavani smiled faintly.

“You wanted the quieter college programme. I wanted another one.”

“Avani…”

“You always gave me the first choice.”

Pavani whispered, “Because I didn’t mind.”

Avani suddenly became emotional.

“That’s the biggest lie you have ever told me.”

Pavani’s eyes filled with tears.

Avani continued.

“You did mind. You simply loved me more than your own wishes.”

Neither of them spoke for a long time.

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Then Pavani whispered, “I never thought of it as sacrifice.”

“Why?”

“Because when you are born with someone… when you grow up with someone… when you cannot walk away from them even for one minute…”

She paused.

“Love becomes different.”

Avani closed her eyes.

Pavani continued.

“I never compromised because you forced me. I compromised because your happiness became part of mine.”

Avani began crying silently.

“But now?” she asked.

Pavani knew what she meant.

Now there were two men.

Two futures.

Two dreams.

And only one choice.

Chapter 7: Pavani’s Decision

The next morning, Pavani made her decision.

“I think you should marry Arjun.”

Avani looked at her.

“What?”

“You love him.”

“So do you love Karthik.”

Pavani smiled sadly.

“Yes.”

“Then?”

Pavani looked toward the window.

“Avani, you have always dreamed loudly.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means everyone knows what you want. Everyone can see it. Everyone can hear it.”

She paused.

“But my dreams were always quiet.”

Avani felt something break inside her.

Pavani continued.

“Maybe that is why I learned to keep them inside.”

“Don’t say that.”

“It’s true.”

Avani held her hand.

Pavani smiled.

“I have spent my whole life being happy when you were happy. Let me do that once more.”

Avani immediately shook her head.

“No.”

Pavani was surprised.

“No?”

“No.”

“But Avani—”

“No.”

“Why are you shouting?”

“Because if I don’t shout, you won’t listen!”

For a few seconds, even Pavani began laughing through her tears.

Then Avani became serious.

“Not this time.”

Pavani looked at her.

Avani spoke slowly.

“Not this time, Pavani.”

Chapter 8: The Letter

A week later, Avani asked Pavani to meet her on the terrace.

The evening sky was orange.

The two sisters sat quietly.

Avani handed Pavani an envelope.

“What is this?”

“Read it.”

Pavani opened it.

It was a letter.

She began reading.

My dear Pavani,

I have spent my entire life believing that I was the stronger one.

I thought strength meant speaking loudly.

I thought strength meant winning every argument.

I thought strength meant getting what I wanted.

But today I understand something.

Sometimes the strongest person is the one who can quietly give up something without making the other person feel guilty.

Pavani stopped reading.

Her vision blurred.

Avani said softly, “Continue.”

Pavani continued.

You have been doing that for me since childhood.

You gave me the window seat.

You gave me the blue dress.

You gave me your time.

You gave me your silence when I wanted to speak.

You gave me your choices when I was too selfish to understand that they were yours.

And now you are ready to give me your future.

No, Pavani.

I cannot accept that gift.

Pavani began crying.

Avani continued speaking, even before she finished the letter.

“Marriage is not just another decision.”

Pavani looked at her.

Avani’s voice trembled.

“It is a great gift.”

She held Pavani’s hand tightly.

“And for the first time in my life, I want to give you that gift.”

Pavani shook her head.

“Avani…”

“Listen to me.”

Avani’s eyes were full of tears.

“Whole life, you compromised for me. Every time we disagreed, I won. Every time I wanted something, you found a way to make yourself want something else.”

Pavani cried silently.

Avani continued.

“I used to think I was winning.”

She smiled painfully.

“But now I understand. I was winning because you allowed me to.”

Pavani whispered, “I don’t want you to sacrifice your happiness.”

Avani immediately replied.

“This is not sacrifice.”

“What?”

“This is my happiness.”

Pavani stared at her.

Avani touched her cheek.

“For once in my life, Pavani… let me choose something for you.”

Chapter 9: The Hardest Goodbye

Avani met Arjun alone.

It was one of the most difficult conversations of her life.

Arjun knew immediately.

“What happened?”

Avani sat quietly.

“I need to tell you something.”

His face changed.

“No.”

She looked at him.

“You don’t even know what I am going to say.”

“I know.”

Avani began crying.

“I love you.”

“I know.”

“I will always love you.”

Arjun closed his eyes.

“Then why?”

Avani took a long breath.

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“Because for the first time, I have understood what Pavani has given me.”

Arjun remained silent.

“All my life, I took her compromises as something natural. I thought she was simply easy-going.”

She smiled through tears.

“But she wasn’t giving up small things because they didn’t matter.”

Her voice broke.

“She was giving them up because I mattered to her.”

Arjun looked at her with pain.

“And now?”

“Now something matters to her.”

“Karthik.”

Avani nodded.

Arjun looked away.

For several minutes, neither of them spoke.

Finally, he asked, “And what about you?”

Avani smiled sadly.

“I will live with my decision.”

“That doesn’t answer my question.”

“No.”

Arjun’s eyes filled with tears.

“I wanted to give you a life where you never had to compromise.”

Avani whispered, “Then give me this.”

He looked at her.

“Respect my choice.”

Arjun slowly nodded.

Then, for the first time, Avani saw tears in the eyes of the man who had always stood so strongly beside her.

He held her hand.

“You are still trying to win the argument.”

Avani laughed through her tears.

“Yes.”

“Do you know something?”

“What?”

“This time, I am letting you win.”

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Avani closed her eyes.

That was their goodbye.

Chapter 10: A Wedding of Three Lives

The wedding was beautiful.

But it was not a day without pain.

Arjun did not attend.

He sent a letter.

Karthik read it privately and handed it to Avani.

It said:

Some people come into our lives to stay. Some come to teach us how deeply we can love.
I wanted a life with you, Avani. But I will never make your happiness feel like a mistake.
Today, I am not losing you with anger. I am letting you go with love.

Avani folded the letter carefully.

Then she looked at Pavani.

The bride was trembling.

“Nervous?”

“Very.”

“Good.”

“What?”

“If you weren’t nervous, I would be worried.”

Pavani laughed.

Then she suddenly began crying.

Avani looked at her.

“What happened?”

“I don’t deserve this.”

Avani’s expression changed.

“Don’t ever say that again.”

Pavani wiped her tears.

“I mean… after everything—”

Avani interrupted her.

“Stop counting.”

“What?”

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“Don’t count who gave more and who received more.”

She held Pavani close.

“We are sisters.”

Pavani whispered, “More than sisters.”

Avani smiled.

“Yes.”

Pavani looked at her.

“Will you regret it?”

Avani was silent for a moment.

Then she answered honestly.

“Maybe.”

Pavani’s eyes widened.

Avani continued.

“Some days may be difficult. Some days I may remember Arjun and cry.”

Pavani began crying again.

“But regret and love are not the same thing.”

She touched Pavani’s forehead gently.

“I can miss him and still know that I made the right decision.”

Pavani whispered,

“Why are you doing this?”

Avani smiled.

“Because one of us had to learn how to compromise.”

Pavani laughed through her tears.

“And of course, you had to make it dramatic.”

“That is my personality.”

Chapter 11: The First Morning

The wedding was fixed.

All arrangements completed.

Wedding day arrived.

All the rituals performed and both got married to Karthik.



After the wedding, life changed.

Not suddenly.

Not magically.

Karthik became part of their home.

He never tried to separate Avani and Pavani emotionally.

He understood that loving Pavani meant respecting the bond that had existed before him.

One morning, Pavani woke up early.

Karthik had arranged a small table near the window.

There were flowers.

A notebook.

And a new pen.

Pavani looked surprised.

“What is this?”

“Your writing space.”

Avani immediately looked offended.

“Excuse me. Where is my gift?”

Karthik smiled.

“You have an entire house to make noise in.”

Pavani laughed.

Avani crossed her arms.

“I don’t like you anymore.”

“Good. I married Pavani.”

For the first time in many months, Avani laughed freely.

Later that day, Pavani found Avani standing alone near the window.

“You are thinking about him.”

Avani did not deny it.

“Yes.”

Pavani stood quietly.

Avani whispered, “Don’t feel guilty.”

“I do.”

“Don’t.”

“But—”

“Pavani.”

She turned toward her sister.

“You gave me years of your life without asking me to feel guilty.”

Pavani began crying.

Avani smiled.

“Now let me give you one decision without making you carry its weight.”

Chapter 12: The Gift

Years passed.

Pavani became a successful writer.

Her stories were filled with quiet people.

People who loved deeply but spoke little.

People whose sacrifices were invisible to the world.

One day, during the release of her latest novel, a journalist asked her:

“Your writing always speaks about sacrifice. Who inspired you?”

Pavani looked toward Avani.

Avani was sitting beside her.

Pavani smiled.

“My sister.”

The audience applauded.

Avani looked embarrassed.

“Don’t start crying on stage,” she whispered.

Pavani laughed.

Then the journalist asked another question.

“What is the greatest gift you have ever received?”

Pavani looked down for a moment.

Then she answered.

“Permission.”

Everyone looked confused.

Pavani continued.

“Sometimes, people who love us give us money. Sometimes they give us opportunities. Sometimes they give us advice.”

She looked toward Avani.

“But once in my life, someone gave me something much greater.”

Avani’s eyes filled with tears.

“She gave me permission to choose my own happiness.”

The entire hall became silent.

Pavani reached for Avani’s hand.

“All my life, I thought I was compromising because I was weaker.”

Avani shook her head.

“You were never weak.”

Pavani smiled.

“No. I know that now.”

She turned toward the audience.

“My sister taught me that love is not about always giving up your dreams for someone else.”

She paused.

“Sometimes love is also allowing another person to have their dream.”

Avani could no longer control her tears.

That evening, when they returned home, they sat together in silence.

Pavani suddenly asked, “Do you remember the window seat?”

Avani smiled.

“Yes.”

“You always took it.”

“Of course.”

Pavani laughed.

After a moment, Avani said softly, “You can have it now.”

Pavani looked at her.

“Really?”

Avani smiled.

“Don’t get used to it.”

Both sisters burst into laughter.

Then Pavani rested her head gently against Avani.

“Thank you.”

Avani looked at her.

“For what?”

“For seeing me.”

Avani’s smile disappeared.

Her eyes filled with tears.

Pavani continued.

“Not as your other half.”

She paused.

“Not as someone who would always agree with you.”

Her voice became soft.

“But as Pavani.”

Avani held her hand.

“And thank you.”

Pavani looked surprised.

“For what?”

Avani smiled through tears.

“For teaching me that winning every argument does not mean winning at life.”

The two sisters sat together as the evening slowly disappeared.

They had entered the world together.

They had faced every difficulty together. They had shared pain.

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They had shared laughter. They had shared every road life placed before them.

But finally, after all those years, Avani had learned the most important lesson of her life.

Love was not about holding on to what you wanted.

Sometimes—

love was about placing happiness into the hands of the person who had spent a lifetime placing yours before their own.

And that was Avani's greatest victory.

Not winning an argument.

Not proving that she was right.

Not getting the person she loved.

Her greatest victory was the day she looked at Pavani and said:

"All my life, you gave me the first choice. Today, my sister, it is your turn."

And Pavani finally understood that the greatest gift Avani had given her was not a marriage.

It was something even more precious.

For the first time in her life, Pavani had not compromised.

And Avani— the girl who always wanted to win—

had finally discovered the beauty of giving…….

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THE RIDE CONTINUES
The scooter ride began in childhood.
The friendship continued through every road of life.
And after almost thirty-five years, the ride still continues.

Prakash and Anand had been friends for as long as either of them could remember.

They had grown up in the same small neighborhood, studied in the same school, played cricket in the same dusty playground, and shared almost every important moment of their childhood.

If Prakash got scolded by a teacher, Anand would be waiting outside the classroom.

If Anand fought with another boy, Prakash would stand beside him—even when he had no idea what the fight was about.

Their friendship had never needed big promises.

It simply existed.

But neither of them knew that one small incident from their childhood would one day travel through time and return as one of the greatest gifts of their lives.

When they were small both used to go on one bicycle.

Some times Prakash used to drive and some times Anand.



A Scooter and a Fear

Both become young.

Anand's father owned an old scooter.

It was not a new or stylish vehicle. Its paint had faded, and sometimes it took several kicks before the engine finally started.

But to Prakash, that scooter looked like something extraordinary.

Prakash's family could not afford a scooter. In fact, they did not even own a bicycle.

Whenever Anand's father allowed them to take the scooter around the empty ground near their house, Anand would happily sit behind Prakash and say,

"Come on! Today you have to try."

Prakash immediately stepped back.

"No, no. I will fall down."

"You won't."

"What if I hit something?"

"There is nothing here to hit!"

"What if the scooter falls?"

"Then we will lift it," Anand replied casually.

Prakash would look at the scooter as if it were a wild animal waiting to attack him.

For several days, Anand tried to convince him.

But Prakash refused.

One evening, Anand finally held his shoulders and said,

"Prakash, why are you deciding that you cannot do something before even trying it?"

Prakash remained silent.

Anand smiled.

"I am here. I will sit behind you. If you lose balance, I will help you. But at least start."

Those words somehow stayed with Prakash.

That evening,

with trembling hands,

he sat on the scooter.

Anand holded scooter from behind.

"Slowly," Anand said.

Prakash started the scooter.

The scooter moved.



For the first few seconds, everything went well.

Then Prakash panicked.

“Anand!”

“What happened?”

“I don’t know how to stop!”

“Prakash! Pull the brake!”

The scooter stopped suddenly.

Both of them almost fell.

For a moment, they looked at each other.

Then they burst into laughter.

“See?” Anand said. “You are still alive.”

Prakash laughed.

“That is because you were sitting behind me!”

Day after day, Anand continued encouraging him.

Sometimes Prakash made mistakes.

Sometimes the scooter stopped in the middle.

Sometimes he took a turn so wide that Anand would shout,

“Are you turning the scooter or taking it to another city?”

But slowly, Prakash’s fear disappeared.

One day, Anand got down from the scooter and said,

“Now ride alone.”

Prakash looked nervous.

“You are not coming?”

“No.”

“What if I fall?”

Anand smiled.

“Then get up and ride again.”

Prakash rode forward.

A few minutes later, he returned with a broad smile.

“I did it!”

Anand raised both hands.

“I told you!”

Years later, Prakash would often remember that day.

At that time, he had thought Anand had merely taught him how to ride a scooter.

He did not know that Anand had actually taught him something much bigger.

Sometimes, all a person needs is someone standing beside them until they learn to stand on their own.

Life Moves Forward

The two boys grew up.

School ended.

College began.

Responsibilities slowly entered their lives.

Their childhood conversations about cricket, movies, and games were gradually replaced by conversations about careers, jobs, money, and the future.

Prakash was not from a financially comfortable family.

He knew that he had to build his future carefully.

While continuing his studies, he started doing part-time delivery work for different delivery apps.

His ability to ride a scooter and later a bike became an important part of his life.

Every evening, after classes, he would put on his helmet and begin his deliveries.

Some days he returned home late at night.

Some days it rained.

Some days the heat was unbearable.

But Prakash continued.

After completing several deliveries, he would look at the money he had earned and smile.

Whenever Anand met him, Prakash would jokingly say,

“Do you know who deserves a commission from my delivery income?”

Anand would laugh.

“Who?”

“You!”

“Why me?”

“Because if you had not forced me to learn scooter driving, I might still be standing near a scooter and saying, ‘What if I fall?’”

Anand laughed.

“You learned it yourself.”

“No,” Prakash said seriously. “I learned it because you believed I could.”

Sometimes Anand would simply smile and change the subject.

But Prakash never forgot.

For nearly two months, he worked extremely hard.

He accepted delivery orders whenever he had time.

Instead of spending his earnings carelessly, he saved them.

He had a plan.

He wanted to learn new software skills and improve his career opportunities.

After weeks of hard work, Prakash finally had enough money.

He joined a software course.

The course opened a new world for him.

He studied seriously and began developing confidence about his future.

Anand, meanwhile, had also completed his studies successfully.

He too wanted to learn software courses.

He had the talent.

He had the interest.

He had the determination.

But at that particular time, his family was going through financial difficulty.

Recently, Anand's sister had been married.

A large part of the family's savings had been spent on the wedding.

One evening, Anand quietly spoke to his father.

"Father, I found a good software course. I think it will help me get a better job."

His father remained silent for a few moments. Anand immediately understood.

His father looked tired.

"I know this course is important, Anand," he said softly. "But give me some time."

Anand forced a smile.

"It's okay, Father. There is no hurry."

But there was a hurry.

Every day, he saw his friends moving ahead.

New courses were beginning.

Job opportunities were appearing.

And Anand felt as though time was moving forward while he remained in the same place.

He did not blame his father. That made the situation even more painful.

One night, Anand sat alone on the terrace.

Prakash called him.

"Where are you?"

"At home."

"Come outside. Let's have tea."

"I am not in the mood."

Prakash immediately sensed something was wrong.

After several minutes of persuasion, Anand finally agreed.

They sat at their usual tea stall.

Prakash noticed that Anand was unusually quiet.

"What happened?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"Anand."

Still, Anand remained silent.

Prakash knew his friend well.

Finally, Anand sighed.

“It is nothing serious. I just wanted to join a software course. But things are a little difficult at home now.”

He explained everything.

Prakash listened quietly.

Anand finished his tea and smiled.

“Don’t worry. Something will work out.”

But Prakash could see the disappointment behind that smile.

That night, he could not sleep.

His friend needed help.

And Prakash remembered something.

A dusty ground.

An old scooter.

His own trembling hands.

And a young Anand saying—

“Why are you deciding that you cannot do something before even trying it?”

The next morning, Prakash checked his savings.

He had some money remaining from his part-time delivery work.

It was money he had carefully earned through long hours, late evenings, rain, traffic, and exhaustion.

For a moment, he hesitated.

He had his own plans.

He could save the money.

He could use it for himself.

But then another thought came to him.

Would I even have earned this money if Anand had not helped me overcome my fear?

The answer was simple.

No.

Prakash picked up his phone.

“Anand, meet me this evening.”

“Why?”

“Just come.”

The Return of a Ride

They met at the same place where they had spent countless evenings during their childhood on terrace of

anand’s home.

Prakash handed Anand an envelope.

Anand looked confused.

“What is this?”

“Open it.”

Anand opened the envelope.

His expression changed immediately.

“Prakash… what is this?”

“The course fee.”

Anand immediately tried to return it.

“No. No, I cannot take this.”

Prakash pushed the envelope back.

“Listen to me.”

Anand looked at him.

Prakash’s voice became emotional.

“Do you remember your father’s old scooter?”

Anand smiled.

“Of course.”

“Do you remember how scared I was?”

Anand laughed.

“You were not scared. You were terrified.”

Prakash smiled.

“Yes. I was terrified.”

Then his expression became serious.

“You forced me to sit on that scooter.”

“I didn’t force you.”

“You did.”

“Maybe a little.”

“And you kept encouraging me. You sat behind me until I learned to balance. Then one day you got down and told me to ride alone.”

Anand remained silent.

Prakash continued.

“After that, I learned to ride a bike too. Because of that, I could take up delivery work. Because of that work, I

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earned this money.”

Anand looked down at the envelope.

Prakash’s eyes became moist.

“Do you know something? Every time I rode through the city making deliveries, somewhere in my mind, I remembered you.”

Anand slowly looked up.

Prakash continued.

“Sometimes I would be tired. Sometimes I would be riding late at night. And I would remember the boy who told me not to be afraid of falling.”

Anand’s eyes filled with tears.

Prakash placed his hand on his friend’s shoulder.

“That day, you helped me take my first ride. After all these years, that ride has come back to you.”

Anand tried once again to refuse. “Prakash, this is your hard-earned money. I cannot take it.”

Prakash smiled and said, “And who helped me earn it?”

Anand remained silent.

“You did.”

“Still, I will return it once I get a job,” Anand said firmly.

Prakash nodded. “Return it if you want. But don’t delay your future because you are waiting for money.”



For a few moments, neither of them spoke.

Then Anand tightly held Prakash's hand.

"I will never forget this."

Prakash smiled.

"Then don't forget one more thing."

"What?"

"When you become successful, help someone else who is afraid to start."

Anand nodded.

That evening, two childhood friends sat together in silence.

They did not need many words.

Their friendship had completed a beautiful circle.

The Road Ahead

Anand joined the software course.

Prakash continued improving his skills.

Both of them worked hard.

There were interviews.

There were rejections.

There were moments of disappointment.

But neither allowed the other to give up.

Whenever Prakash felt discouraged, Anand reminded him,

"You learned to ride only because you tried."

Whenever Anand felt that he was falling behind, Prakash would say,

"Remember what you told me? If you fall, get up and ride again."

Slowly, their hard work began producing results.

Prakash got a good job.

A few months later, Anand received an excellent opportunity as well.

The day Anand received his appointment letter,

the first person he called was Prakash.

"Prakash!"

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“What happened?”

“I got the job!” Anand said very happily.

He showed the shining appointment letter to Prakash.

Prakash felt happy to see that Appointment letter.



For a moment, Prakash remained silent.

Then he shouted,

“I knew it!”

A few weeks later, Anand met Prakash again.

This time, he carried an envelope.

Prakash immediately understood.

“You don’t have to return it,” he said.

Anand smiled.

“I know.”

He placed the envelope on the table.

“But I promised.”

Prakash looked at him.

Anand continued,

“That money helped me when I needed it most. You did not just give me course fees, Prakash. You gave me time. You stopped me from losing months of my life waiting for money.”

Prakash slowly accepted the envelope.

But Anand was not finished.

“Keep it.”

“What?”

“Keep it for someone else.”

Prakash looked surprised.

Anand smiled.

“Maybe one day we will find another person standing in front of a scooter, afraid to begin.”

Prakash laughed.

“And then?”

“And then,” Anand said, “we will give him a push.”

Both of them laughed.

Years Later

One Sunday morning, Prakash and Anand met near their old neighborhood.

Anand pointed toward the empty ground.

“Do you remember?”

Prakash looked toward the place.

The ground had changed.

New buildings had come up.

The old scooter was gone.

Their childhood had disappeared into the passing years.

But the memory remained.

Prakash smiled.

“That is where my career started.”

Anand looked confused.

“Your career?”

“Yes.”

“With a scooter?”

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“With a friend who refused to let me remain afraid.”

Anand became silent.

Prakash placed his arm around his friend’s shoulder.

“People think help always has to be something big. Sometimes, a few encouraging words can change the direction of an entire life.”

Anand nodded.

“And sometimes,” he said, “the help you give someone comes back to you from a road you never expected.”

They stood there for a few moments.

After some time both went to Anand’s home terrace.

The place where they used to share their good and bad of life.

Meanwhile Anand’s mom came to terrace.

She felt happy to see two childhood friends with their friendship beside whole life around 45 years.

She blessed both.



Two childhood friends.

Older now.

Working in good jobs.

Living better lives.

But still carrying the same friendship that had begun years ago.

A friendship that had survived childhood, financial struggles, career worries, and the changing paths of life.

Prakash looked at Anand and smiled.

“You know, I still remember your first driving lesson.”

Anand laughed.

“And I still remember how scared you were.”

“I was not scared.”

“You were terrified.”

Both of them laughed again.

Then Prakash said quietly,

“Thank you, Anand.”

Anand looked at him.

“For what?”

“For teaching me how to ride.”

Anand smiled.

“And thank you, Prakash.”

“For what?”

“For showing me that sometimes, the best return for help is not money.”

Prakash looked at him.

Anand continued,

“It is remembering the person who held your hand when you needed it.”

The two friends walked away together.

The road ahead was long.

But they knew one thing.

No matter how far life took them, there would always be one road where their friendship began—

with an old scooter, a frightened boy, and a friend who simply said:

“Don’t be afraid. I am here. Start.”

And years later, when the roles changed, the answer came back in another form:

“You helped me begin my journey. Now let me help you continue yours.”

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True friendship is not about keeping a record of who helped whom.

It is about remembering the hands that lifted you—and being ready to offer your hand when the same friend needs you.

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When the Dream
TOUCHED THE
FALLS
Some dreams take years to reach us.
But when they finally do, every step of the journey
becomes worth remembering.
NIAGARA FALLS
PASSPORT
A JOURNEY OF DREAMS, STRUGGLES,
AND UNWAVERING DETERMINATION

1. A Dream Born in a Classroom

Rahul was eight years old when he first heard the name **Niagara Falls**.

It was an ordinary afternoon at school. The summer heat had made the classroom unusually quiet, and even the ceiling fan seemed tired as it turned slowly above the students.

Their geography teacher had opened a book and begun speaking about famous places around the world.

There were mountains.

There were rivers. There were deserts.

And then she came to a picture that immediately caught Rahul's attention.

It showed an enormous wall of water falling with unbelievable force. White mist rose into the air. The water appeared endless.

Rahul leaned forward.

His teacher spoke about the waterfall and explained where it was located.

"Niagara Falls is one of the most famous waterfalls in the world," she said.

"People from many countries travel there to see its beauty."

Rahul looked at the picture for a long time. He did not know why, but something happened inside him.

He imagined the Niagara falls.



He imagined standing near that waterfall. He imagined hearing the sound of the falling water.

He imagined feeling tiny drops of water on his face.

When the class ended, most of the students closed their books and ran outside.

But Rahul remained at his desk for a few seconds longer. He looked at the picture again.

Then, almost like making a secret promise to himself, he whispered,

“One day, I will go there.”

At that age, Rahul did not understand how difficult or expensive such a journey could be.

He did not know about visas.

He did not know about jobs, passports, interviews, or international travel.

He only knew one thing.

Somewhere far away in the world, there was a waterfall called Niagara Falls.

And one day, he wanted to stand before it.

That small thought followed him home. That evening, Rahul told his parents about it.

His father was reading a newspaper when Rahul came and sat beside him.

“Dad,” Rahul said.

“Yes?”

“Do you know Niagara Falls?”

His father lowered the newspaper.

“Yes. Why?”

“I am going to see it one day.”

His father smiled.

“Is that so?”

“Yes.”

Rahul’s mother, who was working in the kitchen, heard the conversation.

“First finish your homework,” she said with a smile. “Then you can start planning your trip.”

Rahul became serious and said “I will finish my homework. I will study also. But I will go.”

His parents laughed affectionately.

At that moment, it sounded like one more childhood dream.

Children often wanted to become astronauts, pilots, scientists, movie stars, or athletes.

Rahul wanted to see Niagara Falls.

Nobody imagined that the small boy sitting beside his father would carry that dream with him for years.

But Rahul did.

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2. The Dream That Refused to Leave

As Rahul grew older,

many things changed.

His school changed.

His friends changed.

His interests changed.

The small boy who once spent hours playing outside gradually became a student concerned about examinations and marks.

But Niagara Falls remained.

Sometimes it disappeared into the background of his busy life.

Then suddenly, he would see a photograph.

A television program would show the waterfalls.

A magazine would carry an article about America.

And immediately, the old dream would return.

Rahul would stop and look.

Every time, the same thought appeared.

One day.

During his teenage years,

Rahul began to understand that dreams needed a path.

Simply wishing to go somewhere was not enough.

He needed education.

He needed a career.

He needed an opportunity.

He needed to work hard to achieve.

That was when his childhood dream slowly became connected to his future.

Rahul decided that he would study engineering.

He analyzed after completing Engineering, he could get some software job and fly to USA.

He made road path to achieve his dream.

He used to think about going America and visiting Niagara falls.

His parents were also happy as his dream of visiting Niagara Falls Made him to put his goal.

They were happy to see his interest in setting up a goal and building career to achieve it..

They were sure that he will achieve his goal

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He worked hard and completed his education.

During his college days, many of his friends spoke about going abroad.

Some wanted higher studies.

Some wanted jobs.

Some simply wanted to experience life in another country.

Rahul listened to them, but his dream was slightly different.

He did not want to leave India merely because going abroad sounded exciting.

He wanted to earn an opportunity.

He wanted his professional abilities to take him there.

And somewhere within that dream was Niagara Falls.

He imagined the day he would arrive in America,

settle into his work,

and finally make the journey to the place that had lived in his imagination since childhood.

After completing engineering,

Rahul joined a company.

The dream had now become more practical.

America was no longer just a place in a geography book.

It had become a possible destination.

And Rahul began thinking more and working toward it.



3. The First Opportunity

Rahul worked sincerely.

He learned quickly.

He volunteered for difficult assignments.

He improved his technical knowledge.

He learned how to explain complicated concepts clearly.

His seniors appreciated his presentations and demonstrations.

Within a few years, an opportunity appeared.

The company was looking for someone to work on an assignment in the United States.

Rahul's heart immediately began to race.

This could be it.

For several days, he lived with excitement.

He imagined calling his parents.

He imagined booking his flight.

And, of course, he imagined Niagara Falls.

But the opportunity did not materialize.

There were complications.

Documents were delayed.

The visa process did not move forward as expected.

Finally, the assignment was given to someone else.

Rahul tried to remain calm.

"It's okay," he told himself. "Another opportunity will come."

His parents encouraged him.

His father said, "One opportunity has gone. That doesn't mean the road has ended."

Rahul nodded.

And he continued working.

4. Almost

The second opportunity came a few months later.

This time Rahul was more cautious.

He did not become too excited.

He told himself not to expect too much.

But inside, hope quietly returned.

The project required technical knowledge that Rahul possessed.

His manager spoke positively about him.

Everything appeared to be moving in the right direction.

Then once again, circumstances changed.

The requirement itself was modified.

The company decided to send another employee who was already available.

Rahul was disappointed.

But he smiled.

“Maybe next time.”

Then came another opportunity.

And another.

Each time, Rahul moved closer.

Each time, something happened.

A change in project.

A visa issue.

A change in management.

A different requirement.

A position that was suddenly put on hold.

The pattern began to hurt.

Rahul started wondering whether he was chasing something that simply did not belong to him.

5. The Weight of Repeated Disappointment

Three years passed.

Rahul had worked for more than one company.

He had attended interviews.

He had improved his skills.

He had changed projects.

He had prepared himself repeatedly.

Yet America remained far away.

Sometimes, he felt embarrassed even to speak about it.

Because people remembered.

Friends would jokingly ask,

“So, Rahul, when are we getting the good news?”

Someone would laugh.

“Niagara Falls is still waiting for you!”

Another person might say,

“You have been planning this for years. Maybe you should choose another dream.”

Rahul usually smiled.

He had learned to smile even when he was hurting.

But words had weight.

Sometimes, after returning home, he would sit alone in his room.

His suitcase had never been packed.

His passport had not taken him anywhere.

His dream remained exactly where it had always been.

Far away.

One evening, Rahul sat quietly on working table thinking about his failures



His father came and sat beside him.

For several minutes, neither of them spoke.

Finally, his father asked,

“Are you thinking about America?”

Rahul smiled weakly.

“Is it that obvious?”

“To your father, yes.”

Rahul looked into the distance.

“Dad, sometimes I wonder whether I should stop trying.”

His father remained silent.

Rahul continued.

“I have tried for three years. Every time I think I am close, something goes wrong. Maybe it is not meant for me.”

His father looked at him carefully.

“Do you really want to give up?”

Rahul did not answer.

His father repeated the question.

“Not because you are tired. Not because someone laughed at you. Not because an opportunity was delayed. Do you truly want to give up?”

Rahul looked down.

After a long silence, he said,

“No.”

His father smiled.

“Then don’t call it failure.”

Rahul looked at him.

“Call it waiting.”

Those words remained in Rahul’s mind.

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6. His Sister’s Promise

Rahul’s younger sister had always understood how deeply he cared about Niagara Falls.

She also knew how much he disliked sympathy.

So she chose humour instead.

One day, she came home holding her phone and said,

“Rahul, I have found the solution to your problem.”

Rahul looked at her suspiciously.

“What problem?”

“Your American dream.”

“What is the solution?”

“I will marry someone living in the United States.”

Rahul stared at her.

She continued confidently.

“Then I will invite you. You can stay with us. I will arrange everything.”

Rahul began laughing.

“And what if you don’t find someone in America?”

She pointed at him.

“Then I will search specifically for an American resident. After all, my brother’s Niagara Falls dream is important.”

Their mother laughed from the kitchen.

Rahul shook his head.

“You are crazy.”

His sister sat beside him.

Then her voice became softer.

“But seriously, why are you so stubborn? You can visit America in many ways.”

Rahul looked at her.

“I know.”

“Then why does it matter so much?”

Rahul thought for a moment.

Then he answered.

“Because I don’t want to reach there by accident.”

She listened.

“I don’t want to go because someone invited me. I don’t want to go because somebody arranged a trip for me.”

He looked at his hands.

“I want to know that I worked for it. I want to reach there because I became capable enough for someone to trust me with an opportunity.”

His sister did not joke this time.

She simply said,

“Then you will.”

Rahul smiled.

“How do you know?”

She replied,

“Because you are too stubborn to stop trying.”

7. The Opportunity That Changed Everything

The next opportunity did not arrive dramatically.

There was no warning.

No sign from the sky.

No extraordinary moment.

Rahul simply received information about a position in another company.

The role involved supporting important operations in the United States.

Rahul applied.

He attended the first interview.

Then another.

Then a technical discussion.

Then a presentation.

This time, Rahul did not allow himself to dream too much.

He had learned that hope could be dangerous.

Still, he prepared carefully.

During one of the interviews, he was asked to explain a complicated technical issue.

Rahul explained it clearly.

Then he was asked to demonstrate a solution.

He did.

The discussion continued.

For nearly an hour, Rahul spoke about his experience, his approach to problems, and his ability to communicate with teams.

When the interview ended, he felt satisfied.

But he refused to become excited.

“I have felt this way before,” he reminded himself.

A few days passed.

Then a week. Then another.

Finally, his phone rang.

It was the company.

Rahul answered.

“Hello?”

The voice on the other side spoke.

“Rahul, we have completed the selection process.”

Rahul sat upright.

“Yes?”

There was a brief pause.

“We were impressed with your technical expertise, presentation skills, and your ability to explain and demonstrate complex solutions.”

Rahul held his breath.

“We would like to offer you a key position supporting our operations in the United States.”

For several seconds, Rahul heard nothing.

The voice continued.

“Rahul? Are you there?”

He closed his eyes.

“Yes,” he whispered.

His throat had become dry.

“Are you accepting the offer?”

Rahul suddenly laughed. Then tears filled his eyes.

“Yes,” he said.

“Yes. Of course.”

When the call ended, Rahul remained seated.

His hands were trembling. He looked around his room.

Nothing had changed. The same table.

The same chair. The same walls. But his life had changed. He covered his face with both hands.

And he cried.



8. The Day His Family Celebrated

Rahul walked into the living room.

His mother immediately noticed his face.

“What happened?”

Rahul could not answer immediately.

His father looked up.

His sister stopped using her phone.

Rahul simply stood there.

Then he said,

“I got the job.”

His father smiled.

“That is wonderful.”

Rahul shook his head.

“No, Dad.”

His eyes filled with tears again.

“The United States position.”

For one second, nobody spoke.

Then his mother rushed toward him.

“Really?”

Rahul nodded.

His sister screamed.

His father stood up slowly.

Rahul laughed and cried at the same time.

His mother held his face.

“You finally got it.”

Rahul could only nod.

His father hugged him.

It was not a dramatic hug.

His father was not a man who easily expressed emotions.

But Rahul could feel something unusual in his embrace.

Pride.

Relief.

Happiness.

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Perhaps his father was remembering all the evenings when Rahul had returned home disappointed.

His sister immediately began celebrating.

“Wait! I have to cancel my American marriage plan!”

Rahul laughed.

“Please do.”

She pointed at him.

“But remember, when you go to Niagara Falls, I am coming with you one day.”

“Done.”

That night, Rahul could not sleep.

The dream was no longer a distant possibility.

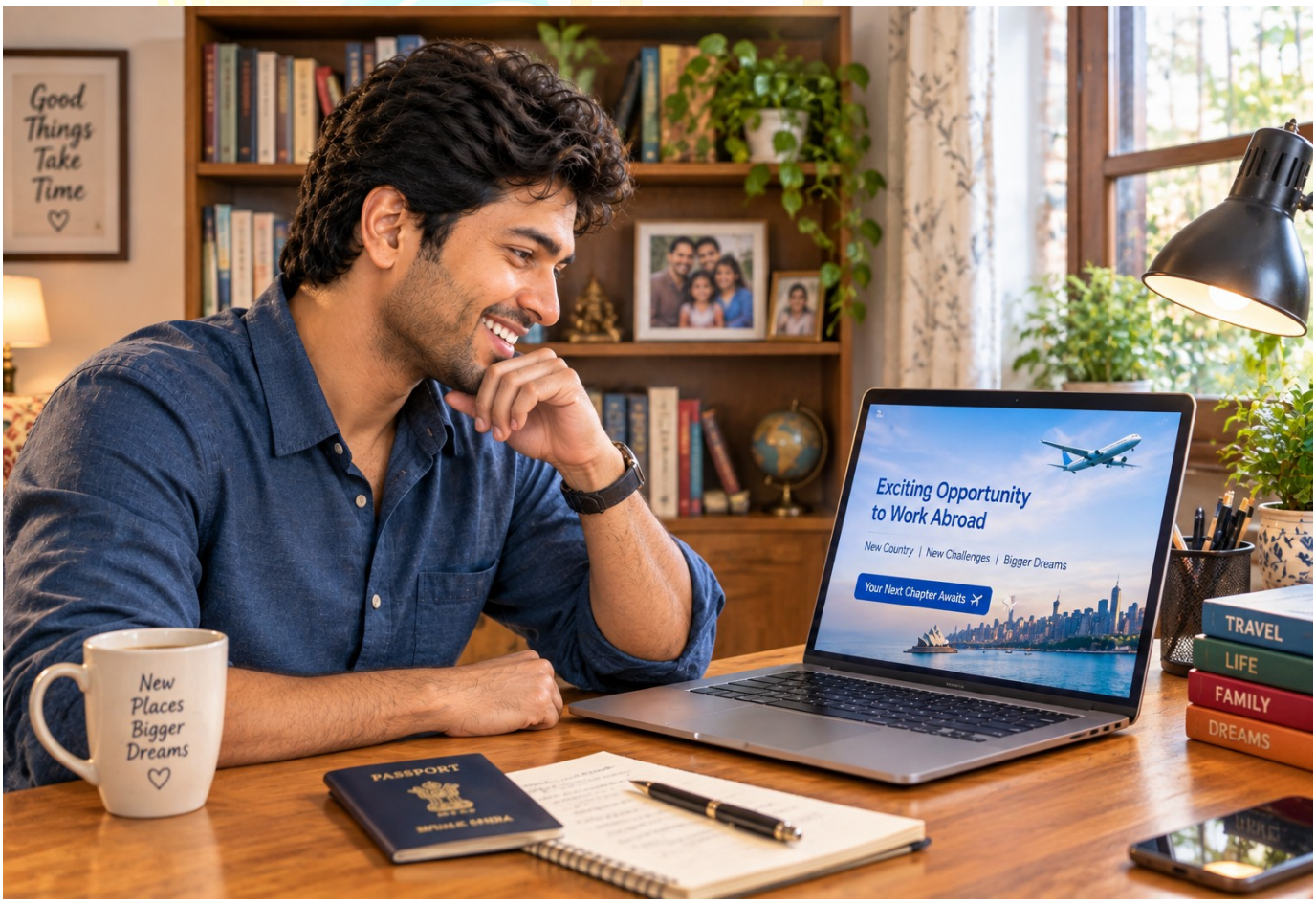
He sat on the same table where he sat so many days thinking about his dream right from his childhood

The chair knows him very much and about the efforts he had put in from his childhood.

He reminded the nights he spent by studying till late hours.

He reminded the Sundays he spent studying on same table without going any where.

While sitting On the same study table he punched the air that he is about achieve his dream.



9. The Journey Begins

The following weeks were filled with formalities.

Documents.

Passport procedures.

Visa applications.

Medical examinations.

Travel arrangements.

Every small approval brought Rahul closer.

But the visa process still frightened him.

Too many opportunities had disappeared at that stage.

When the visa was finally approved, Rahul looked at the document again and again.

It felt almost unbelievable.

This time, nothing had stopped him.

The departure date was fixed.

Rahul began packing.

His mother repeatedly checked whether he had packed everything.

“Take another jacket.”

“Amma, I already have one.”

“You don’t know how cold it will be.”

“I can buy one there.”

“Why waste money?”

Rahul smiled.

His father helped him arrange his documents.

His sister secretly added a small note to his bag.

Rahul discovered it later.

It said:

“Don’t forget why you went there. Work hard. Enjoy your success. And yes—send me pictures from Niagara Falls!”

Rahul kept the note.

10. The Airport Goodbye

The day of departure arrived.

Rahul's suitcase stood near the door.

For years, he had imagined this moment.

But now that it had arrived, he felt strangely emotional.

His mother looked at him again and again.

His father gave him practical advice.

His sister kept joking because she did not want anyone to become too emotional.

At the airport, everything suddenly became real.

Rahul hugged his parents.

His mother whispered,

"Take care of yourself."

Rahul nodded.

His father said,

"You have worked hard for this. Now do your best."

His sister hugged him tightly.

Then she said,

"And Niagara Falls?"

Rahul smiled.

"First office. Then Niagara."

She stepped back.

"Promise?"

"Promise."

As Rahul walked toward the security area, he turned around.

His family was still standing there.

For a moment, he felt like the same little boy who had promised his father that he would one day visit Niagara Falls.

He took the board pass and sat on the chair near the window.

From there he saw the flight to USA was getting ready to take the passengers in.

He was inching towards his dream.

His heart got heavy.

Years of dream....

Getting into reality.

Few more hours only left to achieve his dream.

He looked the boarding pass again.

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Few tears came yet again….



He took a deep breath.

Some moments make us heavy when they are about to get into reality.

He was in same situation. Soon flight started allowing passengers and he entered the flight and sat in his seat.

11. America at Last

When the aircraft began moving, Rahul looked through the window.

His heart was beating rapidly.

Soon, the aircraft rose into the sky.

India slowly disappeared beneath the clouds.

Rahul closed his eyes.

His life had entered a new chapter.

The journey was long.

But Rahul barely slept.

He watched the clouds.

He thought about his parents.

He thought about his sister.

And every now and then, the same thought returned.

I am finally going to America.

When the aircraft landed, Rahul felt a wave of emotion.

He had arrived.

The country that had remained a dream for years was now outside the airport window.

But Rahul knew that another dream was still waiting.

Somewhere.

Behind the busy roads and unfamiliar cities.

Niagara Falls.

12. Forty-Five Days of Waiting

Rahul joined his office immediately.

The excitement of arriving in America quickly met the reality of professional life.

There were urgent projects.

Important meetings.

New responsibilities.

New people.

Rahul wanted to prove that the company had made the right decision by choosing him.

So he worked.

The first week passed.

Then another.

He often looked at Niagara Falls on his phone.

Soon, he told himself.

Thirty days passed.

Still no trip.

Another fifteen days passed.

Rahul began laughing at himself.

“After waiting for three years, I am now in America and still waiting.”

One evening, after completing an important assignment, Rahul finally looked at his calendar.

There it was.

A free weekend.

Two complete days.

His heart immediately began racing.

He booked the trip.

One day for Niagara Falls.

Another day to explore the nearby area.

After making the booking, Rahul sat quietly.

He had been waiting for this day for so long.

Now the date was fixed.

13. Counting Down

The days before the journey felt unusually long.

Rahul checked the weather.

He watched videos.

He looked at photographs.

Then he stopped.

He did not want to see too much.

“I want my first real sight of it to surprise me,” he told himself.

The night before the journey, he barely slept.

He remembered his childhood classroom.

He remembered his father.

He remembered the failures.

He remembered the jokes.

He remembered every time he had said,

One day.

And now…

Tomorrow was that day.

Rahul smiled in the darkness.

14. The First Sight

Rahul woke before his alarm.

He got ready quickly and began his journey.

As he travelled closer, his excitement grew.

Then, at last, he reached the area from where the falls could be seen.

He walked forward.

The sound reached him first.

A deep, continuous roar.

Then the mist.

And finally…

He saw it.

Rahul stopped walking.

Niagara Falls.

There was the falls.

The world famous Niagara Falls.

The falls which he wanted to see in his life,

The falls which he dreamed to feel once at least in life

Were in front of him.

The dream which motivated him all life to study well,

The dream which inspired him to work for a good career,

The dream which inspired him to plan for USA which was dream of every Indian man to land in.

It was in front of him.

It was few meters away distance only.

His eyes got moist.

For a few seconds, the entire world seemed silent inside him, even though the water was roaring before him.

It was larger.

More powerful.

More beautiful.

More alive than he had ever imagined.

Rahul's eyes filled with tears.

He did not wipe them.

He simply stood there.

The dream had become real.

15. Into the Mist

Rahul decided to take the boat that would carry visitors closer to the falls.

As the boat began moving, he stood near the edge.

The wind became stronger.

The mist touched his face.

The sound grew louder.

Then louder.

Then almost overwhelming.

The boat moved closer.

Water filled the air.

Rahul could barely see clearly through the mist.

And then the showers of Niagara Falls touched him.

Rahul closed his eyes.

Another wave of water reached him.

And suddenly, he began crying.

He cried like a child.

He remembered everything.

The opportunities he had missed.

The nights when he had doubted himself.

The people who had laughed.

The moments when he wanted to stop.

His father's words.

Don't call it failure. Call it waiting.

His sister's promise.

His mother's prayers.

And the small boy in the classroom.

Rahul opened his eyes.

The mighty falls were in front of him.

The water continued to fall.

The mist covered him.

His tears became part of the rain around him.

For nearly three hours, Rahul allowed himself to do nothing except experience the moment.

He watched the water.

He listened to its roar.

He felt the showers touching him.

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And slowly, something became clear.

The beauty of the moment was not only because Niagara Falls was beautiful.

It was beautiful because of the journey that had brought him there.

Every disappointment had given this moment a deeper meaning.

Every delay had made his arrival more precious.

While looking to the falls and boat in the water,

Rahul whispered,

“I finally made it.”



16. The Call Home

Rahul took the ticket and entered the boat to see the Niagara falls from near.

He took out his phone.

His hands were still wet.

He called home.

His mother answered.

“Rahul!”

He smiled.

“Amma.”

“Yes?”

For a moment, Rahul could not speak.

Then he turned the camera toward the waterfalls.

“I am here.”

His mother became silent.

His father joined the call.

His sister appeared too.

“Show me! Show me!” she shouted.

Rahul turned the camera.

The enormous falls filled the screen.

His family watched.

Rahul said,

“Do you remember what I used to say?”

His father smiled.

“Yes.”

Rahul looked back at the water.

“I achieved it, Dad.”

His father did not immediately reply.

Then he said,

“Yes, Rahul. You did.”

Rahul’s mother wiped her tears.

His sister smiled.

“See? I didn’t have to marry an American after all.”

Rahul laughed loudly.

For several minutes, they simply stayed connected.

Thousands of kilometres separated them.

But emotionally, they were together.

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Rahul wished they could have been standing beside him.

Perhaps one day, they would.

17. A Promise to Return

As evening approached, Rahul knew he had to leave.

But he found it difficult.

He looked back again.

And again.

The falls continued as if they had always been waiting.

Rahul stood quietly.

Then he spoke softly.

“I will come back.”

It was not a promise made to a tourist destination.

It was a promise made to a dream.

He walked away slowly.

His heart felt heavy.

But it was the beautiful heaviness that comes after something long desired finally becomes real.

Rahul understood something that day.

The moment we achieve a dream cannot always be explained.

People may congratulate us.

They may see our photographs.

They may hear our story.

But only we know the complete journey.

Only we know how many nights we waited.

How many times we failed.

How many times we almost gave up.

And how much courage it took to continue.

For Rahul, Niagara Falls would always be beautiful.

But from that day onward, its beauty would mean something more.

It would remind him of the child who dreamed.

The young man who struggled.

The family who encouraged him.

And the person who refused to give up.

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As he walked away, the mist of the falls still touched the air behind him.

Rahul smiled.

Some dreams take years to come true.

Some dreams test our patience.

Some dreams make us question ourselves.

But perhaps the most beautiful dreams are the ones that do not arrive easily.

Because when they finally touch our lives, we do not merely see them.

We feel every step that brought us there.

And sometimes, when the dream finally stands before us, there are no words.

There are only tears.

There is only gratitude.

And there is one quiet sentence rising from the deepest part of the heart.

“I did not give up.”

Rahul looked back one final time.

The mighty Niagara Falls continued to roar.

And somewhere inside him, the little boy who had once looked at a picture in a schoolbook finally smiled.

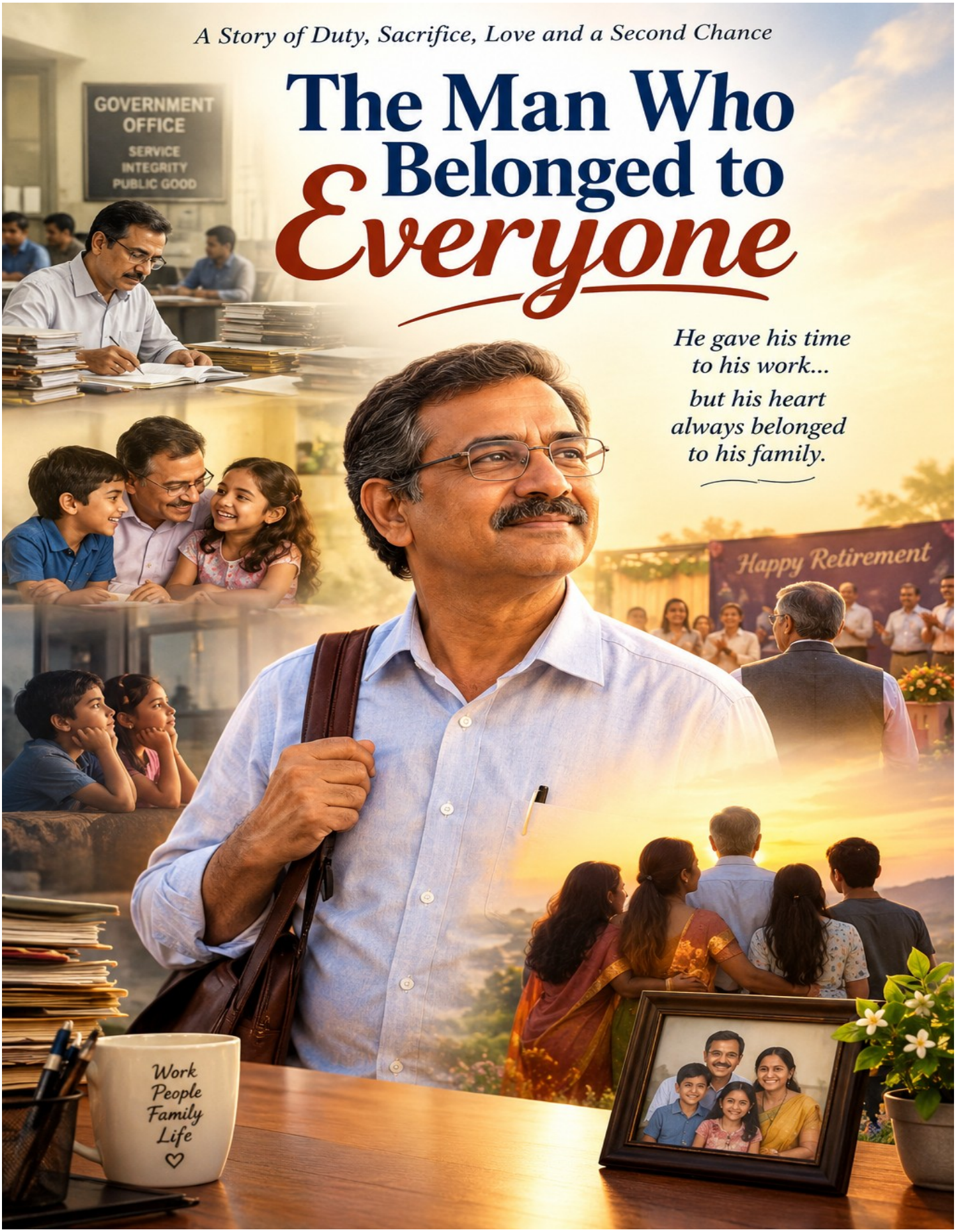
His dream had travelled a long way.

And at last, it had touched the falls.

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A Story of Duty, Sacrifice, Love and a Second Chance
The Man Who Belonged to Everyone
GOVERNMENT OFFICE
SERVICE
INTEGRITY
PUBLIC GOOD
He gave his time to his work...
but his heart always belonged to his family.
Happy Retirement
Work
People
Family
Life

Chapter 1

The Small Clerk

At exactly 8:45 every morning, Krishna Rao entered the old government office.

The building looked little old.

The paint on the walls had begun to fade.

Some of the windows were difficult to close properly.

The ceiling fans made a familiar rattling sound. The corridors smelled of old files, paper and dust.

But Krishna Rao liked the place.

For him, it was not merely an office.

It was his responsibility.

He was a small clerk in the department. His designation was ordinary, his salary was modest and his chair was no different from those of several other employees.

But Krishna Rao had one quality that made him different.

He was sincere.

He never deliberately postponed work.

He never pushed his responsibilities onto someone else.

If a file came to his table, he made sure it moved forward.

If someone needed help, he helped.

If a junior employee was confused about a procedure, Krishna Rao patiently explained it.

If a senior officer needed information urgently, Krishna Rao would search through old records until he found it.

Over the years, he became the person everyone depended upon.

“Krishna Rao garu, could you please check this?”

“Krishna Rao garu, I don’t understand this procedure.”

“Krishna Rao garu, the officer needs this report today.”

“Krishna Rao garu, can you help us with this?”

He rarely said no.

Sometimes his colleagues wondered how one man could remember so many things.

But Krishna Rao had an answer.

“If somebody comes to me with a problem and I have the ability to solve it, why should I send him away?”

That philosophy slowly became his identity.

Unfortunately, while Krishna Rao was becoming indispensable at the office, he was unknowingly becoming less available at home.

And he did not realize it. Not yet.

Chapter 2

The House That Waited

Krishna Rao lived with his wife Padmavathi and their two children, Rajeev and Pallavi.

Their house was modest.

There was a small front room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and a little veranda where Padmavathi grew jasmine plants.

The family did not have many luxuries. But they had affection.

At least, they once had plenty of time for it.

When Rajeev and Pallavi were small, They would wait at the veranda every evening.



He knew his father’s footsteps.

The moment Krishna Rao entered the lane, Rajeev would run toward the gate.

“Dad!”

Krishna Rao would bend down and lift him.

“How was school?”

“Very good!”

“What did you learn?”

Rajeev would tell him everything. Pallavi would also come running.

“Dad, you forgot something.”

“What?”

“You didn’t ask me.”

Krishna Rao would laugh.

“How was your school, Pallavi?”

“Excellent!”

Those were beautiful evenings.

But as Krishna Rao’s responsibilities at the office increased, those evenings slowly disappeared.

Initially, he came home at 6:30. Then 7:00. Then 8:00.

Then some days at 9:00.

Occasionally, even later. The children continued waiting.



But waiting has a strange quality.

When it happens repeatedly, expectation slowly turns into disappointment.

And disappointment eventually becomes silence.

Chapter 3

“I Will Come Early”

One evening, Rajeev stood near his father’s chair.

“Dad?”

“Hmm?”

“Can you take us to a movie tomorrow?”

Krishna Rao looked up from the newspaper.

“Tomorrow?”

“Yes.”

“Which movie?”

Rajeev happily told him the name.

Pallavi immediately joined them.

“I want to come too.”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“Okay. Tomorrow evening.”

“Promise?”

Krishna Rao raised his hand.

“Promise.”

The children celebrated as though they had already watched the movie.

Pallavi decided what dress she would wear.

Rajeev planned what snacks he would buy.

Padmavathi watched them and smiled.

“Don’t promise unless you can come,” she said gently.

Krishna Rao looked at her.

“I’ll come, Padma.”

The next day, the children kept looking at the clock.

Five o’clock.

Six o’clock.

Seven o’clock.

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No Krishna Rao.

At 7:30, Padmavathi received a phone call.

“Padma…”

She knew immediately.

“What happened?”

“There is an urgent file. The officer needs it tonight.”

“But you promised the children.”

“I know.”

“Then what should I tell them?”

Krishna Rao remained silent.

Padmavathi handed the phone to Rajeev.

“Dad?”

“Yes, son.”

“Are you coming?”

“I’ll be late.”

“But you promised.”

“I know.”

“Then why did you promise?”

Krishna Rao had no answer.

“I am sorry.”

Rajeev handed the phone back to his mother.

He went to his room.

Pallavi followed him.

Neither child cried.

That silence hurt Padmavathi more than crying would have.

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Chapter 4

The Zoo

A few weeks later, Krishna Rao promised another outing.

This time it was the zoo.

The children were thrilled.

They prepared everything the night before.

Pallavi packed biscuits.

Rajeev charged his camera.

Padmavathi prepared lunch.

“Tomorrow we will leave by ten,” Krishna Rao said.

“Definitely?” Rajeev asked.

“Definitely.”

But the following morning, at 8:15, Krishna Rao’s telephone rang.

It was from the office.

His leave had not been sanctioned.

An urgent matter required his presence.

He tried to explain.

“Sir, I had already planned…”

There was no flexibility.

Krishna Rao put down the phone.

He knew what he had to do.

When he told the children, Pallavi stared at him.

“But you promised.”

“I know.”

“You always know.”

Krishna Rao looked at her.

“What do you mean?”

Pallavi didn’t answer.

Rajeev quietly put his camera away.

“We don’t want to go anymore.”

Krishna Rao felt something inside him sink.

“I’ll take you next Sunday.”

Rajeev said nothing.

That afternoon, Krishna Rao went to the office.

He completed the work.

Everyone appreciated him.

“Thank you, Krishna Rao garu,” his officer said.

“You saved us today.”

Krishna Rao smiled.

But when he returned home that night, the house was unusually quiet.

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He walked into Rajeev's room.

His son was asleep.

On the table lay the camera he had prepared for the zoo.

Krishna Rao picked it up.

He held it for a few seconds.

Then he placed it back.

He did not sleep well that night.

Chapter 5

Padmavathi's Silence

Padmavathi was not an angry woman.

She was patient.

Very patient.

She understood her husband's nature.

She knew he was not spending time elsewhere.

She knew he was not wasting his evenings with friends.

She knew he was genuinely working.

But understanding something did not mean that it did not hurt.

One evening, she was preparing dinner when Krishna Rao came home late.

"Food is ready," she said.

"I'll eat."

She served him.

He looked at her.

"Padma?"

"Hmm?"

"You seem quiet."

"I'm tired."

"Are you angry with me?"

She smiled faintly.

"No."

"Then?"

"Nothing."

Krishna Rao continued eating.

Padmavathi sat across from him.

After a few minutes, she said,

“Do you know what happened today?”

“What?”

“Pallavi had a school program.”

Krishna Rao stopped eating.

“What program?”

“She performed on stage.”

“I didn’t know.”

“I told you last week.”

Krishna Rao looked down.

“Did you?”

“Yes.”

He remembered nothing.

Padmavathi continued.

“She kept looking toward the audience.”

“Why?”

“She was searching for you.”

Krishna Rao’s hand stopped.

“She asked me before going on stage, ‘Will Dad come?’”

Padmavathi’s voice became softer.

“I told her you would try.”

Krishna Rao could not look at her.

“She performed very well.”

He nodded.

“She received first prize.”

Krishna Rao’s eyes lifted.

“Really?”

Padmavathi smiled sadly.

“Yes.”

“Where is the prize?”

“In her room.”

Krishna Rao finished dinner silently.

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That night, he went into Pallavi's room.

She was sleeping.

Beside her pillow was the certificate.

Krishna Rao picked it up.

First Prize.

He smiled.

Then his eyes became wet.

He kissed his daughter's forehead.

"I am proud of you," he whispered.

But she was asleep.

She never heard him.

Chapter 6

A Growing Distance

Children don't always complain.

Sometimes they adjust.

Rajeev stopped asking his father to attend school programs.

Pallavi stopped telling him about every small achievement.

When Krishna Rao came home, the children were often already asleep.

When he left in the morning, they were still sleeping.

Their conversations became shorter.

"How was school?"

"Fine."

"Any homework?"

"Yes."

"Did you eat?"

"Yes."

That was all.

Krishna Rao noticed the change but could not understand its depth.

One Sunday, he tried to spend time with them.

"Rajeev, let's go outside."

"I have work."

"What work?"

“Friends are coming.”

“Pallavi?”

“I’m studying.”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“Okay.”

He went back to the hall.

He sat alone.

He suddenly realized something painful.

The children had learned how to live without him.

He had spent years thinking,

“I am working for them.”

But somewhere along the way, they had learned,

“We have to live without him.”

Chapter 7

Another Missed Function

Padmavathi’s cousin was getting married.

She had been looking forward to attending the wedding with Krishna Rao.

“You must come,” she told him.

“I will.”

“Don’t say it casually.”

“I won’t.”

“I want you beside me.”

Krishna Rao held her hand.

“I’ll definitely come.”

The wedding day arrived.

Padmavathi dressed carefully.

She waited.

Krishna Rao called.

“Padma…”

She closed her eyes.

“What happened?”

“There is a problem at the office.”

Her expression changed.

“You are not coming?”

“I’ll try to finish quickly.”

“You said you would come.”

“I know.”

She was silent.

Then she said,

“Don’t come.”

“What?”

“I will go alone.”

“Padma…”

“It’s all right.”

She disconnected the call.

At the wedding, relatives asked,

“Where is Krishna Rao?”

Padmavathi smiled.

“He had some office work.”

She said it politely.

But inside, something had changed.

She no longer felt like defending him.

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Chapter 8

Birthdays

Years passed.

Rajeev’s birthday came.

Padmavathi arranged a small celebration.

Pallavi decorated the room.

A cake was ordered.

Rajeev kept asking,

“When will Dad come?”

“He said he would be here by seven.”

Seven became eight.

Eight became nine.

The guests had already started leaving.

At 9:30, Krishna Rao finally arrived.

He was exhausted.

He walked into the house carrying a gift.

“Happy birthday, son.”

Rajeev accepted it.

“Thank you.”

Krishna Rao looked around.

“Where is everyone?”

“They left.”

He looked at the cake.

Only a small piece remained.

He sat beside Rajeev.

“I’m sorry.”

Rajeev smiled politely.

“It’s okay.”

That “it’s okay” was becoming a familiar sentence in their house.

But it was never really okay.

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Chapter 9

The Anniversary

Their wedding anniversary was perhaps the most painful.

Padmavathi did not ask Krishna Rao for anything expensive.

She only wanted him home.

She cooked his favorite dishes.

She wore the saree he had gifted her many years ago.

She placed two plates on the dining table.

She waited.

Eight o’clock.

Nine.

Ten.

Finally, at 10:30 pm, Krishna Rao entered home.

Padmathi was upset completely.

She planned for a visit to temple along with family

But every plan was a flop.

She was really very upset.

She did not speak to him for some time.

Krishna rao tried to give some explanation.

He saw the table.

He immediately understood.



.

“Padma…”

She stood up.

“Happy anniversary.”

“Padma, I’m sorry.”

“I know.”

“I couldn’t leave.”

“I know.”

He looked at the food.

“You waited?”

She smiled.

“Not anymore.”

She began clearing the plates. Krishna Rao stood there helplessly.

That night, Padmavathi slept facing the other side.

Krishna Rao stared at the ceiling.

For the first time, he wondered whether he had been successful in one part of life while failing in another.

Chapter 10

The Years Nobody Counts

People count years by birthdays.

They count years by anniversaries.

They count years by promotions.

But families also count years by missed moments.

Rajeev completed his graduation.

Krishna Rao was present at the ceremony—but arrived late.

Pallavi received a scholarship.

Krishna Rao heard about it over the telephone while he was at work.

Rajeev got his first job.

Krishna Rao was proud.

But he celebrated the news that night after returning home.

Pallavi started her career.

Again, Krishna Rao was proud.

Yet somewhere in the lives of his children, he had become more of a provider than a participant.

He had given them everything he could.

Except enough of himself.

Chapter 11

The Man Everyone Needed

Meanwhile, at the office, Krishna Rao’s reputation grew.

A new officer once asked,

“Who handles the difficult matters here?”

Everyone pointed toward Krishna Rao.

“He does.”

The officer watched him for several days.

One evening he said,

“Krishna Rao, you are always here.”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“Work should be completed.”

“You have a family?”

“Yes.”

“Children?”

“Two.”

“Do they complain that you work too much?”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“Sometimes.”

The officer laughed.

“Then perhaps you should go home early.”

Krishna Rao looked at the clock.

It was already 8:30.

He quickly gathered his files.

That night he reached home before nine.

For some reason, he felt happy.

But the children were already asleep.

He stood at the bedroom doors.

He whispered,

“I came early today.”

No one heard him.

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Chapter 12

Retirement

One morning, Krishna Rao received an official letter.

He read it twice.

His retirement date had been fixed.

He would retire after thirty-five years of service.

He sat quietly.

Thirty-five years.

A lifetime.

He remembered his first day.

He had been young.

He had entered the office with nervousness and hope.

Now he was leaving with grey hair and tired eyes.

His colleagues were delighted.

“We must organize a grand farewell.”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“No need for anything big.”

“No.”

“You are not escaping.”

Everyone laughed.

The retirement function was planned.

His family was invited.

“Padma, you all must come.”

“Of course.”

Rajeev said he would attend.

Pallavi also agreed.

None of them knew how emotional that day would become.

Chapter 13

The Farewell

The hall was filled.

Krishna Rao sat on the stage.

His wife sat beside Rajeev and Pallavi.

They looked at their father.

He seemed smaller than they remembered.

Perhaps age had changed him.

Or perhaps they had never really looked at him carefully.

The program began.

The first speaker stood.

“I have worked with Krishna Rao garu for twenty years.”

He paused.

“I can say with confidence that I have never seen a more sincere person.”

Applause filled the hall.

Another colleague spoke.

“When I joined this office, I knew nothing. Krishna Rao taught me everything.”

A third said,

“He never allowed juniors to feel inferior.”

Another said,

“He treated every employee with respect.”

One senior officer smiled.

“Sometimes I wondered whether Krishna Rao belonged to our department or to every department.”

Everyone laughed.

“He knew something about every section. If one department had a problem, he helped. If another department had a deadline, he helped. He became our unofficial bridge between people.”

Rajeev listened carefully.

Pallavi’s eyes were already moist.

Then another colleague spoke.

“I remember several occasions when Krishna Rao had personal functions. Weddings. Family gatherings. Birthdays.”

He paused.

“Sometimes he could not attend them because an urgent official responsibility needed him.”

Padmavathi lowered her head.

The colleague continued.

“I am sure those were difficult decisions.”

He looked at Krishna Rao.

“But because of people like him, important work got completed.”

Chapter 14

“No One Can Replace Him”

A younger employee came to the microphone. His voice was emotional.

“When I joined this office, I was afraid of making mistakes. Krishna Rao garu told me something I will never forget.”

Everyone listened.

“He said, ‘Don’t be afraid of making a mistake. Be afraid of refusing to learn from it.’”

The audience applauded. The young man continued.

“He helped me grow.”

He looked toward Krishna Rao.

“I am standing where I am today because someone believed in me when I was nobody.”

Then he said the words that shook Rajeev and Pallavi.

“No one can replace him.”

Another colleague said,

“He is not just an employee.”

“He is the anchor of this office.”

A senior officer added,

“People will come after him. New employees will learn the procedures. Files will move. Work will continue.”

He paused.

“But the human connection he created cannot easily be replaced.”

Rajeev looked at his sister.Neither spoke.

They were thinking the same thing.

How had they never seen this side of their father?

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Chapter 15

The Realization

Pallavi wiped her tears. She remembered her school performance.

She remembered searching for her father in the audience.

She remembered being disappointed. But now she understood something new.

Her father had not been absent because he did not love her.

He had been caught between two responsibilities.

He had chosen work too many times.

But he had never stopped loving his family.

Rajeev remembered the zoo.

The movie.

The birthdays.

The promises. For years he had thought,

“My father doesn’t have time for me.”

Now another thought entered his mind.

“Maybe my father gave too much of his time to make sure our lives were secure.”

Padmavathi was thinking about the wedding anniversary.

For years she had felt humiliated. Now she remembered all the other things Krishna Rao had done.

He had never wasted money. He had never neglected the children’s education.

He had always returned home tired but smiling. He had never complained.

Perhaps she had judged his absence without understanding the burden he was carrying.

But she also knew something else. He had made mistakes.

His sincerity toward work did not erase the pain his family experienced.

And perhaps Krishna Rao himself knew that better than anyone.

Rajeev, Pallavi and Padmavathi realized how much efforts Krishna rao put in his job.

They really could not stop themselves of appreciating Krishna rao.



Chapter 16

Krishna Rao's Speech

Finally, Krishna Rao was called to the microphone.

He stood slowly.

The hall became silent.

He looked at his colleagues.

Then at his family.

"Today, you have all spoken so highly of me that I feel embarrassed."

Everyone smiled.

"I thank each one of you."

He took a breath.

"I joined this office as a young man. I came here because I needed a job. But slowly, this office became part of my life."

He looked around.

"I tried to be sincere."

"I tried to help people."

"I tried to complete every responsibility given to me."

His voice became softer.

"And I am happy that I could do something useful."

There was applause.

But Krishna Rao raised his hand.

"However, today I also want to speak about something else."

He turned toward his family.

"Something I should have spoken about years ago."

Rajeev sat upright.

Pallavi held her mother's hand.

Krishna Rao looked at them.

"Rajeev."

His voice trembled.

"I know I missed many moments in your life."

Rajeev's eyes filled with tears.

"I promised you movies and did not take you."

"I promised you outings and cancelled them."

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“I came late to your birthdays.”

“I missed things you wanted me to see.”

He paused.

“I know you were disappointed.”

Rajeev could not control his tears.

Krishna Rao turned toward Pallavi.

“Pallavi…”

“I missed your school program.”

“I did not see your performance.”

“I heard about your achievements later.”

His voice broke.

“I’m sorry.”

Pallavi covered her face.

Then he looked at Padmavathi.

“And Padma…”

She looked at him.

“I missed family functions.”

“I missed our anniversary.”

“I made you go alone many times.”

“I know there were days when you felt that my work mattered more than you.”

Padmavathi’s tears began flowing.

Krishna Rao continued.

“I want to tell you something.”

“I never loved my work more than my family.”

“I simply did not understand how much my absence was hurting you.”

The hall became completely silent.

“I thought that by working hard, I was taking care of my family.”

“I thought that earning honestly, keeping my job secure and helping others was enough.”

He shook his head.

“Today I know better.”

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Chapter 17

The Truth He Learned Too Late

Krishna Rao held the microphone tightly.

“Responsibility has two sides.”

“One is doing what the world expects from you.”

“The other is being present for the people who expect you at home.”

He paused.

“I fulfilled one.”

“I did not always fulfill the other.”

No one spoke.

“I don’t regret my sincerity.”

“I don’t regret helping my colleagues.”

“I don’t regret doing my duty.”

“But if I could go back…”

His eyes filled with tears.

“I would learn to leave the office sometimes.”

“I would learn that some files can wait until morning.”

“I would learn that a child’s school program cannot be repeated.”

“I would learn that a wedding anniversary cannot be postponed.”

“I would learn that a child’s childhood doesn’t wait for retirement.”

Those words broke whatever strength Rajeev had left.

He began crying openly.

Krishna Rao continued.

“To my children…”

He folded his hands.

“I am sorry.”

“To my wife…”

He folded his hands again.

“I am sorry.”

“I cannot bring back those days.”

“I cannot return those missed birthdays.”

“I cannot recreate those evenings.”

“But I can give you something.”

He smiled through his tears.

“My remaining time.”

Chapter 18

“I Am Coming Home”

Krishna Rao looked at his family.

“From tomorrow, I have no office.”

Everyone smiled through tears.

“No files.”

“No meetings.”

“No urgent calls.”

“No officer waiting for me.”

He laughed softly.

“Now I have a new responsibility.”

Rajeev smiled.

“What?”

Krishna Rao looked at him.

“You.”

Then he looked at Pallavi.

“You.”

Then Padmavathi.

“And you.”

Everyone laughed through their tears.

“I spent thirty-five years belonging to this office.”

He took a breath.

“Now I want to belong to my family.”

The hall erupted in applause. But Krishna Rao continued.

“I know retirement cannot repair everything.”

“It cannot erase the past.”

“But perhaps love can begin again.”

He looked at his children.

“Give me one more chance.”

Rajeev stood up. He walked toward the stage.

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He hugged his father.

“Dad…”

Krishna Rao held him tightly.

“I’m sorry, son.”

Rajeev shook his head.

“No, Dad.”

“You don’t have to say sorry anymore.”

Pallavi came forward.

She hugged both of them.

Then Padmavathi joined them.

For several moments, the entire family stood together.

The applause continued.

But none of them heard it.

They were hearing something much more important.

Each other’s hearts.

Chapter 19

The Journey Home

That evening, they returned home together.

For the first time in years, Krishna Rao did not carry an office bag.

He walked into the house and looked around.

Everything seemed familiar.

Yet somehow, everything looked new.

He noticed the jasmine plants.

He noticed the old family photographs.

He noticed a framed picture of Rajeev as a child.

He noticed another of Pallavi in her school uniform.

He picked it up.

“When was this taken?”

Pallavi smiled.

“Years ago.”

“You look so small.”

“You missed a lot.”

She said it playfully.

But Krishna Rao knew there was truth behind the joke.

“I know.”

Rajeev walked beside him.

“Dad?”

“Hmm?”

“Do you remember the zoo?”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“How could I forget?”

“You promised.”

“I know.”

“Let’s go.”

Krishna Rao looked at him.

“When?”

“This Sunday.”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“This Sunday.”

Rajeev extended his hand.

“Promise?”

Krishna Rao laughed.

“Promise.”

Then he added,

“This time, I will be there.”

Chapter 20

The First Sunday

Sunday morning arrived.

Padmavathi woke early.

She was surprised to see Krishna Rao already dressed.

“Where are you going?”

He smiled.

“The zoo.”

Padmavathi laughed.

“After all these years?”

“Yes.”

Rajeev came out.

“Dad!”

Pallavi followed.

“Are we really going?”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“Why are you asking? I promised.”

They got into the car.

During the journey, they talked.

Not about office work.

Not about files.

Not about responsibilities. They talked about life.

Rajeev told his father about his plans. Pallavi told him about her career.

Rajeev asked pros and cons of his plans

Pallavi too followed her brother. Padmavathi told him about the jasmine plants.

Krishna Rao listened. Really listened.

They went to zoo park and nearby another beautiful park.

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At the zoo, they walked together.

It happened after a long time. Rajeev took photographs.

Pallavi laughed. Padmavathi watched her husband.

He looked different. There was no hurry in his eyes.

No telephone in his hand. No file under his arm.

Just a father walking beside his children.

At one point, Krishna Rao stopped.

He looked at Rajeev and Pallavi.

“Thank you.”

Rajeev looked confused.

“For what?”

“For giving me another chance.”

Pallavi smiled and said, “Dad, we were waiting.”

Those words went straight into his heart.

Chapter 21

The Father They Finally Found

Over the following months, something beautiful happened.

Krishna Rao became part of his family’s life again.

He helped Rajeev plan his career.

He sat with Pallavi when she had difficult decisions.

He accompanied Padmavathi to family functions.

He attended birthdays.

He never missed anniversaries.

Sometimes they went out for dinner.

Sometimes they simply sat together at home.

Nothing extraordinary happened.

And that was the beauty of it.

The family was discovering that happiness did not always need a grand event.

Sometimes happiness was simply having everyone at the dining table.

Sometimes it was tea on the veranda.

Sometimes it was a conversation that lasted an hour.

Sometimes it was a father asking,

“How was your day?”

And actually staying long enough to hear the answer.

Chapter 22

A Different Kind of Respect

One evening, Rajeev sat beside his father.

“Dad?”

“Yes?”

“I want to tell you something.”

“What?”

“I used to think you didn’t have time for us.”

Krishna Rao looked down.

“I know.”

“But after your retirement…”

He paused.

“I understood something.”

“What?”

“You were not a bad father.”

Krishna Rao’s eyes became moist.

“You were a father who didn’t know when to stop working.”

Rajeev smiled.

“And now?”

“Now you are learning.”

Krishna Rao laughed.

Pallavi came into the room.

“What are you two talking about?”

Rajeev said,

“We are discussing Dad.”

Pallavi sat beside them.

“Then I’ll say something too.”

“What?”

She looked at her father.

“Whenever I tell people about you now, I don’t say you were always busy.”

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She smiled.

“I tell them you spent thirty-five years helping people.”

Krishna Rao looked at her.

“And I tell them…”

She paused.

“That after thirty-five years, he finally came home.”

Krishna Rao’s eyes filled with tears.

He pulled his daughter close.

Chapter 23

Padmavathi’s Forgiveness

That night, after the children went to bed, Padmavathi and Krishna Rao sat on the veranda.

The night was quiet.

The jasmine plants moved gently in the breeze.

Padmavathi said,

“You know something?”

“What?”

“I was angry with you for many years.”

“I know.”

“Sometimes I thought your office was your real family.”

Krishna Rao smiled sadly.

“I understand.”

“But today…”

She looked at him.

“I don’t feel angry anymore.”

Krishna Rao remained silent.

“I finally understand why you worked so hard.”

She paused.

“But I also want you to understand why we needed you.”

Krishna Rao nodded.

“I do.”

“Money was important.”

“Yes.”

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“Security was important.”

“Yes.”

“But your presence was important too.”

“I know.”

Padmavathi smiled.

“We both learned something.”

“What?”

“You learned that family needs your time.”

“And you?”

She smiled.

“I learned that sometimes love can look like responsibility.”

Krishna Rao reached for her hand.

“I am sorry, Padma.”

She held his hand.

“I know.”

This time, those words meant something different.

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Chapter 24

The Meaning of Retirement

A few months later, Krishna Rao visited his old office.

His former colleagues welcomed him warmly.

“Krishna Rao garu!”

Everyone gathered around him.

He looked at his old chair.

It was occupied by someone else now.

For a moment, he felt emotional.

But then he smiled.

The work had continued.

The office had not stopped.

He had once believed that he was indispensable.

Now he understood.

Nobody is indispensable at work.

The world moves forward.

Files continue.

People change.

New employees come.

Old employees leave.

But at home, there are certain roles that cannot be replaced.

A father cannot be replaced.

A mother cannot be replaced.

A husband cannot be replaced.

A wife cannot be replaced.

Those positions belong to one person.

Krishna Rao looked at his old colleagues.

“You all seem to be doing well.”

One colleague laughed.

“We manage.”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“Good.”

The senior officer said,

“We miss you.”

Krishna Rao nodded.

“I miss you too.”

But this time, he did not stay late.

He did not say,

“I’ll come again tomorrow.”

He said,

“I have to go.”

“Where?”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“Home.”

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Chapter 25

The Man Who Came Home

That evening, Krishna Rao reached home before sunset.

Padmavathi was watering the plants.

She looked up.

“So early?”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“I have retired.”

She laughed.

“I know.”

Rajeev came out and asked, “Dad, shall we go for a walk?”

“Of course.”

Pallavi followed.

“I’ll come too.”

The four of them walked together.

The road was quiet. The sun was slowly disappearing.

Krishna Rao looked at his family.

He thought about the thirty-five years behind him.

There were things he was proud of. There were things he wished he had done differently.

There were moments he could never get back.

But he no longer wanted to live in regret. He wanted to live in gratitude.

He had spent his working life helping an office function.

Now he had another responsibility.

To help his family live the life they had waited so long to share with him.

Rajeev suddenly asked,

“Dad?”

“Yes?”

“What are you thinking?”

Krishna Rao smiled.

“I was thinking about something.”

“What?”

“For thirty-five years, I thought retirement meant the end of my working life.”

He looked at his children and said, “Now I understand that it is the beginning of my real life.”

Pallavi smiled.

Padmavathi looked at him with affection.

They continued walking.

Four people.

One family.

One road.

And a man who had finally discovered where he truly belonged.

EPILOGUE

Years later, Rajeev would sometimes tell his friends about his father.

“My father was a government clerk.”

People would ask,

“Was he a good employee?”

Rajeev would smile.

“He was more than good.”

“He was the person everyone depended upon.”

“Did he get promoted?”

“Not very much.”

“Then why do you speak about him with such pride?”

Rajeev would look toward his father. Because Krishna Rao would usually be sitting nearby, laughing with his grandchildren.

And Rajeev would say,

“Because my father taught me something no promotion can teach.”

“What?”

“Do your work sincerely.”

“Help people.”

“Keep your promises.”

“But never forget the people waiting for you at home.”

Pallavi would add,

“Because one day, the office will replace you.”

She would look at her father.

“But your family never will.”

Krishna Rao would hear those words and smile. He would not say anything.

He had already said everything that needed to be said.

His life had taught him one final lesson:

A successful career can earn respect from the world.

But a life shared with the people you love earns something far greater—

a place in their hearts.

And after thirty-five years of belonging to everyone,

Krishna Rao had finally come home.

****

Comments can be sent to : kumar.ravichn2010@gmail.com


The
Moments
He Chose
Because some
moments are worth
more than money...

There are some things in life that money can buy.

A beautiful house.

A luxurious car.

An expensive holiday.

A comfortable life.

But there are a few things that money can never purchase.

A child's first smile.

The first word she speaks.

The tiny hand that searches for her father's finger.

The morning conversations on the way to school.

A child running toward her father after returning home.

And most importantly—

the years that quietly pass while a child is growing up.

Ravikanth understood this long before life gave him a reason to explain it.

He had a good education, a good job and opportunities that many people could only dream about.

But somewhere along the way, he made a choice.

He chose moments.

And years later, he would realize that those moments had become the greatest wealth of his life.

Chapter 1

A Life That Looked Perfect

Ravikanth had always been a hardworking young man.

After completing his engineering degree, he joined a reputed software company. He was sincere, ambitious and determined to build a comfortable life for himself and his future family.

Within a few years, his career grew rapidly.

His company sent him to the United States on a work assignment.

For two years, he lived there, worked hard and gained valuable experience.

He earned well.

He saw a different world.

He understood what professional success could give him.

But when the assignment ended, Ravikanth returned to Bangalore.

He had no complaints about returning.

In fact, he was happy.

Soon after his return, his marriage was arranged with Avanthi, a girl from Bangalore.

Avanthi was simple, practical and understanding.

Their marriage was not one of those dramatic love stories people write novels about.

It was something quieter.

Two people slowly learning each other.

Two people building a home.

Two people discovering that companionship was not about always agreeing, but about standing beside each other.

Two years passed.

Then one morning, their lives changed forever.

A baby girl was born.

They named her **Kritika**.

The moment Ravikanth first held his daughter in his arms, something inside him changed.

She was tiny.

Her fingers were so small that one of his fingers almost filled her little palm.

He looked at her for a long time.

Avanthi, tired but smiling, watched him.

“Why are you looking at her like that?” she asked softly.

Ravikanth smiled.

“I don’t know.”

Then he looked at his daughter again.

“I think I am seeing my whole life in front of me.”

Avanthi smiled.

“Already?”

“Yes.”

He gently touched Kritika’s forehead.

“I don’t know what she will become. I don’t know where life will take her. But I want her to always know that her father was there.”

Avanthi laughed softly.

“First let her learn to walk.”

Ravikanth laughed.

“Yes. But I’ll be there to hold her hand.”

He did not know it then.

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But he was making a promise to himself.

And he would keep it.

Chapter 2

The Opportunities He Let Go

Kritika grew quickly.

The house that had once been quiet suddenly became filled with toys, laughter, cries and tiny footsteps.

Ravikanth loved every bit of it.

His career continued to grow too.

He received opportunities to work abroad again.

Australia.

The salary package was attractive.

The position was good.

The company was willing to offer him a comfortable assignment.

He discussed it with Avanthi.

“Why don’t you go?” she asked.

Ravikanth looked at Kritika, who was playing on the floor.

“Maybe later.”

“This is a good opportunity.”

“I know.”

“Then why don’t you take it?”

Ravikanth remained silent for a moment.

Then he smiled and said, “I can earn money later.”

Avanthi looked at him.

“But opportunities like this don’t come every day.”

“Neither does childhood.”

Avanthi did not immediately understand what he meant.

Ravikanth continued.

“When she grows up, I can buy her anything she wants. I can buy her expensive clothes. Toys. A big house. I can pay for the best education.”

He paused.

“But I cannot buy back the years when she was three.”

Avanthi stared at him.

“Money can come again,” he said.

“Her childhood won’t.”

That was the first time Avanthi realized that Ravikanth was making a different kind of investment.

He was investing in memories.

Chapter 3

The Father Who Stayed

Ravikanth did not believe that being a father meant merely earning money.

He wanted to participate in his daughter’s life.

He changed diapers.

He woke up during the night when Kritika cried.

Sometimes he walked around the room for an hour just to make her sleep.

There were nights when he had to go to the office early the next morning.

Still, when Kritika cried, he got up.

Avanthi would sometimes say,

“Let me take care of her. You have office tomorrow.”

Ravikanth would smile.

“She has only one father.”

“She has only one mother too,” Avanthi would reply.

“I know.”

“Then let me do it.”

He would laugh.

“Today you do it. Tomorrow I’ll do it.”

But many tomorrows became his.

He wanted to be there.

When Kritika started playing with toys, he made sure she had them.

When she wanted to go outside, he took her.

When Avanthi was busy with household work, Ravikanth took Kritika to the park.

He sat with her and made paper toys.

He sat with her and made coloring.

He sat with her and did Home work.

He sat with her did covering to books.

He took her down the slide.

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He ran behind her when she tried to climb.



He pushed her on the swing.

Sometimes Kritika would stand at the top of the slide and shout,

“Daddy!”

“Yes!”

“Catch me!”

“I am here!”

She would slide down.

He would catch her.

She would laugh.

And he would laugh even louder.

Those were ordinary moments.

But Ravikanth never considered them ordinary.

Chapter 4

“I Love You, Daddy”

As Kritika began speaking clearly, she developed a habit.

Every night before sleeping, she would hug her father.

“I love you, Daddy.”

Ravikanth would smile.

“I love you too.”

One day, she looked at him seriously.

“I love you more than Mommy.”

Ravikanth burst into laughter.

Avanthi, who was standing nearby, immediately objected.

“What?”

Kritika looked at her mother.

“I love Daddy more.”

Avanthi pretended to be angry.

“Then tomorrow Daddy will give you breakfast.”

Kritika immediately ran to her father.

“Daddy will.”

Ravikanth laughed.

Avanthi shook her head.

“Both of you have become one team.”

Ravikanth looked at Kritika.

“Of course.”

He never knew how long that little voice would remain in his house.

So he listened carefully.

Every word.

Every laugh.

Every “Daddy.”

Because somewhere inside him, he knew that childhood was moving faster than anyone could see.

Chapter 5

School

When Kritika turned five, it was time for school.

Ravikanth personally handled almost every admission formalities.

Forms.

Certificates.

Uniform.

Books.

Shoes.

School bag.

Everything.

The night before her first day, Ravikanth stood near her bed.

Kritika was sleeping peacefully.

He looked at her school uniform hanging on the chair.

For some reason, his heart felt heavy.

Avanthi noticed.

“What happened?”

“Nothing.”

“You look emotional.”

Ravikanth smiled.

“She is going to school.”

“So?”

“Until yesterday she was at home.”

Avanthi laughed.

“She will come back in the afternoon.”

“I know.”

“Then why are you worried?”

Ravikanth looked at his daughter.

“Because tomorrow morning she’ll leave home wearing a uniform.”

Avanthi smiled.

“Children grow.”

“That’s what worries me.”

He sighed.

“They grow too quickly.”

The next morning, he woke her up.

“Kritika.”

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No response.

“Kritika…”

She turned away.

“Kritika, school.”

Her eyes opened.

“Five minutes, Daddy.”

Ravikanth smiled.

“First day itself five minutes?”

She covered herself with the blanket.

He gently pulled it away.

“Come on.”

And just like that, another chapter of her life began.

Chapter 6

The Morning Ride

Avanthi wanted Ravikanth to arrange a school bus for both directions.

Ravikanth agreed to the school bus for the return journey.

But he insisted on dropping Kritika at school himself.

Every morning.

On his two-wheeler.

Kritika would sit behind him with her little school bag.

The moment they started, she would begin talking.

“Daddy, today my friend Ananya brought a new pencil.”

“Hmm.”

“And my teacher said I drew the sun very well.”

“Really?”

“And you know what happened yesterday?”

“What?”

“Rahul fell down.”

“Is he okay?”

“Yes. But he cried.”

“Oh.”

“And Daddy…”

“Yes?”

“Tomorrow is my drawing competition.”

“I know.”

“Will you help me?”

“Of course.”

Sometimes she talked continuously.

Sometimes she asked questions.

Sometimes she complained about her teachers.

Sometimes she spoke about her friends.

Sometimes she simply hummed a song.

Ravikanth listened.

He listened to everything.

The road to school was only a short distance.

But to him, it became the most valuable journey of the day.



He would later realize that he had not been taking his daughter to school.

She had been giving him a reason to begin every morning with happiness.

Chapter 7

A Father's Small Work

Ravikanth became involved in every part of Kritika's school life.

He tied her shoelaces.

He helped her wear socks.

He ironed her uniform. He tied her school tie.

He checked her homework. He helped with drawings.

He prepared charts for Environment Day.

He attended school programs.

He listened to stories about her classmates.

Sometimes the assignments were complicated.

Kritika would sit beside him.

"Daddy, I don't know how to draw this."

"Let's try."

"But it is difficult."

"Nothing is difficult. We will do it together."

She would watch him draw.

Then she would try herself.

"Is this okay?"

"Perfect."

"It doesn't look like yours."

"Because it is yours."

She would smile.

That sentence stayed with her.

Years later, she would understand its meaning.

Her father never wanted her to become a copy of him.

He wanted her to become herself.

Chapter 8

Every year, Kritika's class number increased.

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First standard.

Second.

Third.

Fourth.

Fifth. Sixth. Seventh.

Time did not ask permission before moving forward. Ravikanth sometimes looked at old photographs.

In one picture, Kritika was holding his finger.

In another, she was sitting on his shoulders. In another, she was wearing her first school uniform.

In another, she was holding a drawing. The little girl was slowly disappearing.

A young girl was taking her place. Ravikanth felt proud.

But somewhere inside him, he was also afraid.

Afraid of time. Because he knew something. A father can protect his daughter from many things.

But he cannot protect her from growing up.

Chapter 9

After completing her tenth class, Kritika wanted to prepare seriously for the IIT entrance examinations.

Everyone felt that staying in a good residential institution would give her better opportunities.



The decision was made.

Kritika would leave home.

The day came.

Ravikanth packed her belongings.

Clothes.

Books.

Stationery.

Everything.

He checked the suitcase twice.

Then three times.

Kritika laughed.

“Daddy, I am not going to another planet.”

“I know.”

“You can visit me.”

“I know.”

“You can call me.”

“I know.”

“Then why are you worried?”

Ravikanth smiled.

“I’m not worried.”

But his eyes said something else.

At the hostel, Kritika hugged him.

“Bye, Daddy.”

Ravikanth held her tightly.

“Study well.”

“I will.”

“Eat properly.”

“I will.”

“Take care of yourself.”

“I will.”

“Call me.”

“I will.”

She walked away.

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Ravikanth stood there watching her.

He did not cry.

At least not in front of her.

But when he returned to the car, he sat silently.

Avanthi looked at him.

“She’ll be fine.”

“I know.”

“Then?”

Ravikanth looked through the window.

“I think she has grown up.”

Chapter 10

Australia

For the first time in years, Ravikanth felt that he could accept the overseas opportunity he had once rejected.

The opportunity came again.

Australia.

This time he accepted.

Two years had passed since Kritika joined the hostel.

Ravikanth went to Australia.

It was a good assignment.

He worked hard.

But every evening, he called home.

Kritika would tell him about her studies.

He would motivate her.

“You can do it.”

“Daddy, the competition is very high.”

“So what?”

“What if I don’t get a good rank?”

“Then you try again.”

“What if I fail?”

“Failure is not the opposite of success.”

“What is it?”

“Part of it.”

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He would continue encouraging her.

And finally, after two years of hard work, Kritika achieved a remarkable rank.

She got admission into IIT Chennai.

Ravikanth's eyes filled with tears when he heard the news.

"Congratulations, Daddy," Kritika said jokingly.

Ravikanth laughed.

"Why are you congratulating me?"

"Because you worked harder than me."

He became silent.

That sentence touched him deeply.

Chapter 11

A Daughter Understands

After Kritika joined IIT, Avanthi also went to Australia to stay with Ravikanth.

Initially, Ravikanth hesitated.

"Kritika is studying. You should stay with her."

Kritika disagreed.

"No, Daddy."

"Why?"

"You have been alone here."

"I'm fine."

"You've spent your whole life taking care of us."

"I am okay."

Kritika smiled.

"Daddy, I need you. But not the way I needed you when I was five."

Ravikanth became silent.

She continued.

"I can manage now."

Then she turned to her mother.

"Mom, you should go."

Avanthi looked at her daughter.

"Kritika..."

"Mom, Dad was with me in every stage of my life."

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She paused. And said, “Now it is your turn to be with him.”

Ravikanth looked away. Kritika continued.

“Dad, you left so many opportunities because you wanted to be there when I was growing up.”

He remained silent.

“I knew.”

She smiled.

“I knew every opportunity you left.”

Ravikanth looked at her.

“I knew the time you gave me.”

Her voice became softer. “And Dad… that was the greatest gift you ever gave me.”

Neither parent knew what to say. Avanthi wiped her eyes. Ravikanth simply nodded.

Some words do not need an answer. They only need to be felt.

Chapter 12

The Daughter Grows

Years passed. Kritika completed her IIT education with excellent results.



She received a very good job offer from a multinational company.

She joined a PG in Bangalore and began working.

Ravikanth and Avanthi decided it was time to return to India.

But Kritika had another plan.

“You both stay in Australia for some more time.”

“Why?” Avanthi asked.

“I may get an onsite opportunity.”

Ravikanth smiled.

“Are you planning to come here?”

“Maybe.”

Three months later, Kritika received the opportunity.

She flew to Australia.

For the first time, the three of them were together in the same country because of their careers.

Ravikanth felt proud.

The little girl who once sat behind him on his two-wheeler was now an independent professional.

He often looked at her silently.

Avanthi noticed.

“You are thinking about something.”

Ravikanth smiled.

“I am remembering the girl who used to tell me stories on the way to school.”

Avanthi laughed.

“She is still there.”

“No.”

He smiled.

“Now she tells us what to do.”

Chapter 13

Andrew

Kritika worked hard.

Her professional skills impressed everyone.

But her personality impressed one person more than anyone else.

Andrew.

He was her Australian colleague.

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He admired her work.

But more than her professional ability, he admired the way she thought.

Her kindness.

Her confidence.

Her respect toward people.

Her attachment to her parents.

One evening, Andrew finally gathered the courage to speak.

“Kritika, can I tell you something?”

“Sure.”

“I like you.”

She remained silent.

“I don’t mean only as a colleague.”

Kritika looked at him.

“I have been thinking about this for a long time.”

Andrew took a breath.

“I would like to marry you.”

Kritika was surprised.

She did not immediately answer.

That night, she called her parents.

“Dad…”

“Yes?”

“I need to discuss something.”

She told them about Andrew.

Ravikanth and Avanthi listened.

There was silence.

Finally, Ravikanth spoke.

“Kritika, he may be a good person.”

“I know.”

“But…”

“I understand.”

Avanthi continued gently.

“We are not comfortable with the idea of you marrying a foreigner.”

Kritika remained silent.

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“We would prefer an Indian boy,” Ravikanth said.

“Dad, is it because of culture?”

“Partly.”

“Or because you don’t trust him?”

“No.”

Ravikanth sighed.

“We just don’t know whether we will be able to adjust.”

Kritika understood.

She did not argue.

The next day she spoke to Andrew.

He listened carefully.

“What do you think, Kritika?” he asked.

She looked at him.

“I think my parents have more experience and maturity than I do.”

Andrew waited.

“And I will respect their decision.”

“You don’t have your own opinion?”

“I do.”

“What is it?”

Kritika smiled sadly.

“My opinion is that I want my parents to be happy.”

Andrew looked at her for a long time.

Finally, he nodded.

“I understand.”

He did not argue.

He simply said,

“Goodbye, Kritika.”

And walked away.

She watched him leave.

Her heart was heavy.

But she had made her choice.

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Chapter 14

Coming Home

One month later, Ravikanth said something unexpected.

“I think we should go back to India permanently.”

Avanthi looked at him.

“Really?”

“Yes.”

Kritika also agreed.

“I think that is the right decision, Dad.”

Within two months, the family returned to Bangalore.

Ravikanth felt something he had not felt in years.

Home.

The streets were familiar.

The language was familiar.

The food was familiar.

The memories were everywhere.

And most importantly, his daughter was home.

Now Ravikanth felt that another responsibility remained.

Kritika’s marriage.

He began looking for a suitable groom. He was careful.

He wanted someone educated. But more importantly, he wanted someone kind.

Someone who would respect his daughter.

After several discussions and meetings, they found a good match.

The groom was a good man.

He understood Kritika.

He respected her career. He respected her opinions.

Most importantly, he understood her relationship with her parents.

The marriage was fixed. And the day arrived.

Chapter 15

The Wedding

The wedding hall was filled with people.

Laughter.

Music.

Flowers.

Relatives.

Blessings.

Photographs.

But Ravikanth’s eyes kept returning to one person.

His daughter.

Kritika was dressed as a bride.



For a moment, he could not believe what he was seeing.

His mind went back years.

A tiny baby.

A little girl on a swing.

A school uniform.

A school bag.

A drawing book.

A two-wheeler ride.

A hostel suitcase.

An IIT admission.

A graduation ceremony.

A professional woman.

And now—

A bride.

Time had taken everything from one moment and placed it into another.

When the wedding rituals were completed, Ravikanth looked at Kritika.

She looked at him.

Their eyes met.

She smiled.

He smiled.

Neither needed words.

She knew.

He knew.

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Chapter 16

The Empty House

After the wedding, the newly married couple left.

The house became quiet.

Too quiet.

Avanthi stood in the living room.

Ravikanth sat silently.

Neither spoke.

The same house. The same walls. The same rooms.

But something was missing.

Kritika.

Avanthi slowly walked around the house.

She looked at the room where Kritika had slept.

The bed was empty.

Her school certificates were still there.

A few old photographs remained on the shelf.

There was a small toy she had forgotten.

Avanthi picked it up.

She smiled.

Then her eyes filled with tears.

She walked into the living room.

Ravikanth was sitting there.

She sat beside him.

“Ravi…”

“Hmm?”

“Do you remember something I used to ask you?”

“What?”

“I used to ask you…”

She paused.

“If we had a son instead of Kritika, would you have done everything you did?”

Ravikanth looked at her.

Avanthi smiled through her tears.

“You never gave me a proper answer.”

Ravikanth remained silent.

“I think I know the answer now.”

She looked toward the empty room.

“If we had a son…”

Her voice broke.

“He might not have come back to India.”

Ravikanth lowered his head.

“He might have stayed abroad.”

Avanthi wiped her tears.

“He might have said, ‘This is my career. This is my life.’”

She took a deep breath.

“But Kritika…”

She smiled.

“She came back.”

Ravikanth’s eyes became wet.

Avanthi continued.

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“Maybe because she understood what you gave her.”

Silence filled the room.

A long silence.

The kind of silence that carries years of memories.

Ravikanth looked around.

For years, this house had been filled with Kritika’s voice.

“Daddy…”

“Daddy, look at this.”

“Daddy, help me.”

“Daddy, I have an exam.”

“Daddy, take me to the park.”

“Daddy, I love you.”

Now there was nothing.

Only memories.

Chapter 17

The Wealth He Never Counted

Ravikanth slowly stood up.

He walked to the place where Kritika’s school bag used to hang.

He touched the wall. Then he smiled.

“I think I was never poor.”

Avanthi looked at him.

“What?”

He smiled through his tears.

“I thought I was giving up money.”

“I thought I was giving up foreign opportunities.”

“I thought I was sacrificing my career opportunities for her.”

He paused.

“But I was not giving up anything.”

Avanthi looked at him.

“I was buying something money cannot buy.”

He looked toward the empty room.

“Her childhood.”

Avanthi nodded.

“Yes.”

“And she gave it back to us as memories.”

For a few moments, neither spoke.

Then Avanthi placed her hand on his shoulder.

“Sometimes tears come…”

She smiled.

“And we don’t have to stop them.”

Ravikanth nodded.

“These are happy tears.”

They sat together.

Two parents.

In the same house where their daughter had been born.

The same house where she had taken her first steps.

The same house where she had learned her first words.

The same house where her father had stayed awake at night.

The same house where he had tied her school tie.

The same house from which he had dropped her at school every morning.

The same house where she had packed her hostel suitcase.

The same house where she had once said,

“I love you, Daddy.”

Today, she was no longer there.

But every corner of the house carried her.

Every corner of the home reminded her.

Every nook and corner was echoing her voice.

And suddenly Ravikanth understood something.

A father’s greatest success is not always the salary he earns.

It is not the foreign countries he visits.

It is not the position he holds.

It is not the house he builds.

Sometimes…

a father’s greatest achievement is the person his daughter becomes because he was there when she needed him.

Ravikanth had spent years choosing moments over money.

And now, sitting beside his wife in an empty house,

he realized that those moments had not disappeared.

They had become memories.

And memories—

when they are made with love—

never leave.



Epilogue

The Gift

That night, Ravikanth’s phone rang.

It was Kritika.

“Dad?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Are you both okay?”

“Yes.”

“Did you eat?”

“Yes.”

“Mom?”

“She’s here.”

There was a brief silence.

Then Kritika asked,

“Dad…”

“Hmm?”

“I miss home.”

Ravikanth smiled.

“We miss you too.”

“I was thinking about something.”

“What?”

“You remember what I told you in Australia?”

“What?”

“You were with me when I needed you.”

Ravikanth became silent.

“And now I know why.”

He waited.

“Because you gave me something much bigger than money.”

“What?”

“Time.”

Ravikanth closed his eyes.

A tear slowly rolled down his cheek.

Kritika continued.

“I had the best childhood because my father chose to be there.”

He could not speak.

“Dad?”

“Hmm.”

“I love you.”

Ravikanth smiled.

“I love you too.”

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“Good night, Dad.”

“Good night, Kritika.”

The call ended.

Ravikanth remained seated.

Avanthi looked at him.

“What did she say?”

Ravikanth wiped his eyes.

“She said she loves me.”

Avanthi smiled.

“She always says that.”

Ravikanth looked at her.

“Yes.”

He smiled.

“But now I understand what those words mean.”

Outside, the night became quieter.

Inside the house, two aging parents sat together.

Their daughter was far away. But their hearts were full.

Because sometimes the richest people in the world are not those who have earned the most money.

They are those who can look back at their lives and say—

“I was there.”

Ravikanth could say that.

He had been there. For every first step. Every fall.

Every fever. Every school morning. Every examination. Every achievement.

Every tear. Every smile. He had been there.

And perhaps that was the greatest gift a father could ever give his child.

Not wealth. Not property. Not money.

His presence.

And perhaps, many years later, when Kritika looked back at her childhood, she would not remember the toys her father bought.

She would not remember how much money he earned.

She would not remember the foreign opportunities he rejected.

She would remember only one thing.

That whenever she turned around...

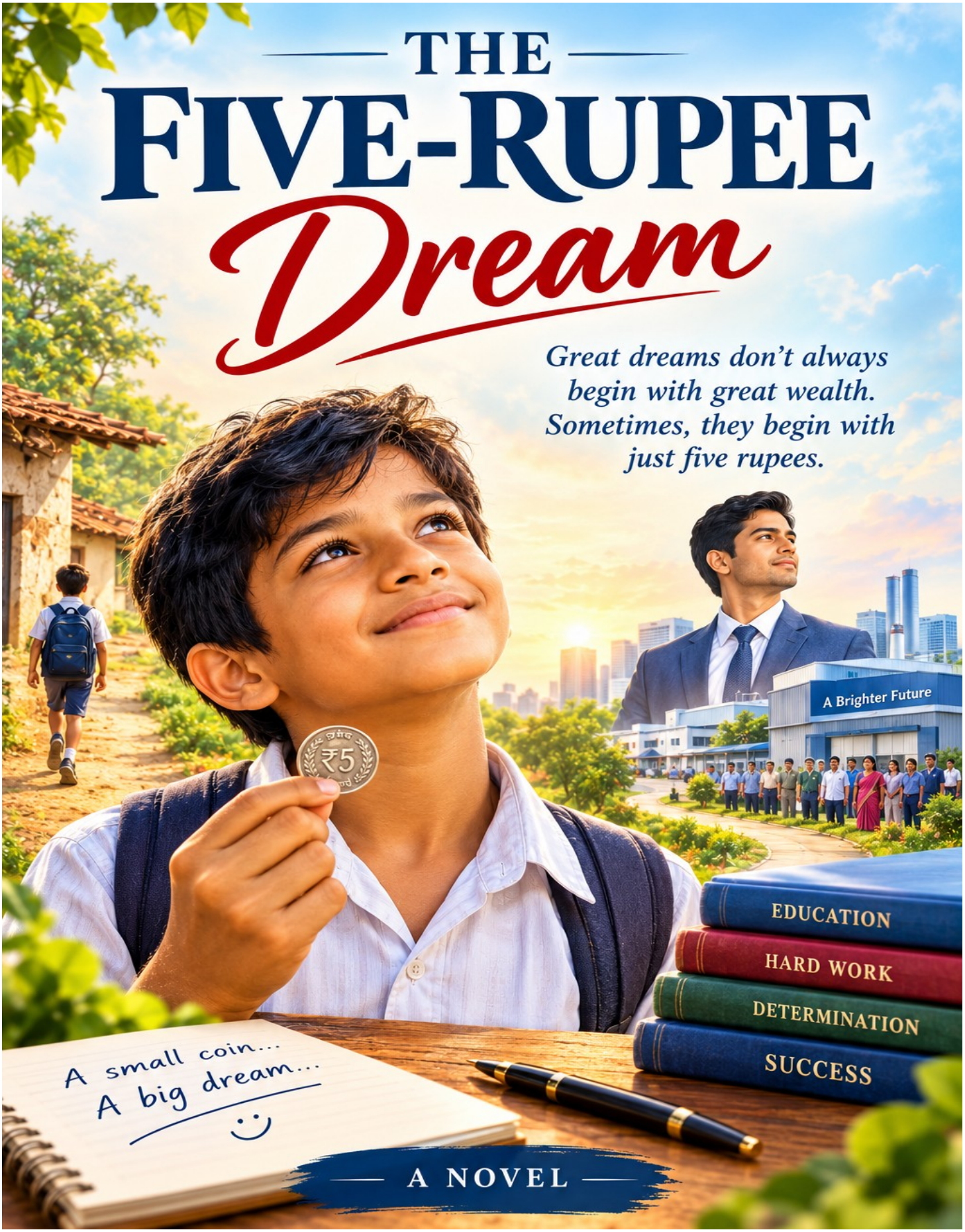
her father was there.

And that was enough to make an entire childhood beautiful…..

****

Comments can be sent to: tsunil51@gmail.com

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THE
FIVE-RUPEE
Dream
Great dreams don't always begin with great wealth. Sometimes, they begin with just five rupees.
A Brighter Future
EDUCATION
HARD WORK
DETERMINATION
SUCCESS
A small coin...
A big dream...
A NOVEL

Chapter 1

Born in the Middle

"Life doesn't always begin with equal opportunities. But greatness often begins with unequal beginnings."

Chapter 1

The first cries of a newborn echoed through the modest government quarters on a rainy evening in July.

The tiny house consisted of two rooms, a small kitchen, and a narrow verandah that overlooked a dusty lane lined with neem trees. The walls had faded patches where the monsoon had slowly left its mark over the years. The ceiling fan groaned as it rotated lazily above.

Inside the house, Lakshmi gently cradled her newborn son.

"He looks just like you," she smiled at her husband.

Ramanayya laughed softly.

"I hope he gets your patience instead of my worries."

The elderly nurse wrapped the baby carefully in a white cloth.

"What will you name him?" she asked.

"Kumar," Ramanayya replied without hesitation.

"It is a simple name."

"So are we," he smiled.

No one in that little house imagined that the child sleeping peacefully in Lakshmi's arms would one day build a company worth crores.

To the world, Kumar was simply another baby born into an ordinary middle-class family.

But destiny often chooses ordinary homes to create extraordinary stories.

Ramanayya worked as a junior clerk in a government office.

Every morning he polished his old black shoes until they shone, folded yesterday's newspaper neatly, and cycled nearly eight kilometers to the office.

His salary was enough to feed the family. Not enough to fulfill dreams.

Every month followed the same routine.

House rent.

Groceries.

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School fees.

Electricity bill.

Medicines.

Bus pass.

By the twentieth day of every month, Lakshmi would quietly begin calculating how to stretch the remaining money.

She had mastered an art few people appreciated—the art of making very little look like enough.

Years passed. The family grew.

First came Ravi, the eldest son.

Then Kumar.

Finally, little Meena filled the house with laughter.

The three children were different in every possible way.

Ravi was confident.

Meena was cheerful.

Kumar was quiet.

He never demanded expensive toys.He never cried for chocolates.

Instead, he watched.

He observed. He listened.

Even as a little boy, he seemed to understand things children normally never noticed.

He noticed the wrinkles on his father's forehead whenever school fee notices arrived.

He noticed his mother quietly reducing the amount of vegetables while serving herself.

He noticed that new clothes always came during festivals—and only if the budget allowed.

Without anyone teaching him, Kumar slowly learned a painful lesson.

Money decided many dreams.

One evening, Ramanayya returned home carrying two colorful school admission forms.

Ravi's eyes sparkled.

"English Medium School!"

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He hugged his father.

"It is the best school nearby."

Lakshmi smiled proudly.

A few years later, when Meena became old enough for school, she too was admitted to the same English-medium school.

Kumar watched happily.

Until one evening, he overheard his parents talking.

"We cannot afford three children in English medium," Ramanayya said, staring silently at his notebook of expenses.

Lakshmi remained quiet.

"The government regional school has good teachers."

"It is cheaper."

"It will help us manage."

Silence filled the room.

Kumar stood outside the door. He had not intended to listen.

But every word entered his heart.

The next morning, he asked only one question.

"Amma... which school am I joining?"

Lakshmi knelt beside him and gently stroked his hair.

"The government school, Kumar."

"Will Ravi anna also come?"

She looked away.

"No."

"What about Meena?"

"No, dear."

There was another silence. Then Kumar smiled.

"That school must also be good."

Lakshmi hugged him tightly.

She knew her little boy had understood much more than a child of his age should.

Years rolled forward. The differences slowly became visible.

Ravi came home speaking English. Meena sang English rhymes.

Kumar carried Telugu textbooks and carefully covered them with old calendar paper.

Whenever relatives visited, they praised Ravi's English pronunciation.

They admired Meena's confidence.

Kumar quietly served them tea.

No one noticed the boy who never complained. Yet inside him, something had begun to grow.

Not jealousy. Not anger.

A silent determination.

"If I cannot get opportunities," he thought, "I will create them."

He did not know how. He did not know when.

But somewhere deep inside, the first seed of a dream had been planted.

And like every great tree, it began beneath the surface—unseen by the world.

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Chapter 2 – The Boy Who Always Came Second

"Some children ask for more. Some children learn to ask for less. The strongest children learn not to ask at all."

The years passed as quietly as the seasons.

Kumar was now seven years old.

Every morning, before the first rays of sunlight reached the narrow streets, Lakshmi would wake up and begin her daily routine. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee filled the small house, followed by the rhythmic sound of her preparing breakfast.

Ramanayya ironed his only office shirt with great care. It had been washed so many times that the fabric had become thin, but he wore it with dignity.

The family gathered for breakfast.

Like every middle-class household, conversations revolved around expenses.

"Ravi's quarterly school fee is due next week," Ramanayya said.

Lakshmi nodded.

"And Meena needs new shoes."

Ramanayya sighed.

"We'll manage."

Kumar quietly continued eating.

He had become familiar with those two words.

"We'll manage."

To most people, they sounded hopeful.

To Kumar, they meant someone in the family would have to sacrifice something.

Most often... ...that someone was him.

One Sunday afternoon, the brothers sat in the verandah watching neighborhood children play cricket.

Ravi suddenly ran inside.

"Father!"

"Yes?"

"Our school is taking us on an educational tour to Hyderabad."

"How much?"

"One hundred and fifty rupees."

For a few moments, nobody spoke.

One hundred and fifty rupees was a large amount for the family.

Ramanayya slowly opened his small diary where every expense was written carefully in blue ink.

After a long silence, he smiled.

"You should go."

Ravi jumped with excitement.

"Thank you, Father!"

He ran outside to tell his friends. Kumar watched his brother disappear down the lane.

He was genuinely happy for him. But he also noticed something others did not.

His father quietly erased an entry in the diary.

It read...

"New sandals for Kumar."

A week later...

Lakshmi noticed Kumar stitching the loose strap of his old sandal with a needle and thread.

"What are you doing?"

"It will last a few more months, Amma."

She understood immediately. Without saying a word, she turned away.

Sometimes tears are easier to hide when nobody is looking.

School became Kumar's favorite place.

Not because it was beautiful. Not because it had the best facilities. But because books never treated children differently.

Inside the classroom, everyone sat on the same wooden benches.

The pages of a textbook never asked,

"Which school do you study in?"

Knowledge welcomed everyone equally. That thought comforted him.

Kumar had another habit.

Every afternoon, after school, instead of rushing home to play, he walked to the small government library.

It was an old building with cracked walls and dusty windows.

The librarian, an elderly man named Srinivas, wore thick spectacles that constantly slipped down his nose.

During Kumar's first visit, the librarian smiled.

"What are you looking for?"

Kumar hesitated.

"I... I just want to read."

Srinivas laughed softly.

"That is the best reason anyone can have."

From that day onward, Kumar became a regular visitor.

The children's section was tiny. There were books about kings and queens.

Stories of Tenali Rama.

Akbar and Birbal.

Panchatantra.

Science experiments.

Great personalities.

Adventure stories.

Kumar read everything. When he finished one shelf...

He moved to the next. Books became his closest friends.

Unlike people... They never judged his clothes. They never laughed at his government school.

They never cared whether he spoke English. They simply opened new worlds.

One evening, Srinivas noticed Kumar reading a biography of a famous scientist.

"You've already finished three books this week."

Kumar smiled shyly.

"I read them twice."

"Twice?"

"I understand more the second time."

The old librarian looked at him thoughtfully. Most children borrowed books for homework.

This boy borrowed them for joy.

Before Kumar left that evening, Srinivas stopped him.

"Wait."

He opened a cupboard and handed him a worn-out library card.

"It belongs to the library now."

Kumar looked confused.

"What is it for, sir?"

"So you can borrow books and take them home."

Kumar's eyes widened.

"Really?"

"Books should never remain on shelves."

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"They should remain in people's hands."

Kumar held the card as if it were made of gold.

That night, he slept with two library books beside his pillow.

Weeks turned into months.

Every story he read planted another seed in his imagination.

One book taught him courage. Another taught him honesty.

Another taught him discipline. Without realizing it...

The library was shaping the man he would one day become.

One evening, while walking home after returning a book, Kumar noticed a small stationery and newspaper shop he had never paid much attention to before.

Bundles of newspapers hung from strings.

Colorful magazines were neatly arranged on a wooden rack.

The evening sunlight reflected off their glossy covers.

One magazine, in particular, caught his attention.

Its cover showed a smiling businessman standing beside a large factory.

Across the top, bold English letters read:

BUSINESS WORLD

Kumar could not understand every word.

But something about that cover fascinated him. He stood there for several minutes, staring at it.

The shop owner noticed the curious little boy and asked,

"You like magazines?"

Kumar nodded.

"What is inside this one, Anna?"

The shopkeeper smiled.

"Stories."

"What kind of stories?"

"Stories of people who built companies."

Kumar looked again at the magazine. People who built companies...

He had never heard anyone in his village talk about such things.

For the first time in his life, he wondered... **What exactly is a businessman?**

He walked home with that single question echoing in his mind.

He didn't know it yet... But that question would quietly change the direction of his entire life.

Chapter 3 – The Magazine Behind the Glass

"The greatest dreams often begin with something we cannot afford."

Sunday mornings were different. Unlike weekdays, there was no school bell waiting for Kumar.

No hurried breakfast. No heavy school bag hanging from his shoulders.

Yet he woke up earlier than everyone else. Not because someone asked him to.

But because Sunday had become his favourite day of the week.

Every Sunday, his father would hand him a few coins.

Because they could not afford paper every day, Ramanayya used to purchased only on Sunday.

He called, "Kumar..."

And said "Go and bring the Sunday newspaper."

"Yes, Father."

It was a small responsibility.

But Kumar carried it with pride.

He carefully folded the cloth bag, slipped the coins into his pocket, and walked towards the newspaper agency at the corner of the market.

The shop was hardly bigger than a small room. Bundles of newspapers were stacked neatly near the entrance.

Rows of colourful magazines hung from strings, gently swaying whenever the morning breeze passed through.

The smell of fresh ink mixed with the fragrance of new paper.

To most people... It was just another stationery shop.

To Kumar...

It was becoming a window to another world. The owner of the shop was a cheerful man in his early forties.

His name was **Prasad**.

Everyone in the locality simply called him...

"Prasad Anna."

He greeted every customer with the same warm smile.

"Good morning!"

"Newspaper?"

"Magazine?"

"Notebook?"

He had seen Kumar many times.

"The Sunday paper?"

"Yes, Anna."

Prasad handed him the newspaper.

Kumar paid the money. But instead of leaving...

He stood silently near the magazine rack.

Prasad smiled.

"You like looking at them, don't you?"

Kumar nodded without taking his eyes off the magazines.

There was one magazine that always occupied the top row.

Its cover changed every month.

Sometimes it featured a businessman standing beside a factory. Sometimes a woman entrepreneur smiling confidently in front of her office.

Sometimes a photograph of machines, ports, or tall buildings.

Although Kumar couldn't understand everything written on the cover, one thing fascinated him.

Every issue carried stories of people who had started with nothing and built something extraordinary.

The magazine seemed to whisper...

"Dream bigger."

One Sunday, Kumar gathered the courage to ask.

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e-magazine

"Anna..."

Prasad looked up from arranging newspapers.

"Yes?"

"How much is this magazine?"

Prasad took it from the rack.

"Ten rupees."

Ten rupees.

The number echoed in Kumar's mind.

His heart sank. Ten rupees was not a small amount.

It was almost the cost of vegetables for a day.

Or a week's bus fare. Or several notebooks.

He smiled politely.

"Okay, Anna."

He returned home carrying only the newspaper.

But his mind remained with the magazine.

That afternoon, while everyone rested after lunch, Kumar sat alone in the verandah.

He took a small empty tin box from his school bag.It had once contained sweets.

Now...

It had become his treasure box.

He opened it. Inside were a few coins.

Fifty paise.

One rupee.

Another fifty paise.

He counted them carefully.

Three rupees.....Only three.

He closed the lid quietly.

"One day..."

Bookwave
e-magazine

"I will buy it."

The next Sunday...The routine repeated itself.

He bought the newspaper.Looked at the magazine.

Smiled and Returned home.

Another Sunday passed. Then another.

Every week, Kumar hoped he would somehow save enough money.

But life had other plans. Sometimes he needed a notebook. Sometimes a pen.

Sometimes his mother asked him to buy coriander or matchboxes with the remaining coins.

The little savings disappeared before they could grow.

Yet...He never stopped dreaming.

One bright Sunday morning, Kumar stood in front of the magazine rack longer than usual.

The cover displayed a successful businessman standing beside dozens of workers.

Across the top was a headline in bold letters.

"From a Small Shop to a Great Industry."

Kumar could not read every word.But he recognised one sentence.

Small Shop.

His eyes sparkled. He wondered...

"Can a person really start with a small shop and build something so big?"

The thought stayed with him all day. Weeks turned into months.

Prasad had begun noticing the boy's silent routine.

Every Sunday. Same time. Same newspaper. Same magazine.

Same disappointed eyes.

One day he smiled.

"You look at this magazine more than anyone buys it."

Kumar laughed shyly.

"I like the cover."

"Only the cover?"

Kumar hesitated and said, "I wish I could read what is inside."

Prasad gently placed the magazine back on the rack.

"You should buy it someday."

"I will, Anna."

"When?"

"When I save ten rupees."

Prasad smiled and said, "I'll be waiting."

The following Sunday, Kumar came with a new idea. His heartbeat quickened as he approached the counter.

"Anna..."

"Hmm?"

"If you don't mind..."

"Can I just look inside for five minutes?"

"I won't damage it."

"I'll return it carefully."

Prasad looked at the magazine. Then at the boy. He knew Kumar meant every word.

But he also knew the reality of his business. He spoke gently.

"Kumar..."

"If I open it..."

"People will think it has already been used."

"No one will buy it."

"I'll lose money."

Kumar lowered his eyes.

"Oh..."

"I understand."

He picked up the newspaper and quietly walked away. Prasad watched him leave.

For the first time...The shopkeeper felt heavier than the little boy.

That evening, Kumar sat outside his house watching the sunset.

He wasn't angry. He wasn't upset with Prasad. He knew Prasad had spoken the truth.

A businessman had to protect his business. He smiled to himself.

"One day... if I ever own a shop..."

"I will make sure no child's dream goes home empty."

The wind carried away his words.

But somewhere...Destiny had already heard them.

The next Sunday would look like every other Sunday.

Or so Kumar believed. He had no idea that life was quietly preparing a surprise...

One that cost not ten rupees...

But only five.

And that tiny difference would change everything.

Chapter 4 – Five Rupees

"Sometimes, the difference between giving up and moving forward is just five rupees."

The first Sunday of every month had become Kumar's favourite day.

Not because it was a holiday.

Not because he could play longer with his friends.

But because...A new business magazine would arrive at Prasad Anna's shop.

He never missed it. Even when it rained.

Even when he had a fever. Even when examinations were around the corner.

The Sunday newspaper could wait. The magazine could not.

That Sunday morning, the sky was covered with dark clouds.

Lakshmi stood near the doorway.

"Kumar..."

"Take the umbrella."

"I'll be back in five minutes, Amma."

She smiled.

"You always say five minutes."

"And return after twenty."

Kumar laughed and ran towards the market.

Prasad was arranging newspapers when he saw Kumar approaching.

"Good morning!"

"Good morning, Anna."

"The usual newspaper?"

"Yes."

Prasad handed him the newspaper.

As always...Kumar's eyes searched the magazine rack.

The familiar **₹10 business magazine** was there.

Its glossy cover looked more attractive than ever.

He stared at it for a few seconds. Then sighed softly.

Nothing had changed. Ten rupees was still ten rupees.

Just as he was about to leave...

Something caught his eye. On the lower shelf...

Partly hidden behind a stack of weekly magazines...

Was another business magazine.

It looked smaller.Its pages were fewer.

Its paper wasn't as glossy. The title was different.

But one word stood out clearly.

BUSINESS

Kumar bent down.

"Anna..."

"What is this magazine?"

Prasad looked.

"Oh..."

Bookwave
e-magazine

"That one?"

"Yes."

"That's a new magazine."

"How much is it?"

Prasad smiled.

"Five rupees."

Five... Rupees.

For a moment...Time stopped.

Kumar wasn't sure whether he had heard correctly.

He looked again.

"Anna..."

"Did you say..."

"Five rupees?"

"Yes."

"Only five."

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The words echoed inside him. Only five.

He had imagined this moment hundreds of times.

Yet when it finally arrived...He couldn't move.

His hands slowly entered his pocket.

He took out every coin he had.

One rupee.

Another.

Fifty paise.

Twenty-five paise.

More coins followed.

He counted carefully on the wooden counter.

One...

Two...

Three...

Four...

Four rupees and fifty paise.

He counted again.

Still...Four rupees and fifty paise.

He looked up. Only fifty paise short.

His smile slowly disappeared.

Prasad watched silently. He knew exactly what was happening.

"Not enough?"

Kumar shook his head.

"I'll buy it next month."

He carefully gathered the coins. Just then...

A cheerful voice came from behind.

"Anna!"

It was Meena.

She had been sent by Lakshmi to buy coriander leaves from the nearby vegetable shop.

She noticed Kumar standing quietly.

"What happened?"

He smiled.

"Nothing."

Children can hide words. They cannot hide disappointment.

She looked at the magazine. Then at the coins.

Then quietly opened the tiny cloth purse tied around her waist.

Inside were two shiny fifty-paise coins.

Her weekly pocket money.Without saying anything...

She gave her 1 ruppee note to her brother..

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Kumar looked surprised.

"No..."

"You keep it."

"I don't need it."

She smiled.

"You wanted the magazine."

"Didn't you?"

He stood speechless.

"But..."

"You won't have money for sweets."

She laughed.

"You read the magazine."

"You tell me the stories."

"That is sweeter."

Kumar looked at his little sister.

Sometimes...Love never announces itself.

It simply arrives as fifty paise.

He slowly turned towards Prasad.

"Anna..."

"I have five rupees now."

Prasad smiled.

"I know."

He carefully took a fresh copy from the rack.

Not the display copy. A brand-new one.

He gently placed it in Kumar's hands.

"There."

"This one is yours."

Kumar held it carefully.

He didn't open it. He didn't even look inside.

He simply stared at the cover.For nearly a minute.

It was the first business magazine he had ever owned.

The paper smelled fresh. The pages were crisp.

His own name wasn't written anywhere on it.

Yet...

It felt as though the magazine belonged only to him.

on the way home...He held the magazine tightly against his chest.

He avoided puddles. He walked carefully so the corners wouldn't bend.

When a light drizzle began, he quickly slipped the magazine inside his shirt to keep it dry.

His own clothes became wet. The magazine did not.

Lakshmi looked surprised when he entered.

"What is that?"

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e-magazine

Kumar slowly removed the magazine from inside his shirt.

His face was glowing.

"I bought it."

"You bought a magazine?"

"Yes, Amma."

"With whose money?"

"My money..."

"And..."

He looked at Meena.

"...her fifty paise."

Lakshmi looked at both children.

For a moment... She said nothing.

Then she gently kissed Meena on the forehead.

"And you gave him your pocket money?"

Meena nodded.

"He likes books more than sweets."

Lakshmi smiled.

"My children are richer than I am."

That afternoon...Kumar opened the magazine.

Very slowly. As though opening a treasure chest.

The first article was about a man who had started a small rice mill with borrowed money.

The next article described a young entrepreneur who had failed three times before succeeding.

There were photographs of factories.

Warehouses. Machines.

Office buildings. People wearing suits.

Charts. Graphs. Words he had never seen before.

He didn't understand everything.Not even half.

Bookwave
e-magazine

But that didn't matter.Every unknown word became a new friend waiting to be introduced.

He took out a small notebook.Whenever he found an English word he didn't understand...

He wrote it down.

Beside it...He left a blank space.

One day...

He promised himself...

Every blank space would be filled.

That night...

Everyone in the house fell asleep.

The lights went out. Silence filled the tiny home. Only one small kerosene lamp still burned.

Under its soft yellow glow...

A little boy sat cross-legged on the floor.

Reading. Turning each page slowly.

Dreaming quietly. Without knowing..

He was not merely reading a magazine.

He was reading the first chapter.....

of his own future.

Chapter 5 – Fifty Readings

"A book is read once. A dream is read again and again."

The little magazine found a permanent place in Kumar's room.

Or rather...In the tiny corner that Kumar called his room.

The family lived in a two-room government quarter. One room belonged to his parents.

The other belonged to three growing children.

There were no cupboards. No study tables. No bookshelves.

Only a wooden trunk, three steel boxes, a few folded blankets, and dreams that somehow found enough space to grow.

Kumar wrapped the magazine in yesterday's newspaper before placing it inside his school bag.

Not because it was expensive.

But because it was precious.

The next morning, before leaving for school, he opened the magazine once again.

Only for five minutes.

Five minutes became fifteen.

Lakshmi called from the kitchen.

"Kumar!"

"School!"

"I'm coming, Amma!"

He hurriedly closed the magazine.

But even while walking to school...

His mind remained on the unfinished article.

During lunch break, while his classmates played kabaddi under the neem tree...

Kumar sat alone beneath the classroom window.

The magazine lay open on his lap.

His friend Raju walked over.

"What are you reading?"

Kumar smiled.

"A business magazine."

Raju frowned.

"What's business?"

Kumar laughed.

"I don't know completely."

"But I'm trying to find out."

Raju looked at the pages filled with English.

"You understand all this?"

"No."

"Then why read it?"

Kumar gently turned another page.

"Because one day..."

"I will."

That evening...

He reached the article he had struggled with the previous day.

There was one sentence he couldn't understand.

He read it once.

Twice.

Five times.

Still nothing.

He copied it carefully into his notebook.

The next day, after school, he carried the notebook to the government library.

Srinivas, the librarian, looked up with a smile.

"Finished another story?"

Kumar shook his head.

"No, Sir."

"I have a question."

He opened the notebook.

"What does this word mean?"

Srinivas adjusted his spectacles.

The word was...**Entrepreneur.**

He smiled.

"That's a big word for a little boy."

Kumar smiled back.

"So..."

"What does it mean?"

The old librarian thought for a moment. Then he pointed towards the banyan tree outside.

"Suppose someone plants a tiny seed."

"The seed grows."

"It becomes a tree."

"It gives shade."

"It gives fruits."

"People rest under it."

"The person who planted the seed created something that helped many others."

Kumar nodded.

"Yes."

"An entrepreneur is someone like that."

"Someone who creates something..."

"...that gives work, hope, and opportunities to many people."

Kumar's eyes widened.

"So..."

"They don't only earn money?"

The librarian smiled.

"No."

"The best entrepreneurs create value before they create wealth."

Kumar wrote every word carefully.

That evening... He learned far more than the meaning of a difficult English word.

He discovered the purpose of business.

The magazine slowly became part of his daily routine.

Every morning...

Five pages.

Every afternoon...

Bookwave e-magazine

Ten pages.

Every night...

Another few pages.

When he reached the last page...

He quietly returned to the first page. And began again.

One Sunday, Ravi noticed him reading the same magazine.

"You've already finished that."

Kumar nodded.

"I'm reading it again."

"Why?"

"I missed many things."

Ravi laughed.

"Who reads the same magazine twice?"

Kumar looked down thoughtfully.

"I think..."

"I'll read it many times."

Ravi shook his head and walked away.

Years later...

Kumar would smile whenever he remembered that conversation.

Because he hadn't read the magazine twice.

He had read it more than fifty times.

Each reading revealed something new.

The first time... He noticed the photographs.

The second time... The headlines.

The third time... The advertisements.

The fourth time... The charts.

The fifth time... The words.

Bookwave
e-magazine

The tenth time...The ideas.

The twentieth time... The possibilities.

By the fiftieth reading...He no longer saw ink on paper.

He saw dreams becoming plans.

Lakshmi often found him reading late into the evening.

"Aren't you tired?"

He smiled.

"No, Amma."

"Didn't you already read it?"

"I did."

"Then why again?"

Kumar thought for a moment.

Then answered quietly.

"Because every time I read..."

"I understand something I didn't understand yesterday."

Lakshmi gently touched his head.

Education wasn't only happening at school anymore.

It was happening inside her son.

Months passed. The second issue arrived.

Then the third. Then the fourth.

Every month... The same excitement.

The same careful walk home. The same newspaper wrapping.

The same notebook beside him. The same promise.

"I will understand every page."

One evening, Ramanayya entered the room.

He saw Kumar writing dozens of English words in a notebook.

"What are these?"

"The difficult words from the magazine."

"You write every one?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"I ask the meaning."

"And after that?"

"I make my own sentence."

Ramanayya turned the notebook slowly.

Page after page... Word after word...

Meaning after meaning. There were no red marks. No teacher's corrections.

Only determination. For the first time...He realized something.

His son wasn't merely reading. He was teaching himself.

Ramanayya quietly closed the notebook.

He didn't say anything. But as he walked away...His eyes had become moist.

There are moments when a father feels proud...Not because his son has achieved success...

But because he has discovered purpose. This was one of those moments.

That night...While everyone slept...

Kumar carefully arranged his four business magazines one above another.

He looked at them as though they were priceless treasures.

Then he whispered softly...

"One day..."

"I'll have an entire cupboard full of these."

The little boy smiled. He had no idea...That years later...

He wouldn't simply own a cupboard full of business magazines.

He would become one of the people featured inside them.

Chapter 6 – The Boy Everyone Knew

"Some customers buy newspapers. Some buy magazines. Once in a while, a little boy walks into a shop and quietly buys a dream."

The Sundays continued.

One after another.

Like the turning pages of a calendar. Like the changing covers of the business magazine.

Like Kumar's growing dreams. Nothing else changed.

The same narrow streets. The same government quarters.

The same old bicycle carrying Ramanayya to work.

The same school. The same library. The same stationery shop.

Yet...Every month, something inside Kumar grew a little more.

It had now been almost a year. Prasad no longer needed to ask.

"The newspaper?"

"The magazine?"

He already knew.

Bookwave
e-magazine

As soon as Kumar entered the shop, Prasad would reach for both.

One Sunday morning, Prasad smiled.

"Kumar..."

"Your magazine has arrived."

The words made Kumar happier than any festival greeting.

"My magazine."

He liked the sound of those two words.

He carefully took the magazine into his hands.

As always...

He looked at the cover first. Then the table of contents.

Then the last page. Only after reaching home did he begin reading from the first page.

It had become a ritual.

One afternoon, Prasad's helper asked curiously,

"Anna..."

"Why do you always keep one copy aside?"

Prasad smiled.

"It is for Kumar."

"The schoolboy?"

"Yes."

"He never misses an issue."

The helper laughed.

"At his age, children ask for comics."

"He asks for business magazines."

Prasad folded another newspaper.

"That is why I keep one copy."

"If I sell every copy before he comes..."

"He'll return disappointed."

The helper looked towards the road.

"Will he become a businessman one day?"

Prasad shrugged.

"I don't know."

"But I know one thing."

"Children who love books never remain ordinary."

Kumar knew none of this. He believed he was just another customer.

He never realized...Someone had quietly begun waiting for him every month.

One Sunday, heavy rain flooded the streets.

Water flowed through the market like a small stream.

Most customers stayed home.

Prasad looked outside.

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"I don't think Kumar will come today."

Just then...

A small figure appeared in the rain. His clothes were soaked.

His hair dripped with water. But his smile remained unchanged.

Prasad laughed.

"You came!"

Kumar smiled.

"The magazine came too."

Didn't it?"

Prasad burst into laughter.

"Yes."

"It did."

He handed over the magazine. Then quietly wrapped it in a plastic cover.

"So it doesn't get wet."

Kumar looked surprised.

"Thank you, Anna."

As Kumar walked away through the rain... Prasad watched him carefully.

"What kind of boy comes through a storm..."

"...only to buy a magazine?"

He smiled to himself.

"A boy with a future."

That evening...Lakshmi noticed the plastic cover.

"Where did you get this?"

"Prasad Anna gave it."

"So the magazine wouldn't become wet."

She nodded quietly. Good people rarely announce their kindness.

They simply practice it. Months continued to pass.

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Every new issue brought new dreams.

One magazine carried the story of a textile businessman.

Another featured a woman who started a pickle business from her kitchen.

Another spoke about exporting handicrafts.

Kumar read everything. He never said,

"This business is small."

Or,

"That business is big."

To him...

Every business had begun with one decision.

To start.

One afternoon in school, the teacher asked,

"What do you want to become when you grow up?"

The classroom immediately became noisy.

"Doctor!"

"Engineer!"

"Police officer!"

"Teacher!"

One by one...

Every student answered confidently.

Finally...

The teacher looked at Kumar.

"And you?"

The class became silent.

Kumar stood up slowly.

"I..."

"I want to become..."

Bookwave
e-magazine

He stopped.

He wasn't sure.

He remembered the business magazines.

The factories, The interviews, The stories.

He took a deep breath.

"I want to become a businessman."

For a second... The classroom remained silent. Then several children laughed.

"A businessman?"

"You?"

"Your father is only a clerk!"

Another boy whispered, "Business is only for rich people."

The laughter spread. Kumar quietly sat down.

He didn't argue. He didn't become angry. He simply opened his notebook. Sometimes...

The loudest answer to laughter... Is silent preparation.

That evening... He reached Prasad's shop as usual.

Prasad noticed something different.

"You look quiet today."

Kumar hesitated.

"Anna..."

"Can poor people become businessmen?"

Prasad looked at him carefully. Instead of answering immediately...

He took the latest magazine from the rack. He opened the cover page.

Pointing to the photograph of an elderly businessman, he asked,

"Do you know him?"

"No."

"He started by selling groundnuts on a roadside."

Kumar looked surprised and asked "Really?"

Prasad nodded.

"The magazine says so."

He turned another page.

"And this man?"

"He repaired bicycles."

Another page.

"This lady sold homemade snacks."

Another page. "This gentleman worked as a clerk."

Kumar looked up.

"A clerk?"

"Like my father?"

Prasad smiled.

"Exactly like your father."

He closed the magazine gently.

"Kumar..."

"Business doesn't ask where you started."

"It only asks whether you are willing to continue."

Those words settled deep inside Kumar's heart.

Years later... When people asked him the secret of his success...

He would remember that rainy evening in the little stationery shop.

Not because of the magazine. But because of one sentence.

"Business doesn't ask where you started.

It only asks whether you are willing to continue."

As Kumar walked home, he looked at the magazine in his hands.

For the first time...

He wasn't carrying paper.

He was carrying belief.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Chapter 7 – The Dictionary of Dreams

"Every difficult word Kumar learned became one less obstacle between him and his future."

The business magazine had become Kumar's favorite teacher.

Unlike his schoolteachers...It never conducted examinations.

Unlike his textbooks...It never ended with a final chapter.

Every month brought another lesson. Every page carried another dream.

Yet there was one problem.

The magazine spoke a language Kumar didn't fully understand.

One evening, he sat cross-legged on the floor with a notebook beside him.

On one side of the page, he carefully wrote English words.

On the other side...He left blank spaces.

Those empty spaces waited patiently for meanings.

He counted the new words he had collected from the latest issue.

Twenty-eight.

Twenty-eight words.

Twenty-eight mysteries.

He smiled.

"Tomorrow..."

"I'll find all of you."

The next afternoon, after school, Kumar walked straight to the library.

Srinivas looked up from his desk.

"You've come with another notebook."

Kumar grinned.

"And more questions."

The old librarian laughed.

"I thought so."

For the next hour...

Bookwave e-magazine

The library became a classroom.

Not the kind with blackboards and attendance registers.

But the kind where curiosity was the only admission fee.

"What does **investment** mean, Sir?"

Srinivas picked up a mango from his lunch box.

"If I eat this mango..."

"It is over."

"If I plant its seed..."

"It becomes a tree."

"Which one is investment?"

Kumar smiled.

"The seed."

"Exactly."

"What is **profit**?"

Srinivas pointed towards the old tea stall outside the library.

"If the tea seller spends eight rupees to make tea and sells it for ten..."

"What remains?"

"Two rupees."

"That is profit."

"What is **loss**?"

"When effort doesn't return what you expected."

He paused.

"But remember this..."

"Money lost can be earned again."

"Courage lost is much harder to recover."

Kumar underlined the sentence three times.

Years later...He would repeat those very words to his own employees.

Bookwave e-magazine

The notebook slowly filled.

Investment.

Marketing.

Management.

Industry.

Distribution.

Export.

Entrepreneur.

Leadership.

Every new word widened Kumar's world.

Language was no longer frightening. It was becoming a bridge.

At home...His new habit puzzled everyone.

Every evening after finishing his homework, Kumar opened two books.

One was his school textbook.

The other was the business magazine.

Lakshmi watched him one day.

"You study two classes?"

Kumar laughed.

"One for school..."

"...and one for life."

She smiled without fully understanding. Sometimes mothers don't understand every dream.

They simply believe in the dreamer.

One Sunday afternoon, Ravi entered the room carrying an English grammar book.

He noticed Kumar reading aloud.

"Pronunciation."

"Opportunity."

"Distribution."

Bookwave e-magazine

Ravi laughed.

"You sound funny."

Kumar stopped reading.

He knew his pronunciation wasn't perfect.

After all... He had studied only in the regional medium.

For a moment...His confidence wavered.

Maybe Ravi was right. Maybe his English would never improve.

That night, he closed the magazine earlier than usual.

The next day, Srinivas immediately sensed something was wrong.

"You didn't bring your notebook today."

Kumar remained silent. Finally he spoke.

"My English is poor."

The librarian smiled gently.

"So was mine."

Kumar looked surprised.

"Really?"

"Of course."

"I grew up in a village."

"I didn't even know the alphabet properly until I was twelve."

"What changed then, Sir?"

Srinivas walked towards a bookshelf.

He picked up an old dictionary.

The cover had almost fallen apart.

Its pages had turned yellow with age.

"This."

Kumar looked puzzled.

"A dictionary?"

Bookwave
e-magazine

Srinivas nodded.

"I spent years becoming friends with this book."

He placed it in Kumar's hands.

"It is old."

"It has no price now."

"But it has value."

"I want you to keep it."

Kumar stared at the book.

"No, Sir..."

"This belongs to the library."

Srinivas smiled.

"No."

"It belongs to the next reader."

Kumar held the dictionary carefully.It was heavier than he expected.

Not because of its pages...But because of the trust that came with it.

He whispered,

"I'll return it."

Srinivas shook his head.

"I don't want it back."

"I want you to wear it out."

From that day onward...A new routine began.

Whenever Kumar found an unfamiliar word in the magazine...

He searched for it in the dictionary.

If the meaning was difficult...

He looked for another word. And another.

Until the sentence finally made sense.

Some evenings...

One paragraph took an entire hour. He never complained.

He believed understanding one paragraph completely was better than reading ten pages carelessly.

Weeks turned into months.

Slowly...

Almost unnoticed...

His English began to change.

He started understanding advertisements.

Then editorials. Then interviews.

Even his schoolteacher noticed. One day during English class, the teacher asked,

"Who can explain the meaning of **confidence**?"

Several students remained silent. Kumar slowly raised his hand.

The teacher smiled.

"Yes, Kumar."

He stood up.

After thinking for a moment, he answered,

"Confidence is believing you can do something..."

"...even before others believe you can."

The classroom became silent.

The teacher looked at him with surprise.

"Very well said."

For the first time...Kumar wasn't afraid of English.

He had stopped seeing it as a language.

He had started seeing it as a friend. That evening...

He opened the first business magazine he had ever bought.

He turned to an article that had once looked impossible to read.

Slowly...He began reading.

This time...He understood almost every sentence.

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e-magazine

A smile spread across his face. The magazine hadn't become easier.

He had become better. He gently closed the magazine. Placed his hand on the cover. And whispered,

"Thank you..."

Not to the magazine. Not to the dictionary.

Not even to the library. He was thanking the little boy...

Who had refused to give up when every page looked difficult.....

Chapter 8 – The Price of Compromise

"Some dreams are postponed by fate. Others are postponed by love."

The years passed quietly.

Kumar was no longer the little boy who struggled to understand every page of his business magazine.

He had grown taller.

His shoulders had become broader.

His confidence had grown.

His notebook of English words had become thicker.

And his collection of business magazines had grown into a neat bundle tied carefully with a cotton ribbon.

Every magazine carried memories.

Every page carried another lesson.

It was the summer after Kumar completed his tenth standard.

Results had been announced.

The house was filled with happiness.

Ramanayya entered the house holding a box of sweets.

"Kumar!"

"Congratulations!"

"You have scored first class."

Lakshmi's face glowed with pride.

Meena clapped happily.

Even Ravi, now studying engineering, hugged his younger brother.

"Well done!"

For the first time in many years...

The celebrations belonged entirely to Kumar.

That evening...

Lakshmi prepared his favourite dessert—**payasam**.

It wasn't expensive. But in middle-class homes...

Love is rarely measured by the cost of the meal.

After dinner, Ramanayya called Kumar to the verandah.

The old wooden chair creaked as he sat down.

"Kumar..."

"Have you thought about Intermediate?"

"Yes, Father."

"I want to take Biology."

"Medicine?"

Kumar nodded.

"I want to become a doctor."

Ramanayya remained silent.

He looked at the road for a long time.

A few children chased a tyre with a stick.

Some women returned from the market carrying vegetables.

Life outside continued normally.

Inside the verandah...

A father searched for the right words.

Finally he spoke.

"I'll do everything I can."

Bookwave
e-magazine

Kumar smiled.

"I know, Father."

A week later...

Admission season began.

Forms.

Certificates.

Queues.

Fees.

Every college was crowded.

Kumar secured admission in the Biology stream.

He returned home carrying his books.

His dream was alive.

Life settled into a new routine.

Classes.

Library.

Business magazines.

Dictionary.

Late-night study.

Every morning before leaving for college, Kumar looked at the photograph of a doctor in his Biology textbook.

One day...

He hoped to wear a white coat himself.

Months passed.

One Sunday afternoon, Kumar was reading an interview with the founder of a pharmaceutical company.

One sentence caught his attention.

"Every medicine reaches a patient because thousands of invisible hands work together."

He read the sentence again.

And again.

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Something about it stayed with him.

He underlined it carefully.

Years later...

He would remember those words in a way he could never have imagined.

Intermediate examinations arrived.

Kumar worked harder than ever.

Sometimes studying until midnight.

Sometimes waking before sunrise.

Lakshmi often found him asleep over his books.

She would quietly place a blanket over his shoulders without waking him.

A mother's love often speaks without words.

The results were excellent. Now came the real challenge.

Medical entrance examinations. The whole family supported him.

Even Ravi explained difficult science concepts whenever he came home during holidays.

Meena tested him with biology questions while laughing whenever he answered too quickly.

For a few months...The family seemed united by one dream.

Kumar should become a doctor.

Examination day arrived.

Outside the examination centre...Hundreds of students stood with their parents.

Some revised formulas. Some prayed.

Some remained silent. Ramanayya placed his hand on Kumar's shoulder.

"There is only one thing I want from you."

"What is it, Father?"

"Do your best."

"The result..."

"...leave it to God."

Kumar nodded.

He entered the examination hall and wrote the exam.

Weeks passed. The results were announced.

Kumar had scored well.

Very well.

But not enough to secure a government medical seat.

A few marks. Just a few marks.

That was all. He stared at the result sheet.

The difference between becoming a doctor...

...and not becoming one.....was smaller than he had imagined.

Friends discussed private medical colleges.

Management seats. Donations. Capitation fees.

The figures sounded unreal.

Lakhs of rupees. Amounts Kumar had never even seen written together.

That evening...He sat silently in the verandah.

The business magazine lay unopened beside him.

For the first time in years...He had no desire to read.

Ramanayya walked towards him carrying two cups of tea.

He handed one to Kumar. Neither of them spoke.

After a long silence, Ramanayya finally said,

"I went to enquire."

Kumar already knew the answer.

"The fees?"

Ramanayya nodded slowly.

"I cannot afford it."

The words came with great difficulty.

Not because they were hard to speak.

But because they hurt the man speaking them.

Bookwave e-magazine

Kumar looked at his father.

For the first time in his life...

He noticed something he had never seen before.

His father's hair had begun to turn grey.

Tiny lines had appeared near his eyes.

The years had been kind to no one.

Especially not to a man who had spent his entire life choosing between responsibilities.

Kumar quietly smiled.

"It's alright, Father."

"No..."

Ramanayya replied immediately.

"It is not alright."

"I know how much you wanted this."

"I am sorry."

Those words pierced Kumar's heart. He had never heard his father apologize before.

Kumar slowly placed his cup on the floor. Then, for the first time in his life...

He held his father's hand. It was rough. Worn.

Marked by years of work.He spoke softly.

"Father..."

"You are apologizing for something that is not your mistake."

Ramanayya looked at him.

"If money decided dreams..."

"...then poor people would never have dreams."

He smiled gently.

"I'll find another path."

That night...Kumar couldn't sleep.

He opened his bundle of business magazines.

He began reading old interviews. One businessman had failed his examinations.

Another had never gone to college.A third had started with nothing more than a rented room.

He suddenly realized something. Every successful person had lost one dream.

Before discovering another. He closed the magazine.

His disappointment had not disappeared. But it had become lighter.

The next morning...He stood before the mirror.

Looked at himself. And whispered,

"If one door closes..."

"I won't stand outside it forever."

"I'll build another door."

The mirror reflected not disappointment...But determination. The dream of becoming a doctor had ended.

But the dream of becoming someone extraordinary...Had only become stronger.

Chapter 9 – The Road Called Commerce

"Life did not ask Kumar to abandon his dreams. It simply introduced him to a dream he had never imagined."

The weeks after the medical entrance results were unusually quiet.

The house had returned to its normal routine.

Ramanayya left for office every morning. Lakshmi busied herself with household chores.

Meena prepared for school.

Only Kumar had changed. He still smiled.

He still helped his mother. He still visited the library.

But somewhere inside...A dream had folded itself away.

Not broken. Just quietly folded.

Like a carefully ironed shirt placed inside a cupboard.

One evening, Ramanayya returned home carrying several college admission forms.

He placed them on the dining table.

"Kumar..."

"Let's decide."

Kumar looked through them.

B.Sc.

B.A.

B.Com.

He read every course silently. His eyes stopped at one form.

Bachelor of Commerce

English Medium.He looked at his father.

"Commerce?"

Ramanayya nodded.

"I know this wasn't your first choice."

"But..."

He hesitated.

"I think you'll do well."

Kumar smiled faintly.

"I don't know anything about commerce."

Before Ramanayya could answer, Lakshmi walked in carrying tea.

She smiled.

"When you were little..."

"You didn't know anything about business magazines either."

The room fell silent. Everyone laughed.Even Kumar.

His mother had unknowingly reminded him of something important.

Every expert... Was once a beginner.

The next morning...Kumar went to the library.

He walked straight towards Srinivas.

"Sir..."

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e-magazine

"I've decided."

The old librarian adjusted his spectacles.

"Medicine?"

Kumar shook his head.

"No."

"B.Com."

Srinivas smiled warmly.

"Excellent."

Kumar looked surprised.

"You think so?"

"I do."

"But everyone says doctors and engineers have better futures."

Srinivas slowly closed the book he had been reading.

"Kumar..."

"Do you remember the first day you came to this library?"

"Yes."

"You borrowed children's storybooks."

"Today you read business journals."

"What changed?"

"I did."

"Exactly."

He leaned forward.

"The future does not belong to a course."

"It belongs to the person studying it."

Those words settled deeply inside Kumar.

Admission day arrived. The college campus was much larger than his school.

Students walked confidently through the corridors. Conversations flowed in English.

Some laughed loudly. Some discussed careers.Some carried expensive bags.

Kumar quietly stood near the notice board.

For the first time in years...He felt the old fear returning.

He was entering an English-medium college.

Would he fit in?

Would his words betray his regional-medium education?

Inside the classroom, the lecturer entered with a pleasant smile.

"Good morning, everyone."

Almost the entire class responded confidently.

"Good morning, Sir."

Kumar's reply came a second later.

A little softer.A little uncertain.

The first lecture was on **Principles of Commerce**.

The professor wrote one sentence on the board.

"Business exists because people have needs."

He turned towards the class.

"Can anyone explain?"

Several students looked down. The classroom remained silent.

The professor smiled.

"No one?"

Kumar slowly raised his hand. His heartbeat quickened.

The professor nodded.

"Yes."

Kumar stood up. He spoke carefully.

"If people don't need something..."

"...nobody will buy it."

"So..."

"Business begins by solving someone's problem."

The professor smiled.

"Very good."

"What is your name?"

"Kumar."

"Welcome to commerce."

The entire class turned towards him.

For the first time...He didn't feel like the boy from a regional-medium school.

He felt like he belonged. Days became weeks.

Something unexpected began to happen. Every subject fascinated him.

Economics, Accounting, Business Organisation, Commercial Geography and Management.

Every chapter reminded him of something he had already seen in his magazines.

It was as though the magazines had quietly prepared him for college years before he even knew it.

Sometimes he smiled while reading the textbook.

"I've read about this before..."

One afternoon, while browsing through an old business magazine, he came across an interview with the founder of a successful retail chain.

One sentence was underlined in red by a previous reader.

"The best businesses are built by people who never stop learning."

Kumar looked at the line for several minutes. Then he opened his notebook. Instead of writing the sentence...

He wrote a promise. **I will never stop learning.**

Years later... That promise would become the culture of his own company.

His English also continued to improve. Every evening, he followed the same routine.

One hour for college subjects.One hour for the business magazine.

Thirty minutes with the dictionary.

Then...He rewrote difficult English sentences in his own words.

Sometimes they sounded awkward. Sometimes they were completely wrong.

But every mistake became another teacher.

One evening, Ravi came home during his semester break.

He noticed a thick notebook on Kumar's bed.

"What is this?"

"My English practice."

Ravi flipped through the pages.

There were hundreds of handwritten sentences.

Corrections. New words. Business ideas. Small observations.....

He looked at Kumar with genuine admiration.

"You've changed."

Kumar smiled.

"I had to."

Ravi quietly closed the notebook. For the first time...

He wasn't looking at his younger brother. He was looking at a young man building himself.

A few months later, the college announced an essay competition.

Topic:

"The Future of Indian Industry."

Many students hesitated. The topic looked difficult.

Kumar smiled. He had been preparing for this competition...

Without knowing it...Since he was nine years old.

That night...He untied the bundle of old business magazines.

One by one...

He spread them across the floor. His room looked less like a bedroom...

And more like the office of a young researcher.

Lakshmi walked in.

"What happened here?"

Kumar laughed.

"I think..."

"...my old friends are helping me again."

She looked at the magazines. Some covers had faded.

Some corners had become worn.

But every magazine had survived.

Just like the dreams of the boy who had collected them.

Lakshmi quietly switched on the extra lamp.

"You'll need more light."

Late into the night...Kumar read.

Not because there was an examination.

Not because anyone had asked him to.

He read because learning had become his greatest joy.

Outside...The town slept peacefully.

Inside one small room...

A future entrepreneur was quietly preparing for a life no one else could yet imagine.

Chapter 10 – The First Stage

"Knowledge gives confidence. Confidence gives courage. Courage changes destiny."

The first year of college passed like a gentle breeze.

Everything about commerce fascinated Kumar. Accounting was no longer a subject.

It was the language of discipline.Economics explained why societies grew.

Management taught him how people worked together.

Marketing...That subject immediately captured his imagination.

It reminded him of every interview he had read in his business magazines.

Every successful entrepreneur had spoken about one thing.

Understanding people. Not merely selling products.

One afternoon, Professor Krishnamurthy entered the classroom carrying a bundle of files.

He smiled at the students.

"Good morning."

"Good morning, Sir."

"I have an announcement."

The room became quiet.

"Next Friday, our department is conducting a seminar."

"The topic is..."

He turned towards the blackboard and wrote in large letters.

'Small Businesses – The Backbone of India'

Several students immediately looked away.

Public speaking. Nobody wanted it.

The professor looked around.

"We need five volunteers."

Silence. Some students pretended to search inside their bags.

Some suddenly became interested in the ceiling fan. Others looked out through the window.

The professor smiled knowingly.

"No volunteers?"

The silence continued.

Kumar looked at the topic once again. Small businesses.

His heart immediately travelled back..To Prasad Anna's stationery shop.

To the vegetable vendors. To the tea stall outside the library.

To the bicycle repairman. To every entrepreneur he had ever read about.

His hand slowly rose.

"I'll do it, Sir."

The professor smiled and said, "Excellent."

"Anyone else?"

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Gradually four more students volunteered.

The moment classes ended...Fear replaced confidence.

"What have I done?"

he thought. He had never spoken before an audience.

He had answered questions in class.That was different. This time...

He would stand on a stage. In front of students, Teachers and Guests.

His palms began sweating just thinking about it. That evening, Kumar opened his wooden trunk.

Inside lay his greatest treasure. Years of business magazines.

He gently untied the ribbon. One by one...

The magazines spread across the floor. He searched for every article related to small industries.

Textile units, Food processing, Printing presses, Rice mills family businesses, Women entrepreneurs and Tiny workshops.

Within two hours...His room had transformed into a research centre.

Lakshmi entered quietly.

"What happened?"

Kumar smiled.

"I have to give a seminar."

She looked surprised.

"You?"

He laughed and said, "I am surprised too."

She noticed the magazines covering the floor.

"So these old friends are helping again?"

Kumar nodded.

"They never stopped helping."

For the next six days...A new routine began.

Study, Write, Rewrite, Read aloud, Correct and Repeat.

He didn't want to memorize the speech. He wanted to understand it.

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e-magazine

Whenever he found an unfamiliar fact...He returned to the magazines.

Whenever he struggled with a sentence..He opened the dictionary.

Slowly...The speech became part of him.

Thursday night. The seminar was only a day away.

The house had gone to sleep. Only Kumar remained awake.

He stood before the small mirror hanging on the wall. Holding a notebook.

Imagining an audience he said, "Good morning..."

"No..."

Again.

"Respected Principal..."

"No..."

Again.

He practiced.

Again, And again, Sometimes smiling.

Sometimes forgetting, Sometimes laughing at himself.

Outside...The town slept peacefully.

Inside...A young man rehearsed for a moment that could quietly change his confidence forever.

The next morning... The college auditorium buzzed with excitement. Students filled the seats.

Teachers occupied the front rows. The Principal welcomed a local industrialist as the chief guest.

The seminar began. The first speaker walked to the podium.

He spoke well. The second speaker followed.

Then the third. Applause echoed through the hall.

Professor Krishnamurthy looked towards Kumar.

"You're next."

Kumar stood up. His legs suddenly felt heavy.

His throat became dry. The few steps to the stage felt longer than any journey he had ever made.

He reached the podium. Adjusted the microphone.

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Looked at the audience. Nearly three hundred faces stared back at him.

For a second... His mind went completely blank. Absolute silence.

He could hear only his own heartbeat. Then...

Something unexpected happened. His eyes fell upon the chief guest.

The businessman was smiling warmly. Not judging him. Encouraging him.

In that moment...Kumar remembered another smile.

Prasad Anna. Standing behind the magazine counter.

"You should buy it someday."

The memory made him smile. His fear slowly disappeared.

He took a deep breath.

"Respected Principal..."

"...honourable chief guest..."

"...my dear teachers and friends..."

His voice trembled. Only slightly. But it continued.

Instead of reading from the paper...He began telling stories.

He spoke about the tea seller near the library. The tailor who stitched uniforms.

The woman who sold homemade pickles. The newspaper vendor.

The stationery shop. He explained that every large industry had once begun as a small dream.

He quoted ideas from the business magazines. Without naming them.

He spoke from his heart. Not from memory.

The auditorium became unusually quiet. Nobody whispered.

Nobody moved. Even the students who had expected broken English listened carefully.

His accent was regional. His grammar wasn't perfect.

But every sentence carried honesty. Every example came from life.

Not textbooks. He ended with one sentence.

"India grows stronger every morning when someone opens a small shop with a big dream."

Silence. For two seconds. Then... The hall erupted with applause. Loud and Long. Heartfelt.

Kumar stood frozen. He hadn't expected this.

Professor Krishnamurthy smiled proudly.

The chief guest himself stood up.

He walked onto the stage. Shook Kumar's hand.

Then said something Kumar would remember forever.

"Young man... never be ashamed of your accent. Knowledge has no accent."

The hall applauded once again.

After the seminar...

Several students surrounded Kumar.

"Your examples were excellent."

"Where did you learn all this?"

"Which books do you read?"

Kumar smiled. He simply replied, "I read magazines."

Nobody knew..Those magazines had cost only five rupees.

That evening...He reached Prasad Anna's shop. As usual. He bought the latest issue.

Prasad noticed the glow on his face and asked, "You look very happy."

Kumar smiled and replied, "I spoke on a stage today."

"Really?"

"How did it go?"

Kumar looked at the magazine in his hands.

Then at Prasad and said, "It began here, Anna."

Prasad laughed.

"What began?"

Kumar simply smiled.

He wasn't ready to explain.

Some stories need years before they can be told.

Chapter 11 – Preparing for Tomorrow

"The future belongs to those who prepare for it long before it arrives."

The applause from the seminar slowly faded into memory.

College life returned to normal.

Assignments.

Internal examinations.

Attendance. Library visits.

Business magazines. Everything continued as before.

But something inside Kumar had changed.

He no longer feared standing before people. He no longer worried about speaking in English.

He had discovered something more valuable than confidence. He had discovered preparation.

One afternoon, Professor Krishnamurthy stopped Kumar near the college library.

"Kumar..."

"Do you have five minutes?"

"Yes, Sir."

They walked slowly through the college garden. The professor looked at him and smiled.

"You know why your seminar was appreciated?"

Kumar thought for a moment and said, "I don't know, Sir."

"It wasn't because your English was excellent."

"It wasn't because your voice was loud."

"It wasn't even because your topic was interesting."

Kumar listened carefully. "It was because..."

"...you had prepared."

The professor picked up a small stone lying on the pathway.

"Hundreds of students want success."

He gently threw the stone into a pond and said, "But very few prepare quietly."

The ripples spread across the water. "Remember this, Kumar."

Bookwave e-magazine

'Preparation is invisible... until success makes everyone notice it.'

Kumar repeated the sentence silently.

He knew... It was another line he would carry for life.

Second year of B.Com began. The subjects became more challenging.

Corporate Accounting. Business Statistics. Cost Accounting. Financial Management.

Many students complained. Some memorized answers just before examinations.

Others searched for shortcuts

Kumar continued following his old habit.

Understand first. Memorize later. He still believed...

Knowledge stayed longer than memory.

His routine had become almost mechanical.

Morning....College.

Afternoon.....Library.

Evening.....Business magazine.

Night.....Dictionary.

Before sleeping...Ten minutes of writing.

Not class notes but Personal thoughts, Business ideas, Interesting advertisements,

Successful companies, Leadership lessons.

He called it his... **"Tomorrow Notebook."**

No one else knew about it. The notebook wasn't neat.

Some pages contained newspaper cuttings. Some had rough calculations.

Some carried motivational quotations. Others held questions.

"Why do some businesses fail?"

"Why do customers trust one brand more than another?"

"Can honesty itself become a business strategy?"

Years later...

Many of those questions would become the foundation of his own company.

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One Sunday...

While reading the latest business magazine...

An advertisement caught his attention.

Across the full page...

In bold letters...

"COMMON ADMISSION TEST (CAT)"

Below it were photographs of smiling students.

The advertisement spoke about the Indian Institutes of Management.

Leadership.

Management.

Corporate careers.

Business leadership.

The words fascinated him.

He read the page once.

Then again.

Then a third time.

The next day...

He went straight to Professor Krishnamurthy.

"Sir..."

"What is CAT?"

The professor smiled.

"I was waiting for you to ask that."

"You know about it?"

"I expected you would."

He took Kumar into the staff room.

Then opened a brochure.

"Kumar..."

Bookwave
e-magazine

"If engineering has the IITs..."

"Management has the IIMs."

"They are among the finest business schools in the country."

Kumar listened with complete attention.

"They admit students through the CAT examination."

"It isn't easy."

"In fact..."

"It is one of the toughest entrance examinations."

The professor paused.

Then looked directly into Kumar's eyes.

"But I think..."

"You should attempt it."

For a few seconds... Kumar didn't speak.

An IIM.

He had read countless interviews of IIM graduates in his business magazines.

CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Industrialists.

They all seemed to come from another world.

Could someone like him...Even dream of studying there?

The professor seemed to read his thoughts.

"Kumar..."

"Don't reject yourself before the examination does."

The sentence struck him deeply. How many dreams had people buried...

Without even trying?

That evening...Kumar carefully cut out the CAT advertisement from the magazine.

He pasted it inside his Tomorrow Notebook. Then wrote beneath it...

'One day... I'll write this examination.'

There was no date.

No deadline.

Only a promise.

The following weeks brought another change.

Whenever he visited the library... He no longer borrowed only business books.

He also searched for books on communication.

Leadership.

Psychology.

Economics.

Biographies.

He wanted to understand people.

Because every successful businessman in his magazines had said the same thing.

"Business is ultimately about people."

One afternoon...

Srinivas noticed the growing pile of books beside Kumar.

"You've changed your reading."

Kumar nodded.

"I think..."

"I need to know more."

The old librarian smiled.

"There is no better sign of education."

"What is that, Sir?"

"When the more you learn..."

"...the more you realize how much remains to be learned."

As months passed...Kumar's reputation quietly spread through the college.

Whenever students struggled with commerce concepts...

They approached him. Whenever someone needed help preparing a seminar...

They called Kumar.

Bookwave e-magazine

Whenever an essay competition was announced...

Everyone expected Kumar to participate.

He helped everyone.

Never asking for anything in return.

Knowledge had given him confidence.

Humility made him respected. At the end of the academic year...

Professor Krishnamurthy handed back the answer papers.

"Kumar."

"Yes, Sir."

"You've scored seventy percent."

The class applauded. It wasn't the highest mark in college.

But it reflected consistency. The professor smiled.

"I am happier about something else."

"What is it, Sir?"

"You don't study for marks anymore."

"You study because you enjoy learning."

Kumar smiled.

The professor was right.

Marks had become a result.

Learning had become a habit.

That night... Kumar untied the bundle of old business magazines once again.

He counted them carefully one by one.

Thirty-six.

Thirty-six magazines.

Thirty-six months.

Three years.....

Three years of learning. Three years of dreaming.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Three years of preparation.

He looked at them with gratitude.

Then quietly whispered, "I still have a long way to go."

The magazines remained silent.

But somehow...

They seemed to agree.

Chapter 12 – The Price of a Dream

"Dreams are free. Preparing for them is not."

The final year of B.Com had begun.

The college campus looked the same. The classrooms hadn't changed.

Neither had the library.

Nor the little stationery shop where Kumar still bought his business magazine every month.

Yet...Everything felt different.

For the first time...

His future stood waiting just beyond graduation.

One afternoon, Professor Krishnamurthy called Kumar into his cabin.

There was a familiar smile on his face.

"So..."

"When are you starting?"

"Starting what, Sir?"

"CAT preparation."

Kumar smiled.

"I've already started."

The professor laughed.

"I should have guessed."

"What are you reading?"

Kumar opened his bag.Vocabulary books.

Reasoning guides and Quantitative Aptitude notes.

Business magazines.

And his old Tomorrow Notebook.

Professor Krishnamurthy looked at the collection.

Then quietly said,

"I don't think you are preparing for an examination."

"I think you are preparing for your future."

From that day onward...

Kumar's life followed a new timetable.

Morning.....College.

Afternoon.....Library.

Evening.....CAT preparation.

Night.....Business magazine.

Past midnight...Tomorrow Notebook.

Some nights...He slept only four hours.

But strangely..He never felt tired.

Purpose has a way of creating its own energy.

His classmates often teased him.

"Kumar..."

"You're studying all the time."

"When do you enjoy life?"

He smiled.

"I am."

One Sunday, while reading the latest business magazine, he came across an interview with a famous industrialist.

The interviewer asked, *"What is the secret of your success?"*

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e-magazine

The businessman replied, **"I worked when motivation disappeared and discipline remained."**

Kumar underlined the sentence. Then wrote it in his Tomorrow Notebook.

Years later...He would frame those words in his office.

The CAT syllabus was enormous.

Logical reasoning. Data interpretation. Verbal ability. Quantitative aptitude.

Every section demanded something different. The mathematics frightened him.

He had avoided advanced mathematics after school.

Now...The numbers had returned.

Bigger harder and Faster.

The first mock test was disappointing. His score was far below expectations.

For a few minutes...He simply stared at the paper.

Not angry. Not frustrated. Just thoughtful.

Professor Krishnamurthy looked at him.

"Disappointed?"

"A little."

The professor folded the answer sheet.

"Good."

Kumar looked surprised.

"Good?"

"Yes."

"Disappointment is useful..."

"...if it sends you back to preparation."

That evening... Kumar walked home slowly.

Instead of opening his business magazine...

He opened the mock test paper again. Every wrong answer became a lesson.

Every mistake received a red circle.

Beside each circle... He wrote only one word.

Bookwave
e-magazine

WHY?

He wanted to understand the mistake. Not merely correct it.

Weeks became months.

Slowly...His scores improved. Not dramatically. Just steadily.

Steady progress gave him more confidence than sudden success.

One evening... Meena entered his room carrying coffee. She looked at the piles of books.

"Anna..."

"Do all these books fit inside your head?"

Kumar laughed.

"Not yet."

She looked at the Tomorrow Notebook.

"What do you write every day?"

He smiled.

"My conversations with tomorrow."

She didn't fully understand.

But years later... She would.

As graduation approached...The college organized career guidance sessions.

Representatives from coaching institutes visited the campus.

One speaker said confidently,

"Students from English-medium schools usually perform better in Group Discussions."

The sentence stayed with Kumar all day. Not because he believed it.

Because he feared it might be true.

That night... He stood before the mirror once again. Just as he had before the seminar.

He imagined invisible people sitting before him. He introduced himself.

Paused. Started again.

Corrected his pronunciation. Changed his posture.

Smiled. Spoke louder then softer.

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Again. And again.

The mirror became his first audience. It never laughed. It never applauded.

But every night...It honestly reflected his progress.

One afternoon in the library...

Srinivas watched Kumar speaking quietly to himself while reading a newspaper editorial.

"What are you doing?"

"Practising."

"For what?"

"Group Discussions."

The old librarian smiled.

"Then don't only read."

"Speak."

Kumar nodded.

"I feel shy."

Srinivas gently closed the newspaper.

Then said,

"Your thoughts become stronger the day your voice stops hiding them."

Another sentence. Another gift.

Another invisible investment.

Graduation examinations ended. The results arrived.

Seventy percent.

A good score. His parents were proud. His professors congratulated him.

Prasad smiled when Kumar shared the news.

"You'll go far."

Kumar smiled.

"I hope so, Anna."

The CAT examination date finally arrived. Outside the examination centre...

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Hundreds of students waited. Some came from elite colleges. Some from engineering backgrounds.

Some had attended expensive coaching institutes.

Kumar carried only one bag.

Inside it were:

A pen.

His hall ticket.

And...

Folded carefully... A tiny piece of paper. Not for cheating.

Just for courage. On it were written four sentences.

Do your best. *(Father.)*

Every expert was once a beginner. *(Mother.)*

Business doesn't ask where you started. *(Prasad.)*

Knowledge has no accent. *(Chief Guest.)*

He looked at those four lines one last time. Folded the paper.

Placed it back inside his wallet. Walked towards the examination hall.

Not alone. He was carrying every person who had believed in him.

The examination lasted three hours.

When it ended...Students rushed outside discussing answers.

"I got this question right."

"I made a mistake there."

"The paper was difficult."

Kumar quietly walked away. He had learned something from the business magazines.

Once the work is done...The discussion changes nothing.

That evening...He visited Prasad's shop.

As always.

The latest business magazine had arrived.

Prasad smiled and asked, "CAT finished?"

"Yes."

"How was it?"

Kumar thought for a moment. Then smiled.

"I don't know whether I'll get into an IIM..."

"But today I know something."

"What?"

"I gave my best."

Prasad nodded. "That is enough."

Sometimes...Peace arrives... Not when we know the result. But when we know we held nothing back.

Chapter 13 – The Waiting Room

"Sometimes life opens the door... only to teach us how to knock better."

The CAT results arrived on a cool winter morning.

Kumar reached the internet browsing centre before it opened.

A small crowd had already gathered outside.

Every face carried hope. Every eye searched for a future.

When the shutter finally rolled up... Students rushed inside.

Kumar waited patiently. One by one, the computers became occupied.

His turn came after nearly twenty minutes.

The browsing centre owner typed the website address.

"Hall ticket number?"

Kumar handed him the slip.The keyboard clicked softly.

For a few seconds...Neither of them spoke.

Then...The screen displayed the result.

The score wasn't extraordinary. But it was good.

Good enough to receive calls from several respected business schools.

Not the prestigious IIMs...But institutions that thousands of students still dreamed of joining.

The browsing centre owner smiled.

"Congratulations."

Kumar smiled too. It wasn't his destination.

But it was certainly a step forward.

When he reached home...Lakshmi immediately understood.

"You got through?"

Kumar nodded.

She folded her hands before the small prayer shelf.

"Thank you."

Ramanayya adjusted his spectacles and read the interview letters again and again.

"Our son has been called for interviews..."

His voice carried quiet pride. Meena jumped with excitement.

"When are you going?"

Kumar looked at the dates. Three different cities.

Three different business schools. Three opportunities. For the next two weeks...

The house itself became an interview preparation centre.

Lakshmi ironed his only formal shirt repeatedly until it looked almost new.

Ramanayya polished Kumar's black shoes.

Meena stood before him every evening pretending to be an interviewer.

"Tell me about yourself."

Kumar laughed.

"You've become strict."

She smiled mischievously.

"I'm helping."

One Sunday... Prasad handed Kumar the latest business magazine.

Then quietly walked to a shelf. He returned carrying an old tie.

"I don't use this."

"It belonged to my nephew."

"It may help."

Kumar looked surprised.

"Anna..."

"I can't take it."

Prasad smiled.

"You aren't taking it."

"You are borrowing confidence."

Kumar accepted it with folded hands.

That evening... He stood before the mirror wearing a tie for the first time.

It took him nearly twenty minutes to knot it properly.

He smiled and said, "I look like the people in the business magazines."

Lakshmi looked at him with moist eyes.

"No..."

She said softly.

"You look like yourself."

The first interview was in Hyderabad.

It was Kumar's first journey alone to a large city.

The railway station overwhelmed him. Announcements echoed through the platforms.

Passengers hurried in every direction.

He held his small bag tightly.

Inside were... His certificates.

His interview call letter. His Tomorrow Notebook.

And Prasad's tie.

The business school campus looked magnificent.

Wide lawns. Modern classrooms. Students speaking fluent English.

Cars entering the gates. For a moment... Kumar wondered if he truly belonged there.

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Then he remembered Professor Krishnamurthy's words.

"Don't reject yourself before the examination does."

He walked inside. The written test went well.

Very well.Logical reasoning, Business awareness.

Analytical ability. These were familiar friends.

Years of reading business magazines had quietly prepared him.

When the results of the written round were announced...

His name was on the list. He smiled.

One more step. The next stage... Group Discussion.



Eight candidates entered a room. A panel member announced the topic.

"Should globalization benefit only big industries?"

The discussion began immediately. Students spoke confidently.

One after another. Ideas flowed rapidly.

English sentences crossed one another. Some interrupted.

Some argued. Some dominated.

Kumar listened carefully. He had many thoughts.

Very good thoughts. But every time he prepared to speak...

Someone else began When he finally entered the discussion...

His words came slowly. His accent became stronger.

He searched for the right English expression.

Those few seconds were enough. The discussion had already moved forward.

He spoke only twice. Both points were meaningful.

But they disappeared beneath louder voices. After the session...

The panel thanked everyone. Candidates waited outside.

Names were announced.

One.

Two.

Three.

Four.

Kumar waited. The list ended.

His name wasn't there. He stood quietly near the college gate.

Students celebrated. Some telephoned their parents.

Others hugged one another.

Kumar simply looked at the campus one last time. Not with anger. Not with jealousy.

Only with a quiet question.

"What more must I become?"

The train journey home felt longer.

Outside the window...

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Villages rushed past. Fields disappeared into the evening.

Passengers chatted happily.

Kumar opened his Tomorrow Notebook.

For several minutes... He looked at the blank page. Then slowly wrote...

"Knowledge opened the gate."

He paused. Then continued. **"Confidence enters the room."**

He underlined the sentence. Twice.

He wasn't criticizing himself. He was discovering himself.

A week later...The second interview arrived.

This time... He prepared even harder.

He practiced speaking every evening. He read newspapers aloud.

He timed his answers. He improved.

But not enough. Again...

He cleared the written round. Again...

He stumbled in the Group Discussion.

Again... He returned home quietly.

The third interview felt different.

He was calmer. More confident. More experienced.

He even smiled during the discussion.

This time...He reached the personal interview.

The panel appreciated his business knowledge.

One professor asked,

"Where did you learn so much about industry?"

Kumar smiled and said "I read business magazines."

The panel members exchanged surprised glances. One of them nodded with admiration.

"That's impressive."

When he came out...He felt hopeful. Very hopeful.

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Days passed. Then... The admission letter arrived. His hands trembled while opening it.

He had been selected. For a few moments...The house erupted with joy.

Lakshmi offered sweets to everyone. Meena danced around the room.

Ramanayya hugged Kumar tightly.

"You did it!"

For one beautiful evening... Every dream seemed possible.

The next morning...

Ramanayya quietly visited the college office.

He returned home late. Much later than usual.

His face looked tired. He sat silently.

No one asked anything.

Finally...

He placed the fee structure on the table.

The amount stared back at everyone.

It wasn't just high. It was impossible.

Educational loans were still rare.

Scholarships were limited.

Savings...

Were almost non-existent.

The room became silent.

A silence heavier than words.

Kumar picked up the paper. Folded it carefully.

Then placed it back on the table.

He looked at his father.

Smiled gently. And said only one sentence.

"Father... dreams should never become your burden."

Ramanayya turned away.

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He didn't want his son to see the tears gathering in his eyes.

That night... Kumar untied his bundle of business magazines.

He looked at them for a long time.

Then he whispered, "I'll find another way."

The magazines remained silent.

As they always had. But somewhere...

Between their faded pages... Hope still waited.....

Chapter 14 – The Richest Poor Family

"Poverty isn't the absence of money. Sometimes, it is the presence of impossible choices."

The admission letter remained on the table. No one moved it.No one spoke about it.

Yet everyone in the house thought about it. Every hour.

Every minute.

Every silence.

For three days... Ramanayya left home a little earlier than usual.

He returned much later. Whenever Lakshmi asked where he had been, he smiled.

"Office work."

But his smile had become heavier. His shoulders looked more tired than before.

Kumar noticed. He didn't ask.

Not yet. On the fourth evening... Ramanayya removed an old steel box from the cupboard.

Inside were neatly folded documents.

Insurance papers. Savings certificates.

A few fixed deposit receipts that had already matured.

Property tax records. He looked through each one carefully.

He made a few calculations on the back of an old envelope.

Then... He quietly folded everything again.

The numbers refused to change. Dreams could not be purchased with hope alone.

The next morning...Instead of going directly to the office...

He visited an old friend. Then another.

Then a distant relative. Every conversation began politely.

Every conversation ended with the same sentence.

"I'll see what I can do."

Some genuinely wished to help.

Some couldn't. Some avoided the subject.

Some simply changed the conversation.

By evening... Ramanayya had walked through half the town.

He returned with tired feet...And empty hands.

That night... Lakshmi found him sitting alone in the verandah.

He wasn't reading the newspaper. He wasn't drinking tea.

He was simply staring into the darkness. She quietly sat beside him.

"You are trying to arrange the fees."

It wasn't a question. It was a mother's understanding.

Ramanayya nodded.

"I promised him."

His voice trembled.

"I promised I'd do everything I could."

"You already have."

"No."

"I haven't."

Lakshmi gently placed her hand over his.

"You gave him honesty."

"You gave him education."

"You gave him values."

"What more can a father give?"

Ramanayya whispered,

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"The opportunity he deserves."

The following afternoon... Lakshmi opened her small wooden jewelry box.

Inside were a few gold bangles. A thin chain. Her wedding earrings.

Nothing extravagant. Just the modest ornaments collected over many years.

She looked at them quietly. Then closed the lid.

Picked it up.

And walked toward Ramanayya.

"Take these."

He looked shocked.

"No."

"We can mortgage them."

"No."

"They are only ornaments."

"They are your memories."

"They are our son's future."

Ramanayya lowered his head.

For several moments...Neither of them spoke.

Standing near the kitchen doorway...Kumar had heard everything.

Every word. Every pause. Every sacrifice.

He quietly walked back to his room and Closed the door.

Sat beside his bundle of business magazines.

For the first time in many years...He cried.

Not because he had lost admission. Not because he was poor.

He cried because his parents were willing to give away everything they had...

To protect his dream. Late that evening...

He walked into the verandah. His parents looked up.

Without saying a word... Kumar took the jewelry box from the table.

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He placed it back into Lakshmi's hands.

Then he folded his hands before both of them.

"Please..."

"Don't."

Ramanayya looked at him.

"Kumar..."

"Listen to me."

"No, Father."

"Today..."

"You listen to me."

It was the first time in his life that Kumar had interrupted his father.

But there was no disrespect in his voice. Only love.

He sat down between them.

"I wanted an MBA."

"Yes."

"I still want it."

"Yes."

"But not like this."

He looked at the jewelry box. Then at his father's tired face. Then at his mother's moist eyes.

And slowly said,

"Father... I lost a college. I did not lose my future."

The words floated gently through the silent house. No one spoke. No one needed to.

Kumar continued.

"If I study by selling Mother's memories..."

"Every success I achieve will remind me of today's sacrifice."

"I don't want that."

"I want to build my future..."

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e-magazine

"...without taking away yours."

Lakshmi could no longer control her tears. She held Kumar's face in both her hands.

"When did you become so grown up?"

He smiled softly.

"I don't know, Amma."

"Perhaps..."

"...while all of you were busy helping me grow."

Ramanayya slowly stood up. He walked toward Kumar.

Placed both hands on his shoulders.

For years... He had always seen Kumar as his son.

That night...For the first time...

He saw him as a man. A man who understood responsibility.

A man who had learned that dreams were important...

But people were priceless.

The next morning...

Kumar woke up before sunrise.

He went for a long walk. The streets were still empty.

The tea stalls had just begun opening.

Milk vendors rode past on bicycles.

The town looked peaceful.

He reached the small library. It was still closed.

He sat on the steps. Waiting.

Not for the library to open. But for his thoughts to settle.

A little later...Srinivas arrived.

He looked surprised.

"Kumar?"

"So early?"

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Kumar smiled and said, "I needed a quiet place."

The old librarian unlocked the door. Without asking questions...

He made two cups of tea. They sat together.

Between rows of books. For a long time... Neither of them spoke.

Finally... Kumar broke the silence.

"Sir..."

"Do dreams expire?"

Srinivas looked at him carefully. Then smiled.

"No."

"They only change addresses."

Kumar frowned slightly.

"I don't understand."

The old librarian pointed toward the bookshelves.

"Some books are here."

"Some are in universities."

"Some are in homes."

"But knowledge remains the same."

He looked directly into Kumar's eyes.

"Dreams are like that."

"If one path closes..."

"They simply wait for another road."

Kumar sat quietly.

Something inside him became lighter.

He realized...

He hadn't lost his dream of learning. He had only lost one route to it.

And there is always another route...

For those who refuse to stop walking.

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That evening...

He opened his Tomorrow Notebook.

On a fresh page, he wrote:

"No dream is worth breaking the people who built it."

He looked at the sentence for a long time. Then he added another.

"My parents are not stepping stones to my success. They are the reason I seek it."

He closed the notebook gently.

Outside...

The sun was setting.

Inside..

.A new dawn had quietly begun.

Chapter 15 – A Different Classroom

"Sometimes God doesn't change our destination. He simply changes the road that takes us there."

The days after refusing the expensive MBA admission were strangely peaceful.

There was no regret. No bitterness.

Only quiet acceptance. For the first time in many months...

Kumar slept peacefully.

He had made his decision. And decisions made with love rarely leave room for guilt.

One evening...Professor Krishnamurthy called him to the college.

The campus looked almost empty. Most students had already left after graduation.

Only a few wandered through the corridors, collecting certificates and saying their final goodbyes.

Kumar walked into the professor's room.

"You wanted to see me, Sir?"

Professor Krishnamurthy smiled and said, "I heard."

Kumar lowered his eyes.

"I couldn't join."

"I know."

There was no sympathy in the professor's voice. Only understanding.

The professor opened a drawer.He took out another application form.

"This is the State MBA Entrance Examination."

Kumar looked at it silently.

"It may not be an IIM."

"It may not have a beautiful campus."

"But..."

He paused.

"It is still an MBA."

Then he leaned forward.

"And remember something."

"A degree gives you a qualification. Learning gives you a career."

Another sentence. Another invisible gift.

A few weeks later...Kumar appeared for the State MBA entrance examination.

This time...He felt lighter.

There was no burden of expectations. No comparison. No fear.

He simply gave his best. The results arrived.

He had secured a good rank. Enough to obtain admission into one of the better MBA colleges in the state.

When Ramanayya heard the news...He smiled with relief.

"This college..."

"...we can afford."

That sentence itself felt like a blessing. Admission day arrived.

The college stood on the outskirts of the city. No grand entrance.

No impressive buildings. No sprawling lawns.

Just a few classrooms. An old library. A modest auditorium.



He entered it willingly..

Some students looked disappointed.

One boy whispered,

"I wanted a famous institute."

Another replied,

"This was my last option."

Kumar heard them. For a brief moment... Even he wondered...

"Is this where my journey ends?"

As he walked toward the classroom...

His eyes fell on a gardener.

The old man was carefully watering a small sapling.

There were hundreds of trees around.

Yet...

He spent extra time with the smallest one.

Kumar stood watching.

The gardener smiled.

"Why are you looking at this little plant?"

"I don't know."

The old man poured another mug of water.

"People admire big trees."

"They forget..."

"...every tree was once protected like this."

Kumar smiled.

Another lesson.

Not from a professor.

But from life.

The first day of class began.

The Principal welcomed the students.

His voice was calm.

"My dear students..."

"I know many of you hoped to study elsewhere."

Several students looked at one another.

The Principal continued.

"But let me ask you a question."

"If Sachin Tendulkar had practised only on international grounds..."

"...would he have become Sachin?"

The hall became silent.

"He became great..."

"...because he respected every ground he played on."

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He looked around the auditorium.

"So..."

"Respect this classroom."

"It may not be famous today."

"But one day..."

"You may become famous because of what you learned here."

The applause lasted several seconds.

Kumar felt something awaken inside him.

Classes began.

Organizational Behaviour.

Marketing Management.

Financial Management.

Human Resources.

Business Communication.

Everything fascinated him. This wasn't just education.

It was a language he had unknowingly been learning for years.

Sometimes... The lecturer explained concepts that Kumar had already read in his business magazines.

He smiled quietly. The five-rupee magazine had reached the MBA classroom before he did.

One afternoon... The Marketing Professor entered carrying nothing except a white chalk.

Without introducing himself...He wrote one sentence on the board.

"Customers buy trust before they buy products."

He turned around.

"Can anyone explain?"

Several students remained silent.

Kumar slowly raised his hand.

"Sir..."

"When people trust a shop..."

"...they stop comparing prices."

The professor smiled.

"What is your name?"

"Kumar."

"Very good."

Then the professor asked,

"Where did you learn that?"

Kumar replied honestly. "From reading business magazines."

The professor looked genuinely surprised.

"Never stop."

That was all he said. But somehow...

Those two words felt larger than an entire lecture.

Weeks passed. The disappointment of not entering a prestigious business school slowly disappeared.

Kumar realized something unexpected. Knowledge had no campus.

It lived wherever someone was willing to seek it.

One rainy evening... After classes...He visited a second-hand bookshop near the bus stand.

Books were stacked from floor to ceiling.

Management books.

Biographies.

Old magazines.

Annual reports.

He spent nearly an hour browsing. Then his eyes stopped.

There... Covered in dust... Lay three old editions of his favorite business magazine.

Published years earlier.

Issues he had never seen before. His heartbeat quickened.

"How much?"

The shopkeeper looked at the faded copies.

"Take all three."

"Ten rupees."

Kumar couldn't believe it.

He paid immediately.

As he walked back to the bus stop...

Holding those magazines close to his chest...

He felt richer than many people carrying expensive briefcases.

That night... He spread the three magazines beside the old collection.

It was like welcoming three long-lost friends into the family.

He carefully wrote the publication dates inside his Tomorrow Notebook.

Then added a small note. **"Sometimes life delays a gift... only to make us value it more."**

Near midnight... Lakshmi entered his room. She saw the magazines spread across the floor.

She laughed softly and said, "I think these magazines love you as much as you love them."

Kumar smiled and said, "No, Amma."

He gently touched the cover of one magazine. "They never left me."

Outside... Rain continued through the night.

Inside... The pages turned quietly. Each page carried another idea.

Another lesson. Another possibility. And somewhere between those pages...

A future entrepreneur was still learning...

One article at a time.

Chapter 16 – The Professor Who Saw Beyond Marks

"A good teacher completes the syllabus. A great teacher discovers the student."

The first semester of the MBA settled into its rhythm.

Assignments became frequent. Case studies replaced textbooks.

Presentations became part of everyday life. Some students struggled with accounting.

Others feared finance. Many disliked statistics.

Kumar enjoyed every subject. Not because they were easy...

But because each one answered a question he had carried for years.

One Monday morning...A new professor entered the classroom.

He looked different from the others. Simple white shirt. Grey hair.

No files in his hands. Only a piece of chalk. He wrote his name on the blackboard.

Professor Raghavan

Below it, he wrote only one word.

VALUE

He turned toward the class.

"I have a question."

"If I give you a gold pen..."

"...and a five-rupee pencil..."

"...which one is more valuable?"

Almost every student answered together.

"The gold pen, Sir."

Professor Raghavan smiled.

"Wrong."

The class became silent.

He walked toward the window.

"The answer depends..."

"...on who needs it."

"If a child is writing his first alphabet..."

"...the pencil may be worth more."

"If a businessman signs an agreement worth crores..."

"...perhaps the gold pen matters."

He looked around the classroom.

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"Never confuse price with value."

Kumar wrote the sentence immediately. Not in his class notes.

In his **Tomorrow Notebook**.

From that day onward...Professor Raghavan's classes became the most awaited.

He rarely dictated notes. Instead...

He told stories. A failed factory.

A successful tea stall. A struggling bookseller.

A small medical shop that became a chain.

Every story ended with a question.

"What would you have done differently?"

Students debated, Argued, Thought.....

For the first time... Business wasn't a subject. It was life itself.

One afternoon... Professor Raghavan placed a box on the table.

Inside were ordinary objects. A matchbox, A bar of soap, A packet of biscuits, A bottle of ink.

He picked up the soap.

"What are we selling?"

Students replied,

"Soap."

He shook his head.

"No."

"We are selling cleanliness."

He picked up the biscuits.

"What are we selling?"

"Food."

Again he smiled.

"No."

"We are selling convenience."

Then he held up the matchbox.

"What are we selling?"

Silence. He looked directly at Kumar.

"Kumar?"

Kumar thought for a moment.

Then answered,

"We are selling the beginning."

The professor looked surprised.

"The beginning?"

"Yes, Sir."

"A stove begins with a match."

"A lamp begins with a match."

"A festival begins with a match."

"A prayer begins with a match."

The classroom became quiet.

Professor Raghavan slowly smiled.

Then said, "I've been asking this question for ten years."

"No one has answered it like that."

After the class... The professor stopped Kumar near the corridor.

"You read a lot, don't you?"

Kumar nodded. "Business magazines."

The professor smiled and said "I guessed."

"How did you know, Sir?"

"Because your answers come from observation..."

"...not memorization."

From that day... A quiet friendship began.

Every Wednesday afternoon... Kumar spent half an hour in Professor Raghavan's room.

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Sometimes they discussed marketing, Sometimes consumer behavior.

Sometimes leadership. Sometimes failure.

The professor never treated him as a favorite student.

He treated him as a curious learner. One afternoon..

Professor Raghavan asked,

"Kumar..."

"What do you want to become?"

Kumar answered without hesitation. "A businessman."

The professor leaned back in his chair.

"Why?"

Kumar thought carefully.

"I have read about people creating industries."

"Giving employment."

"Building products."

"I want to build something that lasts."

Professor Raghavan remained silent for several seconds.

Then he asked softly, "How much money do you want to earn?"

Kumar smiled. "I don't know."

The professor nodded with satisfaction and said, "Good."

Then he spoke slowly and said, **"Never chase money." "Learn to create value."**

"Money has a habit of following value."

The room fell silent. Kumar opened his Tomorrow Notebook.

Carefully...He wrote every word. Then he drew a small star beside it.

He had begun marking the sentences that he believed would guide his life forever.

The professor noticed and asked, "You write everything?"

"Only the important things, Sir."

Professor Raghavan smiled.

Bookwave e-magazine

"No."

"You write the permanent things."

Weeks later... The MBA college announced an industrial visit.

The destination was a medium-sized pharmaceutical manufacturing unit.

Most students were excited because it meant a day away from classes.

For Kumar... It meant something else.

His first opportunity to see a real business from the inside.

The factory manager welcomed the students.

Machines hummed continuously. Workers moved with precision.

Raw materials entered one end. Finished medicines emerged from the other.

Kumar watched everything carefully. Not just the machines.

The people, The supervisors, The warehouse, The dispatch section, The dealer invoices, The distribution charts hanging on the wall.

He asked more questions than anyone else. The factory manager laughed.

"You seem more interested than the rest."

Kumar smiled and said, "I want to understand."

On the return journey... Most students slept on the bus.

Some listened to music. Others joked loudly.

Kumar sat near the window. His Tomorrow Notebook rested on his lap.

He wrote page after page. How medicines were packed.

How inventory moved. How distributors placed orders.

How sales depended on trust. How every department depended on another.

He wasn't writing notes. He was quietly building the foundation of a future he still couldn't fully see.

A few days later... Professor Raghavan returned the industrial visit reports.

Most reports contained copied paragraphs from textbooks.

When he reached Kumar's report... He stopped. Looked at him.

Then addressed the entire class.

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"I want everyone to listen."

He lifted Kumar's report.

"This..."

"...is not a report."

He paused.

"It is observation."

He turned another page. "You didn't describe the factory."

"You described how the business breathes."

The classroom remained silent. Then he looked at Kumar.

"Never lose this habit."

"Companies can hire graduates."

"They cannot easily hire observers."

That evening... As Kumar walked home... He thought about that sentence again and again.

Companies can hire graduates. They cannot easily hire observers.

For the first time... He realized that perhaps...

His greatest strength wasn't intelligence. It was attention. He noticed things.

Small things. The way Prasad arranged magazines.

The way customers trusted certain shops. The way his father counted every rupee.

The way successful businesses respected relationships.

All those observations... Had quietly become his education.

That night...He opened the very first business magazine he had ever purchased for five rupees.

Its pages had turned pale. The corners were worn.

He gently ran his fingers across the cover. Then smiled.

"So..."

"You were teaching me long before I entered an MBA college."

The old magazine remained silent. But somehow... It felt like an old friend smiling back.....

Chapter 17 – Learning to Listen

"The best communicators are not the best speakers. They are the best listeners."

The second semester of MBA had begun.

Presentations had become a regular part of college life.

Almost every week... Students stood before the class.

Some spoke confidently. Some read directly from their notes.

Some tried to impress with difficult English words.

After every presentation... Professor Raghavan gave his observations.

Never harsh. Always honest.

One afternoon... The professor entered the classroom carrying a small cloth bag.

The students looked at one another.

"No books today, Sir?"

He smiled.

"Today's lesson isn't in your textbook."

He placed the bag on the table. Inside it were small slips of paper.

He walked around the classroom.

"Each one of you..."

"...pick one slip."

Everyone did. Each slip contained the name of an everyday object.

Umbrella, Watch, Notebook, Tea cup, Mirror, Comb, Pen.

Kumar unfolded his slip.

It read... **"Candle."**

Professor Raghavan spoke.

"You have three minutes."

"After that..."

"...each of you must sell your object to the class."

The room burst into laughter.

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"Sell?"

"How?"

"We aren't salesmen."

The professor smiled.

"Exactly."

One by one... Students came forward.

"This pen writes smoothly."

"This watch tells accurate time."

"This umbrella protects us from rain."

Every presentation sounded almost the same. Each student described the product.

Very few described the person who would use it. Finally...

"Kumar."

He walked to the front holding the small candle. He looked at it quietly for a few seconds.

Then began. "I am not here to sell a candle."

The class looked surprised. "I am here to sell..."

"...light."

He paused.

"When electricity fails..."

"This little candle removes fear."

"When children study during a power cut..."

"It protects their dreams."

"When a family celebrates a birthday..."

"It becomes part of their happiness."

"When a temple becomes dark..."

"It becomes prayer."

He gently placed the candle on the table.

"So..."

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e-magazine

"I am not selling wax."

"I am selling hope."

Silence.....Absolute silence.

Then...The entire classroom applauded. Even Professor Raghavan smiled broadly.

After class... The professor called Kumar.

"Do you know why your presentation was different?"

Kumar shook his head and said, "You spoke about people."

"Everyone else spoke about products."

He slowly continued.

"Products fill shelves."

"People fill markets."

Kumar immediately opened his Tomorrow Notebook. Another sentence. Another treasure.

A few days later... The Marketing Department announced a field assignment.

Students had to visit local shops and understand customer behaviour.

Most students groaned.

"It is too hot."

"It is boring."

"Can't we do a written assignment?"

Professor Raghavan smiled and asked, "If you wish to understand business..."

"...go where business happens."

Kumar chose a busy marketplace. From morning till evening... He simply observed.

He didn't interfere. He watched.

A vegetable vendor greeted every customer by name.

A tea stall owner remembered how each regular customer liked their tea.

A medical shop owner patiently explained medicines to an elderly woman.

A cloth merchant never interrupted while customers discussed prices. Nobody had an MBA.

Yet... They understood customers beautifully.

Bookwave e-magazine

Near lunchtime... Kumar entered a tiny footwear shop.

An old shopkeeper welcomed every visitor with the same warm smile.

One customer entered. Looked around.

Asked several questions. Finally left without buying anything.

Kumar expected disappointment. Instead... The shopkeeper smiled and said,

"Come again."

After the customer left...Kumar asked, "Aren't you upset?"

The old man laughed and said, "Why?"

"He didn't buy anything."

The shopkeeper rearranged a pair of sandals.

"Not today."

"But he came."

"He trusted my shop enough to enter."

"Maybe next week."

"Maybe next month."

"Business grows slower than bamboo..."

"...but stronger than grass."

Kumar wrote the sentence immediately. For the next hour... He continued watching.

The shopkeeper never hurried anyone. Never argued.

Never pushed products. He listened. More than he spoke. Customers stayed longer.

Many returned. Some simply came to chat.

Others asked for advice before purchasing.

The shop had become more than a shop. It had become a relationship.

That evening... While walking home...

Kumar remembered something. Prasad Anna.

He too... Never forced anyone to buy magazines.

He remembered customers' preferences. Kept newspapers aside for regular readers.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Asked about their families. Smiled genuinely.

Suddenly... Kumar realized something astonishing.

The greatest business lessons of his life... Had begun long before MBA.

The next day... Students submitted their field reports.

Most reports contained sales figures.

Customer counts, Product lists, Shop descriptions.

Professor Raghavan reached Kumar's report.

He adjusted his spectacles. Read silently. Then looked up.

"Kumar..."

"Come here."

The class watched curiously. The professor held up the report.

"This student..."

"...has not written about products."

"He has written about people."

He turned another page.

"There are no complicated theories."

"There are only observations."

He smiled and said, "And business begins exactly there."

After the class... The professor walked with Kumar through the college corridor.

"Kumar..."

"I want to ask you something."

"Yes, Sir."

"If tomorrow..."

"...I make you Sales Manager of a company..."

"...what will be your first responsibility?"

Kumar thought carefully. Then answered.

"Targets?"

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Professor Raghavan smiled.

"Wrong."

He stopped walking. Then gently placed his hand on Kumar's shoulder.

"Your first responsibility..."

"...is not to increase sales."

"It is to increase trust."

He continued. "Sales are temporary."

"Targets change every month."

"Trust..."

"...keeps feeding a business for decades."

The words settled deep inside Kumar. He had read hundreds of business articles.

But no sentence had explained business so simply.

That evening... He opened his Tomorrow Notebook.

He turned to the very first page. There...

Pasted carefully... Was the faded CAT advertisement.

He smiled. Then turned to a fresh page. He wrote in neat handwriting.

"Products may bring customers once."

"Trust brings them back forever."

He drew another small star beside the sentence.

Years later... When Kumar owned his own pharmaceutical company...

That very principle would become the first rule in every sales meeting.

As he closed the notebook... His eyes fell upon the old five-rupee business magazine lying beside him.

He gently picked it up. Ran his fingers over its worn cover. And whispered,

"You didn't teach me business..."

He smiled and said, "You taught me people."

The room remained0 silent. But if old magazines could smile...

This one surely did.

Bookwave e-magazine

Chapter 18 – The First Leader

"Leadership begins the day people trust your intentions more than your words."

The second year of MBA had begun.

Assignments became more demanding.

Projects became larger. Most of them had to be completed in groups.

The class consisted of forty-eight students. Each group had six members.

The professor announced,

"This semester's Marketing Project carries the highest marks."

Immediately... Students began choosing their teammates.

Some selected their closest friends. Some selected the brightest students.

Some simply joined whichever group had space.

Without anyone officially deciding... Five students quietly gathered around Kumar.

He looked surprised.

"Why me?"

One of them smiled and said, "Because you'll make sure everyone learns."

Another added, "And because you never try to take all the credit."

Kumar laughed softly. It was the first time...

Someone had trusted him with leadership. Their assignment was simple in words...

But difficult in practice. Study the marketing strategy of a growing pharmaceutical company.

Interview dealers. Visit medical stores.

Understand the supply chain. Submit a complete report.

Present it before the entire MBA department.

The group met that evening in the college library.

Some wanted to divide the work immediately.

One student suggested,

"You write the report."

"You speak well."

Another said,

"I'll just collect information."

Kumar listened to everyone patiently.

Then quietly closed the notebook.

"No."

Everyone looked at him.

"This project should not belong to one person."

"It should belong to all of us."

One classmate frowned. "But that takes more time."

Kumar smiled and said, "So does building trust."

The room became silent.

Instead of distributing chapters...Kumar distributed responsibilities.

"You..."

"Talk to dealers."

"You..."

"Collect information from medical shops."

"You..."

"Study advertisements."

"I'll coordinate everything."

"And..."

He smiled.

"We'll write the report together."

Over the next three weeks...

The group travelled across the city.

Some days under the scorching sun.

Some days in pouring rain.

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They visited pharmacies.

Distributors.

Hospitals.

Small clinics.

Wholesale markets.

Kumar noticed something interesting.

The best distributors were not the ones with the biggest warehouses.

They were the ones whom everyone knew by name.

Relationships...

Again.

Business always seemed to return to people.

One afternoon...

The group visited a pharmaceutical distributor.

The owner welcomed them warmly.

While the others observed the warehouse...

Kumar stood watching the office.

Doctors' representatives entered one after another.

Some hurried through their presentations. Some left brochures and quickly walked away.

Then another representative entered. He wasn't carrying the biggest bag.

He wasn't the smartest dressed. But something about him was different.

He first asked, "How is your mother's health now, Sir?"

The distributor smiled immediately. "She's much better."

For the next ten minutes... They hardly spoke about medicines.

They spoke about family. Children, Health, Festivals, Only at the end...

The representative quietly placed the order book on the table.

The distributor signed without even checking the price.

Kumar watched carefully. On the way back...

Bookwave e-magazine

One classmate asked,

"Did you notice the order?"

Kumar smiled and said, "I noticed something bigger."

"What?"

"He sold trust long before he sold medicines."

That evening... He wrote in the Tomorrow Notebook.

"People don't buy from those who know the product."

He paused.

Then added... **"They buy from those who know the person."**

He drew another small star beside the sentence.

The presentation day arrived.

Every group stood before the department.

Charts.

Graphs.

Statistics.

Profit margins.

Market shares.

One after another...Excellent presentations filled the morning.

Finally...It was Kumar's group's turn.

Instead of beginning with numbers...

Kumar projected one simple photograph.

A smiling medical shop owner. The entire class looked puzzled.

Kumar began. "Our project is not about medicines."

"It is about trust."

He explained how every successful business they visited...

Regardless of size...Had one common factor.

Relationships.

Bookwave e-magazine

He spoke about distributors.

Retailers.

Doctors.

Customers.

Employees.

Then he concluded with one sentence.

"Supply chains move products."

"Relationships move businesses."

The hall became completely silent.

Even Professor Raghavan looked at him with quiet pride.

After the presentation...

The Head of the Department announced the results.

Kumar's group had secured the highest marks.

His teammates celebrated.

One of them hugged him.

"We won because of you."

Kumar immediately shook his head.

"No."

"We won because no one worked alone."

Professor Raghavan happened to hear those words.

He smiled.

Leadership had arrived.

Quietly.

Without announcing itself.

A week later...

Professor Raghavan called Kumar to his room.

"I have a small gift."

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He handed him a wrapped package.

Inside...Was a fountain pen.

Simple. Elegant. Nothing expensive.

Kumar looked surprised. "Sir..."

"I can't accept this."

Professor Raghavan smiled.

"You can."

"It isn't for your marks."

"It is for something far more valuable."

"What, Sir?"

The professor looked directly into his eyes.

"For making others better."

He paused. Then said slowly,

"The best leaders don't create followers."

"They create more leaders."

Kumar held the pen silently. He knew...This wasn't just a pen.

It was another responsibility. That night..He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

For the first time...He didn't write with his old blue pen. He filled the new fountain pen with ink.

Then wrote carefully.

"Leadership is not standing in front."

"Leadership is making sure no one is left behind."

He smiled.Folded the notebook.

And quietly looked at the shelf where his old five-rupee business magazines rested.

Somewhere...

Between those faded pages...

A little boy who once struggled to buy a magazine...

Had just taken his first step toward becoming a leader.

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Chapter 19 – The First Step

"Every career begins with a job. Every success begins with a struggle."

The final semester passed quickly. Projects became presentations.

Presentations became examinations. Examinations became memories.

One by one...Students began receiving job offers.

The college notice board became the busiest place on campus.

Every morning... Students gathered around it.

Some searched for interview dates.

Some looked for company names.

Some silently counted the number of vacancies.

Hope... Had become everyone's common subject.

One afternoon...The Placement Officer entered the classroom.

"I have good news."

The students immediately looked up.

"A marketing company is recruiting Management Trainees."

Several students clapped.

Marketing had become one of the most popular career choices.

The officer continued.

"The selection process includes..."

"A written test."

"A Group Discussion."

"And a Personal Interview."

The words *Group Discussion* echoed inside Kumar's mind.

For a brief moment...His confidence stepped backward.

He remembered the business schools.

The interviews. The missed opportunities.

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He quietly closed his notebook.

That evening... He walked alone through the college campus.

Professor Raghavan happened to notice him.

"Worried?"

Kumar smiled faintly.

"A little."

"Why?"

"Group Discussion."

The professor nodded.

"So..."

"You are afraid of your past."

Kumar remained silent.

Professor Raghavan began walking beside him.

"Kumar..."

"Do you know the difference between experience and fear?"

Kumar shook his head.

"Experience teaches."

"Fear repeats."

He stopped walking.

"This is not the same discussion."

"You are not the same Kumar."

The words settled gently inside him.

The written examination went well.

Business aptitude.

Logical reasoning.

Marketing concepts.

He completed every section with confidence.

When the results were announced...

His name appeared among the shortlisted candidates.

He smiled.

The first step had gone well.

The Group Discussion began.

Eight candidates.

One topic.

The moderator announced,

"Is customer satisfaction more important than profit?"

The discussion started immediately.

Voices filled the room.

But this time...Something was different.

Kumar didn't rush.

He listened. Carefully. He waited for the right moment.

Then calmly said,

"I think profit is the result."

"Customer satisfaction is the reason."

The room became quiet. Several students nodded.

He continued.

"A company can survive for a quarter without profit."

"But it cannot survive long without trust."

The moderator wrote something on his evaluation sheet.

Kumar noticed. Not with pride but With relief.

He had finally found his voice. The personal interview felt surprisingly comfortable.

One interviewer looked through Kumar's résumé.

"You've studied in a regional-medium school?"

"Yes, Sir."

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"You shifted to English during graduation?"

"Yes."

"Were you afraid?"

Kumar smiled honestly.

"Very much."

"What did you do?"

"I kept reading."

"What?"

"Business magazines."

The interviewer laughed.

"Every day?"

"Many times."

"Sometimes the same magazine."

The panel exchanged amused looks.

One interviewer asked,

"Why read the same magazine again?"

Kumar answered quietly.

"Because every time I understood something new."

The oldest interviewer leaned back.

Then smiled.

"Interesting answer."

Three days later...The results were displayed.

Students rushed toward the notice board.

Names.

Ranks.

Selections.

Rejections.

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Kumar searched carefully. Then...

He found it.

Kumar R.

Selected.

For a few seconds... He simply stared at the board. Not because it was a great company.

Not because the salary was extraordinary.

But because...It was his first job.

He reached home carrying a small box of sweets.

Lakshmi immediately understood.

"You got it?"

Kumar nodded.

She closed her eyes in gratitude.

Ramanayya took the appointment letter into his hands.

He read every line. Slowly. Carefully.

As though reading a sacred book.

Then he folded it gently.

"I knew."

Kumar smiled.

"You never said it."

"A father doesn't have to."

That evening... Prasad Anna saw Kumar walking toward the shop.

The smile on Kumar's face revealed everything.

"Job?"

Kumar nodded.

Prasad walked out from behind the counter.

He placed his hand on Kumar's shoulder.

"I always knew..."

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"...one day these magazines would take you somewhere."

Kumar smiled.

"They already have, Anna."

The joining day arrived.

The office was located in a busy commercial complex.

Glass doors. Reception desk.

Employees moving briskly. Everything looked new.

Everything looked important. The receptionist handed him an identity card.

For the first time in his life...His name appeared below the words...

Management Trainee.

He looked at the card for several seconds.

Not because of the designation.

But because it represented years of invisible effort.

The five-rupee magazine.

The library.

The Tomorrow Notebook.

The late-night studies.

The rejections.

The local MBA.

Every step...

Had quietly brought him here.

Training began.

The company sold financial products.

Insurance.

Investment plans.

Savings schemes.

The trainers were energetic, Targets were discussed from the very first day.

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Charts covered the walls.

Weekly goals, Monthly goals, Quarterly growth.

Everything revolved around numbers.

Kumar listened carefully. He learned quickly.

But somewhere deep inside... Something felt incomplete.

The conversations were about selling. Very few were about helping.

He couldn't explain the feeling. Not yet.

One afternoon... A senior manager addressed the trainees.

He looked around the room.Then said confidently,

"Customers don't know what they need."

"Your job is to convince them."

Several trainees nodded.

Some applauded.

Kumar remained silent.

The sentence stayed with him all day.

That evening...He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

He stared at the blank page.

Then slowly wrote,

"Never convince people to buy."

He paused.

Then completed the thought.

"Help them understand why they should."

He underlined the sentence twice. For reasons he couldn't explain...

It felt important. Years later...It would become the philosophy of his own company.

The first salary arrived. It wasn't a large amount.

But to Kumar...It felt priceless.

He withdrew the money from the bank. Counted every note.

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Then walked home.

Without telling anyone...

He quietly placed the entire salary in his mother's hands.

Lakshmi looked surprised.

"Kumar..."

"You keep it."

He smiled.

"No, Amma."

"You have managed this family with Father's salary for so many years."

"Today..."

"Please manage it with mine too."

Lakshmi's eyes filled with tears.

She gently returned a small portion.

"Keep this."

"For your bus pass."

"For your books."

"For your magazines."

Kumar laughed.

"Even now?"

She smiled.

"Especially now."

Some habits...

Should never end.

That night..

.Before sleeping...

He opened the oldest business magazine in his collection.

On the inside cover...

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He wrote one line. **First Salary.**

Then today's date. Years later…

Whenever he looked at that page… He wouldn't remember the amount.

He would remember the journey.

Chapter 20 – Seven Name Boards

"Failure is not changing jobs. Failure is leaving a job without learning something."

The excitement of the first appointment slowly faded.

The training ended. Targets began.

Every Monday morning… The conference room echoed with numbers.

Policies sold. New customers.

Weekly targets. Monthly rankings. Names of top performers were proudly displayed on the notice board.

Those who failed… Remained silent. Kumar worked sincerely. He met customers at his office.



Explained investment plans.

Some times he visited their offices.

Knocked on countless doors.

Many people appreciated his honesty.

Some even said,

"You explain very well."

Yet...

They bought from someone else.

At the end of the month...

His target remained incomplete.

His manager called him into the cabin.

"Kumar..."

"You're a good person."

"But good people don't always become good salesmen."

The words hurt.

Not because they were insulting.

Because they sounded true.

That evening...He sat alone at a public park.

Children were flying kites. An old man was reading a newspaper.

Youngsters laughed over cups of tea. Life seemed to move normally.

Only Kumar felt left behind. He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

For several minutes... He simply looked at the blank page.

Finally he wrote..."**Honesty is important.**"

He paused.Then continued.

"But honesty without confidence cannot inspire decisions."

He underlined the sentence once. He had discovered his first weakness.

Not product knowledge. Not sincerity but Confidence.

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Within a few months...He resigned.

The first name board disappeared from his life.

The second company dealt with residential plots.

Every morning...The sales team gathered around a large map.

Colored pins marked new layouts.

The manager shouted energetically,

"Land never disappoints!"

The team clapped.

Kumar smiled politely.

For weeks...

He travelled under the blazing sun.

Showing empty plots.

Explaining future developments.

Listening to dreams.

One customer wanted a retirement home.

Another wanted land for his son's future.

A young couple wanted their first investment.

Kumar enjoyed talking to people.

But something disturbed him.

Many promises made by the company...

Were bigger than reality.

One evening...

A senior colleague whispered,

"Don't explain every risk."

"If you tell everything..."

"They won't buy."

Kumar looked at him quietly.

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"And if I don't?"

The colleague shrugged.

"They'll sign."

That night...

Kumar couldn't sleep.

He remembered Professor Raghavan.

"Never convince people to buy."

"Help them understand why they should."

The next morning...

He resigned.

The second name board came down.

The third company sold educational loans.

The work was different.

Parents visited with hope in their eyes.

Students carried dreams.

Applications.

Certificates.

Income proofs.

Every file represented a family.

One father folded his hands before Kumar.

"My daughter got admission."

"If the loan is approved..."

"Her life will change."

Kumar worked tirelessly. The loan was sanctioned.

A month later... The father returned.

Not with sweets. Not with flowers.

He simply held Kumar's hands tightly.

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"You don't know what you've done for us."

That single moment...Stayed with Kumar for years.

While walking home..He realized something.

The happiest day of his month...Had nothing to do with incentives.

It had everything to do with changing someone's future.

Still...The job wasn't stable. Policies changed.

Incentives fluctuated. Branches closed.

Again... He moved on. The third name board disappeared.

The fourth company sold surgical equipment.

This was his first close interaction with hospitals.

Doctors.

Nurses.

Medical stores.

Distributors.

He became fascinated.

Every hospital functioned like a perfectly coordinated business.

Patients rarely noticed. But Kumar observed everything.

The supply chain.

Inventory.

Purchase departments.

Distribution timing.

Vendor relationships.

He wasn't just doing a job.

He was attending another university.

Months passed.

The company struggled financially.

Salaries became irregular. Employees slowly left.

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e-magazine

One by one.

Finally...Kumar too resigned.

The fourth name board faded away.

The fifth company.

The sixth.

The seventh.

Insurance.

Consumer products.

Financial services.

Each new office welcomed him with enthusiasm.

Each farewell carried disappointment.

Friends began asking uncomfortable questions.

"Again?"

"You changed your job?"

"How many companies now?"

Some asked with concern. Others with amusement.

Every question pierced his confidence.

One evening... Ramanayya noticed his silence during dinner.

"You aren't eating."

"I'm fine, Father."

"No."

"You are thinking."

Kumar remained quiet.

After dinner...Father and son sat outside the house.

The streetlight flickered.

The neighbourhood slowly became silent.

Ramanayya spoke first.

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"How many jobs now?"

"Seven."

The answer came almost like an apology.

His father smiled and said, "Good."

Kumar looked surprised.

"Good?"

"Yes."

"I had only one job."

"I retired as a clerk."

"You have already seen seven worlds."

Kumar looked at him without speaking.

His father continued.

"Don't count the companies."

"Count what they taught you."

Another sentence.

Another life lesson.

Not from a professor.

Not from a businessman.

From a government clerk who had quietly observed life.

That night...

Kumar opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

He didn't write about resignations. Or disappointments.

Instead...He drew seven tiny rectangles. Like seven small name boards.

Below each one...He wrote only one lesson.

Company 1 – Confidence matters.

Company 2 – Truth builds trust.

Company 3 – People's dreams are priceless.

Company 4 – Observe systems.

Company 5 – Discipline.

Company 6 – Patience.

Company 7 – Never stop learning.

He looked at the page for a long time.

Then smiled. Perhaps...

He hadn't changed seven jobs.

Perhaps...

He had completed seven classrooms.

A week later...

As he was reading the newspaper...

A small advertisement caught his eye.

Leading Pharmaceutical Company Requires Medical Representatives.

Qualification:

Life Sciences Preferred.

He read it twice. Then a third time.

Suddenly... His Intermediate Life Sciences group...

A decision he had once considered a compromise...

Returned to knock on his door.He quietly folded the newspaper.

Looked toward the shelf where the old business magazines rested.

Then whispered with a smile,

"So..."

"You weren't preparing me only for business."

"You were preparing me for this."

He picked up his file. Carefully arranged his certificates. Straightened his tie.

And walked out of the house. Without realizing...

He was walking toward the career that would finally recognize his true strengths.

Bookwave
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Chapter 21 – The Eighth Door

"Sometimes the door that changes your life is the one you almost ignored."

The pharmaceutical company's office was smaller than Kumar had imagined.

No luxurious reception. No glass cabins.

No impressive conference hall.

Just a modest office filled with medicine samples, promotional literature, and cartons waiting to be dispatched.

Oddly...

It felt welcoming. Almost like home.

The receptionist handed him an application form.

As Kumar filled in his educational details...

The HR Executive looked up.

"You studied Life Sciences?"

"Yes."

"Then why MBA?"

Kumar smiled.

"I've always wanted to understand business."

The executive nodded.

"Interesting combination."

The interview panel consisted of three people.

The Sales Manager.

The HR Manager.

And the Regional Business Head.

Unlike his previous interviews...

No one asked him to speak fluent English.

No one judged his accent. No one seemed interested in impressing him.

They wanted to understand him.

Bookwave
e-magazine

The Sales Manager began.

"Why do you want to join the pharmaceutical industry?"

Kumar answered honestly.

"I don't know everything about medicines."

"But I know how important they are."

The manager smiled.

"Good answer."

Then he placed a medicine strip on the table.

"What do you see?"

Kumar looked carefully. "A medicine."

The manager shook his head.

"What else?"

Kumar turned the strip over.

He noticed the manufacturing date, Expiry date.

Batch number, Company name.

Composition.

Storage instructions.

He smiled.

"I see responsibility."

The room became silent.

The Regional Business Head leaned forward.

"Responsibility?"

"Yes, Sir."

"If a shirt has a defect..."

"Someone may be disappointed."

"If a medicine has a defect..."

"Someone's family may suffer."

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"I think medicines are not ordinary products."

"They carry trust."

For a few seconds...No one spoke.

The Sales Manager slowly exchanged a glance with the Regional Head.

The interview had quietly changed. Instead of asking more questions...

The Regional Head stood up and said, "Kumar..."

"Come with me."

They walked into the warehouse. Rows and rows of neatly stacked medicine cartons filled the room.

The Regional Head picked up one small carton.

"What is this?"

"A medicine."

The Regional Head smiled.

"No."

He handed the carton to Kumar.

"This..."

"...is somebody's hope."

He pointed toward another rack.

"That one..."

"...is someone's mother's recovery."

He pointed to another."That one..."

"...is a child's fever coming down."

He looked directly into Kumar's eyes and said "Never forget..."

"We don't sell medicines." "We deliver hope."

The sentence entered Kumar's heart like a prayer.

He knew... This was where he belonged.

Three days later...The appointment letter arrived.

Medical Representative in ABC PHARMA. He held the letter for a long time.

Bookwave e-magazine



Not because of the salary. Not because of the designation.

Because...

For the first time...A job felt meaningful.

Training began the following week.

There were twenty new recruits from different parts of the state.

Some were pharmacy graduates. Some had studied zoology.

Some came from agriculture.

Everyone carried thick manuals. Hundreds of medicine names.

Dosages.

Compositions.

Medical terminology.

The first day itself felt overwhelming.

One trainee whispered,

"I don't think I'll remember all this."

Another laughed nervously.

"I can't even pronounce half the names."

Kumar smiled.

He had faced this feeling before.

English.

MBA.

Marketing.

Every beginning had once looked impossible.

The trainer entered.

He wrote one sentence on the board.

"Doctors don't expect you to know everything."

Everyone looked relieved.

Then he added...

"But they expect you to learn every day."

Training was intense.

Morning sessions. Role plays.

Product discussions. Field demonstrations.

Question-and-answer sessions.

Most trainees studied only before tests. Kumar did something different.

Every evening...

He returned to his room.

Opened the medicine manual.

And studied it exactly the way he had once studied the five-rupee business magazine.

One page.

Again.

Again.

Again.

The names slowly became familiar.

The compositions started making sense. Diseases connected with treatments.

Treatments connected with patients. Patients connected with families.

His old habit... Had returned.

One night...His roommate laughed.

"Kumar..."

"You're reading the same chapter again?"

Kumar smiled and said, "I always do."

"Why?"

"Because the second reading teaches me what the first one missed."

The roommate shook his head.

"I've never seen anyone study like this."

Kumar quietly turned another page.

Neither had he.

Until life taught him.

At the end of the training program...

A written examination was conducted.

The results surprised everyone.

Kumar secured the highest score.

The trainer called him to the stage.

"Congratulations."

"What is your secret?"

Kumar smiled gently.

"I don't try to finish books."

Bookwave
e-magazine

"I try to understand them."

The trainer nodded with admiration.

A week later... Each trainee received their territory.

Some celebrated. Some complained.

One trainee argued, "My area is too difficult."

Another said,

"There are too many competitors."

Kumar unfolded his posting letter. A semi-urban territory.

Long travel. Dozens of clinics, Medical stores, Distributors.

The territory wasn't easy.

But he smiled. Every road was an opportunity.

Before leaving...The Regional Business Head met all the new representatives.

He spoke only for five minutes.

But Kumar remembered those five minutes for the rest of his life.

"My dear friends..."

"Doctors already know more medicine than we ever will."

"So don't try to impress them."

"Respect their time."

"Respect their profession."

"And most importantly..."

He paused.

"Respect the patient who will finally receive your product."

He looked around the room.

"When you forget the patient..."

"...you become a salesman."

"When you remember the patient..."

"...you become a healthcare professional."

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e-magazine

Kumar immediately opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

He carefully wrote every word.

Then drew a large star beside the final sentence.

He somehow knew...

This wasn't just advice.

It was a philosophy.

The next morning...

Wearing a freshly ironed shirt.

A company bag over his shoulder.

Medicine samples neatly arranged.

He stood at the entrance of his assigned town.

Buses moved.

Medical stores opened their shutters.

Doctors' clinics slowly filled with patients.

He took a deep breath.

Then smiled.

For years...

He had searched for the right road.

Today... The road had finally found him.

As he began walking toward the first clinic...

His steps were calm. Confident. Purposeful.

Somewhere...

Deep inside...

The little boy who once waited outside Prasad Anna's shop...

Walked beside him. Still carrying a five-rupee dream.

Only now...

That dream had learned to wear an identity card.....

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Chapter 22 – Beyond the Prescription

"Every prescription has a patient. Every patient has a story."

The first day in the field began before sunrise.

Kumar carefully ironed his shirt. Polished his shoes.

Arranged the medicine samples neatly inside his company bag.

He looked at himself in the mirror.

For the first time...He wasn't preparing for an examination.

Life itself had become his examination hall.

His Area Sales Manager, Mr. Srinivas, was waiting near the bus stand.

A man in his early forties.

Simple. Soft-spoken.

Always smiling. He carried the same sample bag Kumar had.

Only older. Much older.

Its leather edges had worn out over the years.

Yet...It looked like a soldier's medal.

"Ready?" Srinivas asked.

"Yes, Sir."

They boarded a crowded bus.Kumar expected the Area Sales Manager to discuss products.

Targets. Competitors.

Instead...Srinivas pointed toward the passengers.

"Tell me."

"What do you see?"

Kumar looked around.

"People going to work."

Srinivas smiled. "I see patients."

Kumar looked puzzled. The manager continued.

"That elderly man?"

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"Probably blood pressure tablets."

"The young mother?"

"Her child may have fever."

"The school teacher?"

"Maybe diabetes."

He smiled gently.

"We don't sell to doctors."

"We serve the people sitting behind them."

Kumar remained silent. He had never thought of it that way. Their first visit was to a small clinic.

Nearly thirty patients waited outside. Some held prescriptions.

Some held babies. Some simply waited quietly. The doctor was busy. Very busy.

Srinivas did not complain. He did not ask the receptionist repeatedly.

He simply sat down. Patiently. After almost an hour...



The doctor called them inside.

Kumar expected a lengthy presentation.

Instead...

Srinivas spoke for barely two minutes.

He explained one product. Answered two questions.

Thanked the doctor. And left.

Outside...Kumar finally asked,

"Sir..."

"We waited for an hour."

"You spoke for only two minutes."

Srinivas smiled and said, "Those two minutes belonged to us."

"The previous hour belonged to the patients."

He looked toward the crowded waiting room.

"The doctor was serving them."

"How can I complain about that?"

Kumar quietly wrote the sentence in his Tomorrow Notebook.

The second clinic was different. The doctor seemed irritated.

"I have no time."

"Leave the samples."

Several representatives looked disappointed.

Some argued.

Some tried to extend the discussion.

Srinivas simply smiled.

"No problem, Doctor."

"We'll meet another day."

Outside...

Kumar looked surprised.

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"You didn't even try."

Srinivas laughed softly.

"Relationships aren't built by forcing conversations."

"They're built by respecting them."

By afternoon...

The scorching summer heat became unbearable.

The roads shimmered. Shops looked sleepy.

Even the trees seemed tired. Kumar wiped the sweat from his forehead.

Yet...Srinivas walked with the same energy.

Clinic after clinic. Medical store after medical store.

Never rushing. Never complaining.

Around three o'clock...They stopped at a tiny roadside tea stall.

The owner immediately smiled.

"Welcome, Srinivas Sir!"

"No sugar today?"

Srinivas laughed.

"Yes."

"The doctor warned me."

The tea seller prepared two cups.

Without asking. Exactly the way Srinivas liked.

After they finished... Kumar reached for his wallet.

The tea seller stopped him.

"No."

"Sir has already paid for this month."

Kumar looked surprised.

"For the whole month?"

Srinivas nodded.

Bookwave
e-magazine

"I come here almost every day."

"I don't like searching for change."

Then he quietly added,

"And he doesn't like asking."

Kumar smiled. Even tea had taught him something about relationships.

As they walked again...They passed an old medical shop.

The owner immediately came outside.

"Srinivas Garu!"

"You haven't come for two days."

"I thought you were unwell."

The conversation lasted only a minute.

No business. Only concern.

As they continued walking...Kumar asked,

"Sir..."

"How many years have you known him?"

"Twelve."

"Twelve years?"

Srinivas nodded.

"I've seen his son grow from school to college."

Kumar remained thoughtful.

He suddenly understood why competitors found it difficult to replace people like Srinivas.

Relationships... Could not be copied.

Towards evening...They visited one final clinic.

An elderly doctor.

Grey hair, Kind eyes.

He looked at Srinivas and smiled warmly.

"Come in."

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e-magazine

Then he noticed Kumar.

"New Representative?"

"Yes, Doctor."

The doctor looked at Kumar for a few moments.

Then asked,

"Tell me..."

"Why did you join this profession?"

Kumar answered honestly.

"To build a career."

The doctor smiled.

"A good answer."

"But not complete."

He slowly removed his spectacles.

"When my patients become healthy..."

"They rarely remember my name."

"They remember that they became well."

He paused.

"You too..."

"...should never chase recognition."

"Chase usefulness."

Recognition will find you on its own."

The words settled deep inside Kumar.

On the bus journey back... Neither of them spoke much.

The setting sun painted the sky with orange light. Villages slowly passed by.

People returned home after work.

Kumar looked out of the window.

His mind replayed the entire day.

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The waiting room. The tea stall.

The medical shop owner. The elderly doctor.

Not a single business theory had been discussed.

Yet...

He had learned more than in many classrooms.

That night...

He opened the Tomorrow Notebook. Instead of writing one sentence...

He wrote four.

"Respect people's time."

"Relationships cannot be hurried."

"Every patient is somebody's entire world."

He paused for a long moment. Then wrote the fourth.

"Success in business begins with respect for people."

He closed the notebook.

Looked at the stack of old business magazines.

Then smiled.

"They taught me business."

He whispered softly. "This profession..."

"...is teaching me humanity."

Weeks passed.

Doctors slowly began recognizing him. Receptionists smiled when he entered.

Medical shop owners greeted him by name.

Some even offered him tea.

Nothing extraordinary had happened. No record-breaking sales.

No awards. Just one small change. People had begun remembering Kumar.

And he knew...

That was where every lasting success quietly began.

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Chapter 23 – The Doctor Who Changed Everything

"Knowledge may build a career. Character builds a legacy."

Nearly six months had passed since Kumar joined the pharmaceutical company.

His bag felt lighter. Not because it contained fewer samples.

Because his shoulders had become stronger.

Walking twenty kilometers a day...

Climbing staircases... Waiting outside clinics...

Travelling in crowded buses...

Had quietly become part of his routine. What once looked difficult...

Now felt ordinary.

Doctors had begun recognizing him. Receptionists no longer asked his name.

Medical shop owners smiled the moment he entered. Even competitors noticed him.

"That new fellow..."

"He is improving fast."

Kumar smiled whenever he heard such comments.

Not with pride. With gratitude.

One Monday morning...Area Sales Manager Srinivas handed him a list.

"There is one doctor left."

Kumar looked at the name.

Dr. Vishwanath Rao

A senior physician.

Known throughout the didstrict.

Patients waited for hours to consult him. Many Medical Representatives said he was difficult to meet.

Some had stopped trying altogether.

Srinivas smiled and said, "Don't worry."

"Just be yourself."

The clinic stood beside an old banyan tree.

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Dozens of patients sat patiently outside. Children slept in their mothers' laps.

Elderly people leaned against the wall. The atmosphere was surprisingly peaceful.

Inside...The doctor examined each patient carefully.

Never hurried. Never looked irritated.

Even after hours of consultation... His voice remained calm.

Nearly two hours passed. Finally...The receptionist smiled.

"Doctor will see you now."

Kumar entered respectfully.

"Good afternoon, Doctor."

The elderly physician looked up.

"Please sit."

Unlike many doctors...He did not immediately ask about the products.

Instead...He asked, "How long have you been working?"

"Six months, Doctor."

"You seem sincere."

"Thank you, Doctor."

The doctor smiled.

"Sincerity is easy."

"Consistency is difficult."

Kumar introduced two products. Answered a few scientific questions.

The doctor listened quietly. Then closed the visual aid.

"Kumar..."

"May I ask you something?"

"Certainly, Doctor."

"What do you want to become?"

Kumar answered without hesitation.

"A successful businessman."

Bookwave e-magazine

The doctor nodded.

"Good."

Then he asked another question.

"What is success?"

Kumar paused. He thought of promotions. Recognition. Financial security.

His dream company. The fifty-crore milestone.

Finally he replied, "Building a respected business."

The doctor smiled gently. "Not bad."

"But incomplete."

He slowly stood up. Walked toward the window.

Outside...Patients continued waiting patiently.

The doctor pointed toward them and asked "Do you see these pdeople?"

"Yes."

"They don't know which medicine company I prescribe."

"They don't know who manufactured the tablets."

"They don't know your company's turnover."

"They only know one thing."

"They want to return home healthy."

The room became silent. The doctor turned toward Kumar.

"If your company helps me do that honestly..."

"...you will always have my respect."

He paused.

"But if profit becomes more important than patients..."

"...don't come back."

The words weren't harsh.

They were gentle.

Which made them even more powerful.

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e-magazine

As Kumar prepared to leave... The doctor opened a drawer.

He took out an old fountain pen. Its black body had faded with time.

"I've been using this pen for twenty-five years."

Kumar admired it.

"It still writes beautifully, Doctor."

The doctor smiled and asked "Do you know why?"

Kumar shook his head.

"I refill it."

"Again and again."

He handed the pen to Kumar.

"Character is like this pen."

"If you stop refilling it..."

"It slowly dries."

"But if you refill it every day..."

"It serves you for a lifetime."

He carefully took the pen back.

"Every morning..."

"I refill this pen."

"And every morning..."

"I remind myself why I became a doctor."

He looked directly into Kumar's eyes.

"You should find something..."

"...that reminds you why you entered this profession."

The words stayed with Kumar all day.

That evening... Instead of going home directly...

He walked to the small public library where he had spent so many evenings as a child.

Nothing had changed. The same wooden tables.

Bookwave
e-magazine

The same ceiling fans. The same smell of old books.

The librarian looked at him for a moment. Then smiled in recognition.

"Kumar?"

He stood still.

"You remember me?"

"How can I forget?"

"You were the little boy who finished every children's book on that shelf."

Both laughed. The librarian pointed toward the old reading corner.

"You always sat there."

Kumar slowly walked to that familiar chair. He gently touched its wooden armrest.

For a moment...He wasn't a Medical Representative.

He was a nine-year-old boy again.

Reading. ....Dreaming.....Imagining.

He closed his eyes and silently thanked that little library.

Before leaving... The librarian asked,

"What are you reading these days?"

Kumar smiled.

"People."

The old man laughed.

"Best book in the world."

That night... He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

For several minutes...He simply stared at the empty page.

Then wrote... **"Every profession begins with a purpose."**

He paused. Then continued.

"The day profit replaces purpose..."

Another pause.

"...success quietly begins leaving."

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He drew not one...But three stars beside the sentence.

Something inside him told him...

This page would become important one day.

Months later... Whenever targets became difficult...

Whenever pressure increased... Whenever competitors tried shortcuts...

Kumar opened that page. Read those words.

Closed the notebook. And returned to work. Not with less ambition.

But with clearer direction.

Years later... After becoming Managing Director...

Every newly recruited employee attended an induction program.

Many expected Kumar to speak about sales targets.

Market share. Growth. Exports.

Instead... He stood before them holding a simple fountain pen.

Not expensive. Not decorative.

Just a refillable pen. He smiled and said,

"This pen reminds me that character must be refilled every day."

The employees looked puzzled. Then he added...

"Products may change."

"Markets may change."

"Technology may change."

He paused.

"But if we ever stop remembering the patient behind every tablet..."

"...we will stop deserving this company."

The room fell silent. None of the employees knew...

That those words had begun years earlier...

Inside a small clinic...

With an elderly doctor who unknowingly helped build the soul of the company.

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Chapter 24 – The Shortcut

"Character is revealed not when the road is difficult... but when a shortcut appears."

Nearly a year had passed since Kumar joined the pharmaceutical company.

His confidence had grown.

Doctors recognized him.

Medical shop owners welcomed him.

Distributors trusted his words.

His monthly performance had steadily improved.

For the first time in many years...

Life seemed stable.

His parents finally slept peacefully.

There were no more conversations about changing jobs.

No more uncertainty.

Even Kumar had begun believing...

Perhaps he had finally found his place.

One Monday morning...

The Regional Sales Meeting was held.

Representatives from different districts gathered in a conference hall.

Charts covered the walls.

Sales figures. Growth percentages.

Market share, The atmosphere was energetic.

Names of the month's best performers flashed across the projector screen.

Applause filled the room.

Kumar's name appeared among the top performers.

Not first.

Not last.

Steadily moving upward.

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He felt satisfied. Not because others applauded.

Because he knew every prescription had been earned honestly.

During the lunch break... An experienced representative walked up to him.

"Kumar..."

"Congratulations."

"You're improving fast."

"Thank you."

The senior representative smiled.

"But..."

"You're working too hard."

Kumar looked puzzled.

"What do you mean?"

The man lowered his voice.

"There are easier ways."

That evening...

The two met at a small restaurant.

The senior representative spoke confidently.

"Why struggle every month?"

"You have good communication."

"You have good relationships."

"But relationships alone take time."

He leaned forward.

"Some doctors expect..."

"...special attention."

Kumar remained silent.

The representative continued.

"Arrange expensive gifts."

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"Sponsor family trips."

"Help them in other ways."

"Your sales will double."

The words hung heavily in the air.

For the first time...

Kumar was looking at a road that seemed much shorter.

On the bus ride home...

His mind refused to stay quiet.

He thought of his parents.

The family loans.

His sister's recent marriage. The responsibilities waiting ahead.

Higher sales meant betterd incentives.

Better incentives meant better savings.

The temptation was real. Not because Kumar was greedy.

Because life had taught him the value of every rupee.

That night... He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

But... He couldn't write.

For the first time... The notebook remained blank.

The next morning... He reached the office earlier than usual.

Area Sales Manager Srinivas noticed him.

"You look worried."

Kumar hesitated.

Then shared the entire conversation.

Srinivas listened patiently.

Without interrupting. After a long silence...

He asked only one question.

"Kumar..."

"When you were a child..."

"Why did you read those business magazines?"

The question surprised him.

"To become a businessman."

"No."

Srinivas smiled gently.

"You read them..."

"...to become a better human being who understood business."

He continued,

"If money becomes bigger than values..."

"...you may become richer."

"But you will become smaller."

The sentence struck Kumar deeply.

That afternoon...

He visited Dr. Vishwanath Rao.

After discussing the medicines...

The doctor noticed Kumar's unusual silence.

"Anything bothering you?"

Kumar smiled politely.

"Nothing serious, Doctor."

The doctor looked at him knowingly.

"The eyes answer before the mouth."

Kumar quietly explained everything.

The doctor listened.

Then stood up.

He walked to the bookshelf.

From among dozens of medical books...

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He picked up a small glass paperweight.

Inside it...

A tiny compass floated.

The doctor placed it on the table.

"What do you see?"

"A compass."

"What is its job?"

"To show direction."

The doctor nodded.

"Exactly."

He gently pushed it.

The compass shook for a few seconds.

Then...

Returned to north.

"Storms move it."

"Hands move it."

"But it always returns."

He looked directly at Kumar.

"Your values must become your compass."

"The world will keep pushing you."

"Never lose your north."

Kumar felt goosebumps.

That evening... Instead of going home...

He walked without any destination.

Past medical stores. Past clinics.Past the old stationery shop.

Prasad Anna was arranging newspapers outside.

"Kumar!"

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e-magazine

"Come..."

"You look tired."

Kumar smiled.

They spoke for a few minutes. About work and About life.

About nothing important.

Yet... Kumar felt lighter.

Sometimes..The presence of good people solved problems without discussing them.

As he prepared to leave.. Prasad handed him the latest business magazine.

"It didn't sell."

"Take it."

Kumar smiled.

He accepted it with the same excitement he had felt years ago.

On the cover... A famous industrialist's interview.

One sentence was printed in bold letters.

"Reputation grows slowly... and disappears suddenly."

Kumar stood still.

It felt as though life itself had answered him.

That night...He finally opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

This time...The words came effortlessly.

"Money can solve many problems."

He paused. Then wrote...

"But it should never become the problem."

He drew a long line beneath it. Then added another thought.

"Shortcuts shorten journeys..."

A pause.

"...and sometimes character."

The next morning... The senior representative met him again.

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"So..."

"What did you decide?"

Kumar smiled peacefully.

"I've decided to walk."

The representative looked confused.

"Walk?"

"The long road."

"It suits me."

The senior representative laughed.

"You'll take years."

Kumar nodded.

"I know."

Then he smiled.

"But I'll be able to sleep every night."

Without another word...He picked up his sample bag.

And walked toward the first clinic.

His steps were not faster. They were lighter.

Months passed. Some representatives crossed him in sales.

Some earned bigger incentives.

Some bought motorcycles before he could.

Sometimes... He wondered whether he had made the right decision.

Then he would open the Tomorrow Notebook.

Read one page. Close it. And continue. Because deep inside... He knew something.

He wasn't building this month's sales.

He was building the reputation that one day would convince hundreds of distributors to trust a new pharmaceutical company started by a man named Kumar.

He simply didn't know it yet.

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Chapter 25 – The Weight of a Name

"The greatest achievement in business is when people begin trusting your name before your products."

Two years had passed.

The roads that once looked unfamiliar...

Now felt like old friends.

The bus conductors greeted Kumar with a smile.

Tea stall owners no longer asked what he wanted.

They already knew.

Doctors' receptionists simply nodded when he entered.

Medical shop owners would often say,

"Sit for a minute."

"You look tired."

Without realizing it... Kumar had become part of their everyday lives.

One rainy afternoon...

His Area Sales Manager, Srinivas, handed him a new route plan.

"There is a small town."

"About sixty kilometers away."

"Our company has never performed well there."

"Many representatives have tried."

"No one stayed long."

He folded the map.

"I want you to take it."

Kumar looked at the unfamiliar names.

"Any special reason, Sir?"

Srinivas smiled.

"Yes."

"I think they need someone who knows how to listen."

The town was small. One government hospital.

Three private clinics, Four medical shops, One distributor.

Nothing extraordinary.

Yet... The atmosphere felt different.

Competitors had strong relationships. Doctors hardly knew Kumar.

Medical stores had limited shelf space. Distributors were cautious.

He had to begin again. From zero.

The first week was disappointing.

Most doctors politely accepted samples.

Some hardly looked at him.

One doctor said,

"Leave the literature."

"I'll see it later."

Another replied,

"We already prescribe another company's brand."

Kumar smiled.

"Thank you, Doctor."

He never argued. Never compared.

Never criticized competitors. He simply continued visiting.

The distributor was the toughest.

Mr. Ibrahim.

A businessman with nearly thirty years of experience.

He listened carefully. Then closed the order book.

"Kumar..."

"Your products may be good."

"But I don't know your company."

Kumar nodded.

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e-magazine

"I understand."

"And I don't stock medicines..."

"...I stock trust."

The words stayed in Kumar's mind.

He smiled respectfully.

"I'll come again."

Every Monday... Every Thursday...

He visited again. Sometimes they discussed medicines.

Sometimes the weather. Sometimes cricket. Sometimes nothing at all.

Slowly...Business conversations became human conversations.

One afternoon... Kumar entered the distributor's office carrying a newspaper.

"Ibrahim Sir..."

"I saw this article."

"Your son received the district-level science award."

The elderly distributor looked surprised.

"You read that?"

Kumar smiled.

"I remembered you mentioning his exhibition."

For a moment...

No business was discussed.

Only a father's pride.

As Kumar prepared to leave...

Ibrahim called him back.

"Sit."

He opened the order register.

Without another word... He wrote Kumar's first order.

It wasn't a large order. But to Kumar...

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It felt enormous. Not because of its value.

Because of what it represented.

Outside the office... He looked at the purchase order for a long time.

The amount was ordinary. The trust behind it wasn't.

He quietly whispered,

"Thank you."

Not to Ibrahim.

To life.

Months passed. Sales slowly improved.

Doctors started prescribing his company's products more frequently.

Medical stores reordered without reminders.

The distributor increased stock levels.

No sudden miracle. Only steady growth.

Exactly the kind Kumar believed in.

One morning... He entered Dr. Meera's clinic.

A young mother stood near the reception with a crying child.

She looked anxious. The receptionist was busy.

Without thinking... Kumar offered the child a small coloring book that he carried in his bag.

The little girl stopped crying.

She smiled. The mother smiled too.

After the consultation... The doctor called Kumar inside.

"I heard what happened."

Kumar looked surprised and said, "It wasn't anything, Doctor."

Dr. Meera smiled.

"It was."

She paused.

"You remembered the child before the business."

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She opened the prescription pad. Then quietly said,

"I can teach medicines."

"I cannot teach kindness."

Kumar left the clinic without saying much. Some compliments felt too precious to answer.

That evening... During the monthly review meeting...

The Regional Business Head displayed territory-wise growth.

Everyone expected one of the larger cities to lead.

Instead... The small town appeared at the top.

The room looked surprised. The Regional Head smiled.

"Kumar..."

"Stand up."

He did.

"I want everyone to know something."

"This growth..."

"...did not happen because of advertising."

"It happened because one representative earned the market's confidence."

He paused. Then said something Kumar never forgot.

"Never try to become famous."

"Become dependable."

"Fame introduces you."

"Dependability keeps you in the room."

The hall echoed with applause.

Kumar quietly sat down. His eyes searched for Srinivas.

The Area Sales Manager smiled proudly.

Without speaking... Both understood.

That night... Kumar was waiting for the last bus home.

Rain had begun again. The bus was delayed.

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He stood beneath a small shelter. An elderly pharmacist from the town happened to be there.

He smiled.

"Kumar..."

"I heard you're going back."

"Yes."

The old man looked thoughtfully at him askex "Do you know something?"

"What, Sir?"

"When your company sends another representative someday..."

"He'll find his work easier."

Kumar smiled and said, "I hope so."

The pharmacist shook his head.

"No."

"You don't understand."

"He'll find it easier..."

"...because he'll say..."

'I'm replacing Kumar.'

The words struck him like lightning.

For several seconds...He couldn't speak.

The bus arrived. People rushed to board. But Kumar remained standing for a moment.

He suddenly understood something. Products had entered the market.

But... His name had entered people's hearts.

Late that night...He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

He carefully wrote...

"A good salesman is remembered for his products."

He paused. Then continued.

"A good human being is remembered by name."

After a long silence... He added one final sentence.

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"One day..."

"...let my name become a promise."

He closed the notebook.

Without realizing it...

That prayer had already begun coming true.

Chapter 26 – Leaving the Roads

"Sometimes success asks us to leave behind the places that made us successful."

Nearly five years had passed.

Without announcing itself...

Time had quietly changed Kumar.

The nervous young Medical Representative had disappeared.

In his place stood a confident professional.

Doctors respected him.

Distributors trusted him.

Medical stores welcomed him.

Competitors acknowledged him.

The roads that once tested him...

Now greeted him like an old friend.

One Monday morning...

The Regional Business Head called him.

"Kumar..."

"Please come to Head Office tomorrow."

There was no explanation.

No hint.

Just a simple instruction.

The next afternoon...

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Kumar entered the conference room.

The Managing Director himself was present.

So were the HR Head and the Sales Director.

He immediately wondered...

"Did I make a mistake?"

The Managing Director smiled.

"Relax, Kumar."

"You are not in trouble."

Everyone laughed.

The atmosphere became lighter.

The Sales Director opened a file.

"For the last three years..."

"...your territory has consistently shown growth."

He turned another page.

"Customer retention is the highest."

"Distributor satisfaction is excellent."

"Doctor feedback is exceptional."

The Managing Director looked directly at Kumar.

"Do you know why?"

Kumar smiled politely.

"I've been fortunate to work with good people."

The Managing Director exchanged a glance with the others.

Then said quietly,

"No."

"You became fortunate..."

"...because you became good for people."

He pushed a sealed envelope across the table.

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Kumar slowly opened it. His eyes stopped at one line.

Promotion: Area Sales Manager…. For a few moments… He simply stared and punched air.



He had imagined this day many times.

Yet now that it had arrived…Words refused to come.

The Managing Director stood up.

Walked around the table. And shook Kumar's hand.

"Congratulations."

Then he added,

"Tomorrow…"

"…you stop carrying only your own bag."

"From now onwards…"

"…you carry the confidence of twelve Medical Representatives."

That evening…

Kumar called home. His father answered.

"Father..."

"I've been promoted."

There was silence.

Then Ramanayya quietly said,

"I knew."

Kumar laughed.

"You always know before I tell you."

His father smiled.

"A father notices footsteps before announcements."

Lakshmi took the phone.

"Come home this weekend."

"I'll prepare your favorite meal."

Her voice carried the same joy... As the day Kumar received his first appointment letter.

The next week... The company organized a farewell meeting in his territory.

Doctors attended. Distributors came. Medical shop owners arrived.

Even competitors dropped in to congratulate him.

It felt less like an official function... And more like a family gathering. The elderly distributor, Ibrahim, spoke first.

"Kumar..."

"When you first came here..."

"I refused your first order."

Everyone laughed.

"I thought I was testing you."

He smiled warmly.

"I later realized..."

"...life was testing me."

He folded his hands. "Thank you..."

"...for teaching us that business can still be honest."

Dr. Meera came forward.

She handed Kumar a small gift.

A simple diary. Inside the first page she had written...

"May you never become too busy to remember people's names."

Kumar read the sentence twice. Then quietly closed the diary.

Some gifts... Were meant for the heart.

The farewell ended. One by one...People returned home.

The clinic lights slowly turned off. Medical stores closed their shutters.

The town became quiet. Kumar remained standing alone.

The next morning... Instead of reporting to Head Office...

He decided to make one final round. Not as duty. As gratitude. He visited every doctor.

Every distributor. Every medical shop. Not to discuss products. Only to say thank you.

Some were surprised.

"You came all this way..."

"...just to say goodbye?"

Kumar smiled.

"I came..."

"...because success should never leave without thanking the people who built it."

His last stop was the tiny roadside tea stall. The owner looked shocked.

"You're leaving?"

Kumar nodded.

The tea seller prepared two cups. Exactly as always. No sugar. Extra ginger. Neither of them spoke much.

Words were unnecessary. As Kumar reached for his wallet... The tea seller gently pushed his hand away.

"No."

"Today..."

"...tea is from me."

Kumar smiled.

"I've had hundreds of cups here."

The old man nodded. "And every one of them..."

"...tasted better because you never drank it in a hurry."

For a moment...Both laughed. Then...Without warning...

The tea seller hugged him. A simple hug. Warm. Genuine.

Kumar closed his eyes. He suddenly realized...

He wasn't leaving customers. He was leaving relationships. Before boarding the evening bus...

He looked once more at the small town. The narrow streets. The clinics. The pharmacy boards. The tea stall. The familiar faces.

Five years earlier...He had entered carrying medicine samples.

Today... He was leaving carrying memories.

That night...In his new room...He unpacked his suitcase.

Clothes. Files, Medicine manuals.

The Tomorrow Notebook. And...The small diary gifted by Dr. Meera.

He opened the Tomorrow Notebook. For a long time...He simply looked at the blank page.

Then wrote..."**Promotions change designations.**"

He paused. Then smiled. **"Gratitude keeps us human."**

After another moment...He added one final thought.

"Never become so successful..."

"...that you forget the roads that taught you how to walk."

He carefully closed the notebook.

Outside...A new city waited. New responsibilities.

New challenges. New people.

Inside...The little boy with the five-rupee dream...

Still carried the same notebook. Still collected lessons. Still believed... That every relationship was worth more than every promotion.

Chapter 27 – The Leader Behind the Targets

"The true measure of a leader is not how many people work under him, but how many people grow because of him."

The first day as Area Sales Manager felt strangely unfamiliar.

The same company.

The same products.

The same offices.

Yet...

Everything had changed.

For five years...

Kumar had carried only one responsibility. His own territory.

Now...Twelve Medical Representatives looked at him for guidance.

Their victories...Would be his victories.

Their failures...Would also become his responsibility.

On the first morning...The Regional Business Head introduced him to the team.

"This is your new Area Sales Manager."

Several representatives applauded politely.

Some smiled. A few remained expressionless.

One or two even looked disappointed.

They had expected someone older.

Someone with twenty years of experience.

Not a young manager who had recently been one among them.

Kumar understood their thoughts.

Respect...

Could not be demanded. It had to be earned.

Once again.

The first monthly review meeting arrived.

Every representative entered carrying sales reports.

Some looked confident. Some nervous.

One young representative, Ramesh, sat quietly in the last row.

His head remained down throughout the meeting.

The sales figures appeared on the screen.

Most territories had grown.

One had fallen sharply. It belonged to Ramesh.

The room became silent.

Everyone expected Kumar to question him publicly.

Instead...

Kumar closed the file.

"Let's take a tea break."

The representatives looked surprised.

After the others left...

Kumar walked towards Ramesh.

"Tea?"

The young man nodded hesitantly.

Neither spoke for several minutes.

Finally Kumar asked,

"How is your mother?"

Ramesh looked shocked.

"Sir..."

"How do you know she's unwell?"

"You mentioned it once during training."

The young man's eyes slowly filled.

"My father passed away last month."

"I've been travelling between hospitals and work."

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"I couldn't focus."

He lowered his head.

"I'm sorry, Sir."

Kumar gently placed his hand on his shoulder.

"You don't owe me an apology."

"You owe yourself some patience."

The next morning...

Instead of discussing targets...

Kumar travelled with Ramesh. They visited clinics together.

Medical stores. Distributors.

Not once did Kumar criticize him.

Instead...

He observed quietly.

By afternoon...

He understood the problem.

Ramesh knew medicines.

He respected doctors. He worked hard.

But after his father's death...

He had stopped believing in himself.

Confidence... Not capability...

Had become the missing medicine.

They sat beneath a neem tree outside a government hospital.

Patients walked past. Ambulances came and went.

For a while...Neither spoke.

Then Kumar smiled.

"Do you know how many jobs I changed?"

Ramesh looked up.

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"No, Sir."

"Seven."

The young representative couldn't believe it.

"Seven?"

Kumar nodded.

"I failed in insurance."

"I failed in real estate."

"I failed in loans."

"I failed in many places."

Ramesh listened carefully.

"Then how did you become Area Sales Manager?"

Kumar smiled.

"I stopped counting failures."

"I started collecting lessons."

The words settled gently. Not as advice. As experience.

That evening...Before leaving...

Kumar handed Ramesh an old business magazine. Its corners had faded. Its pages had become yellow with age.

Ramesh looked surprised.

"Sir..."

"This is very old."

Kumar smiled.

"It is older than you think."

"I bought it when I was your age."

He turned the first page.

A sentence had been underlined years earlier.

'Success belongs to those who continue after disappointment becomes ordinary.'

"I've read this magazine dozens of times."

"Today..."

"I want you to keep it."

Ramesh held it carefully.

As though someone had entrusted him with something priceless.

Weeks passed.

Kumar never asked Ramesh,

"How much did you sell?"

Instead he asked,

"How many doctors did you meet?"

"What did you learn today?"

"Did you eat on time?"

"Did you call your mother?"

The questions were simple.

But they slowly rebuilt a broken man.

Three months later...

The quarterly review meeting was held. The projector displayed the latest figures.

The highest percentage growth... Belonged to Ramesh.

The hall erupted in applause. Ramesh stood up. His voice trembled.

"Sir..."

"May I say something?"

The Regional Head nodded.

Ramesh looked towards Kumar.

"Three months ago..."

"I thought I was going to resign."

He paused. Then smiled.

"My Area Sales Manager never asked me why my sales were low."

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"He first asked me how my mother was."

The room fell silent.

"He didn't repair my targets."

"He repaired my confidence."

No one spoke.

Some quietly lowered their eyes.

The Regional Business Head looked at Kumar with admiration.

There are moments when numbers tell only half the story. This was one of them.

That evening... The Regional Head called Kumar into his cabin.

He closed the door. Then smiled.

"I've been observing you."

Kumar listened quietly.

"You know..."

"Most managers try to build better representatives."

He paused.

"You are trying to build better human beings."

Kumar remained silent. The Regional Head continued,

"Never lose that."

"Companies need managers."

"But the world needs leaders."

Late that night...Kumar sat alone in his room.

The old business magazines rested on one side.

The Tomorrow Notebook lay open before him.

He thought about the little boy who once couldn't afford a ₹5 magazine.

He thought about Prasad Anna.

Professor Raghavan.

Dr. Vishwanath Rao.

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Srinivas.

His parents.

His sister.

Every person had invested something in him. Knowledge. Time, Trust, Encouragement.

Without expecting anything in return.

He smiled. Perhaps...

Leadership was nothing more than returning that investment to someone else.

He slowly wrote in the Tomorrow Notebook.

"People don't become stronger because we give them answers."

He paused.

Then completed the thought.

"They become stronger because someone first believed they could find them."

After a long silence...

He added one final line.

"Leadership begins where judgment ends."

He closed the notebook.

Outside...

The city slept peacefully.

Inside...

Another dream had quietly taken birth.

One day...If he ever built his own company...

Its greatest achievement would not be its turnover.

It would be the number of people whose lives became better because they had worked there.

That dream...

Was still years away.

But tonight...

Its foundation had been laid.

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Chapter 28 – The Idea That Traveled

"Products can be copied. Ideas can be improved. But a habit of thinking differently becomes a lifelong advantage."

Two years passed quickly.

Kumar's team had become one of the strongest in the company.

Targets were achieved consistently.

New representatives adapted faster.

Distributor complaints reduced.

Doctor retention improved.

But...

Whenever the monthly review meeting ended...

Kumar was never satisfied. Not because sales were low.

Because he always felt...

"There has to be a better way."

Every evening... After returning home...

He would spread reports across his dining table.

Territory-wise sales. Doctor-wise prescriptions.

Distributor stock movement. Seasonal demand.

Competitor launches.

He studied them exactly the way he had once studied the ₹5 business magazine.

Again... Again... And again.

Patterns slowly began appearing. Something others overlooked...

Caught Kumar's attention.

One night... He noticed something interesting.

Whenever a distributor ran out of stock...

Sales dropped sharply for nearly three weeks. Not because doctors stopped prescribing.

Because medicines weren't immediately available. Patients accepted substitutes.

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Once habits changed... Winning them back became difficult.

Kumar quietly closed the report.

The problem wasn't sales. The problem was supply.

The next morning... He visited three distributors. Instead of discussing orders...

He asked questions. "What medicines move faster during monsoon?"

"What usually goes out of stock?"

"What products remain on the shelf too long?"

The distributors looked surprised.

No manager had asked such questions before.

Most only demanded bigger orders. Kumar wanted understanding.

For nearly a month... He travelled across different districts.

Listening. Observing. Writing notes.

He filled an entire notebook.

One evening... He finally prepared a proposal.

The title was simple.

"Right Stock at the Right Time."

The idea was straightforward.

Instead of supplying the same quantity everywhere...

Supply medicines according to local disease patterns.

Increase fever medicines before monsoon. Increase allergy medicines during seasonal changes.

Increase antibiotics where demand historically rose. Reduce slow-moving inventory.

Simple.

Practical.

Logical.

The proposal reached Head Office.

Weeks passed. No reply.

Some colleagues laughed.

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"You think they'll read it?"

Another smiled. "Head Office already knows everything."

Kumar simply smiled back. He had learned long ago... Not every seed sprouts immediately.

Nearly six weeks later... A phone call arrived.

The Managing Director wanted to meet him. The conference room looked familiar.

He had sat there once before. The day he was promoted.

This time... The atmosphere felt different.

Several senior executives were present. Large charts covered the walls.

One slide displayed Kumar's proposal. The Managing Director looked at him.

"Kumar..."

"Did you prepare this yourself?"

"Yes, Sir."

"What made you think of it?"

Kumar smiled.

"I listened to distributors."

The room became silent.

One Director leaned forward.

"You mean..."

"This idea came from them?"

Kumar nodded.

"They live with inventory every day."

"I only connected their experiences."

The Managing Director slowly closed the file.

Then smiled.

"You know..."

"Most managers try to give answers."

"You first searched for the people who already had them."

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He looked around the room.

"This..."

"...is how organizations learn."

Within three months... The pilot project began.

Five districts. Then ten. Then twenty.

The results exceeded expectations. Stock shortages reduced dramatically.

Distributor satisfaction increased. Sales improved without increasing marketing expenses.

The Head Office circulated a company-wide circular.

The new inventory planning model would be implemented across the country.

At the bottom of the circular... One sentence appeared.

Concept Developed by: Mr. Kumar

He stared at those words for a long time. Not because his name was printed.

Because his idea had begun helping thousands of people he would never meet.

That evening...He travelled to his hometown.

Not for any official work. Just because he felt like going.

As always... His feet automatically turned towards Prasad Anna's stationery shop.

Prasad looked up.

"Kumar!"

"You came after many days."

They spoke about ordinary things.

Rainfall.

Business.

Road widening.

Nothing extraordinary.

Then Kumar casually showed him the company circular.

Prasad adjusted his spectacles.

Read every word slowly.

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Then looked up.

"So..."

"Your ideas are getting printed now."

Kumar laughed.

"Looks like it."

Prasad smiled with pride.

"I remember another printing."

Kumar looked puzzled.

"What?"

"The little boy..."

"...who stood here every Sunday waiting to buy a ₹5 magazine."

Both laughed. For a few seconds...

Neither spoke. Then Prasad quietly said,

"Back then..."

"You waited for printed ideas."

"Today..."

"People are waiting for yours."

The sentence settled gently between them.

Kumar lowered his eyes. Some compliments were too beautiful to answer.

Before leaving...Prasad walked inside the shop.

He returned with an old bundle tied with cotton thread.

"What is this, Anna?"

Prasad smiled.

"Unsold business magazines."

"I never threw them away."

"You always said..."

"One article can change a person's life."

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He handed the bundle to Kumar.

"Take them."

"They belong to the boy who taught me that books don't have customers..."

"...they have destinies."

Kumar held the bundle carefully.

His fingers trembled. It felt heavier than paper.

Because it carried memories.

That night... He reached home.

Opened one of the old magazines.

Inside... An article caught his attention.

The headline read:

"Great Companies Listen Before They Lead."

He smiled. Perhaps...

Without realizing it...

He had already started building the philosophy of the company he would one day own.

He opened the Tomorrow Notebook and Slowly wrote...

"An idea does not become valuable because it is ours."

He paused. Then continued.

"It becomes valuable because it solves someone else's problem."

After a moment... He added another thought.

"Listening is the first investment of every successful entrepreneur."

He gently closed the notebook.

Outside...

The night was silent.

Inside...

A future Managing Director had quietly taken another step toward the company he had dreamed about since childhood.

Chapter 29 – The View from Above

"The higher we climb, the more people we are responsible for lifting."

Three months after the successful implementation of Kumar's inventory model…

His phone rang.

It was the Managing Director.

"Kumar…"

"Can you come to Head Office tomorrow?"

Kumar smiled.

"I'll be there, Sir."

Unlike the previous meetings… This one felt more serious.

Maps of South India covered the conference room walls.

Sales graphs stretched across the projector screen.

Different colored lines represented different states.

Growth….Market share….Distribution strength…..Competitor movement……

The room looked less like an office… And more like a war room.

The Managing Director welcomed him warmly.

"Kumar…"

"You've spent nearly eight years with this company."

"Yes, Sir."

"You've worked as a Medical Representative."

"You've worked as an Area Sales Manager."

He paused.

"I think you're ready for something bigger."

The HR Head slid another envelope across the table.

Kumar slowly opened it. **Promotion: Zonal Sales Manager – South India**

For a few seconds…The words refused to settle inside him.

South India. Thousands of doctors.

Hundreds of distributors. Dozens of managers. An entirely different world.

The Managing Director smiled.

"Congratulations."

He said it in the conference room which filled with claps sound.



Then he added something unexpected.

"This isn't a promotion."

Kumar looked up.

"It's a transfer..."

"...from managing numbers..."

"...to managing dreams."

The room became silent.

The Managing Director continued.

"Every representative working under you..."

"...has parents waiting for his success."

"A spouse hoping for stability."

"Children depending on his future."

"Never forget..."

"Every sales report carries a family's expectations."

Kumar quietly nodded.

He had never looked at a sales chart that way.

The first Zonal Meeting was held in Bengaluru.

Managers from Andhra Pradesh.

Telangana.

Tamil Nadu.

Karnataka.

Kerala.

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All gathered in one hall. Each had different experiences. Different working styles. Different opinions.

The discussions quickly became heated.

One manager blamed pricing. Another blamed competitors.

A third blamed distributors.Everyone had reasons.

Very few had solutions. Kumar listened.

For nearly an hour...He hardly spoke.

Finally...Someone asked,

"Kumar..."

"What do you think?"

He stood up slowly. Walked towards the whiteboard.

Instead of writing sales figures...He wrote one word.

LISTEN

The room looked puzzled. He turned toward them.

"We all know the problems."

"But..."

"How many distributors have we truly listened to this month?"

"How many representatives have we travelled with?"

"How many doctors have we asked..."

...'What can we improve?'"

Silence spread across the room.He continued.

"If everyone in this room already has the answer..."

"...why are the problems still here?"

No one replied.

He smiled gently.

"I don't have better intelligence than any of you."

"I simply ask more questions."

The atmosphere changed.

The meeting slowly transformed from arguments...

...into discussions.

By evening...

Managers who had barely spoken to each other...

Were exchanging ideas.

Not defending opinions.

Building solutions.

Over the next year...

Kumar introduced something unusual.

Every month...

One manager had to present...

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Not his achievements.

But his biggest mistake.

The first month...Nobody volunteered.

The room was uncomfortable.

Finally...Kumar stood up.

"I'll begin."

He projected one of his own decisions.

A distributor appointment that had failed.

A promotional campaign that hadn't worked.

A forecasting mistake.

The room watched in surprise.

One manager whispered,

"Sir..."

"You're showing your own mistakes?"

Kumar smiled.

"If leaders hide mistakes..."

"Teams hide them too."

"If teams hide mistakes..."

"Companies repeat them."

That day...

Nobody laughed.

Instead...

Everyone began sharing honestly. The meetings slowly changed.

People no longer feared failure. They feared repeating it.

One evening...

While reviewing regional reports...

Kumar noticed a young Area Sales Manager from Kerala.

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His numbers were poor.

Repeatedly.

Instead of issuing a warning...

Kumar travelled to meet him.

They spent two days together.

Travelling.

Meeting doctors.

Talking to distributors.

The young manager worked sincerely.

But he struggled with planning.

Before leaving...

Kumar drew four simple boxes on a sheet of paper.

Doctors.

Medical Stores.

Distributors.

Follow-up.

"Every evening..."

"Spend ten minutes filling these four boxes."

"Nothing more."

Six months later... That same Area Sales Manager became one of the company's best performers.

During the annual conference... He smiled and said,

"Sir..."

"You didn't teach me sales."

"You taught me how to organize my day."

Kumar smiled. Sometimes...

Great improvements began with small habits. His reputation slowly spread beyond the company.

Distributors spoke highly of him. Doctors appreciated his ethics.

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Employees requested transfers into his zone.

One Regional Head jokingly complained to the Managing Director,

"Sir..."

"Everyone wants to work under Kumar."

The Managing Director laughed.

"That isn't because Kumar gives easier targets."

He smiled knowingly. "It's because people grow around him."

Months later... A prestigious pharmaceutical conference was organized in Hyderabad.

Senior industry leaders from across India attended.

Kumar was invited to speak. It was his first appearance before such a large audience.

As he stood behind the podium... Bright lights filled the hall.

Hundreds of delegates waited. He looked at the audience.

Then... For a brief second...His mind travelled back.

To a little stationery shop. A ₹5 business magazine.

An old library.

His sister quietly placing coins into his hand. Prasad Anna smiling across the counter.

His father cycling to work. His mother silently adjusting household expenses.

He smiled. Then began his speech.

"My topic today is sales leadership."

He paused.

"But..."

"I'd like to begin with gratitude."

The audience looked surprised. He continued.

"The best business education I received..."

"...did not come from an MBA classroom."

"It came from ordinary people..."

"...who believed in an ordinary boy."

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The hall became completely silent. He spent the next thirty minutes speaking not only about marketing...

But about trust.

Character. Listening. Learning. Relationships.

When the session ended... The applause continued longer than he expected.

An elderly industry veteran walked up to him.

"Kumar..."

"You spoke less about medicines..."

"...and more about people."

Kumar smiled.

"Because medicines reach people..."

"...through people."

The elderly gentleman extended his hand.

"Never change."

That night... Back in his hotel room...

Kumar stood near the window overlooking the city lights.

Success had brought him here. But gratitude kept taking him back.

He opened the Tomorrow Notebook. Its pages had become thick with years of thoughts.

He slowly wrote... **"The higher our position..."**

He paused. Then completed it.

"...the lower our ego must become."

He smiled. Then added another sentence.

"Titles may open office doors."

"Humility opens human hearts."

He closed the notebook.

Outside... The city glittered with ambition.

Inside... The little boy who once counted five-rupee coins...

Still counted blessings.

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Chapter 30 – The Crisis That Built a Leader

"Success introduces a leader. Crisis reveals one."

The first six months as Zonal Sales Manager were demanding.

Kumar now supervised five states.

Every morning began with conference calls.

Every week ended with travel.

Every month brought new targets.

The company was growing rapidly.

So were its expectations.

There were days when Kumar would leave his hotel before sunrise...

...and return long after midnight.

Yet...

He never complained.

He often reminded himself,

"When I wished for bigger responsibilities... I also wished for bigger challenges."

One Monday morning...

His phone rang while he was boarding a flight to Chennai.

It was Ravi, the Regional Manager from Karnataka.

His voice carried unusual urgency.

"Sir..."

"We have a serious problem."

"What happened?"

"One of our largest distributors has stopped placing orders."

Kumar frowned.

"Why?"

"He says our competitors are offering higher margins."

"He's also asking all the retailers to shift to another company's products."

Kumar remained silent.

That distributor alone handled nearly twenty percent of the company's business in Karnataka.

Losing him would affect the entire South Zone.

The Head Office immediately called for an emergency meeting.

Different opinions filled the room.

"Increase discounts."

"Give him exclusive rights."

"Offer foreign tours."

"Reduce product prices."

Every suggestion focused on one thing.

Money.

Kumar listened patiently.

Then he quietly asked,

"Has anyone gone and spoken to him personally?"

The room became silent.

No one had.

The next morning...

Instead of sending emails...

Instead of making phone calls...

Kumar drove six hours to meet the distributor himself.

Mr. Shankar was known throughout the state.

An experienced businessman.

Respected.

Practical.

And extremely straightforward.

As Kumar entered the office...

Shankar smiled politely.

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"I knew you'd come."

Kumar smiled back.

"I felt I should."

They spoke for nearly an hour.

Not once did Kumar mention discounts.

Not once did he discuss margins.

Instead he asked,

"Sir..."

"After working together for eight years..."

"What has changed?"

Shankar remained quiet.

Finally he sighed.

"Kumar..."

"You know the real problem?"

"Our company has grown."

"But somewhere..."

"We have stopped listening."

He continued,

"Earlier your representatives visited to understand our business."

"Now they visit only to collect orders."

"The relationship has become a transaction."

Those words struck Kumar deeply.

For the next two hours...

He simply listened. He wrote down every concern.

Delayed deliveries. Communication gaps.

Slow complaint resolution. Lack of training for retailers.

None of the issues were impossible. They had simply remained unheard.

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Before leaving...Kumar stood up.

"Sir..."

"I can't promise miracles."

"But I promise..."

"...you have been heard."

Back at Head Office...

Many expected Kumar to announce a financial package.

Instead...

He proposed something completely different.

A **Distributor Partnership Program.**

Quarterly meetings.

Training sessions. Dedicated support teams. Faster complaint resolution. Monthly feedback calls.

The Finance Director looked puzzled.

"This won't cost much."

Kumar smiled.

"Exactly."

"It costs attention."

The Managing Director approved the proposal.

Within three months...The atmosphere changed completely.

Distributors no longer felt like customers. They felt like partners.

Suggestions began flowing from every state.

Several of them resulted in improvements to logistics and customer service.

Sales increased naturally. Without offering extraordinary discounts.

Six months later... The same distributor, Mr. Shankar, attended the annual conference.

During his speech... He looked towards Kumar.

"When we almost walked away..."

"We weren't asking for more money."

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He smiled.

"We were asking someone to listen."

The entire hall applauded. After the conference...

The Managing Director invited Kumar for coffee.

No files. No presentations.Just two cups of coffee.

"Kumar..."

"I've noticed something."

"What, Sir?"

"You solve business problems..."

"...without beginning with business."

Kumar smiled.

The Managing Director continued, "You begin with people."

He paused. "And somehow..."

"...business follows."

That evening... Kumar travelled alone.

Instead of taking the company car... He chose the train. He always enjoyed train journeys.

Perhaps because they reminded him of simpler days. He sat beside the window.

Watching villages disappear behind him. Children playing cricket. Farmers returning home.

Small railway stations. Life seemed beautifully ordinary.

Across from him sat an elderly gentleman reading a newspaper.

After some time... He folded it neatly.

"You work in pharmaceuticals?"

Kumar smiled.

"Yes."

"I guessed from your bag."

The old man smiled and said, "My son also works in sales."

"He says targets are everything."

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Kumar looked outside for a moment. Then replied quietly,

"Targets are important."

"But..."

"They are never the purpose."

The old man nodded thoughtfully.

"You must be managing many people."

"A few."

He smiled. The old man looked at him carefully.

"Then remember something."

"When people work **for** you..."

"...they give their time."

"When people work **with** you..."

"...they give their heart."

The train continued moving. But Kumar felt as though time had paused.

He had never seen the gentleman before. Perhaps he never would again.

Yet...Some strangers leave behind permanent lessons.

Late that night... Back in his hotel room...He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

He slowly wrote... **"Business grows through products."**

He paused. Then smiled.

"Great businesses grow through relationships."

After another moment... He added one more line.

"When people feel heard..."

"...they begin to believe."

He closed the notebook.

Outside... The city lights continued shining.

Inside... Another page had quietly become part of the philosophy that would one day build Kumar's own company.

Chapter 31 – The Offer

"Loyalty is tested not when opportunities are absent... but when they arrive in abundance."

By now...

Kumar's name had quietly begun travelling across the pharmaceutical industry.

It wasn't because he appeared in advertisements.

It wasn't because he attended glamorous business events.

It was because of something much simpler.

People spoke about him.

Distributors mentioned him during meetings.

Doctors appreciated his ethical approach.

Managers from other companies noticed how rapidly his zone had grown.

The industry had started asking a simple question.

"Who is Kumar?"

One Friday afternoon...

His mobile phone rang.

The number was unfamiliar.

"Hello..."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Kumar."

"This is Rajiv from Medisphere Pharmaceuticals."

"I hope I'm not disturbing you."

"No..."

"Please tell me."

"We've been observing your work."

"We would like to meet you."

Kumar smiled politely.

"What is it regarding?"

"A senior leadership position."

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A week later...

He met them at a hotel. The HR Director was waiting.

After a brief introduction...They placed a proposal before him.

A salary nearly double his current package, A luxury company car, House rent allowance,

Performance bonus, Stock options.

The HR Director smiled.

"We believe leaders like you are rare."

Kumar listened quietly.

Without excitement.

Without pride.

That evening... He reached home.

He placed the offer letter on the table.

Then... He simply stared at it.

For several minutes. Not because he was tempted.

Because he respected what it represented.

Years ago... No company had wanted him.

Today... Companies were searching for him. Life had come full circle.

The following week...Another offer arrived.

Then another.

One company even offered him the role of National Sales Head.

His friends were astonished.

"Kumar!"

"What are you waiting for?"

"People spend their whole careers hoping for offers like these."

Another friend laughed.

"You'll become rich much faster."

Kumar smiled.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Perhaps.

But something inside him remained unusually calm.

That Sunday...He travelled to his hometown.

As always...His feet carried him to Prasad Anna's stationery shop.

Prasad was arranging magazines on the rack. He looked up and smiled.

"My businessman has come."

Kumar laughed and said, "I've brought something."

He handed over one of the offer letters.

Prasad slowly adjusted his glasses and read it carefully. His eyes widened.

"This is excellent!"

"So..."

"When are you joining?"

Kumar remained silent.

Prasad looked at him curiously.

"You haven't decided?"

Kumar shook his head.

"No."

Prasad folded the letter neatly.

Then asked quietly,

"Why?"

Kumar looked at the old wooden shelves.

The newspapers. The magazines. The familiar counter.

Then spoke softly.

"Anna..."

"When nobody believed I could become something..."

"This company gave me a chance."

"They trusted me."

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e-magazine

"They trained me."

"They stood beside me when I was learning."

He smiled faintly.

"Now that others see some value in me..."

"How can I leave immediately?"

Prasad remained silent.

Kumar continued. "I don't want my career..."

"...to remember me as someone who left for the highest salary."

"I want it to remember me..."

"...as someone who completed his responsibility."

Prasad's eyes reflected quiet admiration.

He slowly nodded. "Money measures success."

He paused.

"Loyalty measures the person."

That sentence remained with Kumar.

A few days later... The Managing Director called him into his office.

"Kumar..."

"I've heard something."

Kumar smiled.

"So have I, Sir."

Both laughed. The Managing Director leaned back in his chair.

"You've received several offers."

"Yes, Sir."

"And?"

"I declined them."

The Managing Director looked at him for a long moment.

Finally he asked,

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"May I know why?"

Kumar answered without hesitation.

"Sir..."

"You gave me responsibility..."

"...before the industry gave me recognition."

"I don't want to forget that."

The Managing Director slowly removed his spectacles.

For a few seconds...He simply looked at Kumar. Then he stood up. Walked around the table. And shook his hand.

Not as Managing Director but as one human being thanking another.

"Kumar..."

"In business..."

"I've signed thousands of appointment letters."

He smiled and said, "But today..."

"I feel proud that one of them belonged to you."

Before Kumar left... The Managing Director called him back and said, "One more thing."

"Yes, Sir?"

"I won't stop you..."

"...the day you decide to leave."

Kumar looked surprised. The Managing Director smiled.

"Because..."

"I know you'll leave only when your dream becomes bigger than your designation."

Those words quietly settled inside Kumar's heart.

He never forgot them. Months passed.

The offers gradually stopped. The industry understood. Kumar was not available.

Not because he lacked ambition. Because he valued commitment.

Ironically...That made people respect him even more.

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One evening...During a leadership conference...

An executive from another company met Kumar over dinner.

He smiled.

"We tried to recruit you."

Kumar laughed and said, "I know."

The executive shook his head.

"You know what impressed us the most?"

"What?"

"You refused us."

Kumar looked surprised. The executive continued.

"A person who can remain loyal..."

"...is the person every company wants."

Late that night...Back in his room...

Kumar opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

He thought about every stage of his journey.

The ₹5 magazine.

The library. His parents. His sister. Prasad Anna.

His first job. Every failure. Every promotion.

Every person who had trusted him

Then he slowly wrote... **"Opportunities will always knock."**

He paused for some time then completed the sentence.

"Character decides which door we open."

After a moment...He added another thought.

"Never leave a place..."

"...that believed in you before the world did."

He underlined the sentence twice. Years later...When he finally resigned... That page would remind him...

That he had stayed..Not because he feared change. But because gratitude had asked him to stay a little longer.

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Chapter 32 – The Multiplier

"The greatest leaders are not remembered for what they achieved... but for what others achieved because of them."

Three years had passed since Kumar became the Zonal Sales Manager.

The South Zone had become the company's strongest region.

Sales were growing consistently.

Distributor satisfaction was the highest in the country.

Employee resignations had fallen sharply.

Most importantly...Young managers wanted to work under Kumar.

Whenever vacancies arose...

Applications carried one common request.

"Preferred Zone: South."

The Human Resources department found it unusual.

Very few employees asked for a location. Most asked for promotions.

These young managers...Wanted Kumar.

One afternoon...

The HR Director smiled while handing Kumar a file.

"You've created a new problem."

Kumar looked puzzled.

"What happened, Sir?"

"Every ambitious manager wants to work under you."

Kumar laughed.

"That's not a problem."

The HR Director smiled.

"It becomes one..."

"...when every other zone starts complaining."

Both laughed.

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A month later... The Managing Director called Kumar.

"Kumar..."

"We're conducting our Annual Leadership Development Program."

"Yes, Sir."

"I want you to design it."

Kumar was surprised.

"Me?"

"Yes."

"Don't teach sales."

He paused.

"Teach leadership."

For nearly two weeks... Kumar prepared every session himself.

He didn't copy management books. He didn't download presentations.

Instead... He opened his old Tomorrow Notebook.

Every page carried a lesson. Every lesson carried a person.

Prasad Anna.

His father.

His mother.

His sister.

Professor Raghavan.

Dr. Vishwanath Rao.

Srinivas.

The tea stall owner.

The distributor.

Every individual had quietly become one chapter of his education.

He smiled.

Perhaps...

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Leadership wasn't learned in classrooms. It was collected from people.

The conference hall was filled with nearly eighty young managers from across India.

Many expected PowerPoint presentations. Complicated management theories.

Sales formulas. Instead...

Kumar walked onto the stage carrying three things.

An old ₹5 business magazine. A worn notebook.

And a faded cloth bag. The audience looked confused.

He placed the magazine on the table.

Then smiled.

"This..."

"...was my first business school."

The room became silent. He told them about a little boy...

Who waited outside a stationery shop every Sunday.

Who couldn't afford a ₹10 magazine. Who happily bought a ₹5 magazine instead.

Who read every page fifty times. Nobody moved.

For thirty minutes...There wasn't a single slide on the screen.

Only one story.

His story.

When he finished...The hall remained completely silent.

Some lessons...

Didn't require applause. They required reflection.

After a few moments...A young manager stood up.

"Sir..."

"May I ask something?"

"Of course."

"Were you never ashamed..."

"...that you couldn't afford the ₹10 magazine?"

Bookwave e-magazine

Kumar smiled gently.

"No."

"I was only grateful..."

"...that life allowed me to afford the ₹5 one."

He paused.

"Never measure your beginning..."

"...against someone else's middle."

The audience immediately began writing the sentence in their notebooks.

The next session was different.

Kumar drew a simple triangle on the whiteboard.

At the bottom he wrote...

Knowledge

In the middle...

Skill

At the top...

Character

He looked at everyone.

"Most companies train knowledge."

He pointed to the second level.

"Experience improves skill."

Then he pointed to the top.

"But..."

"Character..."

"...is a decision."

The hall became completely quiet.

During lunch...

A young woman named Asha approached him.

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e-magazine

"Sir..."

"I've been thinking of resigning."

Kumar smiled.

"Why?"

"I don't think I'm good enough."

Kumar looked at her carefully.

Then asked,

"How long have you been working?"

"Eleven months."

He smiled.

"When I had eleven months of experience..."

"I had already changed three jobs."

She looked surprised.

"Really?"

He nodded.

"I wasn't failing because I lacked ability."

"I was failing because I hadn't found where my abilities belonged."

He paused.

"Don't decide your future..."

"...during your temporary confusion."

Asha quietly wiped her eyes.

Years later...

She would remember that conversation more than any training session.

The Leadership Program ended after three days.

As participants prepared to leave...

Each received a small gift from Kumar.

Not a trophy. Not an expensive pen.

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A simple notebook.

Inside the first page...

He had personally written the same sentence in every notebook.

"Write one lesson every day. One day those lessons will become your greatest teacher."

Many managers smiled politely.

Few realized... They were holding the habit that had quietly shaped Kumar's entire life.

Six months later...Letters started reaching Head Office. Not official reports. Personal letters.

One manager wrote... *"Sir, I no longer fear making mistakes."*

Another wrote... *"I started maintaining a daily notebook."*

One letter simply said...

"Thank you for making me believe that I belong in this profession."

The HR Director placed all the letters before the Managing Director.

He smiled while reading them. Then quietly remarked,

"Kumar isn't developing managers."

"He's multiplying leaders."

That phrase spread throughout the company.

Whenever someone trained an employee well...

People jokingly said,

"Looks like Kumar's influence."

Kumar himself never heard most of those conversations.

Leadership often grows quietly. Without announcements.

Without headlines.

One evening...While reviewing reports...The Managing Director looked toward the HR Director.

"How many leadership programs have we conducted?"

"Twelve, Sir."

"Which one produced the best long-term results?"

The HR Director smiled immediately.

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"Kumar's."

"Any idea why?"

The HR Director looked thoughtful.

"Because..."

"He never taught management."

"He taught meaning."

The Managing Director slowly nodded.

"Exactly."

That night...

Back in his room...Kumar opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

Its pages had almost doubled in thickness.

He looked at the first page he had written years ago.

"Every profession begins with a purpose."

He smiled. The boy who wrote that sentence...

Had become a man helping others discover theirs. He slowly turned to a blank page.

Then wrote... **"Knowledge increases when we learn."**

He paused. Then completed the thought.

"Wisdom increases when we share."

After another moment...He added one final line.

"The best investment..."

"...is the confidence we place in another human being."

He closed the notebook.

Outside...Rain had begun falling softly.

The sound reminded him of childhood Sundays.

Of newspapers. Of magazines. Of dreams.

He smiled.

Some dreams...Didn't end when they came true. They simply became someone else's beginning.....

Chapter 33 – The Dream Beyond the Designation

"There comes a day when success asks a different question—not 'What have you achieved?' but 'What will you create?'"

Another two years passed.

Kumar had now completed more than a decade with the company.

His responsibilities had grown steadily.

His ideas were being implemented nationwide.

Young managers looked up to him.

Doctors respected him.

Distributors trusted him.

The Managing Director depended on him for every major strategic discussion.

There was hardly a meeting where Kumar's opinion wasn't sought.

One Monday morning...

The Board of Directors assembled at the Head Office.

Senior executives from across India were present.

Sales.

Finance.

Production.

Exports.

Marketing.

Human Resources.

The Managing Director stood before the screen.

He smiled.

"Ladies and Gentlemen..."

"I have an announcement."

The room became quiet.

He looked toward Kumar.

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"Effective from next month..."

"Mr. Kumar will take over as our **National Sales Manager**."

The hall erupted into applause.

For several moments...

Kumar simply sat there.

He wasn't thinking about the promotion.

He was remembering...

The little boy who once counted five-rupee coins.

After the meeting...

Many executives congratulated him.

Some hugged him.

Others joked,

"Don't forget us after becoming National Sales Manager."

Kumar laughed.

"I'll first try not to forget my own schedule."

Everyone laughed.

Yet...

Inside him...

There was an unusual silence.

That evening...

He travelled alone.

No meetings.

No phone calls.

Just a quiet drive.

As the highway stretched ahead...

His thoughts wandered backward.

The library.

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Prasad Anna.

His sister secretly placing coins into his hand.

His father riding his bicycle to the office.

His mother calculating household expenses late into the night.

Professor Raghavan.

Dr. Vishwanath Rao.

Srinivas.

Every milestone.

Every struggle.

Every person.

He suddenly realized something.

His entire life...

Had been built by many invisible hands.

A week later...

The company organized a grand function to celebrate his promotion.

Employees from all over India attended.

The Managing Director invited Kumar to speak.

He walked slowly to the podium.

Looked around the packed auditorium.

Then smiled.

"I've been asked to speak about success."

He paused.

"But..."

"I'd rather speak about gratitude."

The audience became silent.

"When I joined this company..."

"I thought success meant promotions."

"Then I thought it meant responsibility."

"Later..."

"I believed it meant trust."

He smiled.

"Today..."

"I think success means something else."

He looked toward the employees.

"It means becoming the kind of person..."

"...whose success makes other people smile."

The applause was gentle.

Not loud.

Because everyone was thinking.

After the function...

The Managing Director invited Kumar for dinner.

It wasn't an official dinner.

Just the two of them.

Over simple food...

They spoke about business. The future. The industry.

After a long silence...The Managing Director asked quietly,

"Kumar..."

"May I ask you something personal?"

"Certainly, Sir."

"Do you still read business magazines?"

Kumar smiled.

"Every month."

The Managing Director laughed.

"I thought so."

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e-magazine

Then he became serious.

"I've watched you for many years."

"You've built leaders."

"You've built systems."

"You've built trust."

He paused.

"Tell me honestly..."

"What is your next dream?"

The question lingered in the air.

For the first time...

Kumar did not answer immediately.

He looked out through the restaurant window. People walked past.

Some hurried. Some smiled. Life moved quietly.

Finally...He spoke.

"Sir..."

"I have a dream."

The Managing Director waited patiently.

"I want to build a company..."

"...where young employees are treated with respect from their very first day."

He continued.

"A company where distributors feel like partners."

"Where doctors trust our intentions."

"Where patients always come before profits."

"A company..."

"...that people remember for its values as much as its medicines."

The Managing Director smiled.

Not with surprise.

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e-magazine

With recognition.

"As I expected."

Kumar looked puzzled.

"What do you mean, Sir?"

The Managing Director leaned back.

"I've been waiting for you to say those words."

Kumar stared at him.

The Managing Director continued.

"I knew this day would come."

"Because..."

"People who think the way you do..."

"...are eventually meant to build something of their own."

The words settled quietly.

Not as encouragement. Almost as permission.

"But listen carefully."

The Managing Director's voice became softer.

"Don't leave because you've become successful."

He paused."Leave only..."

"...when you believe your dream can serve more people than your designation."

Kumar lowered his eyes. That sentence entered his heart immediately.

On his way home... He did something unusual.

Instead of going directly to his apartment...

He drove to the old public library. It had almost closed for the day.

The elderly librarian still recognized him and asked "You still come here."

Kumar smiled.

"I think..."

"I always will."

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He walked toward the same wooden chair where he had once read children's storybooks.

He sat quietly. No book in his hands.

Just memories. A little boy had once dreamed of reading business magazines.

Today...

A National Sales Manager was dreaming of building a business that might one day inspire another little boy.

The circle felt beautiful.

Before leaving... He looked at the shelves. Thousands of books.

Thousands of ideas. Then he whispered to himself...

"Dreams are borrowed from books..."

"...but fulfilled through courage."

That night... He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

The pages were almost full. He smiled.

For years... This notebook had collected dreams.

Now... It would begin collecting plans.

He slowly wrote... **"Every designation has a ceiling."**

He paused. Then completed the sentence.

"A dream does not."

He continued... **"One day..."**

"...I will not build the biggest company."

Another pause.

"I will build the company..."

"...that my younger self would have been proud to work for."

He looked at those words for a long time.

Then gently closed the notebook.

Outside... The city lights sparkled.

Inside... A new chapter of life had quietly begun.

Not the chapter of promotions. The chapter of purpose.

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Chapter 34 – The Hardest Letter

"Some goodbyes are not born from unhappiness. They are born from fulfilled gratitude."

Nearly eighteen months had passed since Kumar became the National Sales Manager.

The company had crossed several milestones.

Its presence had expanded across India.

Exports had begun growing steadily.

Young managers were performing confidently.

Many of the systems Kumar had designed had become standard practices.

Life looked successful from every direction.

Yet...

Inside Kumar...

A quiet question had begun visiting him every night.

"If not now... then when?"

It wasn't a restless question. It wasn't born out of dissatisfaction.

It was born from purpose.

For years...

He had carried someone else's dream with complete sincerity.

Now...

Life was gently asking him to carry his own.

One Sunday morning...He travelled alone.

No destination.

Just driving.

The highway slowly disappeared behind him.

Almost without realizing it...

His car stopped near the old stationery shop.

Prasad Anna was arranging newspapers exactly as he had done for decades.

Some habits... Never changed.

Bookwave e-magazine

"Anna!"

Prasad looked up.

His face immediately brightened.

"My businessman!"

"You've become difficult to catch these days."

Both laughed.

They walked to the nearby tea stall.

The same wooden bench.

The same steel glasses.

Even the tea seller recognized Kumar.

"Extra ginger?"

Kumar smiled.

"You still remember."

The old man laughed.

"Some customers become memories."

For several minutes...

Nobody spoke.

Finally...

Kumar looked toward Prasad.

"Anna..."

"I've been thinking."

Prasad quietly waited.

"I want to start my own company."

The words hung gently in the air.

Prasad did not react immediately.

He simply stirred his tea slowly.

Then looked at Kumar.

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"I was wondering..."

"...when you would finally say those words."

Kumar smiled in surprise.

"You knew?"

Prasad laughed softly.

"The boy who kept reading business magazines..."

"...was never born to remain an employee forever."

"But I'm afraid."

The confession came unexpectedly.

Prasad looked at him carefully.

"Afraid of what?"

"I've never built a company."

"I've only worked in one."

"What if I fail?"

Prasad smiled.

Then pointed toward the road.

"Do you remember..."

"...how you stood outside my shop every Sunday?"

Kumar nodded.

"You couldn't buy a ₹10 magazine."

"No."

"But you still came every week."

"Yes."

Prasad smiled warmly.

"You weren't afraid of being poor."

"You were only afraid of stopping your dream."

The words quietly entered Kumar's heart.

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Before leaving...

Prasad placed his hand on Kumar's shoulder.

"Whether your company becomes ten crores..."

"...or one hundred crores..."

"Never lose the boy who waited outside this shop."

Kumar nodded silently.

That blessing felt more valuable than any investment.

The following week...

Kumar requested a personal meeting with the Managing Director.

The secretary smiled.

"Sir is expecting you."

Kumar was surprised.

"He knows?"

She smiled knowingly.

"I think he always knows."

The Managing Director welcomed him as always.

No files.

No formalities.

Just two cups of coffee.

For a few moments...

Neither spoke.

Finally...

Kumar placed an envelope on the table.

The Managing Director looked at it.

He didn't open it.

Instead...

He smiled gently.

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"So..."

"The day has finally arrived."

Kumar lowered his eyes.

"Yes, Sir."

The Managing Director slowly opened the envelope.

Inside...

A simple resignation letter. No lengthy explanations. Only one sentence stood out.

"I leave with gratitude greater than my ambition."

The Managing Director read it twice.

Then folded it carefully. He looked toward Kumar.

"I've received hundreds of resignation letters."

He smiled faintly.

"Most speak about salaries."

"Some speak about opportunities."

He gently tapped the paper.

"Yours speaks about gratitude."

For a long moment...

Neither of them spoke.

The silence wasn't uncomfortable.

It was respectful.

Finally...

The Managing Director stood up.

Walked toward the large window.

"You know..."

"When you first joined us..."

"I thought we'd hired a good employee."

He smiled.

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"I never imagined..."

"...we were helping create a future entrepreneur."

Kumar's eyes became moist.

"Sir..."

"Everything I know..."

"I learned here."

The Managing Director immediately shook his head.

"No."

"You learned because..."

"...you were willing to learn."

He paused and said, "We merely gave you a classroom."

He turned around. His voice became softer.

"Kumar..."

"Promise me one thing."

"Anything, Sir."

"When your company becomes successful..."

"...don't compete with us by lowering your values."

"Compete by raising the standard."

Kumar immediately stood up. "I promise."

The Managing Director extended his hand.

Kumar took it. Neither of them realized...

That they continued holding the handshake for several seconds.

Sometimes... Respect speaks longer than words.

News of Kumar's resignation spread quickly through the company.

Employees couldn't believe it. Managers called him continuously.

"Sir..."

"Is it true?"

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"Yes."

"Where are you joining?"

Kumar smiled.

"I'm not joining."

"I'm beginning."

The farewell function was held two weeks later. Employees from across the country attended.

Many had travelled overnight. The auditorium was filled beyond capacity.

The HR Director walked onto the stage.

"For fifteen years..."

"Kumar built numbers."

He smiled.

"But more importantly..."

"...he built people."

The applause lasted several minutes. One after another... Employees shared memories.

A young representative said, "Sir never asked me why I failed."

"He first asked whether I had eaten."

The audience laughed gently.

Another manager smiled.

"When my daughter was born..."

"Sir called before my relatives."

Everyone smiled.

The Finance Head remarked, "He was the only National Sales Manager..."

"...who remembered the names of our warehouse staff."

Each memory was small. Together... They revealed the man Kumar had become.

Finally... The Managing Director came to the podium.

He looked around the hall. Then quietly said,

"Companies celebrate appointments."

"Today..."

"We celebrate values."

The hall became completely silent.

He turned toward Kumar.

"There are employees who improve profits."

"There are employees who improve systems."

He paused.

"And then..."

"There are a few..."

"...who improve the culture."

He smiled proudly.

"Kumar belonged to the third category."

For several seconds... Nobody applauded.

Because many were wiping their eyes. When it was Kumar's turn to speak...

He walked slowly to the podium. He looked at every familiar face.

Then began.

"I joined this company carrying one bag."

He smiled.

"Today..."

"I'm leaving carrying thousands of memories."

Gentle laughter filled the hall. He continued.

"If I have one request..."

"...it is this."

He paused.

"Never forget..."

"...every sales report represents a family."

"Every distributor represents trust."

"Every doctor represents hope."

"And every patient..."

He stopped for a moment.

"...represents someone's world."

The auditorium stood in complete silence. He folded his hands. Then ended with the words...

"Thank you for believing in me before I fully believed in myself."

The entire hall rose to its feet.

Not because protocol demanded it. Because their hearts did.

The standing ovation continued for nearly five minutes.

Kumar quietly bowed. Not to the applause. But to the journey.

That night... After everyone had left...

He returned alone to his office. The room was almost empty.

Only a few books remained. The old Tomorrow Notebook lay on the table.

He picked it up. Looked around one final time.

This room had witnessed hundreds of meetings.

Thousands of decisions. Countless dreams.

He slowly opened the notebook.

On the last page... He wrote...

"There comes a day..."

He paused.

"...when gratitude and courage walk together."

Another pause. Then... **"Today..."**

"...gratitude looked back."

"...and courage walked forward."

He gently closed the notebook.

Turned off the cabin lights. Closed the door. Not with sadness. With peace.

Because some chapters end... Only to make room for the greatest chapter of all.....

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Chapter 35 – The First Step

"Every great company begins long before its first office. It begins inside someone's character."

The morning after his farewell…

Kumar woke up without an office to go to.

For the first time in fifteen years…

No phone calls awaited him.

No meetings. No sales reviews. No flight bookings.

The silence felt unfamiliar.

Yet… It also felt peaceful.

He stood near the window with a cup of tea.

For years… His calendar had belonged to a company.

Today… His time belonged to a dream.

A week later.. He rented a small office on the second floor of an old commercial building.

And **Suketh Pharma** Started from that small office.

It had one room.

Two windows.

A small reception area.

An aging ceiling fan that made more noise than wind.

The walls were plain.

The furniture was simple.

One wooden table.

Four plastic chairs.

A steel cupboard.

Nothing about the office suggested that it would one day become a ₹60-crore company.

Except… The man sitting inside.

The landlord handed him the keys.

"Congratulations."

"Thank you."

"What business?"

"Pharmaceutical marketing."

The landlord smiled.

"I wish you success."

Kumar smiled politely and said, "I hope I earn it."

The next morning...He entered the office carrying only three things.

His laptop.

The Tomorrow Notebook.

And...The old ₹5 business magazine.

He placed the magazine carefully inside the cupboard.

Not as decoration.

As remembrance.

Whenever success entered that office...Humility would already be waiting.

A carpenter arrived to install the company name board.

He asked,

"Sir...

What should I write?"

Kumar slowly pronounced the name. The carpenter wrote each letter carefully.

When the board was finally fixed...

Kumar stood outside the office for several minutes.

Reading it silently.

Years ago... He had admired company names printed inside business magazines.

Today...

One of those names belonged to him. He quietly folded his hands.

Not before the board. Before the journey.

The first employee joined two days later.

His name was Arun.

A young sales executive.

Fresh. Energetic. Slightly nervous.

He entered the office carrying a file.

"Good morning, Sir."

Kumar stood up immediately and walked towards him.

And shook his hand.

"Welcome."

Arun smiled with relief. He had expected a formal interview.

Instead...He felt welcomed.

After some discussion...Arun asked hesitantly,

"Sir...

What are my sales targets?"

Kumar smiled.

"You'll receive them."

"But first..."

He handed Arun a notebook.

The first page already contained a handwritten sentence.

"People may forget the medicine you sold...

...but they will never forget how you treated them."

Arun read it twice.

Then looked at Kumar.

"Sir...

Is this from a management book?"

Kumar smiled.

"No."

"It's from life."

Bookwave
e-magazine

Within a month...

Four more employees joined.

A small accountant. Two sales representatives.

One office assistant. The office had become lively.

Laughter filled the small room. Tea cups accumulated on the table.

Ideas filled the whiteboard.

Nobody noticed the cracked paint on the walls anymore.

Dreams have a beautiful habit. They make small places feel large.

Kumar gathered everyone for the company's first official meeting.

No projector.

No microphones.

Just five people sitting around one table.

He stood before them. Holding the Tomorrow Notebook.

"I want to tell you something."

Everyone listened carefully.

"We are not the biggest company."

"No."

"We don't have the biggest office."

"No."

"We don't have the biggest products."

Again...

No.

He smiled.

"But..."

"We can become the company people trust the most."

The room became silent.

He continued.

Bookwave
e-magazine

"I have only four rules."

He slowly wrote them on the whiteboard.

Patients before Profit.

Relationships before Transactions.

Promises before Targets.

Character before Career.

Nobody spoke.

The four sentences quietly became the foundation of the company.

Years later...

Every office branch would display those same four lines.

The first few months were far from easy.

Several doctors politely refused appointments.

Some distributors preferred established companies.

Banks hesitated to extend working capital.

Orders came slowly.

Payments came even slower.

There were evenings when Kumar calculated every expense twice.

Electricity.

Rent.

Salaries.

Travel.

Printing.

There were days when he wondered...

"Was leaving my secure job the right decision?"

One Friday...

The accountant entered quietly.

"Sir..."

Bookwave e-magazine

"This month's collections are delayed."

"I know."

"We have enough money to pay salaries..."

He hesitated.

"...or postpone them."

Kumar looked at him.

"Whose salaries?"

"The staff."

Kumar immediately replied.

"Pay everyone."

"What about you, Sir?"

Kumar smiled.

"I've managed with less before."

The accountant looked surprised.

"But..."

"Your own salary?"

Kumar gently laughed.

"The owner eats after the family."

Arun happened to overhear those words.

He never forgot them.

That evening...

Kumar reached home carrying only a small bag.

His wife noticed he was unusually quiet.

"Everything alright?"

He smiled.

"Yes."

She looked at him carefully.

Bookwave
e-magazine

"You didn't tell me the whole truth."

He sat beside her.

"The business is taking time."

She listened patiently.

"I paid everyone's salary today."

"But I skipped mine."

There was complete silence.

Then...

She smiled.

"Good."

Kumar looked surprised. She continued.

"When you were an employee..."

"You protected your team's future."

"Now that you're an owner..."

"Why should that change?"

He looked at her with gratitude. Sometimes...

The strongest encouragement came in the simplest sentences.

She quietly placed another cup of tea before him.

"We've lived simply before."

"We can do it again."

"Don't build your dream by worrying every night."

"Build it by waking up every morning."

Those words gave him more strength than any bank loan.

Months passed. Slowly...

One distributor became three.

Three became ten. Doctors who had once refused appointments...

Now began recommending the company's products.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Not because of aggressive marketing.

Because they trusted the people representing them.

One evening...

Arun returned from a field visit with excitement.

"Sir!"

"What happened?"

"A doctor told me something."

"What?"

"He said..."

'If you work with Kumar...

...I don't need to question your integrity.'

Kumar lowered his eyes. That sentence meant more to him than a large purchase order.

Trust... Had started generating business.

Exactly as he had always believed.

Late that night... He remained alone in the office. Everyone else had left.

The old ceiling fan continued its familiar sound.

He opened the steel cupboard. Took out the ₹5 business magazine.

Its pages had become yellow with age. He gently turned the first page.

The smell of old paper filled the room. He smiled.

"So... We finally started."

He wasn't talking to the magazine. He was talking to the little boy inside himself.

He opened the Tomorrow Notebook. On a fresh page he wrote...

"The first office is never measured by its size."

He paused. Then continued.

"It is measured by the values that refuse to leave it."

After another moment...

He added one final thought.

"Profit built on trust may grow slowly..."

"...but it never fears tomorrow."

He closed the notebook. Switched off the office lights.

Locked the door. As he walked down the staircase... He looked back once.

The name board was still visible under the streetlight.

A small office. A small team.....

A very big dream. And somewhere... Beyond the darkness... A future was already walking toward him.

Chapter 36 – The Trust Dividend

"The fastest way to build a business is through money. The strongest way is through trust."

The first year of Kumar's marketing company ended quietly.

There were no grand celebrations.

No newspaper advertisements.

No lavish office parties.

The accountant simply walked into Kumar's cabin carrying the annual statement.

He smiled.

"Congratulations, Sir."

Kumar looked up.

"For what?"

"We survived."

Both laughed.

Sometimes...

For a young company...

Survival itself was the first victory.

The annual turnover had crossed **₹1 crore** in first year of formation.

It was the set target for first year and achieved.

That day Kumar gave all his staff a small party as he felt happy.

With not much field force and limited finances he could achieve the turnover.

His efforts really gave results.

He knew Turnover in crores always boost confidence.

Hence He kept his first year target 1 crore and he achieved it.

He decided on that day when the first mile stone is achieved, He need many more milestones to be achieved.

With multiplied confidence he and his small team worked with double efforts.

They were facing little competition too.

Yet they could penetrate more into market.

Met more doctors. Met more distributors. Gave confidence to distributors.

They increased orders. They increased stocks at stores.

They avoided supply chain gaps.

Kumar observed every now and then the Sales figures… Turnover increased every month.

Kumar conducted periodical meetings with sales staff.

He was also meeting the important doctors as part of field work.

He was meeting the distributors too.

All were very happy with Kumar's efforts.

His only aim was to increase the turnover.

His aim was to achieve turnover targets.

He knew if good targeted turnover is achieved, all relative figures will be definitely achieving.

One more year completed.

And….

The annual turnover had crossed **₹3 crores**.

The set turnover for second year also achieved.

To many companies…

It was an ordinary number.

To Kumar…

It represented something far greater.

Three meant hundreds of doctors had trusted a new company.

Hundreds of pharmacies had accepted a new brand.

Thousands of patients had consumed medicines carrying his company's name.

Numbers never impressed him.

Trust did.

One evening... Kumar visited his former Managing Director.

The two shared coffee, just as they had done for years.

The Managing Director smiled.

"I've been seeing your brands in the market."

Kumar smiled.

"And every strip still carries your company's manufacturing name."

The Managing Director laughed.

"So our factory is still working for you."

Kumar replied softly,

"No, Sir..."

"It is still walking with me."

The Managing Director looked at him with quiet pride.

He picked up one of Kumar's medicine strips from the table.

Turning it over in his hand, he said,

"Whenever I see this..."

"I don't feel another company has entered the market."

He smiled warmly.

"I feel one of my own people has grown."

Kumar remained silent.

Respect sometimes leaves no room for words.

As months passed... The partnership between the two companies became stronger.

Whenever Kumar developed a new product concept...

Bookwave
e-magazine

The manufacturing company ensured the highest quality.

Whenever the factory introduced improvements...

Kumar's marketing team took them to doctors with confidence.

It was not merely a business agreement.

It was a relationship built on years of mutual respect.

Many people in the industry found it unusual.

Two companies. Different names.

One spirit.

During an industry meeting... A businessman asked the former Managing Director,

"Sir...

Aren't you worried?

One day Kumar's company may become bigger than yours."

The Managing Director smiled calmly.

He didn't answer immediately. Instead...

He looked around the hall. Then said,

"If that day comes..."

"I will be one of the happiest people here."

The businessman looked surprised.

The Managing Director continued,

"A teacher never fears a successful student."

"A leader should never fear a successful colleague."

He paused.

Then added quietly,

"He never stopped being one of our own..."

"...he simply built another home for the same values."

The hall fell silent.

No one had expected such an answer.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Back at Kumar's office...

Growth was steady.

The company expanded into neighboring states.

New distributors joined.

Young medical representatives arrived with enthusiasm.

The office that once had one wooden table...

Now required another floor.

The old ceiling fan was replaced.

Computers multiplied.

Files occupied entire cupboards.

The walls carried photographs of annual meetings.

Yet...

One thing never changed.

The old ₹5 business magazine still rested inside Kumar's cupboard.

Every new cabin was larger than the previous one.

But the magazine always occupied the same place.

One afternoon... A newly recruited sales executive entered Kumar's cabin.

He noticed the faded magazine.

"Sir..."

"Why do you keep such an old magazine?"

Kumar smiled.

He handed it over carefully.

"This..."

"...is the most expensive thing in my office."

The young executive looked confused.

"It says ₹5."

Kumar laughed.

"It cost me much more than that."

He took the magazine back gently.

"It taught me to dream."

The young man never forgot that conversation.

Years later... Whenever he mentored his own team...

He would tell them about the old magazine in the Managing Director's cupboard.

Stories have a way of becoming culture. The third year ended.

The turnover increased to **₹5 crores.**

Yes. Suketh Pharma crossed crossed **₹5 crore**.

Kumar Punched the air.

It was also the set target and it has been achieved.

He again kept a meeting followed by small party in office and shared his experience.



5 crores target gave him more happiness.

As The digit 5 has a great significance in his life. He felt like one landmark achieved.

His young team were also very happy about the achievement.

His Area Sales Managers and Regional Managers also were happy.

They multiplied their efforts. They multiplied their field work.

They multiplied the dealer visits.

Their orders increased. Their trust in market increased.

Their stocks in shelves increased. The range of the medicines also increased.

Doctors felt happy with the quality of medicines. They prescribed more. They did not face any shortages of stocks.

They did not face any non availability of stocks.

Kumar ensured the proper supply chain activities to eradicate The supply chain activities gaps.

He knew small gap also enough for the competitors to enter, penetrate and spread.

He was very much focused on it that not to give any gap for competitors.

His planning to meet high demand in season time was exceptional.

He put all his experience into his work.

The distributors and young field medical representatives appreciated his efforts.

His work is a lesson to many. His planning and execution is driving force to his staff especially.

He faced so much failure in life and he is not ready to face any failure in life.

He used to tell this sentence quite often to his staff.

Every one felt him like a wounded tiger.

Another year crossed.

Turnover crossed **₹8 crore**.

The set mile stone is achieved again for the year.

Kumar and his team gathered in conference room.

He gave Small party again to his staff.

He motivated his Sales team again. He motivated his admin staff again



He motivated his Sales team again. He motivated his admin staff again.

He motivated every one of all departments.

They entered into fifth year.

The field force started working with new zeal, With new enthusiasm.

Kumar injected his nature of work into every one.

Everyone started working as if they are working for their own company.

Everyone owned the company. Everyone contributed to company.

Their market reach spread all over India

The distributors network established all over India.

The doctors all over India were reached.

His vision for fifth year that reaching all over India achieved.

His vision to reach beyond geographic boundaries in country achieved.

Performing well in all four zones was achieved.

The fifth year…

Came to an end.

The turnover reached …

₹18 crore.

The turnover target was put for

₹15 crore.

But they could get the turnover

₹18 crore.

Kumar was happy once again.



He conducted meeting in his own conference room.

He again gave good motivation speech to his team and staff.

The Sixth year… started.

Many changes came in favor of the company

Banks that had once hesitated... Now competed to offer business loans.

Distributors who had once asked for credit...Now offered advance payments.

Doctors who had once refused appointments...Invited Kumar's team into their clinics.

Success had finally begun knocking loudly.

Months passed.

Orders increased.

His efforts also increased.

He increased his meetings with distributors and doctors.

His Regional Managers performance increased.

His Area Sales Managers performance increased.

All states got good Sales.

Some seasonal effect also supported him.

Another year came to an end.

The turnover reached beyond the expectation.

He was a role model for the young executives.

He was like a guide and mentor for his Managers.

Every one appreciated Kumar.

One evening... The accountant entered with a broad smile.

"Sir..."

"We've crossed **forty crores."**

The office erupted into applause. Employees distributed sweets.

Photographs were taken.Someone suggested a grand celebration.

"We'll celebrate."

Everyone cheered. "But first..."

He looked toward the warehouse manager.

"Have all vendor payments been cleared?"

Bookwave
e-magazine

"Yes, Sir."

"Employee incentives?"

"Completed."

"Distributor claims?"

"Settled."

Only then did Kumar smile.

"Now we can celebrate."

The finance team exchanged knowing glances. They had seen this before.

For Kumar… Celebrations always came after responsibilities.

Kumar smiled.



That evening… As everyone left…

He remained alone in the office.

He opened the cupboard.

Took out the old ₹5 magazine.

The paper had become fragile.

The edges were worn.

He carefully turned its pages.

On the inside cover...

He noticed something he had never paid attention to before.

In tiny letters...

The magazine's motto read:

"Ideas Today... Leaders Tomorrow."

Kumar smiled.

Perhaps...

That single sentence had quietly described his entire life.

He looked out of the office window.

The city lights stretched into the distance.

Somewhere beyond those lights...

A little boy might be standing outside a bookshop...

Looking at a magazine he couldn't yet afford.

Kumar whispered softly,

"I hope someone notices you..."

"...the way life noticed me."

He opened the Tomorrow Notebook one more time.

On a fresh page, he wrote...

"Money enters a business through sales."

He paused. Then continued...

"Respect enters through conduct."

After another moment, he added, **"And when respect stays long enough..."**

Bookwave
e-magazine

"...it quietly transforms into trust."

He underlined the last sentence. Twice.

Closed the notebook.

And smiled.

Because he now understood something that no business magazine had ever fully explained.

The greatest dividend in business is not profit.

It is trust.

Chapter 37 – Beyond the Borders

"Reputation travels farther than advertisements."

Five years had passed since Kumar had opened the small marketing company.

The office that once echoed with only five voices...

Now welcomed more than two hundred employees every morning.

Regional offices had opened across India. The warehouse had expanded twice.

The company's brands had quietly become familiar names in hospitals and pharmacies.

Yet...Visitors entering Kumar's cabin noticed something unusual.

The office had changed. The furniture had changed.

The company had changed.

But...

The faded ₹5 business magazine still occupied the same place inside the glass cupboard.

Success had changed everything.

Except the man.

One afternoon...Kumar received an unexpected email.

It was from a pharmaceutical distributor in **Egypt.**

They had heard about his company's products through an Indian doctor working there.

The distributor wished to meet.

The International Business Manager smiled excitedly.

"Sir..."

"This could become our first export order."

Kumar nodded calmly and said, "Let's first understand their expectations."

A week later...The visitors arrived.

They spent an entire day at Kumar's office.

Most businessmen would have begun with presentations.

Turnover.

Achievements.

Awards.

Kumar began differently. He first took them to the warehouse.

Then to the quality control department.

Finally...He showed them the manufacturing facility of his former company.

The visitors looked surprised.

One of them asked,

"So..."

"You don't own this factory?"

Kumar smiled.

"No."

"But I trust the people who do."

The visitors exchanged glances.

That answer impressed them far more than ownership ever could.

Inside the factory...The former Managing Director personally welcomed the guests.

He proudly explained the quality standards.

Testing procedures, Documentation, International compliance.

At one point...

The Kenyan delegate smiled.

"You both belong to different companies."

Bookwave
e-magazine

The Managing Director laughed.

"On paper."

Then he looked toward Kumar.

"In values..."

"We belong to the same family."

Kumar smiled quietly.

Some partnerships are stronger than contracts.

For two days...

The discussions continued.

Product registrations, Shipping timelines.

Regulatory approvals and Packaging requirements.

Everything was examined carefully.

Finally... On the third afternoon...

The Kenyan delegation stood up. Their leader extended his hand.

"Congratulations."

"We would like to appoint your company as our marketing partner."

The room filled with smiles.

The company's first international agreement had been signed.

The news spread quickly through the office.

Employees applauded. Some distributed sweets.

Others called their families. The receptionist proudly told every visitor,

"Our medicines are now going abroad."

Even the office assistant stood a little taller that day.

Success has a beautiful habit. When it is earned honestly...

Everyone feels they own a part of it.

Months later...The first export shipment was ready.

Thousands of cartons stood neatly arranged inside the warehouse.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Each carton carried Kumar's company's brand.

Each medicine inside had been manufactured by the company where Kumar had once worked.

The former Managing Director visited the warehouse personally.

He picked up one carton.

Ran his hand gently over the printed brand name.

Then looked at Kumar.

"I told you once..."

"...you would build something of your own."

He smiled.

"I didn't know..."

"...I'd be helping you build it."

Kumar folded his hands respectfully.

"You aren't helping me, Sir."

"You are still teaching me."

The Managing Director smiled.

"And you're still making me proud."

As the container truck slowly left the warehouse...

Everyone stood watching. No one spoke.

Sometimes...

A silent moment carries more celebration than loud applause.

The truck disappeared around the corner.

Taking with it.

Not just medicines.

But years of dreams. The export business grew steadily.

Within a year...

New enquiries arrived Also from **Sri Lanka**, **Nepal**, and **Nigeria and Kenya**

Bookwave
e-magazine



Every new market strengthened the company's confidence.

Every successful shipment strengthened its reputation.

At the end of the financial year...

The accountant entered Kumar's cabin carrying the annual report.

His hands were trembling with excitement.

"Sir..."

Kumar smiled.

"What happened?"

The accountant slowly placed the file on the table.

"You should see this yourself."

Kumar opened the report. He read the final figure once.

Then again. For a few seconds...

He remained completely still. The company's annual turnover had crossed...

₹60 Crore.

The room remained silent. There was no shouting. No jumping with excitement.

Kumar quietly closed the file. Then looked toward the window.

Far away... He could almost see a little stationery shop.

A faded magazine rack.

A nine-year-old boy counting coins.

His eyes slowly filled with tears.

Not because the company had reached sixty crores.

Because... His childhood dream had quietly reached him.

That evening... The Board of Directors and senior employees gathered in conference room for a small celebration.



One of the young managers stood up.

"Sir..."

"We've crossed sixty crores."

"You should tell us how it feels."

Kumar smiled.

He looked around the room.

Then answered softly,

"When I was a little boy..."

"I used to read interviews of businessmen whose companies had crossed fifty crores."

He paused.

"I thought..."

"People like them belonged to another world."

He smiled gently.

"Today..."

"I realize..."

"They were once ordinary people who simply refused to stop walking."

The room fell silent.

Every employee understood.

They were not celebrating turnover. They were celebrating perseverance.

Late that night... Kumar remained alone in his cabin.

He opened the glass cupboard. Removed the old ₹5 business magazine.

Placed it on the table. Beside it... He kept the annual report showing **₹60 crore**.

For a long time...He simply looked at both.

The beginning. And the destination.

One had given him a dream. The other had fulfilled it.

He gently touched the cover of the magazine.

And whispered... **"We did it."**

Bookwave
e-magazine

Not...

"I did it."

We did it.

Because he knew...Dreams never travel alone.

He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.On a fresh page, he wrote...

"Turnover measures business."

He paused. Then continued...

"Gratitude measures success."

After a long silence... He wrote one final line.

"Tomorrow..."

"...I must visit someone."

He closed the notebook. Smiled. And switched off the cabin lights.

Chapter 38 – The Debt That Could Never Be Calculated

"Some debts are never written in account books. They are written in the heart."

The next morning...Kumar left home earlier than usual.

His driver noticed he wasn't carrying any office files.

Only a small brown envelope.

"Sir...

Office?"

Kumar smiled.

"No."

"Take me to the old stationery shop."

The driver nodded.

As the car entered the familiar street...

Everything looked smaller than Kumar remembered.

The road. The buildings.

The tea stall. Even the old neem tree under which bicycles were once parked.

Time had changed the town. But memories had refused to grow old.

There it was. The stationery shop.

The faded blue board still hung above the entrance.

Stacks of newspapers were arranged outside.

School children hurried in to buy notebooks.

Parents purchased textbooks.

Life continued... Exactly as it always had.

Kumar remained inside the car for a few moments.

Simply looking. The driver asked softly,

"Sir...

Shall I come with you?"

Kumar shook his head.

"No."

"This journey... I must walk alone."

He slowly stepped out. Every footstep carried years of memories.

The same entrance. The same counter. The same wooden shelves. The same fragrance of fresh paper.

For one beautiful moment...He was no longer a businessman.

He was nine years old again.

Prasad Anna was arranging magazines. His hair had turned almost completely white.

His movements had become slower.

But his smile...Was exactly the same.

He looked up. For a second...

He stared. Then his face lit up.

"Kumar!"

"My boy!"

Before Kumar could say anything... Prasad came around the counter and embraced him.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Not as a customer, Not as a businessman. As family.

They sat together inside the shop. The same old wooden chairs.

A young helper brought tea. For several minutes...

They simply spoke about life.

Health.

Family.

Old customers.

The changing town. Nothing about business.

Some relationships never need formal conversations.

Then...Kumar's eyes slowly wandered toward the magazine rack.

There it was. The same business magazine.

Now glossy. Modern. More expensive.

He walked toward it. Picked up a copy.

His fingers gently touched the cover. Almost instinctively...

He turned to the interview section. And smiled.

There he was. His own photograph. His own story.

Printed in the same magazine he had once only dreamed of owning.

For a few moments...He simply stood there.

Unable to speak.

Prasad watched him quietly. Then smiled.

"I knew this day would come."

Kumar turned.

"You knew?"

Prasad laughed.

"Not this interview."

He paused.

"But I knew...

the boy who read every page fifty times...

would one day become someone worth reading about."

Kumar's eyes became moist.

He walked back to the chair. Placed the magazine gently on the table.

Then looked at Prasad.

"Anna..."

"I've wanted to say something..."

"...for many years."

Prasad smiled.

"Say it."

Kumar took a deep breath,

"When I couldn't buy that ten-rupee magazine..."

"I thought life was being unfair."

He paused.

"But today I realize..."

"If I had bought every magazine easily..."

"I might never have valued a single page."

Prasad quietly listened.

Kumar continued.

"When you started giving me the unsold copies..."

"You probably thought..."

"...you were helping a schoolboy."

He smiled.

"But those magazines taught me business."

"They improved my English."

"They introduced me to entrepreneurs."

"They gave me confidence."

Bookwave
e-magazine

"They changed the direction of my life."

Silence filled the shop.

Even the young helper stopped arranging books.

Kumar slowly reached into his pocket.

He removed the brown envelope.

Placed it gently before Prasad.

"Anna..."

"This is for you."

Prasad looked confused.

"What is this?"

"Please open it."

Inside...

Was a cheque.

For **₹3,00,000**.

Prasad immediately looked up.

"No, Kumar."

"I can't take this."

He tried returning it.

"You've already made me happy by coming here."

"This is too much."

Kumar gently pushed the envelope back.

"No, Anna."

"It isn't."

Prasad shook his head.

"I sold you magazines."

"I didn't change your life."

Kumar smiled.

Bookwave
e-magazine

Then slowly spoke the words that had lived inside him for years.

"No, Anna..."

"You sold newspapers to thousands of people."

He paused.

His voice trembled.

"But to one little boy..."

"...you sold a future."

The shop became completely silent.

Prasad lowered his head.

His hands trembled.

For the first time in years...

Words failed him.

After a long silence...

Kumar continued.

"Please don't think of this as money."

He smiled warmly.

"Think of it as one overdue thank-you."

Prasad slowly wiped his eyes.

"You owe me nothing."

Kumar shook his head.

"I owe you more than this cheque can ever repay.

He looked around the little shop. The walls had aged.

The shelves had worn out. Outside...

Survey markings had been painted on the road.

Kumar noticed them.

"Anna...

What's this?"

Bookwave
e-magazine

Prasad sighed.

"The municipality plans to widen the road."

He smiled sadly.

"They say part of the shop may have to go."

Kumar remained quiet for a moment.

Then placed his hand over Prasad's.

"That's another reason I've come."

He gently pushed the cheque forward once again.

"This isn't a gift."

"It is the foundation of your next shop."

Prasad looked at him in disbelief. Kumar smiled.

"This shop should never disappear."

He looked around the shelves with affection.

"Because somewhere..."

"...another little boy is waiting."

He paused.

"Maybe he can't afford a book today."

"Maybe he can't buy a magazine."

"Maybe he is standing outside this very shop..."

"...dreaming quietly."

He looked back at Prasad.

"This place should continue creating dreams."

Then he softly added the words that would remain with Prasad forever.

"This shop should not be demolished..."

"...this shop should produce many more businessmen like me, Anna."

Prasad could no longer hold back his tears.

He stood up. Walked around the counter.

Bookwave e-magazine

And embraced Kumar tightly.

No words. No speeches. Just gratitude...

Meeting gratitude.

When Kumar stepped out of the shop... He looked back one last time.

Prasad was still standing at the entrance.

Holding the cheque in one hand... And the business magazine in the other.

One represented Kumar's success. The other... Its beginning.

As the car slowly moved away... Kumar looked through the rear-view mirror.

The shop gradually disappeared from sight. But never from his heart.

He smiled quietly. For years... He had believed success meant reaching sixty crores.

Today... He understood something deeper.

Success becomes complete... Only when gratitude reaches its destination.

That night...He opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

He turned to its final blank page. And wrote...

"The greatest investment I ever made..."

He paused. Then smiled.

"...was saying thank you before it became too late."

He gently closed the notebook.

This time... Not as a businessman.

But as a grateful human being.

Chapter 39 – The Share That Was Never a Gift

"The greatest relationships are never measured by what they receive. They are measured by what they quietly give away."

A week had passed since Kumar visited Prasad Anna.

Life slowly returned to its usual rhythm. Meetings resumed.

Export enquiries increased. New product launches occupied his calendar.

Yet... One thought kept returning to him.

A pair of tiny hands. Holding out a few coins.

He closed his eyes. And once again...

He was a little boy. Every Sunday morning...

He would count his savings.

One rupee.

Two rupees.

Sometimes three.

Never enough.

Then his younger sister would quietly walk toward him.

Without saying much... She would place a few coins into his palm.

"Take these."

"No... Amma will scold you."

She would smile.

"I'll manage."

"How?"

"I won't buy ice cream this week."

Sometimes...She skipped chocolates.

Sometimes...She skipped colorful ribbons she wanted for school.

Sometimes...She simply lied to their mother.

"I don't need pocket money this week."

She never called it a sacrifice.

To her...It was simply helping her brother smile.

Back then...Kumar never understood the size of those small acts.

Children rarely do.

Only time teaches the value of invisible sacrifices.

Years later...When Kumar struggled from one job to another...

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His sister's marriage had been fixed.

The entire family was happy. Relatives filled the house.

Wedding invitations were being printed.

Jewellery had been purchased after years of savings.

His father appeared relieved. His mother smiled after many anxious months.

Everyone was celebrating. Except Kumar.

He sat alone on the terrace one evening.

His savings passbook lay beside him.

He looked at the balance. It was painfully small.

After changing so many jobs... After months of uncertain income...

He had almost nothing. His younger sister was getting married.

And he... Could not contribute meaningfully. That thought hurt him more than every failed interview.

His sister quietly came upstairs. She sat beside him.

"You've been hiding here."

He smiled faintly.

"I'm just getting some fresh air."

She looked at the passbook. Then at his face.

"You've always been a bad liar."

He lowered his head and said, "I'm sorry."

She looked puzzled.

"For what?"

"I couldn't do anything for your marriage."

His voice cracked.

"I wanted to buy your jewellery."

"I wanted to help Father."

"I wanted to stand beside him."

"But..."

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"I couldn't."

For several moments...Neither spoke.

The evening breeze carried away the silence. Then...His sister gently held his hand.

Exactly as she had done years ago.

"Do you remember..."

"...the five-rupee magazine?"

Kumar looked up.

She smiled.

"I used to give you my pocket money."

He nodded. Tears had already gathered in his eyes.

She continued..."Did I ever ask you to return it?"

"No."

"I gave it happily."

She smiled.

"So why are you feeling guilty today?"

Kumar couldn't answer.

She looked at him with complete faith. Then said the words he would carry for the rest of his life.

"Don't be upset, Bhaiya."

"The day you become successful..."

She smiled confidently.

"...give me whatever you feel is right."

She paused.

Then laughed softly.

"Because I know something you still don't."

Kumar looked at her.

"What?"

She smiled.

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"One day..."

"...you will become a successful businessman."

Those words had remained inside Kumar for years.

Long after the wedding. Long after she began her new life.

Long after she became a mother. Long after his own company was born.

Every success reminded him...Of a promise waiting patiently.

One evening... Kumar invited his parents, his brother, and his sister's family to his home.

Everyone assumed it was simply a family dinner. His sister laughed.

"You're behaving very seriously today."

Kumar smiled.

"Maybe."

His wife noticed the file lying on the table. She already knew.

She quietly smiled. After dinner...

Kumar stood up.

"I want to say something."

Everyone looked at him. He turned toward his sister.

"You once invested in a businessman..."

She laughed.

"When?"

He smiled.

"You don't remember."

"I do."

He slowly narrated...

The Sundays.

The coins.

The magazines.

The ribbons she never bought. The chocolates she never ate.

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The pocket money she quietly surrendered. As he spoke...

His sister's smile slowly disappeared. She had forgotten those little moments.

Kumar never had. He walked toward her.

Holding a file.

"I've already thanked Prasad Anna."

He paused.

"But there is another person..."

"...whose contribution was just as important."

He gently placed the file in her hands.

She looked confused and asked, "What is this?"

"Open it."

With trembling fingers... She opened the documents. She read the first page.

Then the second. Her eyes widened.

She looked at Kumar in disbelief.

"Bhaiya..."

"No..."

"I can't..."

Her voice broke. The documents legally transferred...

One-third ownership of Kumar's company...

Into her name. The room became completely silent.

His brother looked stunned. His parents could not understand what they had just witnessed.

His sister slowly stood up.

"No..."

"This is impossible."

Kumar smiled gently.

"No."

"It is overdue."

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She shook her head repeatedly.

"I never helped you expecting this."

"I know."

"Then why?"

Kumar walked closer. Because... "This isn't a gift."

He paused.

"This is gratitude."

His sister burst into tears.

"But this company is your dream."

Kumar softly shook his head.

"No."

He smiled through moist eyes.

"It became **our** dream..."

"...the day you gave me your first coin."

Silence filled the room. Even the walls seemed to listen.

Kumar continued. "People think companies are built with investment."

He smiled.

"Mine was."

He looked directly into her eyes.

"My first investor..."

"...was my little sister."

Tears rolled down every face in the room. Their father quietly removed his spectacles. He wiped his eyes.

His mother folded her hands toward the sky. Not in prayer.

In gratitude.

She whispered softly,

"God..."

"Thank you for letting us live long enough to see this day."

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His sister still couldn't accept it.

"Bhaiya..."

"I don't deserve this."

Kumar smiled.

"Neither did I..."

"...when you gave me those coins."

She covered her face and cried. Not because she had received wealth.

But because her brother had remembered. Kumar's wife gently walked toward her sister-in-law. She held her hand.

Then smiled. "For years..."

"I've watched him remember those five-rupee magazines."

She paused. "But every time he spoke about them..."

"He never forgot to mention one thing."

She looked lovingly at Kumar. "He always said..."

'Those magazines were bought with my sister's dreams.'

The room fell into another silence. A silence filled with love.

Late that night... After everyone had left... Kumar opened the Tomorrow Notebook.

There was only one blank space remaining. He smiled. Then wrote...

"Success gave me wealth."

He paused. Then continued.

"Gratitude taught me how to distribute it."

After a long moment...He added one final sentence.

"The greatest return on investment..."

"...is remembering the people who invested in you before success did."

He gently closed the notebook.

This time... There were no blank pages left.

Just as there were no unfinished promises left in his heart.

Chapter 40 – The Next Five-Rupee Dream

"Some dreams end with success. The greatest dreams begin creating new dreamers."

Five years passed.

Kumar's company continued to grow steadily.

New products entered the market.

New countries joined the export list.

The turnover crossed figures that Kumar had never imagined as a little boy.

Awards arrived.

Industry associations honoured him.

Business magazines featured his interviews regularly.

Television channels invited him for discussions on entrepreneurship.

But...

The people who knew Kumar closely noticed something.

Success had changed his address.

It had never changed his destination.

Whenever he returned to his hometown...

His journey always included three places.

His parents' home.

The public library.

And...

Prasad Anna's stationery shop.

Some habits...

Were too sacred to change.

One Sunday morning...

Kumar quietly entered the shop again.

Prasad Anna smiled immediately.

"I knew you'd come."

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Kumar laughed.

"How?"

"You always visit on Sundays."

Both smiled.

Some traditions never need calendars.

As they spoke...

A little boy stood outside the shop.

He looked no older than nine.

He was wearing a neatly washed school uniform.

His eyes remained fixed on a children's science magazine.

He picked it up.

Turned it over.

Looked at the price.

Slowly placed it back.

Exactly the way Kumar had done decades earlier.

Kumar noticed everything.

Without saying a word... He quietly watched.

The boy gathered enough courage to ask.

"Anna..."

"Can I just look at it for a few minutes?"

Prasad looked toward Kumar.

Their eyes met. Neither spoke.

Both smiled.

Prasad picked up the magazine. Placed it into the boy's hands.

"This one..."

"You may take home."

The boy looked shocked.

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"I don't have money."

Prasad smiled.

"I know."

The little boy looked confused.

"Then why?"

Prasad laughed gently.

"Because..."

He looked toward Kumar.

"...someone taught me..."

"...that dreams are worth investing in."

The boy held the magazine as though it were treasure.

He thanked Prasad repeatedly.

Then ran home with a smile that seemed larger than the road itself.

Kumar quietly watched him disappear into the distance.

His eyes slowly filled.

History...

Had just repeated itself.

Prasad looked toward Kumar.

"I've been doing this for years now."

Kumar smiled.

"What?"

"Whenever I see a child looking at a book the way you once looked at magazines..."

"I never let them go home empty-handed."

Kumar lowered his head.

Unable to speak. Prasad continued softly.

"You once told me..."

'This shop should produce many more businessmen like me.'

He smiled proudly.

"So..."

"I thought I'd better start producing them."

Both laughed.

But Kumar's laughter carried tears.

That afternoon... Kumar visited the public library.

The old wooden chair still stood near the children's section.

He sat there quietly. The librarian smiled.

"You still prefer this chair."

Kumar nodded.

"It was my first classroom."

The librarian smiled knowingly.

Children moved around the shelves.

Some searched for storybooks.

Some laughed. Some argued over comics.

One little girl sat alone in the corner. Completely absorbed in a book.

Kumar watched her for a long time.

Then smiled.

Dreams never announce themselves.

Sometimes... They simply sit quietly in libraries.

A few months later... Kumar established a charitable trust.

Not in his own name. Not in his company's name.

He named it... **The Five-Rupee Dream Foundation.**

Its purpose was simple. Every year...

It would provide books, magazines, scholarships and mentorship to children from ordinary families who dreamed beyond their circumstances.

No advertisements. No publicity campaigns.

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No grand launch. Only one belief.

"Talent should never lose to opportunity."

The first scholarship ceremony was held in the same town where Kumar had grown up.

Students from government schools filled the auditorium.

Parents sat proudly in the back rows. Teachers smiled.

Kumar stood at the podium. Looking at hundreds of young faces.

He did not speak about turnover. He did not speak about exports.

He did not speak about awards. Instead...

He held up an old magazine. The same faded ₹5 business magazine.

The hall became silent.

"This..."

he said softly,

"changed my life."

Some children smiled politely.

They didn't yet understand.

Kumar continued.

"I couldn't always buy what I wanted."

"But I never stopped learning."

He looked around the hall.

"Some of you may think your family is too ordinary."

He smiled.

"So was mine."

"Some of you may think your school is too small."

"So was mine."

"Some of you may think your dreams are too big."

He paused.

"They're not."

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A boy from the audience raised his hand.

"Sir..."

"Were you always confident?"

Kumar smiled.

"No."

"I was curious."

The hall became quiet.

He continued.

"Confidence came much later."

"It arrived..."

"...one page at a time."

Another student stood up.

"Sir..."

"What is the secret of success?"

Kumar thought for a moment.

Then smiled.

"There isn't one."

The children laughed.

He continued.

"But there are a few habits."

"Read more than others."

"Work longer than excuses."

"Respect people before expecting respect."

"And..."

He paused.

The entire hall waited.

"...never forget the hands that lifted you..."

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"...when the world didn't even notice you."

The teachers were the first to applaud.

Then the parents. Finally... The children.

As the program ended... A young boy approached Kumar.

He held a scholarship certificate in one hand.

A book in the other.

"Sir..."

"I want to become a businessman."

Kumar smiled.

"So do I."

The boy looked confused.

"You already are."

Kumar gently placed his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"No."

He smiled warmly.

"I'm still becoming one."

The boy laughed.

Years later... He would understand exactly what Kumar meant.

That evening... Kumar returned home. He walked into his study.

On the highest shelf rested three things.

The Tomorrow Notebook.

The ₹5 business magazine. And a framed photograph.

It was not of an award ceremony.

Not of a factory. Not of an export shipment.

It was an old photograph. Prasad Anna standing outside his little stationery shop.

Smiling.

Kumar looked at the photograph for a long time. Then quietly whispered...

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"Thank you, Anna."

Before sleeping... He opened the Tomorrow Notebook one last time.

There was no blank page left. So he wrote on the inside of the back cover.

The final words of his lifelong diary.

"When I was a little boy..."

"...I thought five rupees could buy a magazine."

He smiled. Then continued.

"Life taught me..."

"...that five rupees can also buy a dream."

He paused for several moments. Then wrote the final sentence.

"If this book reaches one child..."

"...standing outside a shop..."

"...wondering whether dreams belong only to other people..."

"...tell him..."

"...they don't."

He gently closed the notebook.

Outside... The rain had begun.

Just as it had on countless evenings throughout his life.

Somewhere...Another little boy was counting coins.

Somewhere...Another little girl was quietly giving her pocket money to someone she loved.

Somewhere...Another Prasad Anna was noticing a curious child.

Dreams...Were beginning again.

THE END

"A dream does not become great when it comes true. It becomes great when it inspires another dream."

Author's Note

Every successful person has a story that the world celebrates.

But behind every successful person...

There are countless ordinary people whose names never appear in newspapers.

A father who sacrifices. A mother who silently endures.

A sister who gives away her little joys. A teacher who believes.

A shopkeeper who notices. A leader who encourages.

Their kindness may seem small in the moment.

Yet years later...It becomes the foundation of someone else's success.

If, after reading **The Five-Rupee Dream**, you remember even one person who quietly shaped your life...

Then Kumar's journey has served its purpose.

Because success is never built alone.It is built by many hearts...

Long before it is measured in numbers.

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Comments can be sent to : touchingwaves@gmail.com

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VOL 1 ISSUE 4
SEPT 2026



Children Zone

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Colouring Fun

Give beautiful colours to this cute little butterfly!



Word Search

Find the 20 words hidden in the puzzle.

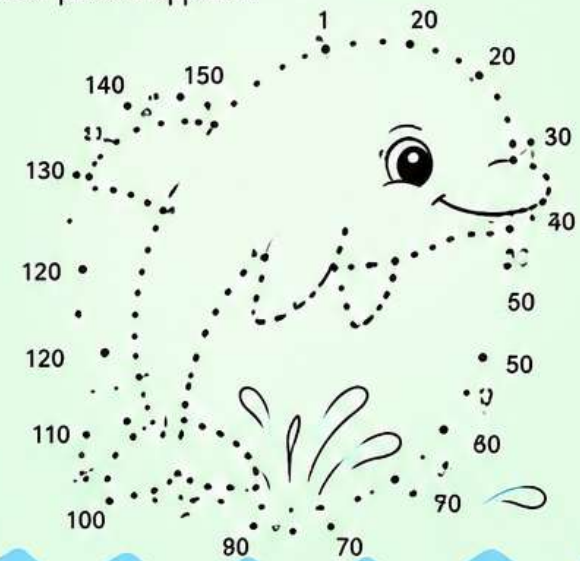
S	U	N	R	A	I	N	B	O	W	Q
T	R	E	E	F	L	O	W	E	R	C
M	O	O	N	S	T	A	R	D	O	G
B	I	R	D	C	A	T	B	O	O	K
S	C	H	O	O	L	F	R	I	E	D
H	A	P	P	Y	S	M	I	L	E	P
R	A	I	N	C	L	O	U	D	T	R
O	C	A	N	M	O	U	N	T	A	N
A	P	P	L	E	F	A	M	I	L	Y
G	H	J	K	L	Z	X	C	V	B	N

1. SUN
2. MOON
3. STAR
4. FLOWER
5. TREE
6. BIRD
7. CAT
8. DOG
9. BOOK
10. SCHOOL
11. FRIEND
12. HAPPY
13. SMILE
14. RAIN
15. CLOUD
16. RAINBOW
17. OCEAN
18. MOUNTAIN
19. APPLE
20. FAMILY

You can do it !

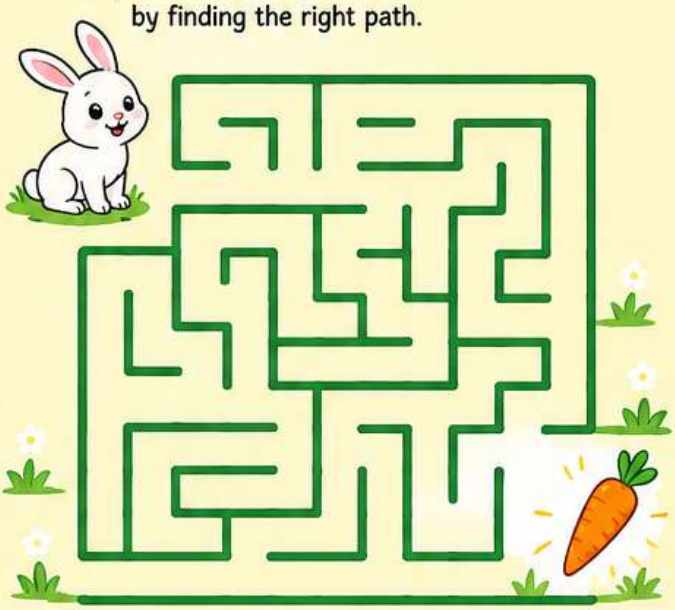
Connect the Dots

Join the dots from 1 to 150 and see what picture appears!

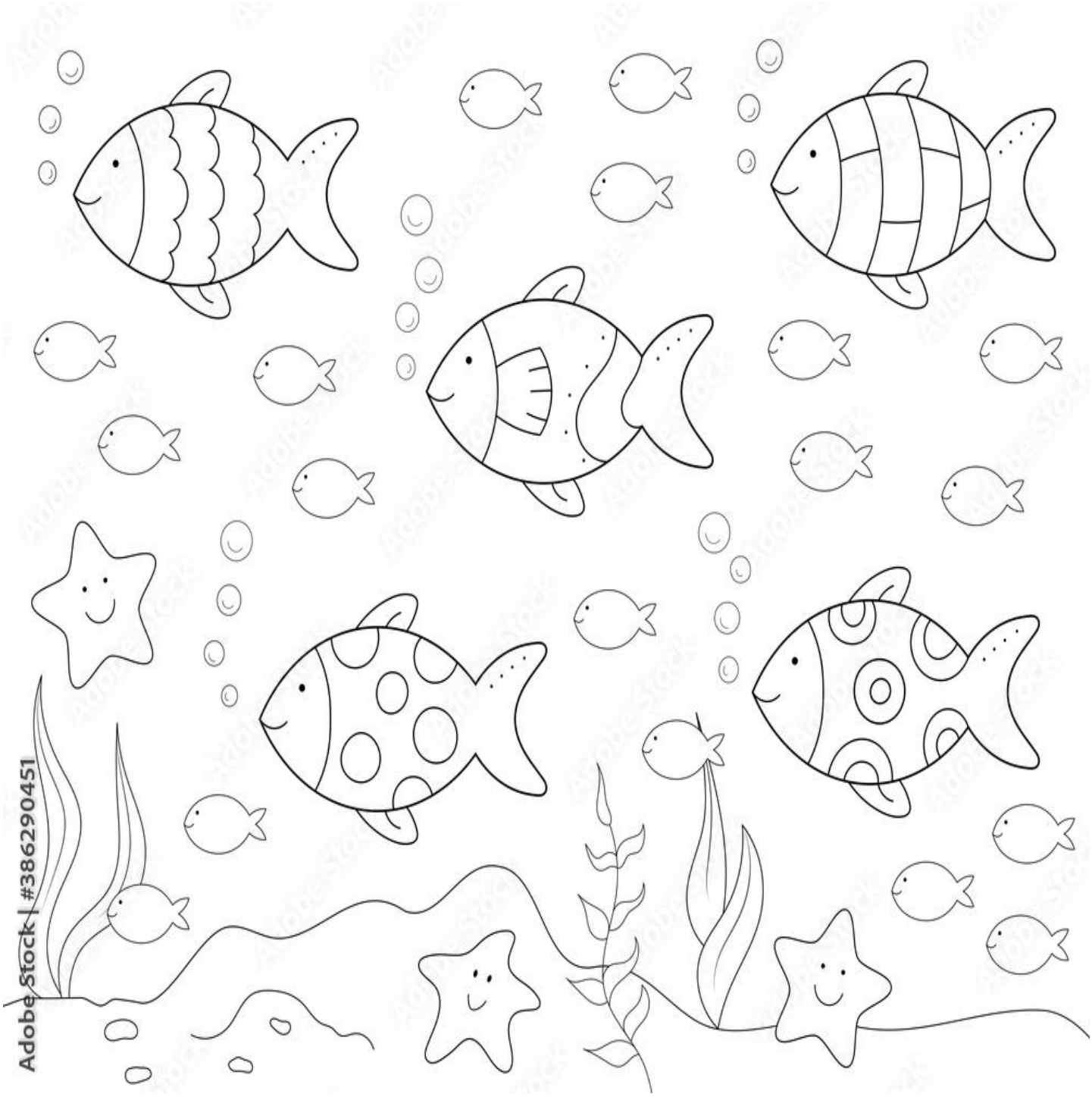


Finding Route

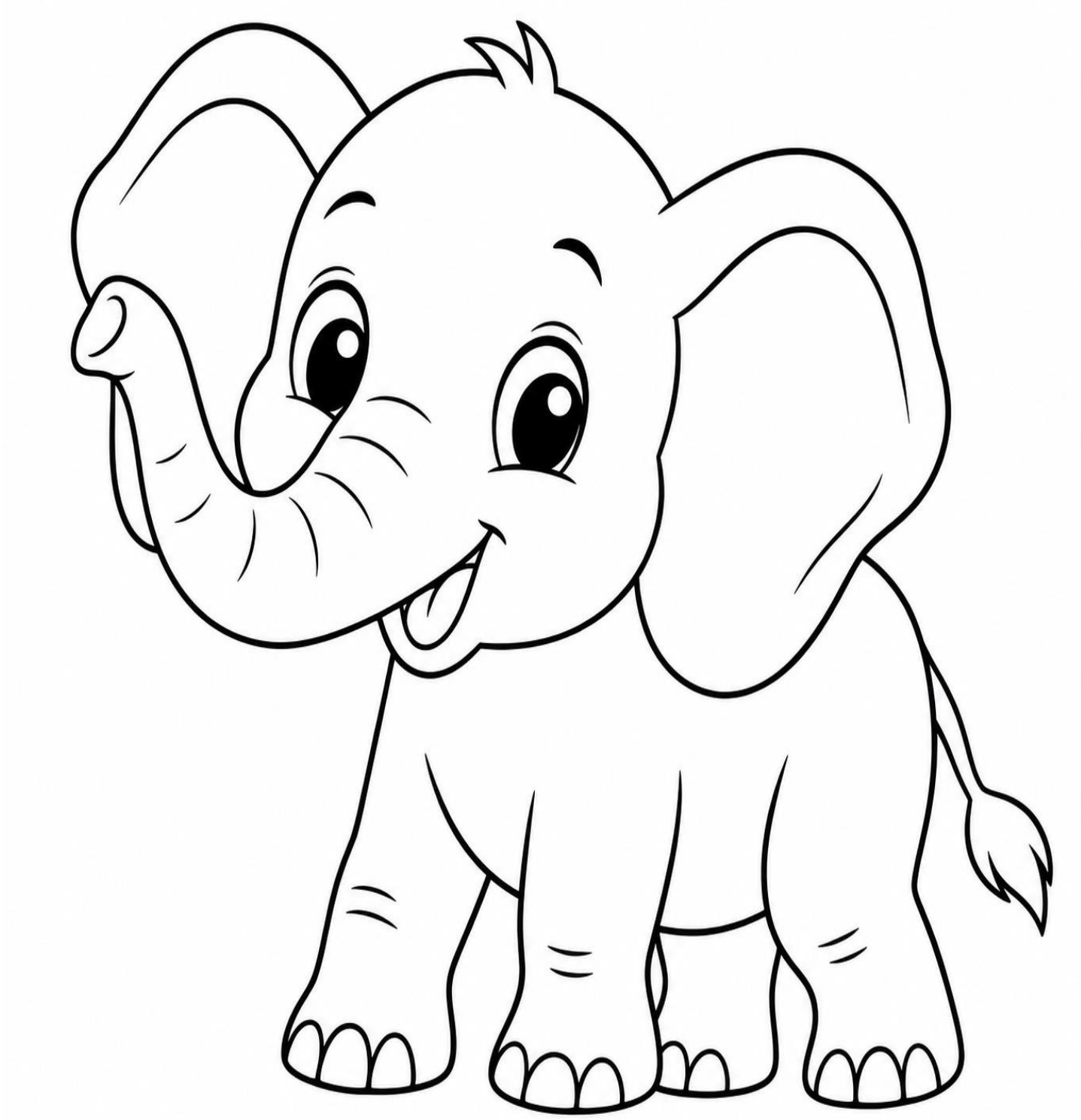
Help the little bunny reach the carrot by finding the right path.



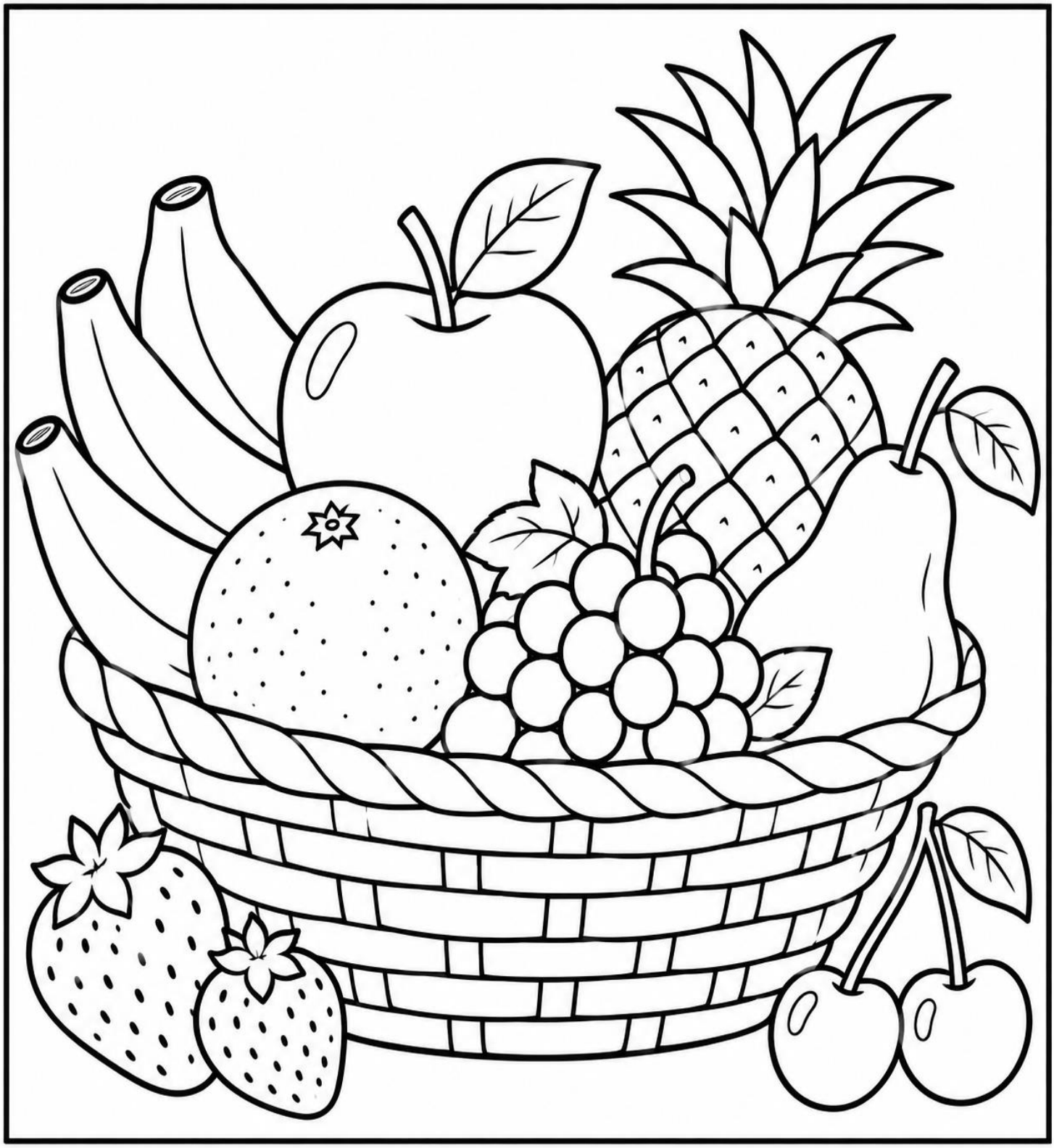
COLOR IT

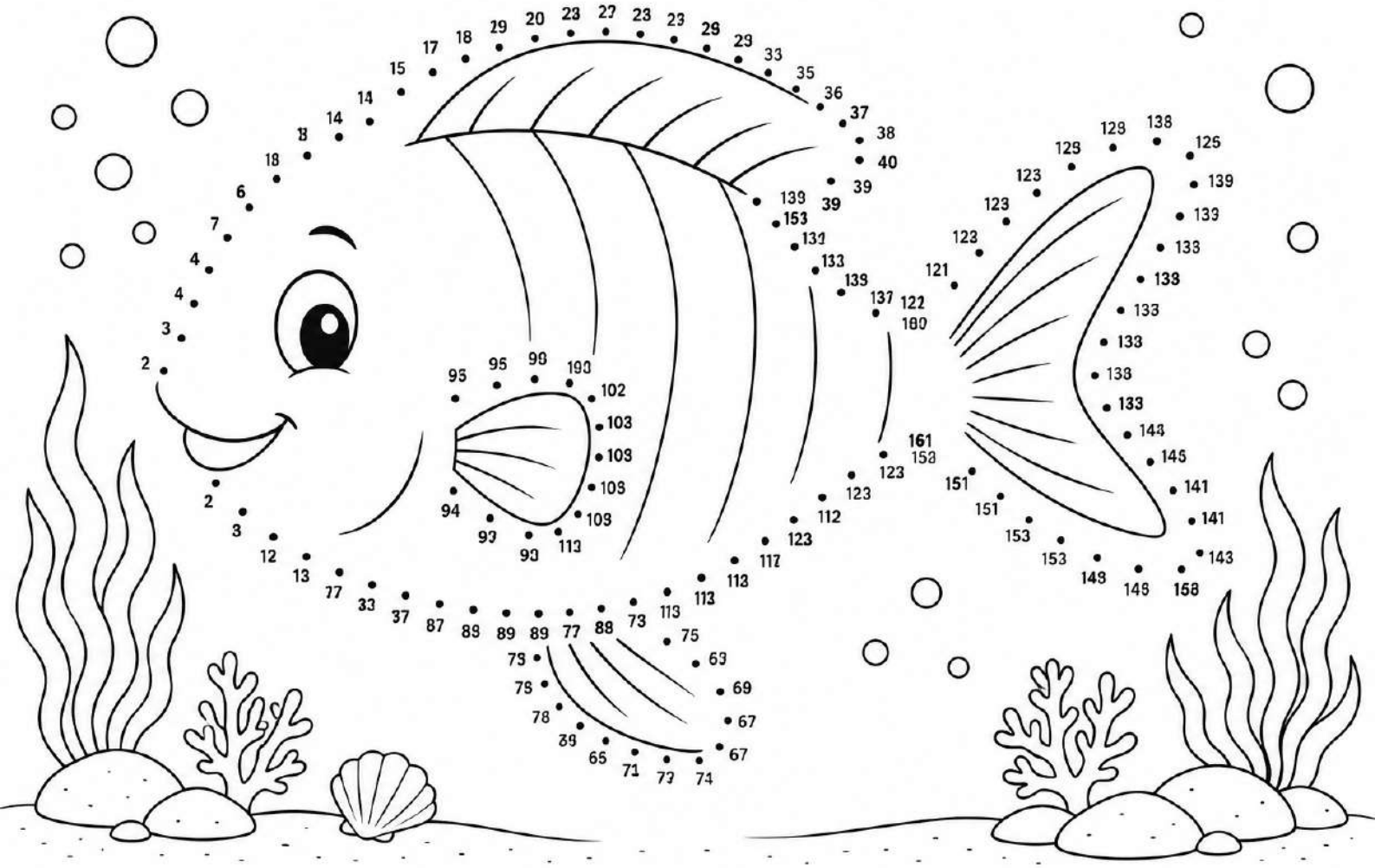


COLOR ME



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Children Zone

Think • Play • Create • Grow

Word Search



Find the 25 words hidden in the puzzle.
They can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal.

O	C	E	A	N	S	D	F	I	S	H
S	T	A	R	F	I	S	H	B	L	U
T	U	R	T	L	E	S	E	A	W	A
C	R	A	B	S	H	E	L	L	S	V
S	E	A	L	M	A	R	I	N	E	R
C	O	R	A	L	R	E	E	F	A	N
W	H	A	L	E	B	O	A	T	S	U
D	O	L	P	H	I	N	S	A	N	D
J	E	L	L	Y	F	I	S	H	O	W
S	Q	U	I	D	W	A	V	E	S	T

Find These 25 Words

1. Ocean
2. Fish
3. Starfish
4. Turtle
5. Crab
6. Shells
7. Seal
8. Marine
9. Coral
10. Reef
11. Whale
12. Boat
13. Dolphin
14. Sand
15. Jellyfish
16. Squid
17. Waves
18. Seaweed
19. Seagull
20. Seahorse
21. Shark
22. Clownfish
23. Treasure
24. Island
25. Lighthouse




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