

Grace Makes
LIFE EASY

Ashok kumar khanna



BlueRoseONE^{.com}
S t o r i e s M a t t e r

New Delhi • London

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

India | U.K.

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please contact:

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

ISBN: 978-93-7542-726-1

Cover design: Deepak Katheria
Typesetting: Sagar

First Edition: June 2026

Introduction— Life Keep Walking

*Life Keeps Walking is a simple yet profound journey through the everyday moments of a family—moments that reveal how life moves, shifts, surprises, and tests us. This story highlights how life goes on... sometimes in the right direction, sometimes into unexpected wrong turns, and often into paths we never imagined. Through love, conflict, choices, and consequences, the family learns that life does not stop for anyone. It teaches, it corrects, it heals, and it keeps moving forward. This book is a gentle reminder that no matter what comes our way, **life keeps walking—and so must we.***

Rajesh and His Two Sons

Rajesh got married to Savita about eight years ago and is now the proud father of two sons— Ankush, aged seven, and Vivek, aged four. He was deeply committed to giving them a good education so that they could reach great heights in life.

Though Rajesh had limited income, he enrolled both sons in a convent school, believing that a strong foundation in English and other subjects would help them compete confidently with others.

Over the years, it became clear that the younger son, Vivek, was exceptionally bright compared to his elder brother, Ankush. During a Parent's Day meeting at school, Vivek's teacher praised him as one of the best students— not only outstanding in academics but also in sports, drama, and other activities. Ankush, on the other hand, was hardworking but struggled with focus. He often became confused during exams and barely managed to pass.

Rajesh grew increasingly worried about Ankush's performance. He would often scold him, asking why he couldn't concentrate on his studies like his younger brother. But despite Rajesh's efforts, nothing changed. Vivek continued to excel, while Ankush kept falling behind.

Now, Vivek was in Class 8 and Ankush had reached Class 10, facing his board examinations. When the results were declared, Ankush scored only 45%. Rajesh was deeply disappointed.

"How will you get a good job with such marks?" he said, "angrily. "You'll end up as a peon or a clerk. I'm really upset. Tell me what you need— extra tuition, coaching— I'll arrange it, but you must improve if you want admission in engineering or medical school."

Rajesh arranged a tutor for Ankush, but there was still no progress. The teacher eventually told him, "Ankush doesn't focus on his studies.

His mind seems lost somewhere else. You should consult a psychologist or psychiatrist.”

Rajesh sighed. “I’m really concerned,” he said. “His younger brother is doing so well, but Ankush’s results are always poor. I’m just an accountant with a limited salary. Do you really think it’s necessary to take him to a doctor? Does he have some health issue?”

The teacher nodded gently. “These days, many students struggle with mental stress and distractions due to excessive use of digital devices. A good doctor can guide him— give him tips to focus better and cope with modern pressures.”

Rajesh took Ankush to Doctors

Ankush’s Silence

Rajesh sat in the waiting area of the clinic, his fingers nervously tapping on the armrest of the chair. Beside him, Ankush sat quietly, looking at the posters on the wall— “Mental Health Matters,” “Your Mind Deserves Care,” “Focus is a Skill, not a Gift.”

It was the first time Rajesh had ever taken his son to see a psychologist. For weeks, he had debated whether this was the right thing to do. “Maybe he’s just lazy,” he had told himself earlier. “Maybe he’ll improve next time.” But the words of the tuition teacher still echoed in his mind: “Sir, Ankush’s mind is somewhere else. He’s not present when he studies.”

The doctor’s door opened, and a calm voice said, “Please come in, Mr. Rajesh.”

Inside, the room was simple— warm lighting, books neatly stacked on shelves, and a gentle smile on the face of Dr. Mehta, a middle-aged psychiatrist known for his work with students.

Rajesh greeted him respectfully. "Doctor, this is my elder son, Ankush. He's in tenth grade. His younger brother is doing very well, but Ankush..." He paused, looking at his son. "He's intelligent, but he can't focus. He studies, yet nothing stays in his mind. His results are poor, and I don't know what to do anymore."

Dr. Mehta smiled and gestured toward Ankush. "Let's talk to the young man first. Tell me, Ankush, what do you feel when you sit down to study?"

Ankush hesitated. His voice was low but sincere. "I try, sir... but my mind goes somewhere else. I keep thinking of other things— sometimes drawings, sometimes music, sometimes I just imagine stories. I can't remember formulas or dates. My friends finish the paper; I get stuck."

Rajesh sighed in frustration. "See, Doctor? He doesn't take studies seriously. He dreams even during exams!"

Dr. Mehta nodded calmly. "Mr. Rajesh, please relax. Let's first understand what's happening inside Ankush's mind."

He turned to Ankush again. "Do you like what you study?"

Ankush shook his head. "Not really. I like to design things— I draw machines, cars, sometimes buildings. But everyone says if I don't get good marks, I'll never have a good future."

There was silence for a moment. Dr. Mehta leaned back and said, "gently, "Ankush, the world needs both doctors and designers. What matters most is not what others expect, but what you can do with focus and joy. You're not broken— you just haven't found your direction yet."

Rajesh frowned slightly, still unconvinced. "But Doctor, how will he get admission anywhere with only 45% marks? I'm just worried about his future. I can't afford failure."

Dr. Mehta nodded understandingly. “I know your concern, Mr. Rajesh. Every parent wants the best for their child. But sometimes, the pressure we put on them— even with good intention— makes them anxious and disconnected. The modern child’s mind is overloaded: phones, social media, comparisons, expectations. They are not failing; they are drowning in noise.”

He took out a notepad and began explaining softly.

“Ankush’s problem is not intelligence; it’s concentration and self-belief. Let’s begin step by step.”

1. Digital Detox

“First, reduce unnecessary screen time. No mobile before or during study hours. Digital distraction is like constant background noise— it prevents deep focus. The mind must learn silence.”

He looked at Ankush. “Try this— keep your phone in another room while studying. Use it only after you complete your goal for the day.”

Ankush nodded thoughtfully.

2. Break Study into Small Goals

“Don’t study for long hours at once,” the doctor continued. “The human brain can’t focus continuously for more than forty minutes. Study for short periods— thirty minutes of full focus, then take a five-minute break. Reward yourself with something small— a walk, music, or a snack. Slowly your concentration will grow.”

Rajesh scribbled notes eagerly.

3. Discover Personal Interest

Dr. Mehta smiled at Ankush. “You said,” you like drawing machines. That’s wonderful! You may have a creative, mechanical mind— not

every child excels in memorizing theory. Parents must recognize the type of intelligence their child has.”

He turned to Rajesh. “Your younger son may be good at academics, but Ankush could become an excellent designer, engineer, or architect— if guided properly. Encourage his creativity instead of comparing him. Comparison kills confidence.”

Rajesh listened silently. He had never thought of it that way.

4. Manage Exam Stress

“Before exams,” the doctor continued, “practice mindful breathing. Sit quietly, close your eyes, and take slow, deep breaths. Tell yourself, I am calm, I will do my best. Anxiety blocks memory. A calm mind performs far better than a fearful one.”

He smiled again. “And remember, marks are feedback— not judgment.”

5. Communication and Support at Home

Dr. Mehta spoke gently to Rajesh, “Spend a few minutes daily just talking to Ankush— not about marks, but about life. Ask what he likes, and what he feels. When a child feels understood, his inner strength returns. Love and patience are stronger than any tuition.”

Rajesh’s eyes softened. “You’re right, Doctor. I think I pushed him too hard. I just didn’t want him to suffer later.”

The doctor nodded kindly. “Every parent fears that. But success is not built by fear— it’s built by confidence. Let him feel capable again.”

6. Practical Routine

Dr. Mehta then wrote a simple schedule for Ankush:

- Wake up early, at 6 a.m., and do ten minutes of breathing or light stretching.

- Study in focused sessions— two in the morning, two in the evening.
- Keep Sundays for revision and creative drawing.
- Go for a short walk daily to refresh the mind.
- Avoid late-night phone use. Sleep early.

He concluded, “This is not just for Ankush. Every student in this digital age needs balance— body, mind, and purpose.”

When they stepped out of the clinic, the sun was setting over the city. Rajesh felt lighter. He looked at his son and saw something new— a quiet spark in Ankush’s eyes.

“Do you feel better?” he asked.

Ankush smiled faintly. “Yes, Papa. Doctor Mehta didn’t scold me. He understood me.”

Rajesh nodded, holding his son’s shoulder gently. “From today, we’ll start fresh. No pressure, but promise me you’ll try with full heart.”

“I will,” Ankush said, his voice steady.

That night, Rajesh sat alone, thinking. He realized how easily love had turned into expectation. He had compared two flowers from the same garden— forgetting that each needed its own light, its own season to bloom.

From the next day, he followed the doctor’s advice. The phone stayed away during study hours, and Rajesh began spending time with both sons, listening more and advising less. Slowly, Ankush began to change— not overnight, but steadily. His focus improved, his confidence returned, and his smile grew more natural.

Months later, when Rajesh attended another Parent's Day, the teacher smiled warmly. "Ankush is improving remarkably. He's more attentive and creative now. Keep encouraging him."

Rajesh looked at his son, pride glimmering in his eyes. For the first time, he didn't measure success by marks. He had learned a greater truth— every child is a different rhythm of the same divine music, and the role of a parent is not to control the tune, but to help it flow freely.

Ankush got a mail from the Doctors which was related to his earlier session with the Doctors.

Don't Think Too Much—Just Do What Makes You Happy

We humans are often victims of overthinking. Our minds are like restless oceans— waves of worry, regret, and what-ifs rise and fall endlessly. We analyse every decision until joy itself becomes a question mark. We want happiness, yet we think so much about how to be happy that we forget to feel it.

In truth, happiness is not something you achieve by thinking; it's something you experience by being. When we stop judging ourselves, comparing with others, or fearing mistakes, we naturally gravitate toward actions that make us feel alive— whether that's painting, gardening, walking in the rain, or simply sitting with loved ones.

Overthinking is like sitting in a parked car and pressing the accelerator— you burn energy but go nowhere. Acting on what brings you peace or joy, however small, sets life in motion. Happiness doesn't always come from grand achievements. It hides in small, genuine acts— in laughter shared over tea, in helping someone without expecting reward, or in forgiving yourself for what you could not do.

So, don't over plan your life like a spreadsheet. Leave some space for surprise and spontaneity. Often the most beautiful moments are

unplanned. If something brings you joy, do it wholeheartedly. The universe aligns more easily with a heart that flows freely than with a mind tangled in hesitation.

“A Smile Is a Spiritual Perfume— You Spray It on Others”

A smile is more than a curve on your lips; it's a message from the soul. When you smile sincerely, something invisible happens— your inner vibration changes, and it touches others even without words. A smile is contagious not because of muscles, but because of energy.

When you smile at someone— a child, a stranger, even a tired colleague— you share an invisible fragrance. It's a spiritual perfume that lingers, reminding others of hope and kindness. You may never know how far your smile travels. It may soften an angry heart, lift a burdened spirit, or simply make someone feel seen.

Smiling is also a form of gratitude. It silently says, “I accept life as it is— with its trials and gifts.” That acceptance opens the door to peace. Great saints and masters often smiled even in suffering, because they had learned that joy is not the absence of pain but the presence of grace.

Try smiling not as a mask, but as an offering. When your smile comes from compassion, it heals you first— then the world around you.

In Essence

Life doesn't need to be so complicated. Think less, feel more. Work with joy, love without condition, smile without reason. When you follow what lights your heart, you become a light for others.

After all— a smile costs nothing, yet it enriches everyone. And the fragrance of one genuine smile can turn even an ordinary day into a festival of the soul.

Ankush replied to Doctors, Sir I got your mail and I loved its contents and message, I am sincerely grateful to you sir for sharing and this will certainly help me in future. Please share such messages in future also to enable me to follow these guidelines.

After some time, the doctor shared another beautiful message:

Turn Your Worry into Worship— And Watch God Turn Your Battles into Blessings

Worry is a thief that quietly steals peace from the heart. It begins as a small thought— What if things go wrong?— and soon becomes a storm that clouds every moment. The mind keeps repeating anxious loops, as if worrying were a form of problem-solving. But worry never solves; it only drains.

Worry is born from the illusion of control— the belief that we can plan, predict, and manage every outcome. When life moves differently from our expectations, worry creeps in. But what if we could transform that restless energy into something higher— into worship?

Worship doesn't always mean rituals, chants, or temples. True worship is surrender— the art of trusting the divine order when your plans fail. It is saying, "God, I don't know the way, but I know You do."

When you worry, you talk to yourself; when you worship, you talk to God. The shift is subtle but powerful— from self-doubt to divine dialogue.

When you start offering your worries instead of feeding them, they lose their grip on you. Every sigh becomes a silent prayer; every tear becomes a drop of faith. Slowly, peace returns. It is not that your challenges vanish; it's that you begin to see them through the eyes of trust, not fear.

And that is when something miraculous happens— your battle turns into a blessing.

When we stop resisting life and start trusting it, every battle becomes a classroom and every wound becomes a teacher. You begin to realize that God never wastes pain. The very situation that once felt unbearable often becomes the foundation of your growth. The broken heart makes you gentler. The failure that humiliated you teaches humility and patience. The delay you cursed turns out to be protection from something unseen.

It's as if the Divine whispers, "Be still. I'm working behind the curtain."

Those who live in constant worry try to control the outcome. Those who live in worship learn to trust the process. Faith doesn't mean everything will go your way; it means you'll be okay even when it doesn't.

How to Turn Worry into Worship

- ***Pause and Breathe:*** When worry arises, take a deep breath. Recognize it; don't suppress it. Say to yourself, "This too is part of God's plan."
- ***Replace Fear with Faith:*** Whenever fear whispers "What if?", respond with "Even if." Even if things don't go as I wish, I will still trust that something good is unfolding.

- ***Pray with Gratitude, Not Desperation:*** Instead of begging for things to change, thank God for the strength to handle them. Gratitude transforms anxiety into acceptance.
- ***Serve Others:*** Helping someone in need dissolves your own worries. Service is the purest form of worship.
- ***Let Go of the Timeline:*** The Divine works in perfect timing, not your timing. Trust that delays are part of the design.

The Inner Miracle

Once you start living this way, a quiet miracle unfolds within. You stop fighting the storm and start dancing in the rain. You stop asking, “Why me?” and start saying, “Try me.” Every battle becomes a chance to demonstrate your faith, and every blessing feels deeper because it came through surrender.

Over time, you’ll notice— what you once called a crisis was actually ***grace in disguise***. The mountains you begged to move were the very ones that strengthened your spirit.

When worry turns into worship, your heart becomes a temple— calm, luminous, and fragrant with trust.

And in that sacred silence, God doesn’t just change your situation— ***He changes you.***

In Essence

When your knees bend in prayer, your heart rises in peace. When your mind stops overthinking, the Divine starts orchestrating. So, next time life feels heavy, don’t carry it alone. Turn your worry into worship— and watch how God turns your battles into blessings.

Story continues

It was a quiet night— the kind of silence that makes even the ticking of the clock sound loud. Rajesh, half asleep, turned in bed and noticed a faint line of light seeping through the crack of the next room’s door. He looked at the clock— 2:00 AM.

A thought ran through his mind— why is the light still on?

He got up slowly, wearing his slippers, and walked toward Ankush’s room. As he opened the door gently, the familiar smell of books, coffee, and a little nervousness filled the air. Ankush was sitting at his study table, eyes focused, under the bright yellow lamp, surrounded by open books and notes.

Rajesh, surprised yet calm, said, “softly, “My son, what is the matter? You are still awake and studying? Tomorrow is your board exam. This is not good. You’ll feel sleepy and tired during the exam, and it will affect your performance.”

Ankush looked up, eyes slightly red but determined. “Dad,” he said, “I’ve completed all the questions, but I still feel like I might forget something. I’m just revising again.”

Rajesh walked closer, placed his hand on Ankush’s shoulder with affection, and said, “You’ve done enough, son. Trust yourself. You’ve studied hard— your mind needs rest now as much as it needs knowledge.”

He picked up the open textbook from the table, closed it gently, and said, “Go to bed. The doctor also advised you not to push yourself beyond your limits. Stress and sleeplessness can block your focus. Take rest— that’s also part of your preparation.”

Ankush smiled faintly, stood up, and said, “Alright Dad, I’ll go. But please wake me up at six. I’ll revise just once more.”

Rajesh nodded. “I will do that. Sleep well now. Let your mind breathe.”

Ankush went to bed, but as he lay down, his mind refused to rest. Numbers, formulas, and facts kept dancing before his eyes. Pressure from expectations— his own and others’— wouldn’t let him sleep. He turned sides again and again, but anxiety had gripped him.

Morning arrived quietly. Rajesh, true to his word, came to wake Ankush at six— but to his surprise, the boy was not sleeping. He was again at the desk, reading intensely, eyes heavy but restless.

Rajesh’s heart sank a little. “Ankush! You didn’t sleep? This is not fair to yourself. Your mind and body need rest to perform well. I’m worried— how will you handle the exam without sleep?”

Ankush turned, smiled faintly again, and said, “Dad, don’t worry. After this paper, there’s a five-day gap before the next one. I’ll rest then. I just want to make sure today goes well.”

Rajesh sighed. “What time does your exam start?”

“Nine, Dad.”

“So, you’ll leave by seven for school?”

“Yes,” Ankush replied, already packing his pens and admit card.

Rajesh said, “gently, “Before leaving, sit quietly for five minutes. Do a short meditation, and take a few deep breaths. It’ll calm your mind and help you focus. Remember, the mind works best when it’s peaceful.”

Ankush nodded, though he seemed lost in his own thoughts. “You please don’t worry, Dad. I’ll take care of myself.”

Rajesh smiled, yet his heart was heavy. Watching his son reminded him of his own youth— those nights before important exams, the same

nervousness, the same fight between sleep and ambition. He realized that every generation goes through this invisible test of endurance— not just in exams, but in life.

Before Ankush left, Rajesh put his hand on his son's head and said, "Remember, my child, exams test knowledge, not your worth. Turn your worry into worship— give your best and leave the rest to God. When you do that, He turns your battles into blessings."

Ankush looked into his father's eyes— tired, yet filled with love and faith. He smiled softly, bent down, and touched his father's feet. "Thank you, Dad. I'll remember that."

Rajesh watched him leave, his schoolbag on one shoulder, walking into the morning light. The house felt strangely quiet afterward. Rajesh stood near the window, watching the sun rise, whispering a prayer— not for marks, but for strength, peace, and faith for his son.

Later that day, as Rajesh waited outside the school gate, he noticed other parents pacing nervously. But he stood calmly, remembering his own words— turn worry into worship.

When Ankush finally came out, he looked lighter, smiling widely. "Dad, the paper went really well!"

Rajesh smiled, eyes moist with relief. "I told you, son— trust your preparation, and let peace do the rest."

That evening, they sat together in the garden. The sun was setting, and the air was cool. Rajesh said, "You see, life will give you many exams— not just in school. Sometimes the pressure will come from outside, sometimes from within. But always remember— do what makes you happy, not what scares you. A smile is a spiritual perfume— when you share it, it fills others' hearts with fragrance."

Ankush nodded, thinking deeply. “I understand, Dad. Maybe I was too focused on perfection. I forgot peace is also part of success.”

Rajesh smiled, “Exactly. Knowledge is light, but peace is the oil that keeps it burning.”

They sat quietly for a while— father and son— as the day faded into dusk. There were no more words needed. Only a gentle smile that said, “everything— of love, learning, and life.

Weeks passed after the exams, and summer had set in. The house felt lighter, the tension of board exams slowly fading. Ankush spent his days helping his mother, reading novels, and meeting friends— all while eagerly waiting for his 12th board results.

The night before the results, Rajesh noticed him sitting in the balcony, scrolling nervously on his phone. “Still anxious?” Rajesh smiled.

Ankush sighed. “Just a little, Dad. I’ve done well this time, so I’m hoping for at least 85%.”

Rajesh patted his shoulder. “Whatever the result, remember— it’s just one chapter, not the whole book.”

The next morning, Ankush was up early. He logged onto the board website the moment the results went live. His hands trembled slightly as he typed his roll number. The screen blinked— and the numbers appeared 60%.

Ankush froze. His heart sank. For a moment, he couldn’t believe it. “This can’t be right,” he whispered. “I did so well!”

Rajesh came over and looked at the screen. “Sixty percent? That seems off. You were confident about your papers.”

Ankush felt tears rising. “Dad, this isn’t fair. I answered everything correctly. I even checked twice before submitting my papers. How can it be just 60%?”

Rajesh placed a calming hand on his back. “Don’t panic, son. Maybe it’s a mistake. We’ll look into it properly. Life sometimes tests patience more than performance.”

After a few days, Ankush formally applied for scrutiny and rechecking through the education board’s online portal. He waited, checking his email every morning, hoping for an update. Weeks went by, but nothing changed. No correction, no response.

Frustrated but determined, Ankush decided to take the matter further. “Dad, I can’t just accept this. I know my effort. I want to approach the court for a fair re-evaluation.”

Rajesh admired his courage. “If you believe in yourself, then go ahead. Truth always finds its way. But remember— fight with patience, not anger.”

With Rajesh’s guidance, they filed a petition seeking re-evaluation by a different examiner. The case took a few hearings. The school records, answer sheets, and evaluation patterns were all reviewed. After several weeks, the court finally gave its verdict.

The judge noted, “There appears to be a clear error in totalling the marks. The candidate deserves correction and a revised marksheet.”

When Ankush heard the words, his eyes widened. His heart raced as the board reissued a fresh marksheet— his actual percentage was 80%.

He ran to Rajesh, waving the document. “Dad! Look! Eighty percent! I knew something was wrong!”

Rajesh's eyes glistened with pride. He hugged Ankush tightly. "I'm proud of you, my son— not only for your marks, but also for your determination. You didn't give up when life seemed unfair. You stood up for truth with courage and dignity."

Ankush smiled through tears. "It feels like a weight lifted off my chest. I can finally breathe."

Without wasting time, he applied for admission to a reputed engineering college. The process was quick— his new marks opened doors that were earlier closed. Within weeks, he received an admission offer from a well-known institute known for its innovation and academic excellence.

When the confirmation letter arrived, Rajesh called the entire family to the living room. He handed the letter to Ankush with a proud smile. "Congratulations, Engineer Sahib!"

Everyone clapped. Ankush bowed slightly, shy but glowing with happiness.

Rajesh looked at him thoughtfully and said, "Remember, success is not just about marks, but about character. You taught yourself— and me— an important lesson: never stop believing in your own effort. Even when the world doubts you, your conviction can rewrite your destiny."

Ankush listened quietly. His heart was full of gratitude.

That night, as he packed his bags for college, Rajesh entered his room once again— just as he had that night before the exams. But this time, Ankush was not tense or anxious. He looked peaceful, confident, and ready.

Rajesh smiled softly. “Do you remember that night, son? You were awake till 2 a.m., afraid of forgetting what you studied. And now, you’ve learned the most important lesson— to never forget faith.”

Ankush smiled. “Yes, Dad. I learned that when things seem unfair, it’s not the end— it’s just God testing our patience. Turn your worry into worship, and He turns your battles into blessings.”

Rajesh nodded proudly. “That’s my boy.”

They shared a long, silent moment— filled not with words, but with love, respect, and the quiet joy of victory born out of struggle.

As Ankush left for his new journey, Rajesh stood at the gate, watching him go— his son walking tall into the sunrise of a promising tomorrow.

Vivek side, younger brother,

While Ankush was celebrating his well-earned admission into engineering, life in the Rajesh household had taken on a new rhythm. Yet, Rajesh’s eyes soon turned toward his younger son, Vivek— the child who had always amazed teachers with brilliance, curiosity, and discipline. From nursery to class eleven, Vivek had been the pride of his school— a student who always topped his class and carried a quiet confidence that made even his elders proud.

But this year, as his own 12th board exams approached, something seemed different. Rajesh noticed that Vivek wasn’t as focused as before. His books lay open, but his eyes often drifted out of the window. His once meticulous schedule was replaced with casual studying, long breaks, and hours spent watching motivational videos or reading about business leaders.

One evening, Rajesh entered his room gently. Vivek was listening to a podcast about entrepreneurship while scrolling through some online business case studies.

“Beta,” Rajesh said, “softly, “I’ve been observing you these days. You don’t seem very serious about your exams. You were always so disciplined. What’s going on? These are your board exams— the most important stage before college.”

Vivek removed his earphones, smiled calmly, and said, “Dad, don’t worry. I’ll manage. I’m not careless— I just see things differently now. Marks are important, but not everything.”

Rajesh frowned slightly. “Not everything? But they do decide your future, don’t they? Your brother was so focused, and I was expecting you to perform even better.”

Vivek leaned back in his chair. “Dad, I’ve already decided what I want to do. And in my chosen field, marks won’t define me. I’ll score decently— maybe around the same as Bhaiya. But I don’t want to chase numbers. I want to chase ideas.”

Rajesh raised his eyebrows, a mixture of concern and curiosity in his tone. “Which field is this, where marks don’t matter much?”

“Management,” Vivek replied with quiet confidence. “I want to study business— maybe do my MBA. I want to work in a multinational company, travel, meet people, and create something of my own one day. I love understanding how people think, how markets move, how businesses grow. That excites me, Dad— not formulas or lab reports.”

For a moment, Rajesh was silent. His son’s words were mature— almost beyond his age. He looked at Vivek, not just as a father but as a man who once had his own unfulfilled dreams. Slowly, a smile spread across his face.

“Vivek,” he said, “warmly, “today’s generation is so clear about their path. When I was your age, I didn’t even know what options existed. My father told me to do B. Com and get a job, so I became an accountant. We never questioned— we just followed. But you and Ankush, you both are writing your own stories. I’m proud of that.”

Vivek’s eyes softened. “Thanks, Dad. I know you worked hard for us— and because of that, I can dream freely. I’m not running away from responsibility. I just want to do something meaningful, something that feels like me.”

Rajesh nodded, touched by the maturity in his son’s words. “And that’s all I want— that you both find happiness and purpose. Marks may open doors, but passion decides how far you’ll go once you walk through them.”

Vivek laughed lightly. “You sound like one of my motivational speakers, Dad.”

Rajesh chuckled. “Maybe I’ve learned from both my sons— one taught me perseverance, and the other, perspective.”

The next morning, Rajesh watched as Vivek packed his bag casually for his exam. There was no nervousness, no tension— just quiet confidence. He had a smile that came from inner clarity.

At the gate, Rajesh called out, “Vivek, all the best. Remember, don’t just write what’s in the book— write what’s in your heart too.”

Vivek turned back, his eyes bright. “That’s exactly my plan, Dad.”

After the exams, Rajesh often thought about both his sons— Ankush, the steady and disciplined one, and Vivek, the visionary dreamer. They were two sides of the same coin— one grounded in hard work, the other lifted by imagination.

He realized that life was beautifully balanced that way— where one son proved that persistence could change destiny, and the other showed that clarity could shape the future.

And in that understanding, Rajesh felt a deep peace. He had done his part— not by controlling his sons' paths, but by allowing them to find their own.

Vivek's 12th board results were out— he had scored 75%. The entire family gathered in joy. Rajesh distributed sweets to neighbours, his face glowing with pride. "Both my sons have made me proud," he said, offering sweets to friends and relatives. "Ankush is already settled in engineering, and now Vivek begins his new journey."

Vivek felt a deep mix of excitement and nervousness. He had secured admission in a reputed college for his Bachelor's in Business Administration— the first step toward his dream of studying management and entering the corporate world.

The first morning of college arrived like a festival. He wore a crisp white shirt, jeans, and a watch that his mother had gifted him. His heart raced as he entered the large gate of the campus, filled with unfamiliar faces and loud laughter echoing through the corridors.

Just as he was finding his way to the classroom, a group of senior students blocked his path. One of them, tall and confident, called out, "Hey, smart gentleman, what's your name?"

Vivek stopped, a little startled. "Sir, Vivek," he replied softly.

The senior grinned. "Vivek, hmm... nice name. What does it mean?"

"Sir, it means intelligence," Vivek answered respectfully.

Another senior, with a mischievous smile, leaned forward. "Do you smoke, Mr. Intelligence?"

Vivek shook his head. “No sir, I don’t.”

“So, you’re a fresher and you don’t smoke? That’s not fair,” another teased. “At least offer a cigarette to your seniors.”

“Sir, I don’t smoke, so I don’t have one,” Vivek said, “nervously.

“Then go to the paan shop and bring a pack of cigarettes— and a matchbox,” one of them said, crossing his arms.

Vivek stood frozen for a second, unsure what to do. Another senior laughed and said, “Why are you standing like a statue? Either treat us or run a round of the ground!”

Vivek smiled faintly, trying to ease the tension. “No, sir. I’ll go and bring it. It’s a small thing.”

“Good boy,” one of them said, patting his shoulder. “Go ahead.”

Vivek hurried to the nearby shop, bought a packet of cigarettes and a matchbox, and returned quickly. He handed them over with a polite “Here, sir.”

The tall senior, whose name was Sushil, took the packet and said, “with a friendly tone, “Thanks for the lovely treat. Remember my name— Sushil. If you ever have a problem in college, come to me. I’ll handle it.”

Vivek nodded, “Thank you, sir. May I go to my class now? I’m already late.”

“Of course,” Sushil said. Then, as Vivek turned to leave, he called out, “Wait, come here.”

Vivek stopped and turned around.

Sushil extended his hand with a smile. “Shake my hand, friend. Don’t take it seriously. It’s just a way we seniors connect with freshers. Hope

you'll remember this moment during elections— and don't worry, we'll even pay you for the cigarettes."

Vivek smiled, shaking his hand. "No need for that, sir. I understand. It was nice meeting you."

As Vivek walked away toward his classroom, the group of seniors waved and shouted, "Bye, fresher!"

He turned back and waved with a grin, "Bye, seniors!"

That small encounter, though strange, left an impression on Vivek. It taught him that even awkward beginnings could hold lessons— about confidence, communication, and grace under pressure.

Later that evening, when Rajesh asked how the first day went, Vivek laughed. "It started with a test of courage, Dad— but ended with a few new connections."

Rajesh smiled knowingly. "College life has begun, my son. Remember, keep your head high, your heart kind, and your values clear. The world will respect you for that."

Vivek nodded. Deep inside, he felt a new sense of independence— the first step of a long and promising journey.

Vivek checked with his elder brother Ankush if the same thing had happened to him when he joined college.

Ankush laughed softly and said, "No, I was lucky. Nothing like that happened in my college. They are quite strict there— especially after the government introduced new rules against ragging. Even a small complaint can get a student suspended."

Vivek nodded, feeling a bit relieved but also thoughtful. "Then why do some seniors still take the risk?" he asked.

Ankush replied, “Sometimes, it’s just a show of power, or a silly attempt to bond with juniors. But you handled it well— politely and smartly. You didn’t lose your respect or temper.”

Rajesh, who was listening from the next room, came out and said, “Yes, that’s true. You showed patience and wisdom. Remember, the first test in college is not in the classroom, but in how you deal with people.”

Vivek smiled, understanding the deeper meaning behind his father’s words. His first day had been uncomfortable, but it also taught him that confidence and humility together create strength. As he prepared his books for the next day, he felt more ready— not just for college, but for life’s many tests ahead.

First day in class

Vivek entered the classroom— his first day of college life. Around forty students were present, busy introducing themselves and forming small groups. He quietly chose a seat in the front row, where a friendly-looking boy sat beside him.

“Hi, I’m Ramesh Trikha,” the boy said, “with a warm smile.

“I’m Vivek,” he replied. Soon, both started chatting about their families, schools, and hobbies. By the end of the lecture, they had already decided to visit the canteen together.

The canteen was buzzing with laughter and chatter. Students crowded around the counter, sipping tea and munching on snacks. Ramesh returned with two cups of coffee and bread pakoras.

Vivek hesitated. “Oh, you got coffee? Sorry, I don’t like it much— it tastes bitter.”

Ramesh chuckled. "Add some sugar, it'll taste better. Or should I get tea for you?"

Vivek smiled. "No, it's fine today, but next time I'll prefer milk tea."

Just then, two girls approached and asked politely, "Can we sit here? All other seats are full."

"Of course!" Ramesh said, quickly. "Good company makes snacks tastier."

The girls laughed and sat down. The first one looked at Vivek and teased, "You seem to be trying to impress on the first meeting! Anyway, I'm Sunanda, and she's Akriti. We're in English Honours, first year."

"I'm Ramesh, and this is Vivek. We've just joined BBA," Ramesh replied confidently.

"So you both are heading toward management?" Akriti asked.

Ramesh nodded. "Yes, I'll go into finance. What about you, Vivek?"

"I want to specialize in management," Vivek said, with quiet assurance.

"Wonderful!" Akriti said, smiling approvingly.

Ramesh asked, "What are your plans?"

Sunanda said, "I love literature—maybe teaching in the future."

Akriti added thoughtfully, "I haven't decided yet. My father's an industrialist; he might have his own ideas for me."

Ramesh laughed. "Then our job placements are secure already! You can hire us after graduation."

Akriti raised an eyebrow. "Very clever!"

“Just joking,” Ramesh grinned. “But speaking of serious matters— our coffee’s gone cold. I’ll get another round. What will you have?”

“Let the waiter come,” Sunanda said.

“There’s no waiter here, madam— it’s self-service. The few around are usually serving seniors,” Ramesh replied playfully.

Sunanda laughed. “Then we’ll manage ourselves.”

“No need. Let us play waiter today,” Ramesh said, “with mock respect.

“Alright,” Sunanda smiled. “Two coffees and a chicken sandwich, please.”

Ramesh headed to the counter while Akriti turned to Vivek. “You’re very quiet. Don’t you talk much?”

Vivek hesitated. “Yes, I’m a bit reserved. I come from a simple family and never had much exposure to co-ed environments.”

Akriti smiled kindly. “Don’t worry, Vivek. College life will teach you many new things— it’s a whole new world.”

Ramesh returned balancing the tray, serving everyone like a perfect host. They all enjoyed the snacks and laughter before returning to class.

Later, when the professor didn’t show up, the class turned lively with jokes and chatter. Vivek leaned toward Ramesh and asked, “How can you talk so easily with everyone— even strangers?”

Ramesh grinned. “Don’t go by my traditional name. I studied in a co-ed English medium school. Times have changed— girls are more confident, more competitive. They’re leading in every field. The old restrictions are fading.”

Vivek nodded thoughtfully. "In our home, we had restrictions too. But now I feel like I'll finally get to learn and experience more. Even Akriti noticed my silence and asked why I wasn't speaking."

Ramesh smiled. "That's normal. Once your hesitation fades, you'll enjoy it all."

That evening, at home, Vivek shared everything with his father and brother.

Rajesh listened carefully and said, "Son, enjoy your college life, but remember— your main focus must be your studies. Don't let distractions take over. You have your whole life for other things."

"Yes, Dad," Vivek said, earnestly. "I won't disappoint you."

Then, after a thoughtful pause, he added, "You know, many relationships can't be measured in money or profit. Some bonds don't bring gain— yet they make us richer, wiser, and happier."

Rajesh smiled proudly. "That's true, son. You're learning not just lessons from books, but lessons of life."

Vivek rushed to the Doctors

One evening, after returning from college, Vivek complained of a sharp pain in his stomach. At first, Rajesh thought it might be due to something he had eaten outside, but when the pain didn't subside, they rushed to their family doctor. After examining him, the doctor gave a few medicines and then began explaining gently, wanting Vivek to understand the root cause rather than just treat the symptoms.

"Digestion," the doctor said, "is one of the most vital processes in our body, yet many people pay little attention to how they eat. The way you eat— not just what you eat— determines how well your body digests

and absorbs nutrients. Eating slowly and chewing food properly is the first and most important step for good digestion.”

He continued, “When you chew food thoroughly, the saliva in your mouth begins to break down carbohydrates with enzymes. This makes it easier for the stomach to digest the food later. But when you eat too fast, large pieces of food reach the stomach, forcing it to work harder. This can lead to bloating, gas, acidity, and discomfort— just like what you’re experiencing today.”

Vivek listened quietly as the doctor went on, “Chewing slowly also gives your brain enough time to receive signals of fullness. It takes around twenty minutes for the brain to realize the stomach is full. If you eat quickly, you end up overeating, which burdens your digestion and makes you sluggish.”

The doctor smiled and added, “Practice mindful eating— take small bites, chew each mouthful at least twenty to thirty times, and focus on the taste and texture of food. Avoid watching TV or using your phone while eating. Drink water half an hour before or after meals, not too much during, because it can dilute the digestive juices. And most importantly, eat with gratitude. Food is not just fuel; it’s a gift of nature.”

Rajesh’s father, who was sitting beside Vivek, nodded in agreement. “You are absolutely right, Doctor Sahib. I’ve been telling him the same thing for months. He eats too fast, sometimes scrolling his phone or rushing to finish so he can get back to other work. I always say— when you eat, concentrate only on eating. That’s the time to nourish your body, not to multitask.”

Vivek looked at both his father and the doctor, feeling a little embarrassed but thoughtful. “You’re right,” he said, softly. “I’ll be more careful from now on. I’ll eat slowly and follow all your advice.”

The doctor smiled. “Good. Remember, Vivek— your stomach has no clock, it listens to your habits. If you treat it well, it will serve you faithfully all your life.”

As they left the clinic, Rajesh put his hand on Vivek’s shoulder and said, “warmly, “Son, health is wealth. Learn to respect your body, and it will reward you with strength and happiness.” Vivek smiled, realizing that sometimes the smallest habits— like eating slowly— can make the biggest difference.

Next day, again Ramesh told Vivek to go for coffee in free period, Vivek refused to go to canteen and narrated him yesterday’s gastric problem and having to go to clinic,

Ramesh, let us go to canteen for a change, don’t take anything, just be with me. I am too freshener and fear of any recking. Vivek agrees to go and reaches at the canteen. Ramesh brought coffee and sandwich and offered sandwich to Vivek, he refused, Ramesh took sandwich, it was not fry, yesterday it was bread pakora. Sorry, Ramesh, let me take precaution for some days.

Both Vivek and Ramesh were enjoying their usual chit-chat in the college canteen, sipping cold drinks and watching the colourful crowd of students pass by. The canteen buzzed with laughter, gossip, and the aroma of samosas and coffee.

Ramesh nudged Vivek and whispered, “Yaar, it feels like a fashion show today. Just look at all these stylish girls!”

Vivek laughed and replied, “True, seems like everyone is competing for the best-dressed award.”

Just then, Ramesh’s eyes widened. “Hey, look! Sunanda and Akriti are coming this way.”

Both the girls approached them with bright smiles. "Hello guys, how are you?" Akriti greeted cheerfully.

Ramesh straightened his shirt and replied, "I'm great! What about you both?"

"We're fine too," said, "Kriti. Then she added playfully, "Excuse me, we're heading to research something on the new menu today."

"So, you're not joining us?" Ramesh asked, pretending to be disappointed.

Akriti smiled, "No, we're expecting a few more friends."

Before leaving, she turned to Vivek, "Hey, you're not having anything? Are you fasting or what?"

Vivek smiled politely. "No, actually, I had a stomach infection yesterday. The doctor advised me to avoid outside food for a few days."

"Really?" Akriti said, surprised. "Sunanda, did you hear that? Even he had the same problem yesterday." Then she looked back at Vivek and said, "warmly, "You're doing the right thing— taking care of your health. I should learn from you. In fact, I won't eat anything from here today either."

With a friendly wave, Akriti and Sunanda walked away to join their group a few tables away.

Ramesh leaned toward Vivek and grinned mischievously. "I think she likes you, bro."

Vivek blushed slightly. "No friend, she's too high-class for me— totally out of my league."

"Arre, in college there's no such thing as 'standard,'" Ramesh chuckled. "If you get a chance, just go with the flow."

As they got up to leave, Ramesh noticed something. “See, she’s looking at you again! I told you she’s interested!”

Vivek hesitated, turned around, and indeed– Akriti was glancing in his direction. When their eyes met, she smiled and waved.

Almost involuntarily, Vivek waved back, his heart fluttering slightly.

Ramesh teased, “Oho! Now she’s smiling! This looks serious, Mr. Vivek!”

Vivek, embarrassed and shy, walked out of the canteen trying to hide his smile.

That night, however, sleep didn’t come easily. Every time he closed his eyes, Akriti’s smiling face and that gentle wave reappeared in his mind. Something new had begun stirring in his heart– something he couldn’t quite name yet.

Vivek’s Dengue Diagnosis

When Vivek’s fever wouldn’t come down even after three days, his father Rajesh decided to take him to Dr. Mehra, a well-known physician in their neighbourhood. The doctor examined him carefully, went through the blood test reports, and looked up with a gentle smile.

“Vivek, you are suffering from dengue fever,” he explained calmly. “But don’t worry– it’s a mild case, and you’ll recover soon with proper care and rest.”

Vivek and his father listened carefully as Dr. Mehra continued, explaining in simple terms.

*“Dengue is a **mosquito-borne viral disease**, spread only through the bite of an Aedes mosquito that carries the virus. It doesn’t spread by touch, cough, or sharing food,” he clarified. “These mosquitoes usually bite during the daytime.”*

He took a chart and pointed out the main symptoms— high fever, pain in the eyes, headache, body ache, and joint pain. “In severe cases, it can lead to abdominal pain, bleeding, or difficulty in breathing,” he added. “But in most people, like you, it remains mild and can be managed at home.”

The doctor patiently explained the three stages of the illness—

- **Febrile Phase:** The stage of high fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, nausea, and fatigue.
- **Critical Phase:** Usually after the fever drops, the body becomes weak, and platelet count may fall.
- **Recovery Phase:** Within a few days, appetite returns, the body regains strength, and sometimes a skin rash reappears briefly.

“Right now,” said, Dr. Mehra, “you’re in the febrile phase but recovering well. You must drink lots of fluids— coconut water, juices, soups— and rest completely. Avoid oily food and take light meals. Monitor your platelet count daily for the next five days.”

Vivek nodded, relieved. Rajesh asked softly, “Doctor, anything serious to worry about?”

Dr. Mehra smiled reassuringly. “No, he’s young and strong. Just make sure there are no mosquito bites around. Use repellents, cover water containers, and keep the surroundings clean to prevent breeding.”

He prescribed some medicines for fever and body pain, along with vitamin supplements to aid recovery.

“Within a week, you’ll feel perfectly fine,” he assured. “But remember, health is the first priority— take this as a warning to slow down and take care.”

Rajesh thanked the doctor and took his son home. Over the next few days, the family followed the advice strictly. Vivek rested, stayed hydrated, and gradually regained his strength.

A week later, he was cheerful again— back to his energetic self, ready for college, and grateful that the illness had taught him one important lesson: ***never take health for granted.***

Concern and Friendship

When Vivek finally returned to college after a week of rest, everyone was happy to see him back. He looked a little pale but carried his usual bright smile. As he entered the campus, his friend Ramesh rushed toward him.

“Hey buddy! Finally, the hero returns!” Ramesh exclaimed, patting him on the back. “Yaar, you gave us a scare. I heard you got dengue. How are you feeling now?”

“Much better now,” Vivek said, with a faint smile. “Doctor told me to take it easy for a few more days. But you know me— couldn’t stay home forever.”

They both laughed, but Ramesh noticed how weak he still looked. “You look like a dried mango, bro. You better not join the gym for a week.”

Just then, Akriti and Sunanda came walking toward them. Akriti looked concerned, her usual lively expression replaced with worry.

“Vivek! We heard you weren’t well,” she said, her voice soft. “You should have told us earlier. We would have visited you.”

Vivek felt his heart skip a beat. “It was just dengue... nothing serious,” he replied casually, though inside he was touched by her concern.

Sunanda teased, “Nothing serious? Half the college was talking about you. Akriti was worried every day.”

Akriti blushed slightly, pretending to glare at her friend. “Oh, stop it, Sunanda! I was just checking if he was okay.”

Ramesh laughed aloud. “See, I told you, Vivek— she was thinking about you!”

“Enough, Ramesh,” Vivek said, trying to hide his smile. “I don’t want to faint again from embarrassment.”

Akriti smiled gently and handed him a small box. “Mom made some homemade soup. It’ll help you recover faster. Please don’t skip your meals again.”

Vivek accepted it gratefully. “Thank you, Akriti. That’s really kind of you.”

As they all sat together under the big banyan tree near the college canteen, Vivek listened quietly while his friends chatted and laughed. For the first time in many days, he felt truly happy— not just because he was recovering, but because he realized the value of friendship, care, and small gestures of love.

Later that evening, while walking back home, he thought about what the doctor had said,— “Take this as a warning to slow down and take care.”

Vivek whispered to himself, “Yes, maybe God wanted me to pause and see what really matters— good health, family, and the people who genuinely care.”

That night, when Rajesh entered his room, Vivek looked up from his notebook and smiled.

“Dad,” he said, “softly, “I think falling sick was a blessing in disguise. I got to know who truly cares.”

Rajesh smiled and patted his son’s shoulder. “Sometimes, life teaches us through pauses, my son. The body rests, but the heart learns.”

Vivek nodded thoughtfully, feeling grateful— for health, for family, for friendship, and for that one gentle smile that had stayed in his heart even through the fever.

A Morning Surprise

It was a bright Saturday morning. Vivek was getting ready for college, buttoning his shirt and glancing at the mirror, still humming a tune from his playlist. Just then, the doorbell rang.

“Who could it be so early?” he murmured, walking to the door.

When he opened it, he froze. Standing there, radiant in a pastel-blue outfit, was **Akriti**. Her presence at his doorstep was completely unexpected.

For a moment, Vivek forgot to breathe. Akriti? Here?

“Good morning,” she said, “cheerfully, noticing his stunned expression. “Sorry if I’m too early. I hope I didn’t disturb you.”

“N—no, not at all,” Vivek stammered. “Please... please come in. This is... uh... my small house.”

Akriti smiled politely, stepping in and looking around the modest but neatly kept living room. There was simplicity in every corner— the family photos on the wall, a flower vase his mother loved, and the faint smell of morning incense.

“Please have a seat,” Vivek said, “nervously, pointing to the corner sofa. “I’ll... I’ll just come in a minute.”

He hurried inside, almost tripping on the carpet, and rushed to his father's room. "Dad! Bhaiya! You won't believe who's here."

"Who?" Ankush asked, looking up from his laptop.

"Akriti... from my college," Vivek said, "in a hushed voice. "She's here at our door!"

Ankush raised his eyebrows. "Wait– the same girl who came out of that BMW recently.

"I think so," Vivek said, scratching his head. "I don't even know her that well. We just met in the canteen once!"

Ankush chuckled and whispered to their father, "Dad, I think our little hero is growing up fast."

"Stop it, Bhaiya," Vivek protested. "She just came to... I don't know why she came!"

Rajesh smiled. "Go, son, offer her tea or water. We'll join you in a minute."

Vivek nodded nervously and returned to the living room, trying to appear calm. Akriti was looking at a family photo hanging on the wall– one taken at a hill station years ago.

"Nice picture," she said, "warmly. "Your family looks very close."

"Yes... we are," Vivek replied shyly. "My father is retired now, and my brother is doing engineering."

Just then, Rajesh and Ankush entered the room with a tray of tea and biscuits.

Rajesh smiled kindly. "Namaste, beta. Please have some tea."

"Thank you, Uncle," Akriti said, folding her hands respectfully. "Actually, I came for a small reason."

Rajesh nodded, curious. "Yes, please tell."

Akriti took a small envelope from her purse and smiled. "This Sunday is my birthday. I'm celebrating it at the Hyatt Hotel. I would be very happy if you all come."

Everyone was taken aback for a moment— the Hyatt Hotel!

Rajesh smiled politely. "That's very sweet of you, beta. Congratulations in advance. May God bless you with happiness always."

Ankush added enthusiastically, "Thank you for inviting us. We'll definitely come!"

Vivek just sat there, half smiling, half in disbelief.

Then Akriti turned to him. "Vivek, are you ready for college? If you don't mind, I can drop you off. It's on my way."

Vivek blinked. "You'll... drop me?"

Akriti laughed lightly. "Of course. Do you have any doubts?"

He quickly shook his head. "No, no... just give me a minute."

Rajesh nodded with a small smile, watching his younger son's nervous excitement. "Go, son. Don't make her late."

As Vivek and Akriti stepped out, Ankush closed the door and burst into laughter. "Dad, our Vivek just left in a luxury BMW! Our little brother has officially entered a new world."

Rajesh smiled faintly but remained thoughtful. "Yes, but I'm wondering why she's so interested in him. We're just a simple family—middle class. Her world looks quite different."

Mother, who had just entered the room with folded clothes, overheard the conversation and said, "You both think too much. Today's

generation is different. Friendship doesn't see class or background. Maybe she just likes Vivek's simplicity."

Ankush nodded. "Mom's right. Anyway, this Sunday will be our first time at a five-star hotel. I'm excited already!"

Rajesh chuckled but said, "calmly, "Let's not rush, Ankush. We'll decide together. Sometimes, charm and glitter can mislead. I only want Vivek to stay grounded."

"Don't worry," Mother smiled. "Your son has a good heart. He won't lose his balance."

Rajesh sighed softly, looking out the window where the BMW had just disappeared around the corner. "I hope so," he murmured. "Life is full of surprises— and sometimes, they come wearing designer clothes and a bright smile."

The Birthday at the Hyatt

Sunday arrived with excitement in the air. The whole family was buzzing with energy. Rajesh had ironed his best shirt, Ankush helped his mother choose a simple yet elegant saree, and Vivek stood before the mirror, carefully combing his hair for the fifth time.

"Bhaiya, is this tie looking, okay?" Vivek asked, adjusting it nervously.

Ankush chuckled. "You look like you're going for a job interview, not a birthday party!"

Rajesh smiled proudly. "Still, neatness always speaks first. You look smart, my son."

The family stepped out, hailed a cab, and within half an hour, they reached **Hyatt Regency**, a world far different from their everyday

surroundings. The shining glass walls, fountains, and valet parking attendants in uniform left them momentarily speechless.

“This looks like a palace,” Ankush whispered. Rajesh nodded slowly, holding his wife’s hand. “Yes... it’s grand, very grand.”

Inside, soft music played, and the lobby was decorated with orchids and balloons. The aroma of fresh flowers mixed with the faint scent of perfume. A waiter guided them to the banquet hall where Akriti’s party was being held.

As they entered, the family paused– the hall glittered with lights, chandeliers, and laughter. Guests moved around in elegant clothes, holding drinks and chatting in English.

Then they heard a familiar cheerful voice. “Uncle! Aunty! Vivek! You made it!”

It was Akriti, walking towards them in a light pink gown, her face glowing with happiness. She greeted them warmly and touched Rajesh’s and his wife’s feet respectfully– something they hadn’t expected in such a modern setting.

“Bless you, beta,” Rajesh said, touched by her humility.

Akriti smiled. “Please come, let me introduce you to my parents.”

She led them toward a tall, confident man and a graceful woman– her father, **Mr. Kapoor**, a well-known businessman in the city, and her mother, **Mrs. Kapoor**, an elegant lady with a kind smile.

“Dad, Mom– this is my friend Vivek and his family,” Akriti said.

Mr. Kapoor shook Rajesh’s hand warmly. “Pleasure to meet you, Mr...?”

“Rajesh,” he replied, humbly. “I’m an accountant in a private firm.”

“Ah, I see. That’s wonderful,” Mr. Kapoor said, “with genuine politeness. “Please enjoy the evening. Akriti has told us that Vivek is a bright student.”

Rajesh looked at his son, surprised. “She... told you that?”

Akriti smiled playfully. “Of course. He’s always helping others in class— quiet but focused.”

Vivek blushed, unable to find words.

The family sat together at one of the tables. Soon, soft music filled the room, and the birthday ceremony began. Akriti cut the cake amid applause and cheers. When she offered the first piece to her parents, the second one— to everyone’s surprise— she offered to **Vivek**.

A small hush spread through the room. Some of her friends exchanged glances.

Rajesh noticed it but remained silent, watching his son’s shy smile.

After the ceremony, Ankush whispered to Vivek, “Bhai, I think she really likes you.”

Vivek blushed. “Stop it, Bhaiya. It’s just friendship.”

But even he couldn’t deny the spark he felt— her eyes often searched for him across the crowd, and her laughter softened whenever she spoke to him.

Later in the evening, Akriti walked up to where Vivek’s family sat. “Uncle, Aunt, I’ve arranged dinner for everyone. Please enjoy. I’ll join you soon after meeting a few friends.”

Mrs. Rajesh smiled kindly. “You’re such a nice girl, beta. God bless you.”

Rajesh looked around the banquet— people dressed in luxury, waiters serving delicacies he had never even heard of, but he also saw how

gracefully his wife and sons carried themselves. He felt proud— not of wealth, but of values.

After dinner, as the family prepared to leave, Akriti accompanied them to the car porch. “Uncle, Aunty, I’m so happy you came. It meant a lot to me.”

Rajesh nodded, smiling warmly. “Thank you, beta, for inviting us. You’re a wonderful host. And may you always remain as humble as today.”

“Thank you, Uncle,” she said, “softly. Then turning to Vivek, she added, “And thank you for coming too... I’ll see you in college.”

Vivek nodded, “Sure. Happy Birthday once again.”

As the cab drove them home, Ankush couldn’t stop smiling. “Dad, that was an amazing evening. The food, the lights, the music... I’ll remember it forever.”

Rajesh, looking thoughtful, said, “slowly, “Yes, son. It was grand. But more than that, I saw something rare— kindness in a rich girl’s eyes. Maybe friendship doesn’t need balance sheets.”

Vivek looked out of the window silently, the reflection of the city lights passing over his face. Deep inside, he felt something new— a quiet admiration, mixed with curiosity and gratitude.

Maybe this was how connections were born— not in fancy halls or expensive clothes, but in small gestures of warmth, respect, and understanding.

Akriti and Vivek became good friends in couple of months and today Akriti told Vivek, let us go for movie,

Vivek; you mean I should bunk the class:

Yes, get notes latter from your friend, Ramesh.

Vivek, I don't want to say but he himself is not serious in class, He is a very cool person, he doesn't take any load in himself.

Akriti, tell me you want to go with me or not

Not today as some important lecture is there in the next period.

She turned red with anger and went away from there in anger.

Vivek, please listen to me, but she did not even look back and disappeared from the sight in anger.

Vivek; could not figure out, what happened and was confused about whether he should go to her class to make her happy or to me class to attend the important subject to understand. After sometime, he decided to go to his class and decided to see her latter.

After attending the class, he went to her class direct and he looked around the classroom thoroughly and found her missing. Sunanda called Vivek and asked, "What's the matter? How are you here? Where's that Akriti?"

"She's gone home, saying she's unwell."

Sunanda noticed Vivek's face looked sad. "How are you here? What's the matter?"

"Vivek explained everything."

"Sunanda, she is that crazy. She got angry over such a small thing. It's okay. I'll talk to her tomorrow and explain it to her."

Vivek smiled faintly but still felt a strange heaviness in his heart. That evening, when he returned home, Rajesh immediately noticed his quietness.

"Beta, everything alright? You're unusually silent."

"No, Dad, it's nothing," Vivek murmured and went to his room.

Rajesh turned to Ankush. "Go check on your brother. Something's bothering him."

Ankush entered the room with his usual cheer. "What's up, bro? Why the long face?"

Vivek tried to deny it, "Nothing serious."

Ankush smirked. "Come on, I know it's Akriti. I've seen you two together—once even at the shopping mall. Don't worry, I didn't tell anyone."

Vivek was startled. "Please don't tell Dad, he'll misunderstand."

Ankush laughed. "Relax. Just tell me what happened."

Vivek opened up about the day's events, his confusion, and his guilt.

Ankush patted his shoulder. "Don't overthink, yaar. Everything will be fine."

Just then, Vivek's phone buzzed. It was Akriti. He picked up and stepped aside.

"Hi Vivek," her voice sounded soft, almost apologetic. "I went to your class, and Sunanda said, 'you left early. Are you okay?'"

"I'm fine," Vivek said, "quietly. 'Just wasn't in the mood. Thought your class was more important.'"

"Let's go out tonight," Akriti said, "suddenly. 'Maybe a pub or somewhere chill?'"

"No, I don't drink," Vivek replied.

"I'm not saying to drink," she laughed lightly. "Just to relax, have fun."

"My family isn't that modern, Akriti. I can't lie and go out late," he said, "honestly.

She paused, then said, "softly, "Okay... as you wish," and hung up.

Vivek stared at his phone screen, lost in thought. Ankush, who was still nearby, said, "teasingly, "Bro, you just spoiled the mood! Don't take things so seriously."

"Ankush, she's different... I don't want to mess up my studies or her respect," Vivek said.

Ankush smiled. "It's no one's fault—it's just your age. Sometimes, going out and talking things through helps. Call her and tell her you'll meet tomorrow. I'll handle Dad if needed."

After a long pause, Vivek nodded. He called Akriti again and said, "gently, "Tomorrow, same time?"

Akriti smiled through the line. "Done."

For the first time that day, Vivek felt light again—as if a small cloud had lifted from his heart.

The next morning, Vivek woke up with mixed feelings— a little nervous, a little hopeful. He dressed carefully, checked himself in the mirror twice, and whispered, "Just be normal."

At college, the day felt longer than usual. His eyes kept glancing toward the entrance, waiting for Akriti. Finally, around noon, she appeared— confident, radiant as always, but with a gentler expression than before.

"Hi," she said, "softly, stopping near the canteen.

"Hi," Vivek replied, his heart skipping a beat. "Shall we sit in the garden?"

They walked to a quiet corner of the college garden where a few students sat chatting under the trees. A gentle breeze moved between them as they sat down.

Akriti spoke first. "I'm sorry about yesterday. I didn't mean to overreact. I just thought you were avoiding me."

Vivek smiled faintly. "No, Akriti. I just didn't know how to handle that situation. I'm not used to all this—pubs, late outings, big cars. My world is simple."

Akriti looked at him thoughtfully. "That's what I like about you, Vivek. You're honest. Most people I know pretend to be someone else just to fit in."

He looked surprised. "You mean that?"

"Of course," she said, smiling. "I have friends who have everything money can buy, but they lack peace. You have something rare—simplicity with self-respect."

Her words touched him deeply. "I just don't want you to think I'm old-fashioned," he said, still hesitant.

She laughed lightly. "You're not old-fashioned, you're real. And I need more real people around me."

There was a pause, a pleasant silence filled with unspoken understanding. Birds chirped nearby; the sunlight danced on the leaves.

Akriti broke the silence. "You know, Vivek, life isn't about fancy things or high standards. It's about who makes you feel peaceful when everything else feels noisy."

Vivek nodded. "My father always says— don't chase people or wealth, chase goodness; the rest will follow."

Akriti smiled. "Wise man. I'd love to meet him someday."

Vivek blushed slightly. "You already did— the day you came home."

They both laughed. The tension between them melted away completely.

At that moment, Sunanda walked by and saw them. She grinned and whispered teasingly, "Peace treaty signed, huh?"

Akriti laughed and said, "Yes, Miss Peacemaker!"

After she left, Akriti turned to Vivek. "So, we're friends again?"

Vivek smiled widely. "Not just friends— better friends."

Akriti, so today I will pick you up,

Vivek, don't come to my home, you can pick me up from the Bus stand next road from our house.

As Akriti waved and walked away, Vivek stood there for a moment, smiling quietly. He realized that life often tests patience and understanding through small hiccups— but when handled with honesty, even misunderstandings can bloom into something beautiful.

That evening, when he reached home, his father noticed the calm glow on his face.

Rajesh smiled knowingly. "Looks like the storm has passed."

Vivek laughed softly. "Yes, Dad. And it left behind a rainbow."

Vivek's Evening with Akriti

Vivek reached the bus stand exactly at 8 o'clock. The early morning air had given way to the soft warmth of the evening. As he looked around, he spotted Akriti waiting beside a sleek silver car, scrolling casually through her phone.

“Oh, you’re here before me,” he said, a bit surprised.

Akriti smiled. “Yes, I thought there might be heavy traffic today, but the roads were surprisingly clear. So, I reached a little early.” She looked at him carefully from head to toe and added teasingly, “Come, sit for a while. Some of my other friends are on their way. But first, we need to fix your outfit!”

Vivek blinked, a little puzzled. “Why, what’s wrong with my clothes?”

She laughed softly. “Your jeans are fine, but that shirt— definitely not for a party. You look like you’re headed for a class presentation, not an evening at the Qutub Hotel pub.”

Vivek smiled awkwardly, unsure of how to respond. “If you say so,” he murmured, trying not to sound defensive.

“Perfect,” Akriti said, turning to her driver. “Let’s go to Ambience Mall. We’ll get something nice for you before the party.”

The car purred as they drove through the busy Delhi roads, lights from the shops and cafes reflecting off the glass. Vivek sat quietly beside her, both fascinated and slightly nervous. He had never been to Ambience Mall before, nor had he imagined shopping at luxury stores with someone like Akriti.

As they entered Zara, Akriti moved confidently among the aisles, scanning shirts with a quick, practiced eye. She picked out a dark green T-shirt and handed it to Vivek. “Try this. Go to the fitting room— let’s see how it looks.”

Vivek hesitated but obeyed. A few minutes later, he came out wearing the T-shirt. Akriti’s eyes lit up. “Wow! You look amazing— see, I told you. Now you look like someone going to a party, not a parent-teacher meeting.”

Vivek smiled shyly. "Then let me take my old shirt."

Akriti waved her hand. "Leave it there. You don't need it."

"Sorry," he said, "gently but firmly, "I can't do that." He folded his old shirt neatly and put it in his backpack.

Akriti raised an eyebrow, half amused, half impressed. "You're impossible," she said, laughing.

At the billing counter, before Akriti could take out her card, Vivek stopped her. "Please, let me pay. You've already done enough."

"Vivek, that's not fair," she protested, but he had already handed his card to the cashier.

As they walked out, she smiled with mock annoyance. "Fine, Mr. Gentleman. But now I owe you one."

Outside, Vivek checked the bill and gasped slightly. "Fifty thousand rupees... for one T-shirt?"

Akriti laughed out loud. "Welcome to my world!"

He looked at her, half embarrassed, half smiling. "In my world, that's the price of two months of college canteen meals."

"Then you'd better enjoy this party," she said, tapping his shoulder.

The car stopped at the Qutub Hotel. The grand entrance shimmered under the golden lights, and the faint sound of live music floated from inside. As they walked through the marble lobby, Vivek felt as if he had stepped into a different universe— the scent of perfume, the laughter of people dressed elegantly, and the soft clink of glasses.

They entered the bar area, where some of Akriti's friends were already seated— chatting, laughing, and sipping their drinks. Akriti introduced Vivek to everyone. "This is Vivek, my college mate."

One of the guys raised his glass. “Hey Vivek, welcome! Akriti’s friend is our friend.”

Vivek smiled politely and nodded. He felt slightly out of place but tried to relax. Akriti noticed his unease and leaned closer. “Don’t worry, just be yourself.”

He nodded, grateful for her kindness.

A Night of Contrasts

She told the driver, “Take us to *Selah, Qutub Hotel*, Qutab Institutional Area.”

As the car glided through the South Delhi roads, Akriti turned to Vivek with a confident smile.

“Hope you’ll like the place,” she said. “Selah is a standout destination in Delhi’s nightlife— elegant, vibrant, and full of energy. It’s where you go when you want a night to remember.”

Vivek nodded, slightly nervous but curious. Akriti continued, almost like a guide introducing a new world.

“It’s got everything— an indoor lounge for quiet dinners, a terrace with the city skyline, and a dance floor that comes alive after 10. You’ll see.”

The car stopped under the glowing sign of *Selah*. The air smelled of perfume, music, and excitement. Inside, warm lights, velvet chairs, and rhythmic beats filled the space.

They found a cozy table near the terrace. Akriti ordered mocktails, knowing Vivek didn’t drink.

“Two virgin mojitos, and a plate of cheese croquettes,” she told the waiter.

As the evening settled in, the conversation turned easy— college jokes, favourite movies, dreams of travel. Vivek listened more than he spoke, but every time Akriti laughed, her eyes sparkled in a way that drew him in.

For a brief moment, he forgot about their worlds being different— her luxury, his simplicity— and just felt happy to be there, sharing that warmth.

Terrace Moments

Later, Vivek stepped out to the open terrace. The night breeze carried the faint hum of music from inside. The city lights of South Delhi stretched endlessly below them.

Akriti joined him quietly, standing beside him.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” she said, “softly.

“Yes,” Vivek replied— but his eyes were on her, not the skyline.

She noticed, smiled faintly, and looked away. “You know, you’re not as boring as you look in class.”

Vivek laughed. “Thanks, I think.”

“Why not take a beer?” she teased.

“I had it once, long ago— at my cousin’s wedding. I lost control and embarrassed everyone. I stopped after that,” he said, “truthfully.

Before she could respond, her group of friends arrived— loud, laughing, full of energy.

“Hey, Akriti! There you are!” one of them shouted.

They all began dancing near the bar, pulling Akriti along. One of her friends turned to Vivek, amused.

“Dude, you’re drinking Coke? Come on, have a whisky or at least a beer!”

Vivek smiled politely. "No thanks, I don't drink."

"Just one bottle, man. Nothing happens in one or two," the friend insisted, handing him a chilled bottle.

Vivek hesitated. He looked at Akriti— she gave a playful nod, half teasing, half encouraging.

"Okay, fine," he said, "quietly."

One bottle turned into three as the night grew louder— laughter, music, and cheers blending into a dizzy blur. Vivek danced awkwardly at first, but soon even he couldn't resist the rhythm.

Then someone shouted, "Let's take one for the road— it's already midnight!"

The moment Vivek heard "12 a.m.", the world around him froze. His heart raced.

"Oh God," he muttered, his mind suddenly clear. "It's 12 already... My father will kill me!"

He rushed to Akriti.

"Please, we have to go now," he said, "urgently."

Akriti, half-drunk and carefree, laughed. "Relax! The night's young. People stay till three."

"Please, Akriti, I'm serious. I can't face my dad if I'm late."

She sighed, then looked at him gently. "Fine. You're not in a state to argue. I'll take you to my place. You can go home in the morning."

Vivek froze. "What? No, I can't do that."

"Don't worry," she said, holding his hand. "Your brother called. I told him we'd be late. He said, 'he'll manage your dad.'"

Vivek was stunned. "You... talked to Ankush?"

“Yes,” she said, “with a tipsy smile. “He’s sweet. Don’t overthink.”

Before he could say anything, she stumbled, almost falling. He caught her by the arm. She was drunk—her words slurred, her steps uncertain.

“Driver, bring Car,” she ordered, still holding onto Vivek’s hand tightly.

They sat in silence as the car rolled through the sleeping city. She leaned against his shoulder, half-conscious. The scent of her perfume mixed with the faint smell of alcohol.

Vivek’s heart pounded. He wanted to push her away— and yet, something in him didn’t move.

When the car stopped, the driver said, “Madam, ghar aa gaya.”, We are at Home.

“Akriti, we’ve reached,” Vivek whispered, patting her arm.

She stirred weakly, opened her eyes, and whispered, “Help me inside.”

Still unsure, he helped her to the door. She fumbled with her purse, found the key, and opened the door. Inside, the house was silent. She led him to her room, collapsed onto the bed, and within seconds, was asleep.

Vivek tried to wake her twice, then thrice— no response. He stood there, frozen between panic and confusion.

“What have I gotten into?” he whispered to himself.

Finally, he stepped quietly into another room, sat on the couch, and stayed awake till dawn.

When the first light of morning filtered through the curtains, he got up silently and left the house, his heart heavy with confusion— guilt, fear, and something he couldn’t name.

For the first time, Vivek felt the *real taste of adulthood*— not freedom, but the burden of choices, mistakes, and emotions that no one had prepared him for.

At Home

When he entered the house, the clock showed 7 am . His father, Rajesh, was sitting in the living room, wearing his reading glasses. The TV was off. That meant only one thing— he had been waiting.

“Where were you, Vivek?” Rajesh asked quietly, not angry but serious.

“Papa, I was with Akriti and her friends— at a party.”

“At this hour?” His father’s voice sharpened slightly. “You could have at least called.”

“Yes, Papa. Sorry. It got late.” But Ankush was aware and was informed.

Rajesh looked at him for a moment, then at his new shirt. “New clothes?”

Vivek nodded. “We went to the mall before the party. Akriti helped me choose this.”

Rajesh raised an eyebrow. “And you paid for it?”

No , Papa.” Akriti paid, I was paying but she said,” I have already paid.

Rajesh took off his glasses slowly.

Vivek looked down, guilty but honest.

There was silence. Rajesh sighed and leaned back. “Vivek, I’m not angry. You’re growing up. But just remember— money should never buy confidence. Simplicity is your strength. Don’t lose it.”

Vivek nodded silently.

His father softened his tone. “Akriti seems like a nice girl. Just... stay grounded, beta. These new friendships can be exciting, but don’t forget who you are.”

“I won’t, Papa,” Vivek said, “quietly.”

Rajesh smiled faintly. “Good. Now go take rest. Tomorrow will bring its own surprises.”

Vivek went to his room, lay on his bed, and looked at the ceiling. His mind replayed the evening— Akriti’s laughter, her words, the way she said, “Mr. Honest.”

He smiled to himself. Somewhere deep inside, a small seed had been planted— of admiration, curiosity, and something he couldn’t yet name.

The Morning After

Vivek woke up with a pounding head. The faint sunlight filtered through the curtains, blinding his heavy eyes. His throat was dry, his body sluggish— a strange mix of confusion and regret clouded his mind.

For a moment, he didn’t know where he was. The memories of last night came rushing back— the music, the laughter, the beer, Akriti leaning on his shoulder, her house, her room...

He sat up abruptly, his head spinning.

“Oh God,” he murmured, holding his temples. “What have I done?”

After a few minutes of stillness, he slowly got out of bed and splashed water on his face. The reflection in the mirror looked foreign— tired eyes, unshaven face, and a guilt he couldn’t hide.

Just then, the door creaked open. Ankush peeked in, holding a mug of tea.

“Brother, what happened? Are you still sleeping? It’s almost ten,” he said,” with a teasing tone.

Vivek turned away. “Don’t ask, bhaiya... I’m not feeling well.”

Ankush’s expression shifted from playful to curious. “What happened last night? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

Vivek sighed, sitting heavily on the edge of the bed. “She... she drinks a lot. I didn’t know she was like that. She was completely high. I somehow brought her home safely. God knows how I controlled myself.”

Ankush’s eyes widened. “Oh my God. You didn’t do anything wrong, did you?”

Vivek looked up sharply. “No! Never. I wouldn’t. I just helped her, that’s all.”

Ankush exhaled in relief but still shook his head. “You’re lucky you had sense left. Dad was suspicious last night. He kept asking me where you were.”

Vivek’s heart sank. “What did you say?”

“I told him Akriti was celebrating her birthday with her friends and you’d be late. He wasn’t convinced, but he didn’t press much.”

Vivek buried his face in his hands. “I can’t do this anymore, bhaiya. She’s from a different world— expensive cars, luxury hotels, parties till 3 a.m. I don’t belong there. If I continue this friendship, my career... my life will be ruined.”

Ankush sat beside him and placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “Calm down, Vivek. I know it feels heavy, but don’t overthink. God will sort things out. You did nothing wrong. Just rest today, don’t go to college. Let your mind settle.”

Vivek nodded faintly. “You’re right. I just... I don’t want to see anyone today.”

He leaned back on his pillow. Ankush quietly drew the curtains and left the room.

Within minutes, Vivek closed his eyes again— but sleep didn’t come easy. His thoughts swirled like smoke: Akriti’s laughter, her eyes, her drunken words, and the silent guilt he carried.

He whispered to himself before drifting into uneasy rest,

“I wish last night never happened...”

The morning had passed, but its shadows stayed— not in the room, but in Vivek’s heart. For the first time, he understood how fragile boundaries could be— between friendship and attraction, adventure and regret, impulse and conscience.

The Morning After: Akriti’s Side

It was almost noon when Akriti stirred. Her head throbbed faintly, and her lips were dry. The faint sunlight seeped through the sheer curtains, touching her face like a whisper. She sat up slowly, looking around in confusion— the clothes she had worn last night were lying carelessly on the couch, her purse half-open on the table.

The memory of the previous night flickered before her eyes— the bar, the laughter, Vivek’s quiet smile, and then... nothing.

Startled, she looked around the room.

“Vivek?” she called softly, expecting a response from somewhere.

Silence.

She walked through her spacious bedroom and opened the door to the next room. Empty.

Her heart quickened a little. Where had he gone? Did he leave early? Was she rude?

She stepped out into the hallway, her bare feet pressing against the cold marble floor, and found the maid changing the bedsheets in the guest room.

“Rita,” she said, “did you see any boy here in the morning?”

The maid looked puzzled. “No, Madam. I’ve been here since seven o’clock. I didn’t see anyone. Who are you asking about?”

Akriti frowned slightly. “You just do your work. You ask too many questions sometimes.”

She turned abruptly and walked toward the main gate. The security guard stood at attention as soon as he saw her approaching.

“Did you see Vivek leave?” she asked sharply.

The guard hesitated, adjusting his cap. “Madam, are you talking about the young man who came with you last night?”

She looked at him, surprised. “You were on duty at night?”

“No, Madam. The night guard told me. He said, “you came home late and the boy went inside with you. Early morning, before sunrise, someone left quietly.”

Akriti’s face flushed— half embarrassment, half irritation. “You people keep a little too close an eye,” she muttered.

The guard added cautiously, “Madam, your father left for the office around ten. He was asking what time you came home last night.”

Her heart sank. “He asked that?”

“Yes, Madam.”

Without another word, Akriti turned back toward the house. Her steps were quick, her mind racing. She picked up her phone and dialled her father's number.

"Dad," she said, her voice calm but edged. "Why did you ask the guard what time I came home? You could've asked me directly."

Her father's voice was firm but soft on the other end. "Beta, I just asked casually. You came home late. You know I worry."

"Dad, I'm not a child anymore."

"I know," he sighed. "But I also received an SMS about your credit card— some Zara shopping, matching T-shirts? Who was that for?"

Akriti hesitated for a second, then smiled faintly. "Oh, that was just a return gift. Vivek and his family came to my birthday party."

Her father chuckled lightly. "So, it was for that boy, huh?"

"Dad!" she protested. "You read too much into everything."

"Maybe," he said, "but I'm still your guardian. I have a right to know where you're going and with whom. I just want you to be careful."

Akriti sighed, exasperated. "Dad, I'm over eighteen. I know what I'm doing. Please stop treating me like a kid."

"Once you get married," he replied calmly, "you can live as freely as you want. Until then, let me worry. I'm your father, not your enemy."

His words lingered between them— sharp, protective, and filled with concern.

"Fine, Dad," she said, "finally. "I'm going to college now. Bye."

"Take care, beta," he said, his voice softening.

When the call ended, Akriti stood for a moment, staring out the window. The morning breeze ruffled the curtains. A part of her felt annoyed— yet somewhere deep down, she knew her father wasn't entirely wrong.

She went to her dressing mirror, picked up the dark green T-shirt that Vivek had worn the previous day, and held it for a moment. A strange warmth passed through her.

"He's different," she thought. "Simple... honest. But maybe too different for my world."

She placed the T-shirt neatly on her bed and whispered, almost to herself,

"I wonder if he'll even talk to me again."

Vivek's Silence

Rajesh was quite concerned about Vivek. Ever since Akriti's party, Vivek had been unusually quiet— withdrawn and not even eating properly.

Finally, Rajesh spoke to his elder son, Ankush.

Rajesh: "I'm really worried about Vivek. He hasn't been himself lately. Do you know what's wrong?"

Ankush: "Dad, I think he's in love with Akriti. But after seeing her lifestyle, he's confused... maybe wondering if he could ever match that in the future."

Rajesh: "That's serious. If this goes on, he might lose focus on his studies. Depression can be dangerous."

Ankush: "Dad, I've met Akriti too— she's actually a good girl. Maybe she goes clubbing once in a while, but that doesn't define her. Let's not jump to conclusions. I'll talk to him and guide him."

Rajesh smiled.

Ankush: “Why are you smiling?”

Rajesh (chuckling): “Just thinking— a boy with no experience in love is going to give advice about it!”

Ankush (grinning): “I may not have personal experience, but I’ve seen and learned from others’ stories, Dad.”

Rajesh: “Good. Why don’t you take him somewhere for a change? A short holiday might refresh his mind. You can talk to him there.”

Taking his father’s advice, Ankush went to Vivek’s room.

Ankush: “Hey bro, what’s going on?”

Vivek (dull tone): “Nothing much.”

Ankush: “I was thinking of going to Varanasi. It’ll be a good spiritual trip— and with Lord Shiva’s blessings, everything will fall into place. You’re a great devotee of Shiva, right?”

Vivek looked at him silently for a moment, then nodded.

Ankush: “So, should I book the tickets?”

Vivek (half-heartedly): “Yeah... okay, book it.”

That evening, Ankush returned with the details.

Ankush: “All set! We’re going by Vande Bharat Express— train number 22436. Departs at 6 AM, reaches by 2 PM.”

Vivek: “Eight hours? That’s fast!”

Ankush: “Yes, and comfortable too— clean, neat, and efficient.”

Vivek (smiling faintly): “I’ve heard that. It’s been so long since we went anywhere together. Who’s paying for it?”

Ankush: “Dad gave me ₹15,000 for the trip.”

Vivek (with emotion): “He’s incredible. Always giving up his own wishes for us. One day we’ll make sure he lives the life he

deserves.”

Ankush: “Of course, bro.”

The next morning, they reached the station at 5:45 AM. As they waited for the train, Vivek stopped by a bookstall and bought a Bollywood magazine.

Just as he turned around, he froze— Akriti was standing right in front of him.

Vivek (shocked): “Akriti? You’re here?”

Akriti (smiling): “Hi! Yes, I came to drop off my mom. She’s going to Varanasi too. And you?”

Vivek: “Same. Going for darshan.”

Akriti: “Oh! By the way, why haven’t you been coming to college? I even asked Ramesh, but he didn’t know. You haven’t been answering my calls either.”

Before Vivek could respond, the train whistle blew.

Vivek: “I’ll miss my train! Let’s talk when I’m back.”

Akriti: “Sure. Don’t worry. We’re good friends, right? Let’s keep it that way.”

Vivek (nodding): “Yes... definitely.”

He rushed to board the train.

Once seated, Ankush teased him,

Ankush: “So, Akriti at the station— divine coincidence, huh? Lord Shiva’s blessing! Maybe this trip will clear your misunderstandings.”

Vivek (smiling for the first time): “Maybe you’re right.”

Ankush (laughing): “Look at you! Your face already looks brighter!”

As the train sped ahead, some women began singing devotional songs dedicated to Lord Shiva. The brothers joined in, and the eight-hour journey flew by like a dream.

By 2 PM, they arrived in Varanasi, took a rickshaw, and headed toward their hotel— hearts lighter, hopes rekindled.

Varanasi: The City of Light

After checking into their hotel, Ankush and Vivek went straight to the concierge desk to arrange for a local guide for the following morning. The staff assured them that an experienced guide would meet them the next day to show them the true soul of Varanasi.

The Guide's Introduction

The next morning, after a quick tea, guide, **Mr. Mishra**, greeted them in the lobby with a warm smile.

He began, “Varanasi, or Kashi as we call it, lies on the sacred banks of the Ganges. It’s not only India’s holiest city but also one of the oldest living cities in the world. Every stone here whispers a story. People come from every corner of the world to seek spiritual awakening. From the ghats to the temples, everything here has a divine rhythm. And nearby lies **Sarnath**, where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment.”

Vivek and Ankush listened with deep interest. The air itself felt ancient and sacred.

Morning on the Ganges

Before dawn, the brothers followed their guide to the riverbank for the **sunrise boat ride**. The city was still asleep, wrapped in a misty silence, broken only by the rhythmic sound of the oars cutting through the water.

As their boat glided along the Ganges, they watched priests and pilgrims performing their morning prayers on the ghats, their chants blending with the sound of temple bells. The rising sun turned the river golden, and for a moment, Vivek felt his heart lighten— as if some invisible burden had been lifted.

After the soulful ride, they stopped at a famous local eatery for breakfast. The place was crowded, filled with the aroma of freshly fried **puri bhaji**— crisp breads with spicy potato curry. Despite the rush, every bite was worth it.

Walking Through History

Later that afternoon, they explored Varanasi on foot with their guide. The narrow lanes were like a living maze— vibrant, noisy, and full of life. The guide shared stories about every temple, every shrine they passed, adding meaning to what they saw.

They visited several sacred ghats and temples, learning about their mythological and historical significance. The brothers then requested to try some local street food, and the guide took them to a small stall famous for **tamatar chaat**— a spicy blend of tomatoes and potatoes smothered in chutney and topped with crisp sev. The taste was tangy, fiery, and unforgettable.

In the nearby **bazaar**, they bought gifts for their parents— a silk kurta-pyjama for their father and a beautiful Banarasi saree for their mother. The silk shimmered like liquid gold under the market lights.

Evening Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat

As the sun began to set, they made their way to **Dashashwamedh Ghat**, the heart of Varanasi's spiritual energy. Hundreds of lamps illuminated the riverfront. A long line of priests, dressed in saffron, performed the **Ganga Aarti**, offering sacred fire to the river as conch shells and bells echoed through the air.

Hundreds of boats floated on the water, filled with pilgrims and visitors chanting in unison. The brothers sat silently, mesmerized. The flickering flames reflected in the river looked like stars fallen from the heavens.

Vivek whispered, “I remember watching this on TV once... even the Prime Minister of Japan joined our Prime Minister here for the Aarti. But being here in person— it’s something else entirely.” Ankush nodded. “It feels like the soul itself is glowing.”

In that sacred moment, both felt a deep connection— mind, body, and spirit aligned. They silently thanked Lord Shiva for bringing them here and for blessing them with peace.

Discovering the Soul of Kashi

Later, their guide took them to the *Annapurna Temple*, recently in the news because the ancient idol of the Goddess— stolen a thousand years ago— had been brought back from the UK. They offered prayers and felt proud of their culture’s revival.

Walking back through the narrow lanes, they bought a brass *diya* and a glass memento to remember their journey. The guide explained, “Until recently, these lanes were extremely cramped, with electric wires hanging everywhere. Thanks to the new corridor, it’s all open and organized now— the city breathes again.”

The brothers nodded in appreciation. They could feel the pulse of history and spirituality around them.

Homeward Thoughts

That night, as they prepared to return to Delhi, Vivek felt transformed. The silence that had once burdened him was replaced by calm understanding.

Standing on the balcony, looking at the distant glow of the ghats, he said,"softly,

"Ankush... maybe Lord Shiva brought me here to remind me that life keeps flowing, just like this river. Whatever happens, love, pain, joy—it all moves on."

Ankush smiled and placed a hand on his shoulder.
"Yes, bro. The Ganges washes away not just sins, but sadness too."

The Unexpected Encounter

Before leaving the next morning, both bowed their heads in gratitude—carrying back not just souvenirs, but peace, strength, and the divine energy of Varanasi.

At the railway station, as they prepared to board their train, Vivek suddenly leaned toward Ankush and whispered, "See there... Akriti's mother."

Ankush turned quickly, surprised. "Where?"

Vivek nodded slightly toward the platform. "There— she's walking this way."

As if sensing their gaze, Akriti's mother noticed them whispering and walked closer with a curious smile.

"You were hinting at me... do you know me?" she asked politely.

Both young men froze for a moment, unsure what to say.

Finally, Ankush spoke hesitantly, "Madam, I'm Ankush— and this is Vivek. We had come to your house on Akriti's birthday."

Her eyes lit up with recognition. "Yes, yes... I remember now. Your parents had come too, right?"

"Yes, Madam," Ankush replied.

She turned toward Vivek. "And you... you came recently to drop her home late at night, didn't you?"

Vivek looked down, almost embarrassed. In a low voice he said, "Yes, Madam. She had invited me for her party."

A knowing smile touched her face. "I know. You've been quite the topic in our family these days."

Vivek's eyes widened slightly. "I'm sorry, Madam, if anything went wrong."

She shook her head kindly. "No, no, not at all. In fact, I should thank you for dropping her home safely. We were all just surprised that she had consumed more than her usual. She rarely drinks, but I suppose meeting so many old friends made her want to celebrate freely." She was rather upset, why she took more and it might have given bad impression to you.

The announcement for her train echoed across the platform. She picked up her bag and said, "warmly, "I must board now. Hope to see you again."

"Yes, Aunty. Sure," Vivek replied with a faint smile.

"What's your coach number?" he asked.

"It's in the first coach— first class, she answered.

She nodded. "Good. Don't worry about me— my driver is here." With a graceful smile, she waved and walked toward her train.

Ankush and Vivek soon settled into their seats.

Ankush chuckled softly. "Brother, what a fate you have! First Akriti in Delhi, now her mother here in Varanasi. Looks like God is arranging your journey with a personal touch!"

Vivek smiled faintly but remained quiet.

Ankush teased, “By the way, what did she mean by saying you’re the ‘current topic’ in their family?”

Vivek sighed. “I already told you— nothing happened. Maybe that late-night drop became the subject of discussion.”

Ankush laughed. “Even silence can create stories sometimes.”

Vivek didn’t respond. After a while, he leaned back, closed his eyes, and soon drifted into sleep— calm and peaceful. When dinner was served, he quietly refused.

Ankush watched him for a moment, smiled, and thought, “Strange are the ways of destiny— sometimes it brings people together not once, but twice, just to remind us that some connections are still unfinished.”

In the train, opposite us some people were chatting, which was quite interesting.

The Mirror Within

It was a bright Sunday morning when Krishna gathered his group of senior friends— Ved, Mukesh, and Rajesh— at the garden bench they called their “wisdom corner.” A gentle breeze rustled the peepal leaves as they sipped their tea and shared their usual banter.

That day, Ved looked unusually quiet. Krishna noticed and asked, “What’s the matter, Ved? You look like a philosopher lost in his own thoughts.”

Ved smiled faintly. “Maybe I am. My grandson, Aarav, had an argument with his teacher yesterday. Instead of admitting his mistake, he blamed the whole class. When I asked him why he didn’t

apologize, he said, 'I didn't do anything wrong.' It made me think—are we really growing up, or just growing old?"

Rajesh nodded. "Hmm, today's generation often thinks saying sorry is a sign of weakness."

Krishna stirred his tea and said, "softly, "No, my friend, saying sorry is the biggest sign of strength. You are not grown up until you know how to communicate, apologize, be truthful, and take accountability without blaming someone else. That's real maturity."

Mukesh chuckled, "That's true even for us! Last week when my wife was upset, I first blamed her for being moody— but later I realized I was the one who forgot our anniversary. I apologized, and peace returned faster than I expected."

Everyone laughed.

After a moment, Krishna leaned forward and said, "You see, life gives everyone two mirrors— one of positivity, one of negativity. Positive thinkers have a solution for every problem, while negative thinkers find a problem for every solution."

Ved nodded thoughtfully. "Exactly. Aarav's teacher told him to lead the class cleaning duty for a week. Instead of seeing it as punishment, I told him to see it as an opportunity— to show leadership. That's how positivity works— it changes the lens, not the world."

The group sat silently for a while, watching children play in the garden. The laughter of those little ones broke through the air, pure and carefree.

Rajesh smiled, "Children forgive and forget so easily. They fight, cry, and play again in five minutes. As we grow older, our ego grows faster than our heart."

Krishna closed his eyes for a moment and said, “Yes, and when ego rules, peace disappears. Positivity isn’t about ignoring problems— it’s about believing that solutions exist. The more we communicate with truth and humility, the clearer our path becomes.”

As the morning sun rose higher, the group stood up to leave. Ved said, “I’ll talk to Aarav tonight, not to scold him— but to tell him what you just said. Maybe he’ll start using the mirror of positivity.”

Krishna smiled, “And remind him— when you point one finger at others, three fingers still point back at you.”

Everyone laughed again, their hearts lighter, their minds wiser.

As they walked home, the words lingered in the air—
“Stay positive. Speak truth. Accept responsibility. That’s the real sign of growing up.”

One person sang poem and then explained thoroughly.

From Demand to Delight

There is no limit to demand,
Desire walks hand in hand
With dreams unending, fleeting, vast—
Yet peace arrives when longing’s past.

When I remember my gift, I am glad,
For life itself is the treasure I had.
The breath I take, the sky I see,
Are blessings flowing endlessly.

When I am glad, my heart is light,
Darkness fades before its sight.
When gladness deepens into cheer,
Joy whispers softly, "I am here."

When my mind is happy, still, and clear,
All worldly noise I cease to hear.
My body rests, serene, aware,
As peace pervades the silent air.

When my body is tranquil, calm, and free,
A gentle pleasure arises in me.
Not born of want, nor bound by gain,
But joy that blooms beyond all pain.

When pleasure so pure begins to stay,
My wandering mind forgets to stray.
It centres deep, both firm and kind,
A single flame in the winds of mind.

This calm becomes my spirit's ground,
Where higher truths in silence sound.
Faith and wisdom softly start
To glow within my open heart.

And from this glow, enlightenment gleams,
The end of chase, the birth of dreams.
Where demand dissolves, contentment flows,
And the light of being gently grows.

The Chain of Inner Joy (Explanations)

There is truly no limit to human demand. Desires multiply like ripples in water— one fulfilled, another born. Yet amidst this endless chase, a moment of remembrance can awaken something deeper. When I

remember my gift— not the one wrapped in paper, but the gift of life itself, the breath that sustains me, the mind that can think, and the heart that can feel— I shall be glad.

When I am glad, my soul begins to smile. Gratitude takes root, and happiness quietly blossoms within. This happiness is not the noisy celebration of possession, but the peaceful recognition of abundance already present.

When my mind is happy, my body too becomes calm. The heart beats evenly, the breath deepens, and every cell seems to rest in harmony. The storms of restlessness subside, and in that stillness, a quiet joy begins to glow.

When my body is tranquil, I experience pleasure— not sensual pleasure, but the gentle delight of being alive. This pleasure refines itself into contentment, and contentment gives birth to focus.

When the mind feels such pure pleasure, it naturally becomes concentrated. Wandering thoughts return home, like tired birds finding their nest. In that concentration lies awareness— clear, unshaken, luminous.

This awareness sustains the spiritual factor in my being— the subtle energy that connects body, mind, and soul. It becomes the current that flows through my inner world, nurturing faith, mindfulness, and wisdom.

And when these qualities grow together, they lead to enlightenment— not a distant goal, but a living experience of peace, balance, and understanding.

Thus, from remembrance of a simple gift arises gladness, happiness, tranquillity, and finally illumination— a journey from endless demand to eternal contentment.

What a depth in their message, Vivek said.

Ankush, yes in deed.

Both Ankush and Vivek deboarded the train at Delhi. To their pleasant surprise, they again met Aakriti and her mother on the platform. They exchanged warm smiles, greeted each other politely, and promised to meet again sometime.

As they walked toward the taxi stand, Ankush observed the subtle glances and quiet gestures between Vivek and Aakriti. He could clearly sense the bond forming between them.

On the way home, Ankush broke the silence.

“It seems she’s quite serious about you, Vivek,” he said, “with a teasing smile.

Vivek looked thoughtful. “I really don’t know, Ankush. I’m puzzled. After that party episode, I’ve been cautious. I’ll take my time to understand her. This could turn out well... or completely ruin my peace.”

The Vocabulary Challenge

One evening, Vivek and Ankush were sitting in their room, talking about the day’s events. The topic drifted, as it often did, toward her—Akriti.

Vivek sighed, shaking his head. “You know, sometimes she uses such hard English words, it’s impossible to understand her. Half of them just fly over my ears!”

Ankush grinned mischievously. “Oh really? For example?”

Vivek picked up a notebook from his table and flipped through it. “Here, listen to these— she once called someone a couch potato, another time she said,”her colleague was a workaholic. Then she

said,”her cousin is a social butterfly and her uncle is henpecked! Can you believe that? And yesterday she used bookworm, cheapskate, chatterbox, and slacker! I didn’t understand a single one.”

Ankush burst out laughing. “That’s easy, Vivek! Let me decode them for you.”

He began, counting on his fingers:

“Couch potato– a lazy person who spends hours watching television.

Workaholic– a person who loves to work all the time.

Social butterfly– someone who’s very friendly and loves parties.

Henpecked– a husband who always listens to his wife; in Hindi, joru ka gulam!”

Vivek laughed aloud. “That’s a good one!”

Ankush continued, “Cheapskate– a miser.

Bookworm– someone who loves reading books; in Hindi, kitabi keeda.

Chatterbox– a talkative person, batooni.

And slacker– someone lazy who avoids work.”

Vivek clapped his hands. “Oh, bro, you got a hundred percent marks! I checked some of these later in the dictionary, and you’re absolutely right. These are just a few examples I remember– she has an entire vocabulary bank in her head!”

Ankush smiled proudly. “Keep reading, you’ll pick it up too. Every new word adds to your confidence– and your charm.”

Vivek nodded thoughtfully. “Yes, I read my academic books, but not novels. Maybe I should start.”

Ankush placed his hand on Vivek’s shoulder. “Be positive, my brother. The more you learn, the brighter you grow.”

Vivek smiled faintly, looking at the open dictionary on his desk—perhaps the beginning of a new habit.

Vivek just smiled faintly and looked out of the window, choosing not to continue the discussion.

When they reached home, they shared every detail of their trip with their father.

Their father listened patiently and said, “It seems that girl and her family are religious and devotional. That’s a very good sign. Pious people usually understand life better and learn to adjust to situations gracefully. I’m happy you both experienced such divinity and the blessings of Lord Shiva.”

Vivek nodded. “Dad, the aarti was beyond expectations. The entire atmosphere was filled with devotion. Even the vendors were moving from one boat to another—selling water, snacks, and even applying tilak on people’s foreheads. Ankush also got one, but the paste caused a burning sensation! We had to rush to a chemist and apply some cream.”

“That’s not fair,” the father frowned. “The government should not allow such vendors to sell unsafe products. It’s risky. But overall, I’m glad you both enjoyed the trip.”

After a pause, he added with a gentle smile, “By the way, today is Nanak’s birthday. I’m going to the Gurdwara for seva. I’ll take langar there and then attend a satsang with my friends from Maa Ananda murti’s

As the satsang concluded and devotees began walking toward the langar hall, Rajesh, with curiosity gleaming in his eyes, asked his friends,

“Tell me, why is this Langar served? And who started this beautiful tradition?”

Ved smiled and said, “Rajesh, that’s a wonderful question. The story of Langar carries deep meaning and timeless values.”

He continued, narrating gently, “The Langar was started by **Guru Nanak Dev Ji**, the first Sikh Guru. It wasn’t just a meal; it was a revolution in thought. In those days, society was divided by caste, status, and religion. Guru Nanak Dev Ji wanted to teach that all human beings are equal in the eyes of the Creator.”

1. Equality (ਸਮਾਨਤਾ / Samanta)

“In the Langar hall,” Ved explained, “everyone sits together on the floor— rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, man and woman— all share the same food. This simple act dissolves every wall of hierarchy. It says clearly that no one is higher or lower than anyone else.”

2. Seva (Selfless Service)

“Serving Langar,” he continued, “is not a duty, it’s Seva— **selfless service** done from the heart. People volunteer to cook, serve, and clean, not for recognition, but for the joy of giving. It is a way to practice humility and compassion— to remind ourselves that serving others is serving the Divine.”

3. Community and Sharing

“Langar also builds community,” said, “Krishna, joining in. “It creates Sangat— togetherness. No one should go hungry, and everyone should share. It shows that food is a right, not a privilege. The shared meal becomes a bridge between souls.”

4. Spiritual Practice

“For Sikhs,” VED added softly, “preparing and serving Langar is also a form of worship. When they feed others, they are feeding Waheguru

Himself. It expresses the Sikh prayer— ‘Sarbat da bhala’— the welfare of all humanity.”

Ved concluded, his voice calm and full of warmth, “So, my friends, Langar is not merely food. It is a living symbol— of ***Equality, Service, Compassion, and Community***. Guru Nanak Dev Ji transformed a simple meal into a sacred expression of love and unity.”

Rajesh looked around the hall— people from all walks of life sitting together, smiling, sharing, serving each other with devotion. His heart filled with gratitude. He whispered, “Now I understand. This Langar is truly divine— food for the body, and nourishment for the soul.”

As Ved finished explaining the sacred meaning of Langar, Rajesh sat silently for a while, watching the humble yet divine scene unfold before him. Men, women, and children— all sitting in neat rows on the floor, sharing the same food with laughter and reverence. The aroma of dal and fresh rotis filled the air, mingling with the sound of Waheguru Simran echoing softly in the background.

Rajesh turned to his friends and said, “with a gentle smile, “I have eaten Langar before, but today I have understood its soul. I want to serve too... not as a guest, but as a sevadar.”

Without waiting for a response, he walked toward the serving area, tied a white cloth around his head, rolled up his sleeves, and joined the volunteers. An elderly sevadar handed him a steel bucket of dal and said, “kindly,

“Beta, serve from the heart— Prem naal parshaad batna (serve food with love).”

Rajesh nodded respectfully. As he moved down the row, pouring warm dal into each plate, he looked at every person with gratitude. There

were children, old men, travellers, and workers— all smiling, saying softly, “Sat Sri Akal.”

Every spoonful he served felt like a prayer. A strange peace filled him— deep, wordless, complete.

He noticed how even the smallest act— serving water, wiping a spill, refilling a plate— became a form of meditation.

When the last plate was served, Rajesh joined his friends again, his eyes glistening.

“I felt something divine,” he said, “quietly. “When I served food, I forgot myself completely. For a few moments, there was no I... only the joy of giving.”

Ved placed his hand on Rajesh’s shoulder and smiled, “That, my friend, is the true essence of Seva. When the heart melts into service, God Himself begins to serve through you.”

As they sat together afterward, partaking in the Langar, the food tasted different— not just of lentils and wheat, but of love, humility, and grace.

Rajesh whispered softly,

“Today, I didn’t just learn about Langar... I lived it.”

Anand Murti Gurumaa

The Divine Journey of Guru Nanak in Baghdad

The body took birth, and today we celebrate that auspicious day with joy and gratitude.

***“Ek Onkar, Satnam, Karta Purakh, Nirbhau, Nirvair,
Akaal Moorat, Ajooni Saibhang, Gur Prasad.”***

– The One Creator, timeless and beyond birth, self-existent, realized through the Guru's grace.

As the hymn says:

Even if a thousand suns rise and a thousand moons shine,
Without the light of the Guru, the world remains in darkness.

Listen, my beloved friend–

I have seen the True Guru,

And have placed my mind forever at His feet.

Without the Satguru, life in this world is barren.

Says Nanak– blessed are those who meet the True Guru

And live forever in that light.

Waheguru... Waheguru... Sri Waheguru...

Today, I will narrate one of the divine episodes from the life of **Guru Nanak Dev Ji**, described in the Vaars of Bhai Gurdas Ji. This particular account tells of Guru Nanak's journey to **Baghdad**, a city in present-day Iraq– one of the four great Udaasis (spiritual travels) he undertook.

When Guru Nanak and his companion **Bhai Mardana** reached the outskirts of Baghdad, the people of the city did not allow them to enter.

So Guru Nanak said, “gently,

“No matter– I shall sit here,”

and he made his dwelling outside the city walls.

By his side was **Bhai Mardana**, his dear friend, devotee, and companion, carrying his famous rabab (string instrument). Together, they sat quietly in meditation.

Guru Nanak's face radiated such divine light that even passersby would stop in their tracks, mesmerized by his glow.

"Who is he?" they would whisper.

"What is this radiance?"

Guru Nanak remained silent, immersed in deep stillness. Bhai Mardana gazed upon him with reverence.

Then, after some time, Guru Nanak slowly opened his eyes and rose.

He took a deep breath and uttered a single, powerful sound— a call, a divine vibration.

That sound spread across the land like a wave of light.

It is said, "that for a moment, all of Baghdad seemed to fall silent— as if time itself had paused.

Everything stood still—

men, birds, the wind—

as if the whole world had entered a sacred emptiness.

The energy of that one call— its radiance, its power, its divine vibration— reached every corner of the city.

People nearby and far away alike were struck with wonder.

"What kind of voice is this?" they asked.

"Who has uttered such a sound?"

Drawn by that call, people began walking toward its source.

Among them was a revered **Sufi saint named Dastgir**, a spiritual master of the region.

He too was astonished.

For as he later said,"—

"The mind never truly rests. Thoughts constantly wander.

But this call... this voice has stilled everything within me.

Who could possess such power?"

Dastgir approached and asked respectfully,
“Tell me, O Fakir, from which lineage do you come?
Who are you, and whose disciple are you?”

In those days, Sufi saints were often recognized by their spiritual lineage.

Bhai Gurdas Ji writes:

Nanak kal vich Aaya, Rab fakir ikko pehchana—
“In this age of Kaliyug, Nanak has come—
He appears as a fakir, yet He is God Himself.”

Bhai Mardana said, “softly,
“This is Guru Nanak, from Hindustan.
You ask who He is— He is the very form of the Divine.”

He added,
“If you wish to know from where God comes,
ask your own heart— for He dwells there.”

Hearing this, Dastgir was stunned.
He said, “To say such a thing— that a man is God— this is unheard of!”

Soon another famous saint, **Pir Bahlol**, also came to meet Guru Nanak.

Both were highly respected spiritual figures in Baghdad, honoured by all.

And there they sat together—
at the feet of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

From this divine meeting began a beautiful dialogue.

In his Vaar 1, Pauri 35, Bhai Gurdas Ji writes:
Ek Baba Akaal Roop, Dooja Rababi Mardana—

"One is Baba Nanak, the timeless form of the Divine;
The other is Mardana, the musician who sings His praise."

These two saints, these two fakirs,
chose to rest outside the city of Baghdad.

Guru Nanak's sacred call— Bang— spread like divine music,
and upon hearing it,
the entire city became silent and still.

The people asked in awe,
"What kind of miracle is this?
Who is He, whose voice stills the hearts of men and the noise of the
world?"

Even the great Pir Dastgir sat deep in meditation,
seeking the source of that radiance.
He realized that this was no ordinary saint—
but one who carried divine light itself.

Thus, Bhai Gurdas Ji declares:
"In this dark age, Nanak has come as the Divine Fakir—
appearing in human form, yet beyond all forms."

Guru Nanak's message spread far beyond India,
reaching distant lands like Iraq.
Even today, in **Baghdad**, there stands a sacred site—
a shrine in memory of Guru Nanak's visit.

The people there do not call him Guru Nanak,
but lovingly call him **Peer Nanak—**
Fakir Nanak—
a saint who brought divine light across all boundaries of faith.

Even today, local caretakers maintain that holy place,
continuing the tradition of reverence and service.

So let us not dwell only on history or logistics,
but open our hearts to the sacred vibration of his words—
the eternal truth that resounds in the hymn:

“Ek Baba Akaal Roop...”

One is the Formless One,
And the other, the devoted musician—
Together, they brought light to a world lost in darkness.

Show Your Mercy, My Sai

Show Your mercy,
Show Your mercy, my Sai,
Show Your mercy, my compassionate Lord.

O my Thakur, grant me not such a mind
That forgets You, even for a moment.
O my Thakur, bless me instead
To remember You forever and ever.

Show Your mercy,
Show Your mercy, my Sai,
Show Your mercy, my compassionate Lord.

Water, fan, and humble service before the saints,
Sing the glory of Govind, the Lord Divine.
With every breath, remember His holy name—
And find peace, eternal and divine.

Show Your mercy,
Show Your mercy, my Sai,
Show Your mercy, my compassionate Lord.

*By Your grace, illusion and pride depart,
And all false attachments fade away.
By Your compassion, O merciful One,
We find bliss that no words can say.*

*Show Your mercy,
Show Your mercy, my Sai,
Show Your mercy, my compassionate Lord.*

*You are the ocean of grace, the saviour of the fallen,
Kind, benevolent, and ever forgiving.
In a moment's remembrance of Your name,
One attains the joy of countless kingdoms of living.*

*Show Your mercy,
Show Your mercy, my Sai,
Show Your mercy, my compassionate Lord.*

*Those who chant, meditate, and serve with love,
Find favour in the heart of the Lord above.
By chanting His name, all thirst is quenched,
Says Nanak— the soul is content and drenched.*

*Show Your mercy,
Show Your mercy, my Sai,
Show Your mercy, my compassionate Lord.*

*O my Thakur, grant not a mind
That forgets to meditate upon You.
Let every breath, every moment of mine
Be filled with remembrance true.*

*Show Your mercy,
Show Your mercy, my Sai,
Show Your mercy, my compassionate Lord.*

My Sai... my Sai...

The True Meaning of ‘Sai’ – The Lord, The Master

The word “**Sai**” means “**Master**”– and You, my Lord, is my Master.

If He is my Master and I belong to Him, then tell me– in a company, who worries about the business– the owner or the employee?

Of course, the **owner** does.

The employee isn’t responsible for profit or loss.

He simply performs his duty.

If there is profit, it belongs to the owner;

if there is loss, it too belongs to the owner.

And when there’s profit, the owner rewards the employee with a bonus.

But I’m not talking about worldly owners, whose losses often never recover– who suffer endlessly.

I speak of that **divine Owner**, the **Supreme Lord**, in whose realm there is **never any loss**.

If He wishes, He can fill your empty hands–

or He may empty them again,

and from that same emptiness, make new creation bloom.

That is **His divine play**, His **Leela**.

He may create the universe or dissolve it;

He may make it move, or let it rest.

Why should the mortal being ever worry?

Let Him– who owns everything– take care of it all.

Everything belongs to Him, and we too belong to Him.

So why should we worry?

Whatever happens, will happen for good.

Whatever happens, will happen perfectly.

Just do not tie yourself with the threads of **attachment** to this world,

because sorrow is born from attachment.

The world itself gives no pain—

the **earth** gives no sorrow; it quietly revolves.

The **sky** gives no sorrow; it simply shelters us.

The **rivers** and **mountains**— they too are harmless.

You may say, “But floods and landslides destroy homes!”

Yes— but the mountains didn’t break themselves.

We cut down the trees.

We destroyed the forests to grow crops.

We built cities on that destroyed greenery,

and now, when there is no oxygen,

we buy **air purifiers** to survive inside our own homes.

And soon, if man’s foolishness continues,

people will carry **oxygen cylinders** on their backs—

just to breathe.

Man’s greed has harmed **Nature**,

and when Nature punishes, it is always fair.

We mine sand from rivers to build houses—

but when heavy rains come, the riverbeds, hollowed out,

can no longer hold water,

and floods follow.

When trees are gone, rains lessen;

when rains lessen, rivers dry up.

Then people suffer for water.

And when rains suddenly return, the imbalance causes floods

again—
fields and homes are destroyed.
Man blames fate— but not his own actions.

Today, on the holy occasion of **Guru Nanak Gurpurab**,
I make a humble request:
Plant **trees** on your birthdays, anniversaries, or celebrations.
In Haryana, the government has made spaces for tree planting—
I appeal to officials to inform people where to plant,
so trees grow in the right places and are protected.

Trees give joy.
They give shade, fruit, flowers—
they harm no one.
It is **human ignorance**, not Nature, that brings sorrow.

Let me tell you a story from **Maharashtra**—
of a devoted couple named **Raka** and **Banka**.
They were poor but deeply spiritual.
They collected wood from the forest, sold it,
and used the little they earned for simple food—
spending the rest of their time in devotion and song.

One day, while walking,
Raka was ahead and Banka followed behind.
Raka saw a gold nugget lying on the road—
perhaps dropped by a passing merchant.
He thought, “Ah, gold! But my wife is behind me.
Women are fond of gold.
If she sees this, she may feel tempted.”
So he pushed the gold aside with his foot
and covered it with dust.

Banka arrived and asked, "What are you doing?"

Raka hesitated, "Nothing, nothing."

But she insisted, "Tell me the truth!"

They had vowed never to lie,

so Raka confessed, "It's a piece of gold.

I feared you might feel tempted,

so I covered it with dust."

Banka burst into laughter—

so hard that she bent to the ground laughing.

Raka asked, "Why are you laughing?"

She said, "I thought you were wise—

but today you proved you are a fool!

You're covering **dust with dust**,

and you think this shiny dust— this gold—

can tempt me?

You forgot that gold itself comes **from the womb of this very earth**.

How can it be more precious than the earth itself?"

Raka folded his hands, bowed to her, and said,

"Forgive me. I doubted you.

You are far purer and wiser than I."

Such were the saints of our land—

living as householders, yet full of renunciation, wisdom, and peace.

They worked hard, lived simply, without greed or competition—

content with what they had.

But today?

Even with abundance, people rush to buy more.

Every festival, every sale— they crave new things.

No harm in buying for children with joy,

but adults too behave like children—
always wanting more clothes, more gadgets, more shoes.
This endless **“more”** brings endless suffering.

We forget— life is not about collecting possessions,
but about **earning peace and grace**.

So pray sincerely:

“O Lord, show mercy. Grant me the wisdom
to remember You always.”

Because right now, that wisdom is missing.
We live with greed, anger, pride, and ego.
Our minds are cluttered with worldly garbage.
Our attention is trapped in illusions.

The Lord says:

“Always remember Me.”

By His grace, illusion and pride vanish.
Without His grace, even our spirituality becomes pride.
Some boast, “I wake at 5 AM, I chant my mantra daily.”
But such pride itself becomes bondage.

Just as you hide your gold and jewels for safety,
hide your **spiritual practice** too—
keep it sacred and humble, not for display.
After all, the most valuable things are kept private.
Even money— a mere piece of paper— we guard.
Remember **demonetization**?
How the “precious” paper suddenly lost all value!

If one day gold became as cheap as iron—
children would play with gold coins in the streets!
What then would it be worth?

If you're stranded without food or water,
your gold and money are useless.
You can't eat gold, can't chew diamonds—
what truly sustains you is **food, water, and air.**

These are life's true treasures,
but we forget their value chasing glitter.

So, pray—

“O Lord, grant me wisdom to remember You always.
By Your grace, may pride and attachment vanish.
May ignorance be destroyed, and may I live in peace.”

You, O Lord, are ***the Ocean of Compassion,***
the Treasure of Mercy,
the Redeemer of the Fallen,
the Beloved Master of All.

Through Your grace, may I serve Your saints,
offering water, waving the fan of love,
singing Your glory.

With every breath, may my mind remember Your name—
for in that remembrance lies true rest and eternal joy.

Now, as I sit in the company of saints, I have listened to the
satsang.

I have learned how to remember and meditate upon You.
By constantly remembering You, O Lord, I have found peace—
A treasure of supreme bliss that has come to me only through Your
grace.

May this grace continue to shower upon me— endlessly,
continuously, lovingly.
O Sai, be merciful, let Your compassion forever flow upon me.

This divine tradition began with *Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*, the first Guru.

After him came *Guru Angad Dev Ji*, *Guru Amar Das Ji*,
Guru Ram Das Ji,
and then the fifth Guru, *Guru Arjan Dev Ji*.

The sacred hymn (Shabad) we recited today is from *Guru Arjan Dev Ji*,

who holds the blessed honour of compiling all divine verses together into what we now know as the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Before that, the holy verses were kept in collections called Pothys, which were preserved by Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the Gurus after him.

It was the Fifth Guru who gathered the wisdom of six Gurus and sixteen devotees into a single divine scripture—a radiant source of eternal light and knowledge for all humanity.

Each word of this holy Bani is filled with sweetness, devotion, and love.

It contains the ways of Bhakti (devotion), Yoga (discipline), methods of conquering the mind, and paths to realizing the soul.

It was *Guru Nanak Dev Ji* who gave this sacred wisdom a voice, a form, and a rhythm—

expressing the highest truths of the Vedas in the simple language of the common people.

He taught us how to live in love, humility, and remembrance of God.

From *Kartarpur* to *Nankana Sahib*, from *Iraq* to *Assam*,
from *Sri Lanka* to *Kailash Mansarovar*,
Guru Nanak travelled far and wide—
spreading the message of truth, compassion, and oneness.

Often, he spoke nothing—
his divine presence alone transformed hearts.
And when his companion Mardana played the Rabab,
Guru Nanak would say, “Mardana, play the Rabab—
the divine song has begun to flow through me.”

Then, with love-filled words, he would sing—
and whoever heard that melodious voice
became his follower, his devotee, his disciple.

Wherever he went— to Iraq, the yogic lands of the Himalayas,
or among monks and scholars—
all recognized in him the highest saint, the perfect yogi, the divine
guide.

Yes, at times Guru Nanak Dev Ji used his divine powers (siddhis),
but never to impress— only to awaken faith.
For he knew that while few understand wisdom,
many are moved by miracles.

Yet, he never taught the pursuit of powers—
he only taught **love, remembrance, and devotion**.
And when a seeker matured in these,
Guru Ji himself imparted the supreme Brahm Vidya—
the knowledge of the Divine.

Today, as we celebrate the sacred Gurpurab,
let us remember the Guru's words,
reflect upon their meaning,
and carry their essence into our lives.

After the satsang, langar (sacred meal) has been lovingly prepared
for everyone.

Please partake of it with devotion and gratitude.

Take only as much as you can eat—

let not the food of the Guru go to waste.
Even the smallest morsel is divine Prasad.

I say this because I once knew a woman—
a schoolteacher with no faith in saints or satsang.
She was once persuaded by others to attend a darshan of my
Maharaj Ji.

As she looked upon him, something awakened within her—
a deep love, an unexplainable transformation.

At that moment, Maharaj Ji was eating.
He looked at her kindly and said,
“Come, share this food.”

He took a piece of bread from his plate, poured some lentils upon it,
and handed it to her.

Without hesitation, she accepted and ate.
From that moment, her heart was filled with divine love.

She returned home and told her family,
“I can no longer stay here; I wish to live close to the Guru.”
Her family was astonished—
but soon, she did go to live near him.
The saints named her Mata Ram.
Such is the power of Prasad given with love.

So, accept this Prasad with reverence and faith—
for who knows which door of grace it may open for you.

With these words, I bring this Vani to rest.

Sri Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

All glory to You, O Lord!

May Your praise resound in every heart,

May divine flowers of joy and devotion shower upon all—

Victory to the Name Divine, again and again!

Rajesh arrived home

It was past nine when Rajesh finally reached home. The evening air was cool, carrying a faint fragrance of incense that still lingered on his kurta. As he opened the door, his son Ankush looked up from his books and exclaimed playfully,

“Dad! A full-day outing today? You look like you’ve been on a mission!”

Rajesh chuckled softly, setting down his shoes near the entrance. “Yes, beta,” he said, “with a calm, glowing smile, “but it wasn’t an outing. Today, I did something that touched my heart deeply. I went to the Gurdwara and served in the Langar as a sevadar.”

Ankush, curious, tilted his head. “You were serving food, Dad?”

Rajesh nodded, sitting beside him. “Yes, son. I served dal and rotis... but more than that, I served people. Old, young, rich, poor— all sitting together on the floor, eating the same meal. No one higher, no one lower. Just human beings, sharing love through food.”

Ankush smiled faintly. “That sounds peaceful.”

“It was,” Rajesh said, his voice soft but filled with depth. “I felt something divine in those moments. When I poured dal into each plate, I wasn’t just feeding people— I was feeding my own soul. I understood what Seva truly means. The Guru’s teachings are not just words; they are living experiences. I saw humility, equality, and devotion come alive in every gesture of those sevadars.”

He paused for a moment, his eyes reflecting a calm glow. “Today, I didn’t earn anything, yet I feel richer than ever before. I didn’t pray in words, but my hands, my heart— they prayed through service. I feel... blissful, beta. Completely content.”

Ankush watched his father silently. He had never seen him this serene before— no tension of work, no hurry, just a gentle peace that seemed to radiate from within.

Rajesh placed a hand on his son's shoulder and said, "softly, "Remember, son, when you serve selflessly— even in small ways— the heart opens up. The Divine enters quietly. That's where real happiness lies, not in achievements, but in giving."

Ankush nodded thoughtfully. "Maybe next time, I'll come with you, Dad."

Rajesh smiled, his eyes moist with affection. "That would make me happier than anything."

The clock struck 9:30. The house was silent except for the faint chanting of Waheguru playing softly from Rajesh's phone— a habit he had picked up that very evening. He leaned back on the sofa, closed his eyes, and whispered, "Thank you, Guru, for showing me the joy of Seva."

For the first time in months, he slept that night with a heart completely at peace.

After a week to college

Today Vivek reached college after a week and entered the class and met his best buddy, Ramesh.

Ramesh, dear friend, where you were, it looks, we are meeting after months.

Vivek, yes, I too am feeling the same, actually I just went to Varanasi and decided to enjoy holidays and darshan of Mahadev and attending Arti was amazing.

Ramesh; smiled and said, “She was also not seen, what going on friends?”

“Vivek, I don’t know anything about her, I just saw her at the railway station with her mother and I have not met her for the last 10 days.”

The professor came in the class and all student stand up and gave the attendances.

A Window to the World

The seminar hall was abuzz with energy. Students were still discussing the day’s lecture when the professor, a tall man with silver-rimmed glasses, stepped forward and cleared his throat.

“Before you leave,” he announced, “I have some important news. The department has received an invitation for a one-month international training programme— one batch will go to Japan, and another to London. Those interested can collect the application forms from the office and submit them with your preferred destination. The programme will begin this summer.”

A wave of excitement swept through the room. For most students, it was the opportunity of a lifetime.

Vivek’s eyes lit up. He could already imagine the cherry blossoms of Japan, the streets of Tokyo, and the chance to experience an advanced learning environment. Without wasting a moment, he collected the form, filled it neatly, and noticed a note at the bottom— Nominal participation fee: ₹20,000.

That evening, he returned home and found his father, Rajesh, reading the newspaper.

“Dad,” he began with eager eyes, “I need ₹20,000 for a one-month training programme in Japan. It’s part of a government exchange initiative. I’ve been selected!”

Rajesh looked up, his face brightening. “Wow, that’s wonderful news, son! Of course, I’ll arrange it. But tell me, how will you manage living expenses there? One month abroad isn’t easy.”

Vivek smiled, already prepared with answers. “I checked with my friends. They’re taking a foreign exchange card worth 1,000 dollars, but I’ll manage with just 500. The Japanese government is covering most of the costs— accommodation, food, and training. I only need pocket money.”

Rajesh nodded approvingly. “That’s smart of you. Still, I’ll take a small advance from my provident fund— it’s worth it for your future. You’re making me proud, Vivek.”

“Thank you, Dad,” Vivek said, “softly. “The programme will likely be in June— during summer holidays.”

“Oh, so we have two months,” Rajesh replied thoughtfully. “Plenty of time to prepare.”

Just then, Ankush entered the room, overhearing the last part of their conversation.

“Wow, congratulations, Vivek!” he said, patting his brother’s shoulder. “You’ll be the first in our family to go abroad. That’s a big thing!”

Vivek grinned modestly. “Thank you, Bhai.”

Then Ankush, with his trademark teasing tone, added, “By the way... she’s also going, right?”

Vivek frowned. “Who?”

“Akriti, of course,” Ankush said, with a playful smile.

Vivek chuckled, shaking his head. “No, Bhai. She’s from Arts. This training is only for BMA students.”

“Oh, I see,” Ankush replied, pretending disappointment. “Any updates from her after your Varanasi trip?”

Vivek paused briefly. “No, I haven’t seen her since then.”

“You could have called,” Ankush said, “casually. “At least to ask how she’s doing.”

“Let’s not rush things,” Vivek replied patiently. “Her friend Sunanda told me she’s in London with her aunt– they have some family business there.”

Ankush leaned back in his chair, grinning. “Then maybe you should’ve picked London instead of Tokyo!”

Vivek smiled faintly, this time with a firm tone. “No, Bhai. Japan is more advanced technologically. I want to learn new things– real things. My mind doesn’t work on false or emotional impulses. Let’s not discuss her now. It’s too early to analyse anything.”

Ankush raised his hands in mock surrender. “Okay, okay, Mr. Serious! It’s your life, you know best. I was just teasing.”

The brothers laughed, and the room filled with the lightness of their bond.

That night, as Vivek sat by his study table, he looked at the Japan brochure lying beside his form. A sense of quiet excitement filled him– a mix of ambition and curiosity.

“Maybe,” he thought, “life is opening a new window. And this time, I must look through it with courage, not confusion.”

Outside, a soft breeze touched the curtains, as if whispering—
“Stay positive, focus forward— and the world will open its doors to you.”

Next day at college met Akriti

A Surprise Conversation

Weeks passed quickly. Between his classes and project work, Vivek spent his evenings with a dictionary and a notebook, jotting down new words. Ankush often teased him—
“Preparing for Oxford or for her?”

Vivek only smiled. “For myself, Bhai... and maybe a little for her.”

One pleasant afternoon, Vivek was standing near the college canteen when he heard a familiar voice behind him.

“Hey, Vivek! Long time no see!”

It was Akriti, cheerful as ever, holding a coffee cup and her usual air of confidence.

“Oh, hi, Akriti,” he greeted warmly. “Yes, it’s been a while. You’ve been quite the social butterfly, I guess.”

Akriti raised her eyebrows in surprise, then smiled. “Wow, you’re using my words now!”

Vivek grinned. “I’m learning, you see. You’re quite a good teacher—though unintentionally.”

She laughed. “So, what’s next? Going to call someone a couch potato or a workaholic?”

“Only if it fits,” Vivek replied playfully. “Though lately, I’ve been a bit of a bookworm myself.”

Akriti tilted her head, amused. “Impressive, Mr. Vocabulary! You’ve changed.”

“Maybe,” he said, “lightly. “Or maybe I just stopped being a slacker.”

She chuckled, genuinely impressed. “That’s a good change, Vivek. I like it. You sound more confident now.”

“Thanks,” he said, “softly, meeting her eyes. “Learning new words is easy— learning where to use them is the art.”

“True,” she said, nodding. “And you seem to be learning both.”

A Friend Indeed

It was a bright morning on campus. Students were gathered in small groups, discussing the upcoming international training programmes in Japan and the UK. The atmosphere was full of excitement and curiosity.

Akriti spotted Vivek walking toward the library, carrying a file in his hand. She smiled and called out, “Hey, Vivek! I heard some students from our class are going to Japan and the UK for a one-month training. Are you selected?”

Vivek turned, slightly surprised but pleased to see her. “Yes,” he said, “with a modest smile. “I’m selected for Japan.”

“That’s wonderful news! Congratulations,” Akriti said, “warmly, her eyes bright with genuine happiness.

“Thanks,” Vivek replied, trying to sound casual though his heart felt light with joy.

After a pause, Akriti added softly, “Do you need any help? Financial or otherwise? Please don’t hesitate— treat me like a friend. You know the saying— ‘A friend in need is a friend indeed.’”

Vivek looked at her for a moment, touched by her kindness. “That’s very thoughtful of you, Akriti. I truly appreciate your gesture. I’ll surely reach out if I need anything.”

She smiled. “No need for thanks, really. It would be my pleasure to help. Just promise me you won’t hesitate.”

“I promise,” Vivek said, “gently. “See you later.”

“Sure,” she said, turning to leave. “All the best, Vivek.”

As Akriti walked away, her words echoed softly in his heart. Vivek stood there for a while, watching her disappear into the crowd. A quiet glow spread across his face.

For the first time, he felt a strange mix of calm and confidence— not just pride in being selected, but a warmth born of connection. He realized that sometimes, friendship speaks louder than affection, and kindness leaves a deeper mark than admiration.

He whispered to himself, smiling,
“Some people don’t just wish you luck— they become your luck.”

The Costly Mistake

That night, Vivek received a call from an unknown number.

“Hello, Vivek ji,” the voice said, “politely. “Your father asked me to transfer ₹50,000 to you. I’ve just sent ₹48,000— please check your message.”

Vivek was surprised. “But my father didn’t mention anything about this money. Let me confirm with him first.”

The stranger replied quickly, “Of course, sir, but please check— the transfer is already done.”

Vivek glanced at his phone and saw the SMS notification: **₹48,000 credited.**

“Yes, I got the message,” he said.

The caller responded, “Good. I’ve now sent the remaining ₹2,000 as well.”

Moments later, another SMS pinged– but this time, it showed **₹20,000 credited**, not ₹2,000.

Vivek frowned. “Sir, it says twenty thousand, not two thousand.”

“Oh no!” the man exclaimed. “That must be a mistake. I sent the wrong amount. Could you please send back ₹8,000 right away? I’m in urgent need.”

Without thinking twice, Vivek said, “Sure, no problem,” and immediately transferred ₹8,000 back.

A few minutes later, when he tried checking his balance, his heart sank– **his entire account had been wiped clean.**

He sat there frozen, realizing he had been scammed. “What a fool I’ve been,” he muttered. “Dad arranged that money from his provident fund... and I’ve lost it all.”

That night was long and sleepless.

In the morning, Vivek got ready for college in silence.

Rajesh, his father, noticed. “Beta, how can you leave without breakfast? It’s ready.”

Vivek forced a smile. “I’m not feeling hungry, Dad. I’ll grab something from the canteen.”

Rajesh looked closely at his son's face— pale, uneasy, lost. "You look upset. Did something happen? Something wrong with Akriti?"

Vivek's tone changed. "Dad, you people have no other topic than Akriti! There are other sorrows in the world besides love!" He stormed out of the house.

Rajesh sighed deeply. "What's wrong with him today?" he asked Ankush. "Did he say anything to you?"

Ankush shook his head. "No, Dad. He was quiet this morning. I asked, but he said, "nothing."

Rajesh looked worried. "Follow him, Ankush. He seems disturbed."

Ankush smiled lightly. "Dad, he's not a child. Don't worry, he'll manage. He'll be fine soon."

Rajesh nodded slowly. "I hope so. May God help him and ease his worries."

As Vivek left for college, Ankush silently promised Dad— I'll find out what's troubling my brother. Dad's right and let me know if anything is wrong.

"Sure dad, I will." Ankush said.

At college, Vivek tried to focus on his lectures, but his mind was blank. Numbers, words, faces— everything blurred into noise. The incident from last night kept flashing in his head: the phone call, the SMS, the foolish transfer.

During lunch break, Ankush quietly entered the campus. He spotted Vivek sitting alone on a bench under the banyan tree— the place they often sat together during school days.

"Bhai," Ankush said softly, "what's going on? Dad's worried."

Vivek looked up, tired and restless. “Nothing, Ankush. Just... made a stupid mistake.”

“Tell me.”

Vivek hesitated, then sighed. “I got a call last night. Some fraud tricked me into sending ₹8,000. I didn’t realize it was a scam— and now my whole account is empty.”

Ankush’s eyes widened. “What? How much did you lose?”

“Everything Dad transferred for my trip— all of it.” Vivek’s voice broke slightly. “I can’t even face him. He withdrew that money from his provident fund for me.”

Ankush sat beside him in silence for a moment, then placed a hand on his shoulder. “Bhai, it’s okay. Mistakes happen. At least you learned something priceless— never trust random calls or messages.”

Vivek nodded weakly. “I know. But I feel so small right now... so guilty.”

Just then, Akriti approached, holding two cups of tea. “Hey, both of you sitting here so seriously— what’s the crisis?” she smiled, trying to lighten the mood.

Vivek didn’t reply. Ankush looked at her and whispered, “He got scammed last night. Lost all his savings.”

Akriti’s face changed instantly— concern replaced her playful tone. She sat down beside Vivek. “Oh my God, Vivek... you should’ve told someone immediately. Did you report it?”

Vivek shook his head. “No... I was too ashamed.”

Akriti looked straight into his eyes. “Shame doesn’t solve problems. Action does. Come on— we’ll go to the bank right now and file a complaint. My cousin works in the cybercrime office. He can help.”

Vivek looked surprised. “Really?”

“Of course,” she said, “firmly. “You remember what I told you— a friend in need is a friend indeed. This is the time to prove that line true.”

For the first time that day, a faint smile appeared on Vivek’s face. Ankush grinned, relieved to see his brother’s spirit returning.

That afternoon, with Akriti’s help, they visited the bank and lodged a cyber fraud complaint. The officer assured them that the account was already flagged and some recovery might be possible.

As they stepped out of the branch, Vivek exhaled deeply. “I can’t thank you enough, Akriti. You turned my panic into hope.”

Akriti smiled gently. “Don’t thank me. Just promise you’ll never stop trusting— not people, but yourself.”

Vivek looked up at the clear sky, feeling lighter. “Yes,” he said, “maybe this was not a loss... just a lesson.”

Lessons Beyond Borders

A week later, Vivek received confirmation: the cybercrime team managed to freeze part of the scammer’s account and recover ₹20,000. It wasn’t the full amount, but it was enough to bring back hope.

That evening, he sat with his father, Rajesh, at the dining table. “Dad,” Vivek began softly, “I have something to tell you.”

Rajesh looked up from his newspaper, his calm eyes waiting.

“I was cheated by a scammer last week,” Vivek said, voice trembling. “I didn’t tell you earlier because I felt ashamed. I lost your money—the one you arranged for my trip.”

For a moment, silence filled the room. Rajesh folded the newspaper slowly. “And now?”

“I filed a complaint. The bank recovered some amount with Akriti’s help. But... I wanted to apologize.”

Rajesh didn’t speak immediately. He looked at his son— not with anger, but with compassion. “Vivek, mistakes are a part of life. What matters is whether you learn from them or hide from them. I’m proud that you faced it and spoke the truth.”

Vivek’s eyes moistened. “Thank you, Dad. I’ll never forget this.”

Rajesh smiled faintly. “Go on your training, son. Learn the world, but more than that— learn yourself.”

Before leaving to Tokyo, Akriti gave an envelope to Vivek, and said, “good luck and all the best for your Tokyo tour.

Vivek, what is this,

Akriti, this is just a compliment from me, open only at your house.

Vivek, accepted the envelope and opened it at home and found us\$ 1000/- in it.

He smiled and kept the same in his suitcase.

Vivek landed in **Tokyo**, surrounded by clean streets, polite people, and an energy of discipline. The training program was intense— long hours, strict schedules— but he loved every bit of it.

He often recalled Akriti’s words, “Action solves problems.” Whenever challenges arose, he faced them with calm confidence. His Japanese mentor once told him,

“You are not just learning skills, Vivek. You are learning Kaizen— the art of continuous improvement.”

Vivek smiled, remembering his father's similar wisdom. He noted in his journal every night:

"Positive thinkers see a solution in every problem. Negative ones see a problem in every solution. I'll stay positive— always."

When he returned to India after a month, his father and Ankush were at the airport, waiting. Rajesh embraced him tightly. "Welcome home, my son. How was Japan?"

Vivek smiled, eyes gleaming. "More than a training, Dad, it was a life lesson. I learned discipline, gratitude, and humility. And I learned... how to value what you've given me."

Rajesh patted his shoulder. "Then my investment wasn't wasted."

Just then, his phone buzzed— a message from Akriti:

"Welcome back, Mr. World Traveler! I hope Japan has made you wiser, not just smarter."

Vivek smiled. For the first time, he realized— wisdom doesn't come from books or travel, but from experiences that humble you and people who stand by you.

He looked at his father and said, "softly,

"Dad, I think now I truly understand what being grown-up means— communicating honestly, apologizing sincerely, and taking responsibility without blaming anyone."

Rajesh nodded, pride shining in his eyes. "Yes, son. That's real education— not degrees, but understanding."

And that evening, as the sun dipped behind the skyline, Vivek whispered to himself—

"When my mind is happy, my body is tranquil. When I am tranquil, my soul feels free."

A New Beginning

Two days after returning from Japan, Vivek walked into the college campus, feeling refreshed yet strangely nervous. The month away had changed him— his confidence, his attitude, even the way he looked at life.

As he entered the corridor, he heard a familiar voice behind him.
“Mr. Tokyo!”

He turned.

Akriti stood there— bright, cheerful, yet with a calmness in her eyes. She was wearing a simple Kurti and carried a notebook in her hand.

“You’re back,” she said, with genuine warmth. “Welcome home.”

Vivek smiled. “Thank you. It feels good to be back.”

“So...?” she asked, leaning slightly forward. “Did Japan make you wiser or just more stylish?”

He laughed. “Both, I guess. But yes— I learned discipline, patience... and the value of small things.”

Akriti nodded thoughtfully. “Travel does that. It changes you in quiet ways.”

There was a brief pause. She noticed a seriousness in his face that wasn’t there before.

“Is everything okay?” she asked gently.

“Yes,” he said. “Actually, I wanted to thank you. For your help that day— with the scam. If you hadn’t guided me, I would have lost everything.”

She shrugged softly. “Friends don’t count favours, Vivek. They show up when needed.”

Her words touched him more deeply than he expected.

"Still," he said, "I didn't express it properly that day. So... thank you."

Akriti smiled— a slow, sincere smile that lit up her eyes.

"Accepted. And now tell me— did you bring souvenirs or only wisdom?"

Vivek opened his bag and handed her a small paper-wrapped packet.

"A Japanese Omamori," he said. "A good-luck charm. For you."

Akriti looked surprised, almost shy. "For me? Why?"

"Because you stood by me," he said, "quietly. "And because gratitude should be expressed, not assumed."

For a moment, Akriti's eyes softened.

"You've changed, Vivek," she whispered.

"Maybe," he replied. "Or maybe... I've learned to see things more clearly."

They walked together toward the canteen— not as strangers, not as classmates, but as two people beginning to understand each other.

A new chapter had begun.

The Envelope, the Truth, and an Unexpected Question

The next day on campus, Vivek found Akriti sitting under a tree near the courtyard, flipping through her notebook. He approached her with a hesitant smile.

"Akriti... if you don't mind, please take this envelope back," he said, extending it toward her. "I didn't use the money you gave me.

Everything in Japan was free from the host university. I didn't spend a rupee."

Akriti looked surprised.

“Really? Does that mean you stayed inside the university all the time? No shopping, no sightseeing?”

Vivek chuckled.

“No, the schedule was super busy. And Japan closes early— most shops down by 7 p.m. We had night programmes daily. Only once on the weekend, a college bus took us for a city tour. That too was free.”

“Oh...” she murmured thoughtfully. “Still, I don’t take back gifts, Vivek. Keep it for your future trips.”

He shook his head gently.

“Please, Akriti. I request you. Take it back. You once gifted me an expensive T-shirt, remember? This is nothing compared to that.”

She looked at him, hesitated for a moment, then slowly took the envelope.

“Fine. Since you insist.”

They both smiled.

After a pause, Vivek asked, “I heard you also went to the UK. How was your tour?”

Akriti’s eyes brightened instantly.

“It was wonderful! I stayed with my aunt and cousin. After six years, I finally met them. Aunty pampered me like anything.”

She giggled suddenly.

“And you know what she asked? ‘Akriti, have you selected any boyfriend yet?’”

Vivek raised an eyebrow, amused.

"I told her no," she continued. "Then she said," she has someone in mind— a boy she thinks is perfect. She offered to introduce us. I told her, 'Let me enjoy life first. I'm not in a hurry for marriage.'"

Vivek nodded, smiling softly.

"Yes, it's your life. Take your own time."

Akriti turned to him playfully.

"What about you? Have you chosen any girl?"

"Me?" Vivek laughed nervously. "Right now, I want to build my career first... then I'll see."

She leaned in slightly, eyebrow raised.

"Hmm. I feel like you like me. Tell me honestly— don't be shy."

Vivek froze. His heartbeat skipped.

"Akriti... I like you as a friend. Nothing beyond that."

The words slipped out gently but firmly.

Akriti smiled— a calm, graceful smile.

"Good. That's clear then. Friendship is perfect."

She stood up, adjusting her bag.

"Okay, see you later, Vivek."

And with that, she walked away, leaving Vivek standing under the tree— relieved, confused, and strangely hopeful all at once.

A Night of Realizations

In the evening, Ankush entered Vivek's room with a mischievous smile.

"So, Mr. Japan-returned hero," he teased, "how is Akriti? Any further progress, my dear bro?"

Vivek looked up, irritated.

"You seem more interested in her than I am. Why don't you propose to her?"

Ankush froze.

"What? Why would you say that? Bro... did something go wrong?"

Vivek sighed deeply and leaned back.

"These days you can't understand people, Ankush. Life moves too fast. Everyone has their own way of thinking. Today Akriti told me about her UK trip. She said, 'she hasn't even thought of choosing a partner or marriage. And here we were—me, you, even some classmates—assuming she was interested in me.'"

He paused.

"Her words made one thing clear: she doesn't feel anything beyond friendship. So it's better I close this chapter. I'll focus on study and my career."

Ankush listened quietly, then said, *"Maybe she doesn't love you, but one thing is sure—she likes you. And sometimes, liking becomes love."*

Vivek shook his head.

"No, Ankush. I'm not compatible with her world. We're middle-class. She's the daughter of industrialists. Five luxury cars, a mansion... she'll suffocate here. I can't give her what she's used to."

He continued softly, *"Her birthday party— all her friends were confident, polished, well-established. People who know exactly what they want. And I... I get sentimental for nothing."*

Ankush looked surprised.

"Your entire view about her has changed."

Just then, their father entered.

“What’s going on between the brothers?” he asked.

Vivek quickly signalled Ankush to keep quiet.

“Nothing, Dad,” Ankush replied. “Just college talk.”

Their father nodded.

“You both are entering your final year. What are your plans?”

Vivek spoke boldly.

“Dad, I want to do an MBA. I’ll work hard and try for high marks. Maybe I can even study abroad.”

Ankush laughed. “Big dreams, bro.”

Dad’s expression turned serious.

“Let him dream. Sometimes dreams come true. Work hard and leave the rest to the Almighty. If it is written in your destiny, no one can stop it.”

Vivek smiled.

“Dad, many universities offer scholarships or stipends if grades are good.”

His father placed a hand on his head.

“All the best, my child. God bless you. May He fulfil your dreams.”

Vivek hugged him emotionally.

“I need your blessings too, Dad. You are my immediate God.”

His father pulled him closer and kissed his forehead.

Ankush protested, “Dad! This is unfair. I’m also your son. Why only him?”

His father laughed and opened his arms.

“Come, you too.”

He hugged and kissed Ankush as well.

Then he sat on the bed and said, “gently, “My children, remember... life is about balance. Be kind, but don’t let people misuse you. Trust others, but don’t be deceived. Be content, but never stop improving yourself.”

Ankush nodded. “Thanks, Dad. Beautiful words.”

“It’s past midnight,” their father said, standing up. “Go to bed. We should sleep by 10 and wake before sunrise. It is good for health—body and mind.”

“Good night, Dad,” both brothers said, “and went to their rooms.

And in the silence that followed, Vivek lay awake, replaying Akriti’s words in his mind— not with pain, but with a resolve he’d never felt before.

The Distance Akriti Could Feel

The next morning, Vivek reached the college earlier than usual. Instead of sitting in the canteen where he and Akriti often met, he went straight to the library. He opened his MBA preparation books, but his mind kept wandering.

Focus, Vivek... focus. No distractions, he told himself.

At around 10 a.m., Akriti walked into the corridor. She expected Vivek to greet her with his usual smile. But he wasn’t at his usual spot. She checked the canteen— empty. She checked the garden— no sign of him.

“Strange...” she murmured.

Finally, she peeked into the library. There he was— sitting straight, deeply engaged in a book, earphones plugged in, completely absorbed.

Akriti walked slowly toward him. He noticed her reflection in the glass door but pretended not to.

She tapped lightly on the table.

“Good morning, Mr. Serious.”

Vivek removed his earphones politely.

“Good morning.”

“That’s it?” she asked. “No smile... no jokes... nothing?”

Vivek shrugged. “Just studying. I’ve wasted enough time.”

There was a shift in his tone— not rude, not distant, but guarded.

Akriti sensed it instantly.

“Are you avoiding me?” she asked softly.

“No,” he replied calmly. “I’m just focusing on my goals. That’s all.”

She sat across from him.

“You weren’t like this yesterday.”

“People change,” he said, without looking up. “And sometimes they should... for their own good.”

Akriti felt a pinch in her heart— a feeling she didn’t expect.

“You’re talking like a motivational speaker,” she joked weakly.

Still no smile.

She leaned forward.

“Vivek... did I say something wrong?”

“No,” he said, finally meeting her eyes. “You said,” the right thing. I just understood it more deeply.”

She didn't know what that meant, but she could sense something had shifted— not just in his words, but in his eyes. A calmness. A distance.

For the first time, Akriti felt uncomfortable.

“Okay...” she said, “slowly. “Take care. I’ll see you later.”

She stood up and walked away.

But after taking a few steps, she turned back to look at him.

He didn't look up.

That bothered her more than she expected.

Akriti Messages Vivek at Night – Expanded Scene

*It was almost **12:45 a.m.** The house was quiet, the lights were dim, and Vivek was lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling.*

His mind kept drifting to the evening conversation with Ankush and Dad.

He had convinced everyone—and even himself—that he should forget Akriti.

“Better to end this before it becomes something impossible,” he whispered to himself.

He turned off his mobile and placed it aside. But just as he closed his eyes, the phone vibrated.

One message.

From: Akriti.

Vivek sat up instantly. His heartbeat sped up for no reason.

Akriti: *“Reached home? All, okay?”*

He read the message twice. It was just a simple line, but to him it felt like a storm inside the stillness.

“Why is she asking? Does she care? Or is she just being polite?”

His fingers hesitated above the keyboard.

Vivek (*typing... deleting... typing...*):

“Yes, reached home. All fine. You?”

She replied within seconds.

Akriti: “Good. Today you looked... I don’t know... a little disturbed. Everything alright?”

Vivek froze.

He never expected her to notice, let alone ask.

Vivek: “No, nothing serious. Just studies, future plans. But stressed.”

After a moment, another message came.

Akriti: “Hmm... don’t overthink. You are good, Vivek. You’ll do well. Just trust yourself.”

Her words were simple, but they touched him deeply.

For a moment, all his doubts—about status, money, lifestyle—became quiet.

He typed back slowly.

Vivek: “Thanks. Your words helped.”

There was a long pause. It felt like she was deciding something.

Then she sent another message—short, soft, and completely unexpected:

Akriti: “Good night, Vivek.”

Vivek smiled without realizing it.
His heart felt strangely light.

Vivek: “Good night.”

He placed the phone on his chest and lay down, still smiling.
He told Ankush he wanted to forget her... but tonight, her messages
had entered deeper into his heart.

Somewhere, in her room across the city, **Akriti too stared at her phone**, wondering why she cared so much about a boy who never
tried to impress her... a boy who felt different from all the others.

Next Morning – Akriti’s Uneasy Restlessness

Akriti had said, “Good night” with confidence...
But sleep did not come easily.

She kept turning on her pillow, replaying their chat again and again.
Something about Vivek felt different—simple, genuine, a little shy,
and strangely calming.

Around **1:15 a.m.**, she unlocked her phone one more time.
No new message.

She locked it again... and then unlocked it after 20 seconds.

“Akriti, what are you doing?” she whispered to herself.

She wasn’t used to waiting for anyone’s message.

In her circles, people always tried to impress her, chase her, show off.

But Vivek?

He never tried to impress.

Never demanded attention.

Never acted over-smart.

Instead, he replied with honesty... softness... maturity.

And that was exactly what was making her restless.

Finally, she fell asleep sometime after 2 a.m.

Morning – First Thought: Vivek

At 7:00 a.m., she woke up and the first thing she did was... grab her phone.

Still no message.

She felt a strange pinch in her heart.

“Why am I expecting a message? He replied last... now it’s his turn?”

*She brushed her teeth, took a shower, ate breakfast...
But every few minutes, her eyes drifted toward her phone.*

Her MOM noticed her uneasiness.

“Aku, everything okay?”

“Yeah... just tired.”

But inside, she was conflicted.

Checking Again... and Again

By 10:15 a.m., she checked her phone for the 12th time.

Still nothing.

She opened their chat window, read last night's messages again:

***Akriti:** “Good night, Vivek.”*

***Vivek:** “Good night.”*

A soft smile tugged at her lips.

She whispered, “He is too innocent... too real.”

But then another thought came—

*“Or maybe he doesn’t care... maybe he really meant it when he said,
“he is focused on studies.”*

This thought bothered her more than she expected.

She opened Instagram...

Then closed it.

Opened WhatsApp...

Then closed it.

*Her mind kept whispering, “Should I message him? No... that will
look desperate.”*

But the truth was simple—

She missed talking to him, even if it was just a few messages.

The Twist— A Notification Pops Up

*At 11:02 a.m., just when she put her phone face down, she heard
the notification tone.*

Her heart jumped.

She picked up the phone instantly.

And there it was...

From: Vivek.

*Akriti felt warmth spread across her chest, a soft smile blooming on
her face that she couldn’t hide even if she tried.*

She took a deep breath...

Her fingers trembled slightly...

And she opened the message.

Akriti's heart was beating slightly faster as she opened the notification.

Vivek:

"Good morning. Hope you slept well.
Sorry, I slept early yesterday... long day.
Reached home safely. Thanks for asking."

It was a simple message, polite and thoughtful—
exactly the kind of message a boy sends when he cares... but is afraid
to show it too openly.

Akriti exhaled, her shoulders relaxing.

"He messaged first... He actually messaged first."

For some reason, that made her smile brighter than usual.

Akriti Replies... Not Too Fast, Not Too Slow

She didn't want to look restless,
so she waited **three minutes** before typing back.

Akriti:

"Good morning. Glad you reached safely.
And you slept early? That's rare
Everything okay?"

She stared at the message before hitting send.
It felt slightly personal... slightly caring.

She hesitated for two seconds... then sent it.

Vivek Reads It Immediately

Within **10 seconds**, "typing..." appeared.

Akriti's stomach flipped a little.

Vivek:

“Yes, all okay. Just tired.
These days... a lot on my mind.”

Akriti raised her eyebrows.

This was unusual.
Vivek rarely hinted at his emotions.

Akriti:

“A lot on your mind?
क्या चल रहा है (*What's going on*)

She added a soft smile emoji
Just to make him feel comfortable.

Vivek Opens Up a Little

A good minute passed.

Then—

Vivek:

“Nothing serious...
Just studies, future, career.
And some... confusion.”

Akriti felt a tiny spark of curiosity.

Akriti:

“Confusion?
About what?”

Her heart was beating a little faster now.

Vivek Almost Says It... Then Doesn't

He typed for a long time.
Akriti watched the “typing...” bubble with rising anticipation.

Then the message came:

Vivek:

“Actually...

Leave it. Chhodo.”

Akriti froze.

Why “chhodo”?

What was he trying to say?

She immediately replied:

Akriti:

“No. Tell me.”

Three seconds later, another message from her:

Akriti:

“I asked... toh bolo.

What are you confused about?”

Her tone was gentle, but firm.

Vivek Finally Replies—Indirect... But Honest

After almost a full minute:

Vivek:

“Sometimes I feel...

I should keep distance from certain people.

Because maybe...

I don’t fit in their world.”

The words hit her like a sudden gust of wind.

Her eyes widened.

“He’s talking about me.”

She immediately sat up straight, her heartbeat quickening.

Akriti Before Typing: Shocked... Hurt... And Realizing Something

Her fingers paused above the keyboard.

She whispered softly:

“Distance?

From me?”

Suddenly she felt uneasy...

surprised at how much his words mattered.

She typed slowly, carefully—

For a moment, Akriti just stared at Vivek’s message:

“Maybe I should keep distance...

Because I don’t fit in their world.”

Something about it pinched her heart.

A strange fear...

A strange protectiveness...

And even stranger—***she didn’t want him to distance himself from her.***

She took a deep breath and typed:

Akriti:

“And who exactly are these ‘certain people’ you think you don’t fit with?”

She added no emoji.

She wanted him to feel the seriousness.

Vivek Reads It... Hesitates

He typed.

Stopped.

Typed again.

Stopped again.

Akriti watched the “typing...” bubble appear and vanish three times.

Finally:

Vivek:

“Forget it, Akriti.

You won’t understand.”

Her brows tightened.

Won’t understand?

Really?

She replied instantly:

Akriti:

“Try me.”

Another message followed before he could respond:

Akriti:

“You think I don’t notice?

You behave differently these days.”

Vivek Feels Exposed... Nervous

He swallowed hard.

Vivek:

“No, nothing like that...

Bas... I’m sorting things in my mind.”

Akriti wasn’t convinced.

She typed:

Akriti:

“Sorting?

Or running away?”

That hit him directly.

Vivek’s Heart Sinks

He sat on the edge of his bed, staring at her message.

His throat felt dry.

Vivek:

“Not running away.

Just... thinking maybe I expect too much.”

Akriti’s eyes widened.

“Expect... from whom?”

But she already knew the answer.

Still, she typed:

Akriti:

“From whom, Vivek?”

Vivek Finally Hints at the Truth

This time he didn’t overthink.

He just wrote what he felt:

Vivek:

“From someone who...

maybe sees me only as a friend.”

He hit send.
Closed his eyes.
And waited.

Akriti's Heart Jumps

She reread his message twice.
A warmth spread inside her chest.
A smile she didn't plan appeared on her lips.
She typed slowly, choosing every word carefully:

Akriti:

"And what if...
that someone doesn't want you to keep distance?"

Vivek sat up straight.

His breath caught.

He read her message again.

And again.

Before He Could Reply... She Sends One More Line

A shorter line.
A softer line.
A braver line.

Akriti:

"Did you ever think of that?"

Akriti Takes a Deep Breath... and Opens Up

The silence after her last message
"Did you ever think of that?"
felt loud.

She could see *Vivek online*, then *typing...*, then stopping.

Again typing... then stopping.

He was nervous.

And strangely... that made her smile.

She decided to take the step he couldn't.

She typed slowly, thoughtfully, her heart beating faster than she liked to admit.

Akriti:

"Vivek... can I say something honestly?"

Vivek froze.

His fingers stopped moving.

He waited.

Akriti:

"You always assume people like me live in some different world.

Big cars... mansion... lifestyle... parties.

But you never asked me if I care about these things."

She paused.

Read it twice.

Then continued:

Akriti:

"Do you know what I notice first?

Not brands.

Not money.

Not status."

Her breath trembled slightly.

Akriti:

"I notice sincerity."

Vivek felt his heart punching inside his chest.

She kept typing:

Akriti:

"And... you're one of the sincerest people I know."

Vivek's world paused.

*All the doubts he had repeated in his mind—
she's rich... she's out of my league... she won't like someone like
me...*

— suddenly felt foolish.

She continued before he could respond:

Akriti:

*"If I ever choose someone in life...
status won't matter."*

Another message:

Akriti:

"Character will."

A third message came quickly, soft but brave:

Akriti:

*"And Vivek...
you have that."*

Vivek is Speechless

He stared at the screen, unable to blink.

His throat tightened.

His palms were sweating.

He never imagined Akriti would say something like this.

His reply came slowly:

Vivek:

“Akriti... I don’t know what to say.”

But she wasn’t done yet.

Akriti:

“Then don’t say anything tonight.”

Akriti:

“Just don’t distance yourself from me.”

A last message:

Akriti:

“Good night, Vivek.”

And she went offline.

Vivek stared at that last line for a long, long time...

His heart was calm.

His doubts weaker.

His smile impossible to hide.

For the first time,

he felt like maybe—

just maybe,

he wasn’t dreaming.

The Evening of Bhajan and Blessings

After dinner, Rajesh walked into the living room with a small envelope in his hand.

“Children,” he said, “warmly, “I have an invitation for a Bhajan and Satsang of Guruji at **Select City Walk, Saket**. Only **two people** are allowed. Who wants to join me?”

Vivek looked up from his books, his mind clouded with pending coursework and recent emotional turbulence.

“Dad, I would love to go,” he said, “politely, “but I have a lot of revision left. Sorry, I can’t.”

Rajesh nodded and walked to Ankush’s room.

“Beta, would you like to come with me?”

Ankush replied instantly, his eyes brightening, “Of course, Dad! I’ve heard so much about Guruji. It would be a blessing to attend.”

“Good. We’ll leave by 3 PM. The Satsang starts at 4.”

At the Venue – A Sea of Devotion

They reached early and were amazed to see rows of volunteers guiding devotees with absolute discipline and warmth.

At the entrance, a volunteer folded his hands and said, “Sir, shoes will be kept at that counter.”

He put their shoes carefully in a plastic bag and handed them **Token No. 22**.

When they entered the hall, most of the chairs were still empty. The final preparations were happening:

- Some volunteers decorating the dais with fresh flowers
- Some spreading *white sheets and soft pillows* for devotees
- Some checking the mic and speakers
- Some arranging of water bottles on the side tables

They waited patiently for an hour as the hall slowly filled. Within no time, it was almost full— a peaceful yet energetic atmosphere.

The Musical Magic Begins

The singer, *Siddharth*, was on stage setting his musical instruments.

When he began the first bhajan, the entire hall vibrated with melody:

- Bhajans of *Shiva*
- Devotional songs of *Ganesh*
- Soulful chants of *Guruji*

People clapped, some closed their eyes, some swayed gently.

In between, volunteers served *tea, samosa, snacks, and mineral water*, all with generous smiles.

Devotees Share Miracles

After the bhajans, devotees came on stage to share experiences.

1. First Devotee – The Question of Many Gods

A lady spoke emotionally:

“I once asked Guruji why we have so many gods. Isn’t it confusing?
Guruji smiled and said,

'God is one.

We divided Him in names and forms.

Your prayer goes only to Him, whichever door you choose."

The hall echoed with murmurs of agreement.

2. Second Devotee – The Broken Car Miracle

"My car broke down in a jungle at night.

I prayed, 'Guruji, help me.'

Within ten minutes, a tempo driver stopped and asked if I needed help.

He towed my car all the way to the market.

I know Guruji sent him."

3. Third Devotee – The ICU Recovery

Another man spoke with trembling voice:

"My wife was in ICU. Guruji told me:

'Take one roti and one green chilli.'

It sounded strange, but I obeyed.

With doctor's permission, she ate one small bite...

and within hours, her condition improved.

That's Guruji's grace."

4. The Organiser's Story – A Miracle of Weather

"Pollution was 400 yesterday," he said.

"I prayed to Guruji for a clear day for this event.

This morning, pollution dropped to **80**.

Only his blessings made this possible."

Aarti & Langar

The session ended with a beautiful Aarti.

Then volunteers served *Langar*—
dal, roti, sabzi, and warm jalebi.

Simple food, but divine in taste.

After receiving prasad, Rajesh and Ankush collected their shoes and walked out.

Returning Home

Rajesh asked gently,
“Son, did you enjoy the Satsang?”

Ankush smiled,
“Yes, Dad. It was beautifully organised. The volunteers were so disciplined.

But one thing... the music was too loud.
The singer was talented, but the heavy sound drowned his voice.”

Rajesh laughed,
“You’re right. Even I have a slight headache. But the experience was worth it.”

The Family Returns Home – A Warm Evening of Sharing

They reached home by early evening, still carrying the calmness of the social fathering, Satsang within them.

As soon as they stepped inside, Mother looked up from the kitchen and asked eagerly,

“Ho Gaya darshan? Kaisa tha aaj ka langar?” (“Did you have your darshan? How was today's langar?”)

Rajesh and Ankush sat down, almost competing with each other to narrate everything—

the soulful bhajans, the peaceful sangat, the humble sevadars, the warm langar, and those little moments that felt like miracles.

Vivek listened quietly from the sofa, a soft, rare smile sitting on his lips.

He didn't say much, but something in their words touched him—as if the peace they experienced was slowly seeping into his own restless heart.

After a while, Rajesh cleared his throat.

“Arre haan... ek baat toh reh hi gayi,” he said, tapping his forehead. (“Oh yes... there is one thing left,” he said, tapping his forehead.) “Akriti Ke papa bhi wahan the! (Akriti's father was also there! I instantly recognized him.)

Pehle toh unhone pehchana nahi, (At first, he did not recognize me), but when I mentioned we had visited their home on Akriti's birthday, he smiled and remembered everything.

Bahut pyaar se mile. (He met us with great love.) and listen... he said, “Kriti always praises you.”

Vivek's head lifted slightly.

“Me?” he asked softly.

“She never told me that her family follows Guru ji... neither that she talks about me at home.”

Rajesh smiled knowingly.

“They may be well-off, beta... but they are genuinely pious people. Aaj kal jab log thoda sa bhi status paa lete hain, they forget simplicity.

But jo log sach mein rab se jude hote hain... their hearts remain clean.

(These days, when people achieve even a little status, they forget simplicity.

But those who are truly connected to God... their hearts remain clean.)

They understand that the real treasure lies within, not outside."

Ankush burst out laughing, "Wah, Wah, Dad!

Guru ji ka effect— today you sound like a full philosopher!"

Even Vivek couldn't stop himself from smiling at that.

Rajesh tapped Ankush lightly.

"You will also understand these things when life teaches you.

Paisa bahut logon ke paas hota hai... par insaaneyat sabke paas nahi hoti.

(Many people have money... but not everyone has humanity.)

And Akriti's family— they have that grace."

Mother nodded quietly, feeling proud of the peaceful tone in the room.

Vivek leaned back on the sofa, staring at the carpet...

but his mind was far away.

Akriti praised him?

She never said, "that..."

Why would she bring up his name at home?

What did she say?

And why did his heart suddenly beat faster after hearing this?

Something warm spread within him— something he wasn't ready to accept yet, but couldn't ignore anymore.

Next Day in College— A Conversation That Changes Something

The next morning, Vivek reached college a little earlier than usual. He didn't admit it to himself, but somewhere he hoped he might run into Akriti.

And almost as if the universe listened, she appeared near the corridor, adjusting her bag.

Their eyes met.

Vivek smiled first.

"Hi... yesterday I met your dad. My family and he were both at Guru ji's social gathering."

Akriti's face brightened.

"Yes, he mentioned it! It's really nice to know your family also believes in spirituality."

Vivek asked curiously, "So... you only follow Guru ji? Or any other group?"

She frowned lightly. "Group? What do you mean?"

"I mean," Vivek explained, "some people follow a spiritual master, some follow different paths... Krishna, Rama... there's a long list."

Akriti smiled softly— a very calm, grounded smile.

"Vivek, God is ultimately one. We humans divided Him.

Every prayer, no matter where it starts, reaches the same Supreme.

He is not 'somewhere else'... He is within us.

Forms may change— just like our own bodies change... baby, youth, adult, old age— but the essence remains one."

Her voice became gentler.

"Even God's forms change for us. But He... He is one."

Vivek looked at her with admiration.

"Wow... you know a lot about spirituality."

Akriti shrugged lightly.

"It's the atmosphere at home. My mother is even more pious."

"But she wasn't there yesterday," Vivek said.

Akriti nodded.

"She was doing social work— distributing clothes and food in the slum areas."

Vivek's eyes widened slightly.

"That's wonderful. Donation, gratitude..."

"Yes," she said, "simply. "We must do what we can. They're people too."

Then she looked around at the corridor and lowered her voice.

"Let's sit somewhere?"

Vivek blinked. *"Somewhere? Where... somewhere?"*

She laughed softly.

"Canteen, or maybe a restaurant outside. At least we'll have some privacy.

Here, classmates stare and create stories for no reason."

Vivek nodded slowly, and then— a little nervously— said,

"Your dad said,"yesterday... that you like me."

Akriti's eyes opened wide.

"No! I didn't say that. I just told him you're a good person... honest, same inside and outside."

Vivek let out a relieved laugh.

"Thanks... I'm flattered anyway."

She rolled her eyes playfully.

“Come on. Let’s go have chicken biryani.”

Vivek stopped.

“But... I’m vegetarian.”

Akriti looked genuinely surprised.

“Really? You’re vegetarian?”

“Yes, 100%,” he said, “with a proud smile.

“No problem,” she grinned. “We’ll order vegetarian biryani.”

At the Restaurant

They sat near the window.

Steam rose from the plates as the biryani arrived.

“How is it?” Akriti asked.

“It’s good... but a little spicy,” Vivek admitted, wiping his forehead.

“Arre!” she laughed. “You’re sweating!

Come, have mango ice cream. It will cool you down.”

She spoon-fed him a bite playfully.

He protested, but only half-heartedly.

She also took one scoop for herself, smiling at him.

Just then, Ramesh walked into the restaurant with two friends.

Vivek tensed immediately.

Perfect timing— exactly the person he didn’t want to see.

Ramesh spotted them and smirked.

“Hi Vivek... hi Akriti. Enjoy, man.”

Vivek forced a polite smile.

“Come join us, Yaar. We’re almost done but we can share a cup of tea.”

Ramesh shook his head.

“No, you both continue. We’ll have our lunch.”

He walked away, still wearing that teasing grin.

Akriti sighed.

“Let’s go. Too many college students here now— it’s getting loud.”

“Yes,” Vivek nodded. “I feel the same.”

They stepped out into the sunlight.

Akriti checked her watch.

“I have a class. If you’re free around 2 PM, I can drop you home.”

Vivek quickly shook his head.

“No, no, it’s okay. I’ll manage. But... thank you.”

Akriti gave him a small, unreadable smile.

“Okay... as you wish.

See you tomorrow.”

She walked toward her building.

Vivek stood there for a moment...

feeling something unfamiliar, warm, and confusing inside him.

Tomorrow suddenly felt too far away.

Conversation at Aakriti House.

At dinner, Father looked at Akriti lovingly and asked,

“Dear, what are your plans for the future? This is your final year of graduation.”

Akriti smiled and replied,
“Dad, I feel I should go for post-graduation— either in English or Sociology.”

Father raised his eyebrows.

“Sociology? Can you explain a little more, if you know about it?”

Akriti nodded confidently.

“Sociology is the study of human relationships and how society works. It teaches us how people live together, how groups are formed, and how rules, traditions, and institutions shape our behaviour.

It covers many areas— family, religion, crime, culture, education, government, poverty, wealth, and social change.”

She continued,

“*“At a personal level, sociology studies love, identity, aging, family conflict, and unusual behaviour. At the national level, it looks at crime, discrimination, inequality, education, business, and cities. At the global level, it studies migration, war, peace, and economic development.

Sociologists use research— surveys, interviews, documents, census data— to understand why societies work the way they do. A key idea is ‘sociological imagination’, which means connecting our personal lives with larger social forces.

Students of sociology learn to think critically, ask questions, analyse information, and communicate clearly. These skills help in many careers. In short, sociology helps us understand how society shapes our lives.”

Father clapped softly.

“Wow! Today’s generation is truly knowledgeable. Very well explained.”

He paused, then added with a smile,

“And... no thoughts about marriage? Your aunt in London keeps calling me about that boy. I think she even discussed it with you.”

Akriti sighed.

“Dad, I told her I’m not ready. I’m only 21. I’m still a child in many ways. I won’t think of marriage before 30.”

Father smiled gently,

“It’s your life, beta. I trust you to choose the best for yourself.”

Suddenly Mother asked,

“Beta Akriti, I hope nothing is being cooked up between you and Vivek?”

Akriti froze for a moment— surprised and puzzled.

Mother leaned forward.

“Why are you quiet? Be frank, beta.”

Akriti replied calmly,

“No, Mom. Nothing like that. We are just good friends. Nothing more than that— at least not yet.”

Father changed the subject softly.

“Akriti, listen to this spiritual note. It may help you.”

The Grace of Giving

Father read gently:

“No person in this world is ever remembered for what they received; they are honoured only for what they gave.

Receiving fills the hands... giving fills the heart.”

“Daan is not about quantity but intention.

A kind word, a patient ear, a warm smile— these create real destiny.”

“The tree gives shade even to the one who cuts it.

The river gives water to all.

The sun gives light without asking who is worthy.”

“Blessings don’t come from possession but from contribution.

What we give becomes our identity.

What we receive disappears with time.”

“So choose to give— love, peace, forgiveness, joy.

In giving, you rise. In giving, you grow. In giving, you become divine.”

Akriti laughed lightly.

Father asked,

“Why are you laughing, dear?”

Akriti said,

“Because a few days back me and Vivek were discussing Guruji’s Satsang... and you mentioned Mom’s charity work. I’m glad that even though we are well-established, we still think about people in need.”

Mother raised an eyebrow.

“So... you and Vivek are meeting regularly? Only in college or outside also?”

Akriti rolled her eyes.

“Mom, again silly questions! I’m going. Good night!”

And she walked away, leaving her parents smiling—

and a quiet, growing story taking shape inside her heart.

Next Morning— Vivek Acts Differently in College

The next morning, Vivek reached college earlier than usual.

He felt... lighter.

There was a quiet glow on his face, as if the Satsang stories from last night had settled inside him.

But something else was happening too—

*Akriti's words, her smile, the way she fed him ice cream,
the way she said, "see you tomorrow"...
all kept replaying in his mind.*

He stood near the classroom door, pretending to scroll on his phone. But his eyes kept drifting towards the entrance— waiting, without admitting it.

For the first time ever, he wanted to see her before she saw him.

When Akriti finally entered the corridor with two friends, talking and laughing, Vivek instinctively straightened his shoulders.

He looked confident... almost mature.

Akriti noticed him immediately.

He wasn't nervous, wasn't awkward, wasn't avoiding her.

He just gave a calm smile.

Not too much, not too little— just enough.

Akriti raised an eyebrow.

"Good morning, Mr. Serious."

Vivek smiled,

"Good morning. You look... different today."

"Different? How?" she asked teasingly.

“Peaceful,” he said, “softly.

For a moment her smile paused—
as if his words touched something deeper inside her.

They walked toward class together.

Their steps matched naturally, a slow rhythm forming without effort.

Her friends watched from a distance, whispering.

Vivek didn’t care.

This time he wasn’t flustered, wasn’t overthinking.

Something inside him had shifted— a quiet confidence.

Akriti noticed it.

She nudged him lightly,

“Kya baat hai, aaj bade wise lag rahe ho?”

(what’s up you, look great today)

Vivek smiled,

“Bas... kal ke Satsang ka effect hoga. And maybe... some people make you want to be better.”

“Just... yesterday Satsang would have an effect and maybe... some people make you want to be better.”

Akriti looked at him for a full second—
longer than usual.

Something unspoken passed between them.

Before she could reply, Ramesh arrived loudly,

“Good morning couple!” he teased.

Vivek didn't blush this time.

He just looked at him calmly and said,

"Good morning, Ramesh. Class chalu karenge?"

Ramesh was shocked.

This composed version of Vivek was new— even for him.

Akriti smiled secretly.

As they entered the classroom, Akriti whispered,

"I like this version of you."

Vivek's heart skipped a beat.

But he stayed calm.

"Thanks. I'm trying."

And for the first time,

she believed him.

That night, just as Vivek was finishing his notes, his phone buzzed.

A message from Akriti.

Akriti: "You okay today? You looked... different."

Vivek stared at the screen for a long second.

His heart gave a strange, uneasy thump.

All day, he had avoided her eyes—not out of dislike, but out of confusion.

She had looked more radiant than ever, happy, peaceful after the Satsang,

and he felt suddenly unsure of where he stood in her life.

And now she had noticed.

He typed... deleted... typed again...

Finally, he replied:

Vivek: "I'm fine. Just... had a lot on my mind."

He kept the message short, safe, controlled.

But Akriti typed back instantly, as if she had been waiting.

Akriti:

"If something's bothering you, you can tell me.

I mean... only if you want to."

Her gentleness shook him more than any confrontation could.

Vivek leaned back, staring at her message.

No one usually asked him how he was.

No one noticed his moods.

But she did.

He typed slowly:

Vivek: "Nothing serious... just life."

Again, he wanted to say more—but fear wrapped around his honesty.

For a moment the chat went silent.

Then Akriti sent one last message:

Akriti: "Okay... just take care. Good night."

Vivek, yes, sorry, sorry, today My parents asking me anything is being cooked between us.

Akriti, what you said.

Vivek said, "nothing, we are just friends.

Oh;

Akriti, why did you say

“I actually dreaming more than friends,” Vivek said

“Akriti, you are becoming chaloo,” (cunning)

He laughed.

Akriti wrote, “I feel we have a platonic relation.”

And then she added, “Good night.”

Vivek stared at the message, confused. He had never heard those words before. Curious, he checked Google.

It said:

Platonic relations mean deep, affectionate relationships without any romantic or sexual involvement.

They are based on:

- Friendship
- Trust
- Emotional connection
- Mutual respect
- Care and companionship

A platonic relationship can exist between any two people—friends, colleagues, or even partners—where the bond is spiritual, emotional, or intellectual, not romantic or physical.

Vivek felt a pinch in his heart.

Why did she say this?

Does it mean there’s nothing between us?

Troubled, he walked to his brother Ankush’s room and shared everything.

Ankush laughed softly.

“Don’t worry. Feelings change when they’re meant to. And even if they don’t—friendship is never a loss.”

Vivek returned to his room and looked at those two simple words again... platonic relation.

He read them over and over, as if they carried a warmth he hadn’t felt in years.

He kept the phone aside, but sleep didn’t come easily.

Because for the first time...

Akriti had shown him a clearer picture of her heart—even if it wasn’t the one he hoped for.

Just then, Rajesh, their father, stepped into the room.

“Kids, what’s going on so late at night?”

Vivek quickly replied, “Dad, nothing serious... just discussing our final exam preparations.”

Rajesh nodded. “Good. By the way, tomorrow I’m going to a friend’s house. They’re organizing a Bhagavad Gita Path.”

Ankush smiled. “Dad, these days you’re visiting a lot of spiritual programs.”

Rajesh chuckled softly. “Yes, beta. I enjoy it. At my age, it keeps the mind peaceful. And honestly, as senior citizens, we should spend our time in good habits, not worries.”

He looked at Ankush. “You want to join tomorrow?”

“Dad, I’d love to... but our finals are close. So, until the exams are over, I think I should stay focused. Sorry.”

Rajesh placed a gentle hand on his shoulder. “No problem, son. Study well.”

He wished them both good night and walked back to his room, leaving the boys in a quieter, more thoughtful silence.

The Next Evening – A Shocking Arrival

The entire family was sitting together when a loud honk echoed outside.

Everyone turned.

A shining *Lamborghini Urus* stopped at their gate.

Neighbours peeped from balconies, whispering and staring.

Akriti stepped out.

It was a shock for everyone.

Rajesh came out first.

“Beta, sab theek? How come you suddenly came here?”

Akriti smiled politely.

“All fine, Uncle. Actually... my parents are out of town, and I have to attend a friend’s wedding tonight. I didn’t want to go alone, late night. So... I want to take Vivek with me. In case of any emergency, I’ll feel safe if he’s there.”

Rajesh raised his eyebrows, surprised but concerned.

“Yes, you can take him... but try to come early. His exams are near. His dream is to go abroad for studies—marks matter.”

“Uncle, I’ll try. But the wedding might go till 12. I’ll drop him safely.”

Vivek came forward, slightly embarrassed.

“Sit for a minute, have coffee. I’ll get ready in ten minutes,” Vivek said, shyly.

Akriti nodded, waited.

They left for the wedding.

The Accident

The wedding went beautifully, music and laughter everywhere.
On the return, the road near Aerocity was quiet.

Suddenly—

A bike came speeding from the wrong side and crashed into the front of Akriti's car.

Three boys were on the bike. One fell hard and didn't move.

Within seconds, their friends arrived and started shouting.

One boy grabbed Vivek's collar.

"Paise wale ho to kuchh bhi karoge? Scooter ka nuksaan, hospital ka kharcha—sab doge!"

"If you're rich, will you do anything? Damage to the scooter, hospital expenses—everything will you pay)

Akriti stepped forward sharply.

"Enough! They came from the wrong side. No helmet. Stop shouting. If he's injured, let's take him to a hospital!"

But they kept demanding money.

The Police Arrives

Before anything could happen, a PCR van reached.

Someone must have called.

The officer looked serious.

"Madam, we'll take the injured boy to the hospital and the car to the station. You also come for the statement."

It was the first time Vivek was entering a police station.
His hands trembled.

In the station:

"Your name?" the officer asked.

"Vivek, sir."

"Madam, your name?"

"Akriti."

"Who was driving?"

"Sir, I was driving."

"License and car papers?"

Akriti hesitated.

"They're at home. I'll bring them tomorrow."

The officer shook his head.

"Driving without license? Another offence. And you were over speeding."

"No sir, I wasn't! They came from the wrong side! Three on one bike, no helmet—please check the CCTV!"

The phone rang at the station.

The officer's face changed.

"The injured boy... he's in coma. Serious condition."

Akriti froze.

Her voice shook as she called her father.

"Papa... accident ho gaya... police station mein hoon..."

("Papa... I had an accident... I am at the police station...")

"Don't worry, beta. I'm coming. Which station?"

"Airport. Atrocity Marriott side."

Suresh Arrives

Within an hour, **Suresh**, Akriti's father, entered.

"Inspector sir, please understand—they are students. Exams are nearby. Let them go."

The inspector was strict.

"Sir, the boy is in coma. This is not a small case. And she was driving a car without papers. If we release them, tomorrow media will say police favoured the rich. My job will go."

Vivek quietly called Ankush.

"Please come... I'm scared."

Ankush rushed to the station.

He remembered that one of his classmates' fathers was a senior officer.

He immediately called him and explained everything.

On phone, the classmate said:

"Don't worry, my dad is here. Give the phone to the inspector."

The inspector picked up.

"I'm DSP West. Accept their bail. Release them after FIR. They will come whenever you call."

The inspector obeyed reluctantly.

"Okay. Since my senior said, 'so, you may go. But you must cooperate with the inquiry.'"

Akriti nodded.

"Yes sir, of course. It's already 4 a.m. Please let us go."

Aftermath

All formalities completed.

Suresh looked at Vivek and Ankush.

“Beta, thank you... sincerely. You both helped us in a tough time.”

Akriti hugged her father tightly.

“Papa, I was so scared...”

“It’s okay, beta. Everything will settle down. Don’t panic.”

He dropped Ankush and Vivek home.

Next Morning – Tension in the Air

The sun was up, but the house was quiet.

Vivek had barely slept. His mind kept replaying the accident... police station... the unconscious boy... Akriti’s frightened face.

At breakfast, Rajesh watched him silently.

“Beta,” he said finally, “you look disturbed.”

Vivek nodded.

“Dad... first time I’ve seen all this. Police station... FIR... that boy in coma... I’m scared.”

Rajesh placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Fear is normal, but remember—truth gives strength. You were not at fault.”

Just then, Vivek’s phone buzzed.

A message from Akriti:

“Good morning... You, okay? Still shaken? I couldn’t sleep last night.”

Another message followed quickly:

“The doctors said, “the boy is stable, still unconscious... but not worsening. Papa is handling everything.”

Vivek typed slowly:

“I’m okay. Just worried about the boy... and you.”

Akriti replied:

“Let’s meet in college. We need to talk.”

In College – A Quiet Distance

But when Vivek reached college, Akriti was not her usual confident, smiling self.

She looked pale, serious.

She sat quietly in the classroom, avoiding unnecessary talk.

Their friends whispered:

“What happened between them? They’re not even looking at each other.”

After lectures, Vivek approached her.

“Akriti... are you okay? You looked different yesterday... and today also.”

She hesitated.

“I just... I don’t want anyone in college to know anything. People twist stories.”

“I understand.”

She looked down.

“And Vivek... I feel guilty. I dragged you into all this. If anything had happened to you...”

Vivek stepped closer.

“Akriti, you didn’t drag me. I chose to come. And I will stand with you no matter what.”

For the first time since the accident, she smiled—soft, grateful.

“Thank you... truly.”

But the tension around them was still not gone.

*The accident had brought them close in one way,
and yet created a strange, unspoken distance.*

Akriti’s Father’s Call

At noon, her father called.

*“Beta, police may call you again today for finalizing the statement.
I’ll pick you after college.”*

Akriti’s face stiffened.

Vivek overheard and came forward.

“I’ll come with you.”

She shook her head gently.

“No... you have classes. And your dad will worry again. I’ll manage.”

Vivek felt uneasy.

*Something had changed between them...
something fragile, emotional, uncertain.*

*It was **5 a.m.** when they entered.*

Rajesh opened the door instantly.

He looked worried, then hugged Vivek tightly.

“Don’t worry, beta... everything will be fine.”

Vivek finally allowed himself to breathe.

Rajesh sat beside Vivek, his voice calm but firm.

“Vivek, the best thing you did that night,” he said, “was stopping Akriti from drinking—and you yourself staying sober. If even a single drop of alcohol had been involved, the situation would have become far worse. These days the law is strict, and one mistake can destroy a young person’s life.”

Vivek nodded quietly.

“Sir, the inspector insisted we go with him to the hospital for a medical test,” he explained. “He said it would protect us later from media questions and court doubts. Today anything can turn into a headline.”

Rajesh sighed with relief. “Good. Very good.”

Police Station – Final Statements

Later that day, Akriti, her father Suresh, and Vivek reached the police station again.

The inspector was in a better mood now.

He read the report and said:

“Don’t worry. The situation is clear. Those boys were drunk, three riding on one bike, no helmet, and coming from the wrong side. Even their families don’t want to push the case. When it reaches court, it will likely be dismissed.”

Relief washed over both families.

Akriti’s father asked softly, “Can we leave now? Their exams are close, and the children are under pressure.”

The inspector nodded.

“Yes, you can go. There is no urgency now. The case will move slowly through routine procedure.”

Akriti and Vivek exchanged a small smile—the first moment of lightness after days of fear.

Exams, Results, and a New Turning Point

Once peace returned, Vivek buried himself in studies. His hard work paid off—he scored **90%** in his final exams.

Excited, he applied to a university in the **USA**.

A week later an email arrived:

“Seat available under sports quota. Applicant must show strong sports skill.”

Vivek was confused.

Akriti stepped in immediately.

“Come with me,” she said, smiling.

“You’ll learn golf.”

She took him to a nearby academy and arranged his admission.

Vivek practiced daily, sometimes failing, sometimes improving, but always encouraged by Akriti’s quiet confidence in him.

Within months, he reached a handicap of **12**—an impressive level for a newcomer.

He wrote back to the US university with his golf profile.

Two weeks later, the acceptance letter arrived:

“Congratulations. You are selected.”

*Vivek stared at the screen, overwhelmed.
Dreams he once saw from afar were now in front of him.
And somewhere deep inside, he knew...
Akriti was the reason behind this turning point.*

A Silent Goodbye (Unspoken Feelings)

*The evening before Vivek's departure was chaotic.
Suitcases open, relatives visiting, mother giving last-minute advice,
father checking documents again and again.
Amidst all this, the doorbell rang.
It was Akriti.
She stepped in quietly, holding a simple envelope.
"Aunty, this is just a small card for Vivek... nothing else."
Inside the envelope was a handwritten note:
"Dream big. Fly high.
Some friendships stay forever, no matter where life takes us."
– Akriti
No flowers.
No deep words.
Just sincerity.
When Vivek saw the card much later, he smiled—not loudly, but
deeply.
He knew she had stayed just five minutes, watched him from a
distance, and left without saying anything.
Some goodbyes don't need words.
Some feelings speak only through silence.*

And sometimes, silence hits harder than any confession.

Family Preparing for Vivek's Journey

The house was alive with emotions.

Vivek's mother kept repeating, "Do you have your medicines? Your passport? Keep warm clothes; America is cold..."

His father checked all documents twice—admission letter, fee receipt, visa papers.

Ankush came with a bag of chocolates.

"In case you miss India," he laughed.

Neighbours came to wish him well.

The atmosphere was half festive, half emotional.

At night, Rajesh sat with Vivek.

"Beta, remember... success is not in America. Success is inside you. Stay humble, stay grounded, and remember your values."

Vivek nodded with moist eyes.

Later, when he was alone, he picked up Akriti's card again...

*and smiled **THE NOTE AKRITI WROTE***

The paper was small, folded carefully, her handwriting neat but slightly shaky.

"Vivek,"

*I don't know how to say this face-to-face,
so I'm writing it before my courage runs away.*

*You came into my life quietly...
as a classmate, then as a friend,*

*but somewhere in between,
you became much more.*

*I don't know when it happened—
maybe the day you messaged me at 1 a.m.,
or the day you got shy eating spicy biryani,
or the night you protected me without thinking twice.*

*You don't say much,
but whatever you say stays in my heart.*

*You are going far,
but don't ever think you are leaving my thoughts.*

*I am proud of you.
I really am.*

*Go... achieve everything you dream of.
Live fearlessly.
Work hard.
Make your parents smile every day.*

*And if... someday...
you ever feel alone in that new world—
just remember,
there is one person back here
who will always pray for you
and trust you without a second thought.*

*I don't know what the future holds,
but I know this—
your journey matters to me.*

Take care of yourself.

– *Akriti*

(And yes... please miss me... just a little.)

VIVEK READING THE NOTE ON THE PLANE

The plane had taken off.

Lights dimmed, passengers settled.

A quiet hum filled the air.

Vivek opened his backpack and found the note exactly where he had placed it.

His hands trembled slightly as he unfolded it.

With every line he read, his heartbeat slowed...

then quickened...

then softened.

By the time he reached “please miss me... just a little,”
he smiled for the first time since he left the departure gate.

A warm feeling spread through him—
something between joy and ache.

He looked out of the small window.

The clouds below glowed orange from the setting sun.

He whispered softly,

almost to himself:

“Akriti... how do you do this to me?”

He folded the note carefully,

like a treasure,

and placed it inside his passport—

the safest place he could think of.

*He leaned back, closed his eyes,
and for the first time in hours,
felt peace.*

*Because now he knew—
he wasn't flying alone.*

A part of her was travelling with him.

Something inside him whispered:

“This is not an ending. This is the beginning of a bigger story.”

us Vivek's First Struggle in the USA

(Homesickness, classes, culture shock)

*The first week in the USA did not feel like the dream he had
imagined.*

*Vivek stepped into his university campus with two suitcases and a
heart full of mixed emotions. The buildings were huge, the faces
unfamiliar, and the silence in his dorm room felt almost loud.*

*The first night, he sat on his narrow dorm bed, staring at the foreign
ceiling fan.*

*For the first time, he felt the **weight of distance**—thousands of miles
away from home, Akriti, and everything familiar.*

*He opened her note again—
soft paper, her handwriting slightly curved from emotion:*

“Be brave, Vivek.

The world is waiting for you.

And I'm here, always cheering for you from the other side.”

His eyes filled instantly.

Classroom Shock

On the first day of classes, he walked into a lecture hall with 250 students.

Everyone seemed confident, fast, and outspoken.

The professor spoke quickly—

so quickly that Vivek struggled to note even half of it.

American accent, technical terms, slides changing in seconds—it felt overwhelming.

At one point the professor asked a question, and before Vivek could even think,

five hands shot up like arrows.

“How do they think so fast?” he wondered.

When he returned to his dorm, he felt defeated.

Cultural Missteps

The cafeteria was another challenge—

bread, salads, cheese, pasta.

Where was dal, roti, sabzi?

Everything felt bland, tasteless, and expensive.

Even simple conversations felt difficult.

People said, “Hey, what’s up?” while walking away.

Back home “How are you?” meant real conversation.

Here... everything was quick.

One day, someone asked,

“Yo, wanna hang out?”

He politely said, “No thank you.”

And they walked away thinking he wasn’t interested.

Later he discovered it meant:

“Come join us.”

He felt embarrassed for days.

Lonely Nights

At night, he would sit by the window watching tiny cars pass on the roads below.

The time zone difference meant:

When he woke up → India was sleeping.

When India woke up → he was in class.

He missed:

- Amma waking him for breakfast
- Papa’s evening tea
- Rajesh Uncle’s advice
- And... Akriti’s smile

The loneliness felt like a shadow that followed him everywhere.

But Something Changed...

On his fourth evening, he received a message.

Akriti:

“How’s my brave boy today?”

Just reading those words felt like a warm hand on his shoulder.

He typed back slowly:

“Trying... it’s difficult here.”

She replied:

“I know. But I also know you.”

You don't quit.

You grow."

And for the first time since he landed,

Vivek smiled.

In India, Vivek's father often remembered a spiritual gathering he had once attended—a discourse on the Bhagavad Gita. It wasn't a story but a deep, insightful lecture on ***how to love God*** and how spiritual growth unfolds within a seeker.

The speaker had explained beautifully:

"Without flowers, there can be no fruits.

The journey of a flower becoming a ripe fruit is the journey of the soul toward self-realization."

He went on:

- ***The flowering stage is the path of service.***
When a seeker serves others with humility and sincerity, the first blossoms of spiritual life appear.
- ***As the flower matures into an unripe fruit, it becomes the path of devotion (bhakti).***
Love for the divine begins to grow—pure, unquestioning, and innocent.
- ***When the fruit finally ripens, filled with sweetness and fragrance, it becomes the path of Self-Knowledge (gyana).***
Wisdom emerges. The seeker begins to understand the true nature of the Self.

At that stage, the speaker said, the flowers of good deeds and sincere service have transformed themselves—through love and devotion—into the sweet fruits of divine wisdom.

He concluded:

“On the spiritual path, it is not enough to worship with rituals alone.

True worship begins when every action becomes service, and every deed is offered to the Lord with love.

When your work becomes worship, wisdom naturally blossoms.”

These words had stayed with Vivek’s father for years.

He would often recall them whenever life felt confusing or difficult, and they brought him a sense of quiet strength and clarity.

He was informed that every month, the organiser arranges this discourse and decided to attend it regularly. It was very soothing, self-orientated, given a new life of inner world, attachment if shifted from outside world to inner world, how fortunate and lucky I will be. If God is inside, I will pray only peace and interest to give time on repetition word, meditation, breathing, If you are healthy inside , you are automatically strong from outside and can fight all the hindrance/obstacles comes into the life. Oh god be grace on me and need your kind blessing to attaché me 90 percent inside and 10 percent outside, just to fulfil my responsibility on my shoulders.

Yoga session at USA

Vivek also next day called Dad and informed him that in this university, there was session on Yoga and pranayama, I am sending you video for your knowledge, it was quite good.

As long as our relationship with ourselves is not beautiful, we cannot expect to have healthy relationships with others.

Inner confidence, self-love, and self-care are essential qualities. With regular yoga practice, you will notice these qualities slowly awakening within you.

Many of us suppress our emotions.

We want to speak to our family members, to our partner, to our wife or husband—but fear stops us.

Sometimes injustice happens to us, yet we stay silent because of societal pressure.

These unexpressed feelings remain stored within the mind since childhood. Over time, these trapped emotions settle in the body and create serious problems like depression, anxiety, and restlessness.

Chanting is a beautiful technique to release these pent-up emotions.

Today, we will practice three types of chanting.

*The sound Om has three syllables: **A – U – M.***

- *While chanting **A**, keep your attention on your navel, the Manipura Chakra. Feel the vibrations in your belly.*
- *While chanting **U**, focus on your chest, the Anahata Chakra. Allow the vibrations to fill your heart space.*
- *While chanting **M**, bring your awareness to your throat or above, the Vishuddhi Chakra. Feel the sound resonating upward.*

Sit with your spine erect, knees folded, and palms resting on your knees, facing upward.

Keep your eyes gently closed.

Take a deep breath in... and begin.

Chant **A** with awareness on the navel.

Chant **U** with awareness on the chest.

Chant **M** with awareness on the throat.

Then combine all three into one long, flowing **OM**, letting the vibration move from the navel to the chest and then to the head.

After chanting, lie down in Shavasana.

Relax your legs, your arms, your whole body.

Stay with the vibrations and your natural breath.

Remain connected with yourself.

Namaste.

That evening, while Vivek was settling into his routine abroad, his phone buzzed with a WhatsApp notification from Dad.

Dad:

“Vivek beta, I watched the video you sent. It was very interesting and truly beneficial. Our saints’ messages and teachings are reaching the whole world now. In today’s lifestyle, such guidance is a blessing—for our health, for our mind, and for our inner peace.”

Vivek smiled softly.

He had shared the video hoping his father would like it, but reading his words, he felt something deeper—an invisible thread of connection stretching across continents.

Dad continued with another message:

Dad:

“You focus on your studies, but don’t forget your wellbeing. These spiritual teachings will keep you balanced there.”

For a moment, Vivek closed his eyes.

Far away from home, in a new country, new culture, new

challenges—his father’s words felt like warmth wrapped around his heart.

He typed back slowly:

Vivek:

“Thanks Dad. I felt the same. I’ll keep following it.”

It wasn’t just a conversation—it was a reminder that no matter where he went, a part of home always travelled with him.

Vivek’s First Golf Practice at the University

Vivek reached the university golf course early in the morning, the grass still wet with dew and a thin mist floating above the fairway. Everything looked huge—professional, disciplined, and a little intimidating. Back in India, he had practiced in a small academy; here, the course looked like it belonged on television.

Students were already warming up—stretching, taking slow swings, talking confidently. Vivek felt a knot in his stomach.

Do I really belong here?

He took a deep breath and walked toward the coach.

Coach Miller, a tall man with a calm face, glanced at the registration list and smiled.

“Vivek from India? Welcome. Let’s see what you’ve got.”

Vivek nodded nervously.

He placed the ball on the tee, gripped the club, and tried to remember all the lessons he had learned back home—stance, shoulder alignment, breathing. He swung.

Tap.

The ball didn't fly.

It rolled... just a few feet.

A few students looked, some hiding smiles. Vivek's ears turned warm. He felt like apologizing.

But Coach Miller walked up beside him and said, "gently, "Relax. First day nerves. Try again. Don't fight the club—flow with it."

Vivek exhaled slowly and swung again.

This time, the ball lifted—light, clean, smooth—and soared into the distance.

A small cheer rose from behind.

"Nice one!" someone said.

Vivek smiled shyly. The knot in his stomach loosened. He could do this. He just needed time.

After two hours of practice—driving, chipping, putting—his hands were sore, but his heart felt lighter.

He wasn't just learning golf.

He was learning to rebuild himself in a new world, one swing at a time.

Walking back to the dorm, he checked his phone.

A message from Dad:

"Beta, did you practice golf today?"

Vivek looked at the course behind him and replied,

"Yes Dad... and for the first time here, I feel like I'll be okay."

Vivek's First Success in Class

The classroom was bright and modern, filled with students from different countries. Everyone seemed confident, fluent, fast. Vivek

sat quietly in the second row, his notebook open, his mind still battling homesickness and jet lag.

Today was his first graded class activity in “Sociology of Global Cultures.”

Professor Harris walked in with her usual energetic smile.

“Good morning, everyone. Today we’ll discuss cultural perception. I want each of you to share an example from your home country.”

Vivek’s heart skipped.

Oh no... speaking in front of the class? In English? On the first week?

Students started sharing—Americans, Europeans, Japanese, Africans—each sounding polished and confident. Vivek felt smaller and smaller in his chair.

Then Professor Harris looked at him.

“Vivek, would you like to share something from India?”

A soft silence spread across the room.

Vivek swallowed. For a moment, he thought of saying “I’m not ready.”

But then he remembered Akriti’s last line in her note:

Never hide your light. You have more in you than you think.

So, he stood up slowly.

“Ma’am... in India, we follow a tradition called Atithi Devo Bhava... it means the guest is like God.”

A few students looked intrigued.

He continued, gathering confidence as he spoke.

“It’s more than hospitality. It is about respect, warmth, and seeing divinity in every human being. When guests visit, we serve them

before serving ourselves. It's a cultural habit that teaches humility, generosity, and community harmony."

The class was completely silent—listening, absorbing.

Something changed in that moment. Vivek wasn't just a shy international student anymore.

He was someone with a rich heritage, sharing wisdom.

Professor Harris smiled warmly.

"Beautiful explanation, Vivek. That is exactly what cultural sociology is about—understanding human values through lived traditions. Thank you for that insight."

A soft round of applause followed.

Vivek sat down slowly, his cheeks warm, his heart racing—but in a good way.

For the first time since arriving in the USA, he felt seen. Heard. Valued.

After class, a classmate tapped his shoulder.

"Hey man, that was awesome. I never knew something like that existed."

Vivek smiled shyly.

"Thank you... it's just how we live back home."

When he walked out into the cold American air, he felt a new confidence.

Maybe he could survive here.

Maybe he could shine in his own way.

He opened his phone.

A message from Dad:

"Beta, hope your day went well."

Vivek typed back:

“It did, Dad... today, I got my first success.”

Vivek's Return to India After Two Years

Slowly, steadily, Vivek adjusted to life in the USA.

The early days of homesickness, cultural shock, and nervous classroom moments gradually faded. He made friends, learned the American work style, played golf on weekends, and soon moved into the final year of his MBA.

His professors praised him.

His confidence grew.

And then came the biggest milestone of his life—

He was selected through campus placement into a top multinational company, with a handsome package of USD 100,000 per year.

The day he received the offer letter; Vivek sat quietly on a bench outside the university building. Snowflakes drifted around him. His eyes became moist.

“From that small house... from Dad’s struggles... to this moment... it’s all God’s grace.”

But a strange emptiness remained.

Two years had passed since he left India.

He hadn’t met his parents, his brother Ankush, or any of his friends.

And most painfully...

There was ***no news of Akriti.***

Her number was inactive. Her social media is silent.

Not a single message.

Life in the USA had moved fast—too fast.

So, he made a decision.

That evening, Vivek called home through WhatsApp video. His family picked up instantly. Smiles, shock, tears—everything happened at once.

“Dad, Mom, Ankush... I’m coming home this Christmas!”

The house erupted with happiness.

He continued gently, “It’s been more than two years. I miss you all. And... I want to visit all the holy places in India. I still remember my first trip to Varanasi before coming here. I believe Lord Shiva blessed me with this path of study and now this job. I must go again... to thank Him.”

His father nodded proudly.

“Beta, God listens to a grateful heart. We will go wherever you wish.”

Within a week, Vivek prepared a complete itinerary—carefully planned, deeply emotional:

- *Varanasi – to bow before Baba Vishwanath*
- *Ayodhya – to seek the blessings of Prabhu Shri Ram*
- *Somnath – the eternal Jyotirlinga on the sea*
- *And finally, Vaishno Devi – with Ankush by his side*

Fifteen days of pure devotion.

Fifteen days to reconnect with his roots.

Fifteen days to heal the silent wound that Akriti had unknowingly left.

When Vivek landed in India, the air felt different—warm, familiar, full of memories.

His father hugged him tightly at the airport. His mother cried openly. Ankush laughed and dragged his luggage.

But inside Vivek's heart, a quiet thought echoed:

"Will I ever see Akriti again?"

He pushed the thought aside.

For now, he wanted peace, gratitude, and the spiritual journey that awaited him.

And so, the pilgrimage began—one temple, one prayer, one rediscovered emotion at a time.

The Return From the Pilgrimage

After completing their divine journey—Varanasi, Ayodhya, Somnath and Vaishno Devi—Vivek returned home feeling peaceful and spiritually lifted. But the moment they entered the house, his father looked at him with a mixture of love and disappointment.

Dad: *"Beta, what is the use of holidays if you cannot spend time with your old parents?"*

You were away for two years... and now again you are running."

Vivek sat beside him gently.

Vivek: *"Dad, it's not that I don't want to stay. But this is my first job, and the company is very strict. If they feel I'm careless, they may even terminate me."*

His father shook his head firmly.

Dad: *"Nothing doing. You will stay for at least one more week. Parents also have some rights over their children."*

Vivek smiled faintly.

“Okay Dad... I’ll mail them. If I get approval, I’ll stay.”

He immediately wrote to his employer, explaining the situation.

The reply came the day after Christmas.

A cold, blunt email:

“You must rejoin immediately. As per contract, leave beyond the approved period is not permitted. Either report to duty or consider it a resignation.”

Vivek’s face became pale. He quietly handed mail to his father.

Vivek: “Dad... see this. I’m sorry. I have no choice. I must leave tomorrow.”

For a moment his father looked stunned and helpless.

Dad: “Oh no... so soon?”

Vivek held his hand.

Vivek: “Don’t worry. I’ll come next Christmas and stay for one full month.

Or better... I’ll call you there. By then I should have a good house. You and Mom will stay with me.”

His father sighed, then nodded slowly.

Dad: “Okay beta... all the best. God bless you.

They say wherever a person’s food and water are written, he goes there.

Let’s see... whether you come here or we go there.”

Vivek laughed softly—but he understood the depth behind those words.

That night, as the brothers sat on the terrace, Vivek suddenly asked:

Vivek: “Bro... tell me honestly—
What about Akriti?”

Ankush smiled knowingly.

Ankush: “I am your brother. I know what sits inside your mind. She used to call us sometimes... but for the last one year, there’s been no news.”

Vivek looked up at the sky, his heart tightening.

Vivek: “Let’s go to her house tomorrow.”

Ankush: “Alright. We’ll go.”

And with that decision, an old chapter—left half-open—was about to be revisited.

They reached Akriti’s house around noon.

The security guard, sitting at the gate, stood up the moment he saw Vivek.

“Sir! How are you? Seeing you after such a long time...”

Vivek was surprised.

“You... know me?”

The guard smiled respectfully.

“Of course, sir. You had come once... very late at night, to drop Miss Akriti after that wedding.”

Vivek’s face tightened with memories.

“Yes... right. Can we meet her? Or her father?”

The guard’s expression changed.

He lowered his voice.

“Sir... Miss Akriti is not here anymore.”

Vivek froze.

“What do you mean?”

*“After that accident case, she faced many complications.
The boy’s family trouble... the court... media pressure...
She was mentally disturbed.*

*A few months later, she left for London to stay with her
aunt and continue her studies.”*

Vivek swallowed hard.

“And her parents?”

*“They’re in London as well these days. The house is
locked. No one has been living here for months.”*

A long silence followed.

Vivek looked at the empty house—the same gate where he once waited for her—the same porch where she stood smiling... and now nothing remained except echoes.

He turned without a word and began walking down the road.

Ankush followed him quietly.

A few meters ahead, they noticed a huge crowd gathered near a makeshift stage.

Men, women, children—all sitting with folded hands, listening with complete stillness.

A spiritual storyteller (Katha-vachak) was narrating.

Her voice was powerful, calm, magnetic.

Vivek slowed down.

Ankush whispered,

“Let’s go, bro... you’re not in the mood.”

But Vivek didn’t move.

His eyes were fixed on the storyteller.

Something in her voice—certainty, peace, truth—pulled him like a magnet.

“No, Ankush... I want to stay.”

They moved forward and found two empty chairs at the back.

The moment they sat, the storyteller said:

“Sometimes, life separates people not to punish them, but to prepare them...”

One must walk alone for some distances to discover who they truly are.”

The words hit Vivek straight in the heart.

The crowd was silent.

The wind felt softer.

The world slowed down.

For the first time since morning, Vivek breathed deeply.

Ankush glanced at him.

Vivek just whispered, almost to himself—

“Maybe... this is where I needed to come today.”

The world feels sweet only until we taste a sweeter nectar.

Tea feels sweet until we eat a rasgulla—then the tea tastes bland.

Similarly, the world feels pleasant only until we taste the divine sweetness of ***Thakur ji***.

Once that divine nectar is tasted, worldly pleasures lose their charm.

Thakur ji told the Gopis,
"I know you no longer belong to the world, but the world still needs
you.
There are duties you must fulfil. I too have duties left, and my time
here is short."

He had to end His Vrindavan pastimes and go to Mathura.
Before leaving, He accepted the love of the Gopis completely.

When Akrura arrived with the chariot sent by Kansa,
Thakur ji understood that the time had come.
Tears filled His eyes.

Nanda and Yashoda welcomed Akrura,
but when Yashoda Maa learned he had come to take Krishna and
Balarama,
she fell silent.
She knew this was not a journey of two days—
this was the final separation.

That night, Yashoda fed Krishna butter with her own hands,
trying to hide her breaking heart.
Krishna comforted her like an innocent child:
"Maa, I will go, see Mathura, and return in three days."
But both knew this was their last embrace.

All of Vrindavan felt it.
The cows, peacocks, birds—everyone gathered at Nand Bhavan,
crying silently, knowing this was their final night with their beloved
Kanha.

Even the Gopis, and finally **Shri Radha**, came at midnight.
When Radha learned the truth—that Krishna was truly leaving—
she fainted from pain.
Reviving, she saw Krishna at her feet.

He said,

"Kishori, forgive me. I cannot repay this love.

I leave my flute and my crown at your feet."

He placed His flute before Radha and said:

"Whenever the pain of separation becomes too much,

play this flute and call me—I will come."

Radha smiled through tears:

"How can I call you when I can never forget you?

You can only remember someone you once forgot."

Still, she kept the flute close.

Krishna said,

"I leave all of Vrindavan in your care.

Hide your tears from the people—

if you break, the whole of Braj will break."

At dawn, Vrindavan prayed to the Sun not to rise,
for if the Sun rose, their **Kanha** would leave forever.

Vivek turned to Ankush, his voice heavy with emotion.

***"I feel like I'm going through the same phase, Ankush...
separated from her, without any clarity."***

Ankush immediately pulled him into a warm hug.

***"Brother, don't worry. Everything will fall into place with
time. Life always opens a new door."***

After the spiritual gathering ended, the two brothers quietly walked back home, each lost in their own thoughts. The evening had stirred old memories, unhealed wounds, and unanswered questions.

The next few days passed quickly. Vivek was preparing to return to the USA, and the entire family felt a silent sadness. They had spent

precious days together after years, and now the thought of another long separation was weighing on everyone's heart.

On the morning of his departure, the house felt unusually still. His mother fussed over his packing, his father gave him repeated instructions, and Ankush followed him around, trying to hide his emotions. But the moment finally came.

Vivek touched their feet, hugged everyone tightly, and said, ***"I'll be back soon... this time, not after such a long gap."***

With mixed feelings—gratitude for new beginnings and longing for unfinished chapters—Vivek left for the airport.

The next day, he landed in the USA and rejoined his job as planned, stepping back into the rhythm of his new life... though a small part of his heart still lingered in India.

Vivek's New Phase in the USA

Returning to the USA after his emotional trip to India felt different this time. The same streets, the same office building, the same apartment—yet everything carried a new meaning. Something inside him had shifted.

His colleagues welcomed him back warmly.

"Hey Vivek, how was India?"

"It was refreshing... emotional... and grounding," he replied with a gentle smile.

But deep inside, a quiet restlessness had settled. Memories of Akriti's house, the guard's words, and the spiritual gathering kept echoing in his mind.

A New Determination

At night, after work, Vivek often sat near his apartment window sipping tea—an Indian habit he still cherished. The city lights flickered below, but his thoughts drifted far away.

Where is Akriti now? How is she coping? Why did fate take such a strange turn for both of us?

One evening, he logged into LinkedIn. For the first time in years, he typed her name in the search bar:

“Akriti Sharma – London.”

Several profiles appeared, but none were clearly hers. He hesitated to send a request; he didn’t want to disturb her or reopen old wounds. Still, the hope lingered.

Work, Growth & Recognition

At his office, Vivek began performing exceptionally well. His manager noticed his dedication.

“Vivek, your consistency is impressive. We’re considering you for an early leadership program.”

This recognition boosted his confidence. Hard work became his anchor—something to hold on to when emotions pulled him away.

Spiritual Influence

The katha he had attended in India kept replaying in his mind, especially the storyteller’s words:

“Separation is not loss; it is preparation.”

He began listening to spiritual talks during his commute—Bhagavad Gita commentaries, stories from saints, mindfulness practices. Slowly,

his mind started gaining calmness. Instead of trying to forget Akriti, he began to understand life's deeper design.

A Letter to Ankush

One night, he texted Ankush:

"Brother, I am fine here. Work is going well.

But somewhere in my heart, I feel that my path and Akriti's path will cross again—if destiny wishes.

Till then, I'm focusing on becoming a better version of myself."

Ankush replied instantly:

"I'm proud of you. Just keep walking your path. Life has a strange way of bringing people back."

A Gentle Turning Point

Two weeks later, while checking his emails one morning, he noticed something unusual:

A message from a London-based conference organizer. They wanted his company to nominate a young professional for an international business summit.

His manager said,

"Vivek, I think you should attend. You'd represent us well."

London.

His heart skipped a beat.

Was this a coincidence?

Or the beginning of something life-changing?

Vivek's London Trip

When Vivek received the email confirming his nomination for the International Business Summit in London, he felt an unexpected flutter in his heart. London—the city where Akriti was now studying, living, healing.

He didn't tell anyone about this thought, not even Ankush. He simply prepared for the conference like a disciplined professional.

Arrival in London

The moment he stepped out of Heathrow Airport, a cold breeze brushed his face.

London felt calm, dignified, and yet strangely familiar—almost as if destiny had brought him there for a reason.

His colleague Mike, who had arrived a day earlier, waved at him.

“Welcome to London, mate! Long flight?”

“Yes, but I'm excited,” Vivek replied, hiding the swirl of emotions inside.

They drove to the hotel near Westminster. Vivek looked out of the window—beautiful streets, orderly traffic, historical buildings. But his mind kept drifting to one thought:

Will I meet her?

Should I even try?

Or should I respect the silence she has chosen?

The Conference Begins

The next morning, the conference hall buzzed with international delegates. Vivek, in his navy-blue suit, represented confidence and sincerity.

During the panel discussion, he spoke about adapting businesses to cultural diversity—a topic drawn from his own experience of adjusting to life in the USA.

When he finished, the audience applauded warmly. Several senior executives approached him:

“You spoke well, young man.”

“Brilliant insights.”

But even with this success, his heart felt strangely heavy.

A Walk Through the City

In the evening, he stepped out alone.

He walked along the Thames, crossed the Westminster Bridge, and stood silently in front of the London Eye. The cool air made him nostalgic.

If Akriti is here somewhere... does she also walk on these streets?

Does she remember anything?

Or has time erased everything?

His phone buzzed. It was Ankush.

“Reached safely?”

“Yes bro.”

“Did you meet her?”

“No... I haven’t tried. Maybe I shouldn’t.”

“Do what your heart says, Vivek,” Ankush replied.

Destiny’s First Hint

The next day, after the conference concluded early, Vivek decided to explore the city. He took a cab to Oxford Street, walked through bookstores, cafés, and clothing stores.

Inside a bookstore, he picked up a spiritual book—something similar to what the Katha Vachak had narrated in India. As he flipped pages, he suddenly froze.

A familiar fragrance.

A familiar voice.

A laugh he could recognise anywhere.

He turned.

A girl at the far corner of the store, holding a cup of coffee, was talking to an elderly British lady.

The girl had short hair now, a calmer face, a gentler smile.

But her eyes... those eyes were unmistakable.

It was Akriti.

Vivek's heart suddenly began to race, but his feet refused to move.

She hadn't seen him yet.

Should he approach?

Should he disturb her peace?

Or simply walk away silently?

He watched from a distance, torn between courage and emotion.

A Sudden Turn

As she turned to leave, her eyes accidentally met his.

She stopped.

Vivek's breath caught.

Her expression froze for a second...

Surprise.

Recognition.

And then a flood of old memories in her eyes.

"V-Vivek?" she whispered, barely audible.

He felt his voice disappear, but somehow, he managed:
“Hi, Akriti...”

The moment hung suspended—like time itself was waiting to see what destiny would write next.

Akriti; My dad told me yesterday that you are London, He saw you post on Facebook, I was thinking to speak to you and what a coincident, we her here, so what is your itnery, how long you are hare and when we can meet and talk.

Vivek, I am just leaving tomorrow and we can have dinner together today, let us meet at Taj restaurant, I am also staying there,

A Gentle Beginning of Reconnection

For a few moments, neither Vivek nor Akriti spoke. They simply stood there—two people who once shared a world, now meeting in a foreign land, both changed by time and distance.

Akriti held her coffee cup tightly, as if steadying herself. Vivek could see a mixture of surprise, relief, and something softer—something familiar—in her eyes.

“London suits you,” he finally said, breaking the silence.

A small smile appeared on her face.

“You changed too... in a good way.”

They stepped aside from the bookstore crowd, moving near a quiet corner by the window. A soft drizzle had begun outside, making the streets glisten under yellow street lamps.

A Light, Hesitant Conversation

"How long have you been here?" she asked gently.

"Just two days. Conference work," Vivek replied.

"And you?"

"Almost a year now. Studying psychology. My aunt lives here."

"That's... really good, Akriti. I'm happy for you."

She nodded, but her eyes lowered slightly, as if carrying unspoken memories.

Vivek didn't push.

He didn't ask about the accident, the silence, the sudden disappearance.

He simply stood there with quiet respect.

After a few seconds, Akriti looked up again.

"You must have been angry with me... for leaving without telling you."

Vivek inhaled slowly.

"No. I was... worried. But I knew you must have had your reasons. And I didn't want to disturb your peace."

Her eyes softened.

"Thank you... for understanding."

The Past Walks Beside Them, But Doesn't Overpower

They stepped out of the bookstore together, and Akriti opened her umbrella.

"Come, let's walk," she said, "softly."

They walked on the damp pavement of Oxford Street, the city buzzing around them yet feeling strangely peaceful. For the first time in years, their pace matched naturally—like old times.

“I heard you went to the US... MBA?” she asked.

“Yes. Finished last year. Now working in a multinational. Life is... busy, but good.”

“That suits you,” she smiled.

“And London?” he asked back.

She looked ahead, exhaling.

“At first it was difficult. New place, new people... and I was carrying a lot inside. But slowly, I found myself again. Classes helped. My aunt helped. Time helped.”

The way she said, “it—soft, steady—told Vivek she had walked through pain, but also through healing.

Old Warmth, New Distance

A chilly breeze passed between them. Akriti tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

“Vivek...”

“Yes?”

“It feels nice to talk after so long. But things are different now. I’m different.”

“I know,” Vivek said, calmly.

“And I’m not here to force the past back. I’m just... happy to see you okay.”

She stopped walking and looked at him with gentle gratitude.

“That means a lot.”

A Small Step Forward

They reached a quiet corner where a small café glowed warmly under dim lights.

“Coffee?” Akriti asked, surprising herself more than him.

Vivek smiled.

“Only if you join.”

Inside, they found a corner table. The warmth of the café, the soft music, the misty window—all of it made the moment feel fragile yet comforting.

They talked about small things—her classes, his work, life in London, life in the US.

No heavy questions.

No expectations.

Only a steady, respectful warmth.

At one point, Akriti said, “softly:

“You know... I used to think meeting you again would be difficult. But right now... it feels peaceful.”

Vivek looked down at his cup, hiding the emotion in his eyes.

“I’m glad.”

A Quiet Goodbye—for Today

After an hour, Akriti checked her watch.

“I should go. My aunt will worry.”

Vivek stood up.

“Well... take care, Akriti.”

She hesitated for a moment, then stepped a little closer.

“Vivek... let’s not lose touch again. Not like last time.”

His heart warmed quietly.

“Sure,” he said. “I’d like that.”

They exchanged numbers—not with old intensity, but with new gentleness.

As she walked away into the soft London drizzle, she turned once more and smiled.

Vivek stood there watching her go, feeling something, he hadn’t felt in years—

Peace.

Closure.

And a quiet beginning.

A New Openness Between Vivek and Akriti

As they walked slowly along the quiet London street, Vivek finally gathered the courage to speak what had been resting in his heart.

“Akriti... why don’t you come to the USA sometime?” he said, “gently.

“We could spend time together... talk openly... exchange our feelings.”

Akriti laughed lightly, tilting her head.

“Feelings? What do you mean by ‘feelings’?”

Vivek smiled, a little embarrassed but determined.

“Feeling means... what you think about me, what I think about you.

Your plans, my plans... our understanding.

We never got a chance to talk about these things earlier.”

Akriti stopped walking for a moment. A soft breeze touched her face.

“Vivek...” she said, “quietly, “I’ll be honest. Earlier, I always felt I may never adjust in your family. Everything was different—expectations, lifestyles, responsibilities. And I wasn’t ready.”

She took a slow breath, then continued:

“But now... you’re well-settled, mature, independent. And I feel... maybe we can move forward and know each other better. Not rushing... just understanding each other’s nature, habits, and thoughts.”

There was a gentle honesty in her voice that warmed Vivek from within.

He smiled.

“Yes... that’s exactly what I meant.”

He then hesitated for a second before saying:

“By the way... we haven’t even exchanged our numbers.”

Akriti laughed again, softly.

“True. Give me your US number.”

Vivek recited it.

Akriti immediately called him from her phone.

“See?” she smiled. “No need to exchange anything. Now you already have my UK number. Bohlenath took care of it.”

Vivek laughed.

“You’re right. Simple and perfect.”

They stood there for a few moments—quiet, comfortable, and hopeful.

That night, they texted briefly. Just a “Reached home safely?” and “Good to meet after so long.”

And the next morning, Vivek boarded his flight to the USA, carrying with him something he hadn't felt in years—

A Sense of New Beginning

In India, Vivek's father spoke to him over a video call, his eyes shining with relief and warmth.

"Vivek, I am so glad to hear you met Akriti," he said. "From your voice itself, I can feel happiness in your heart. God bless you, beta. Tomorrow I am going to the Satsang—I will pray for even more happiness in your life."

"Thank you, Dad," Vivek replied softly. "I really need those blessings."

"Hold on," his father said, "Ankush wants to talk."

"Hi bro!" Ankush's excited voice burst through. "I heard everything! So... what's the news?"

Vivek smiled. "I feel she is finally opening her heart. She is thinking about us... about a future."

"Congrats, bro! We're all super happy for you."

Vivek asked, "And what about your government job interview?"

"No updates yet," Ankush sighed, "but I got an offer from a multinational as Assistant Software Manager."

"That's amazing!" Vivek encouraged. "You should join. These companies value hardworking people—and they pay well too."

"Yes... if the government result doesn't come, I'll join."

Just then, Dad added softly, "You know, Vivek... this human birth is the most precious form in the universe. Only humans are blessed with

the awareness to seek God. We know the path, yet we get distracted by worldly affairs and forget our real purpose—to return to the Supreme.”

He continued, almost as if speaking from the depth of a Satsang:

“When we surrender to the Almighty, an inner strength rises. Problems still come, but they only touch us and pass. You lived your life like an ordinary human—running behind success, worries, happiness—but now your heart has turned toward the spiritual path. You enjoy being with spiritual seekers, listening to divine stories.”

“But even Satsang creates a deeper longing—to see God, to feel God. And even a glimpse of the Divine gives only temporary joy. True fulfilment comes when the seeker fully merges with the Supreme, when the difference between ‘you’ and ‘Him’ disappears.”

“That state,” he said, “is unending peace and limitless bliss. This is what Lord Krishna taught Arjuna—not just to know God, not just to see God... but to become one with God.”

Vivek listened quietly, deeply moved.

A new chapter of his life had truly begun.

Rajesh Dad read an article in the newspaper and forwarded the same to his son Vivek.

Which in turn liked the message and said, “it is very inspiring. Saints are great soul, who had guided masses and bringing them dark to light. “

“There would be no quarrels if everyone became children.”

— Jain Munishri Tarun Sagar Ji

I was reading a profound message that said:

"If a guest comes to your home, offer them food.
If not food, offer water.
If not water, offer them a place to sit.
If you cannot even offer a seat, then offer sweet words.
And if you cannot offer sweet words, at least offer a smile.
But if you cannot even smile... then drown yourself in a bucket of water."

The message is simple—
hospitality begins with the heart, not with resources.

As parents, we teach our children to study hard, to grow, to become capable—but we must also teach them humility. Do not raise them so high that one day they look down upon their own parents. Many people made this mistake, and today, in old age, they carry the pain of it. After the crop is eaten by birds, regret remains—but it cannot bring back what is lost.

Someone once asked, "How can I bring heaven into my life?"
The answer is gentle yet powerful:

Keep your ***mind cool***, your ***pockets sufficient***, ***shame in your eyes***, ***sweetness on your tongue***, and ***compassion in your heart***.

If you live this way, you will not have to go to heaven—
heaven will come and sit beside you.

The irony of life is that everyone wants happiness, but few are willing to cultivate the qualities that bring happiness. We get angry, fight, argue—but the worst mistake is silence that breaks bonds. As long as we keep talking, even though conflict, reconciliation is possible. Anger itself is not wrong, but carrying hatred after the anger is what poisons relationships.

Children fight and cry one moment and become friends the next.
How beautiful life would be if all adults remained like children—
pure, forgiving, and quick to let go.

In this world, two things must never be forgotten:

God and one's own mortality.

And two things must always be forgotten:

If you do good to someone—***forget it.***

If someone does wrong to you—***forget it even faster.***

These four principles—two to remember, two to forget—
are the essence of living a peaceful, divine life.

A Heartfelt Message Exchange Between Vivek and Akriti

The evening after exchanging numbers, Vivek sat on the edge of his bed in the USA, holding his phone, wondering whether to message first.

Before he could decide, a notification blinked.

Akriti:

“Reached home. Still smiling... maybe because of today.”

Vivek's heart skipped a beat.

Vivek:

“I am smiling too. I didn't expect our conversation to feel so natural.”

A pause... three dots blinking on the screen...

Akriti:

“Same here. I felt like I've known you for a long time.”

*Vivek felt warmth spreading in his chest.
He typed slowly, choosing words carefully.*

Vivek:

“Strange, isn’t it? Two people from two different worlds... and yet talking like old friends.”

Akriti replied instantly.

Akriti:

“Maybe some connections don’t follow logic. They just happen.”

*Vivek stared at her message for a long second.
He typed, deleted, retyped—then finally sent:*

Vivek:

“I felt peaceful talking to you today. Not excited—peaceful... like something in me settled.”

She took a moment before replying.

Akriti:

*“That’s beautiful. And honest. I feel comfortable around you.
That’s rare.”*

Then, unexpectedly, another message came.

Akriti:

“One more thing... I’m glad you came to meet me today.”

Vivek smiled deeply, a soft joy filling him.

Vivek:

“Thank you for giving me that time. It meant a lot.”

A few minutes passed.

The night was quiet.

Both were lost in thoughts of each other.

Then Akriti sent one last message:

Akriti:

“Good night, Vivek. I don’t know why... but I’m looking forward to tomorrow.”

Vivek read it twice, then replied:

Vivek:

“Good night, Akriti. So am I.”

As they placed their phones aside—two continents apart—both fell asleep with the same gentle smile.

A Turning Point: When Their Bond Quietly Shifts Into Love

It was a rainy evening in London when Akriti messaged Vivek.

Akriti:

“It’s raining heavily here... everything looks a little lonely today.”

Vivek was in his apartment in the USA, working on a presentation. He stopped immediately.

Vivek:

“Talk to me. I’m here.”

She sent a photo through the window:
a soft drizzle, blurred street lights, and a cup of steaming tea.

Something about that picture touched him deeply.

Vivek:

“This looks peaceful... but your eyes say something else.”

After a moment, she replied:

Akriti:

"Sometimes I feel like life moves forward but my heart stays behind."

Vivek took a breath.

He typed without overthinking:

Vivek:

"If your heart ever needs a place to rest... mine is open."

A long silence.

He wondered if he went too far.

Then her message popped up:

Akriti:

"Vivek... why do your words make things feel lighter?"

Vivek:

"Maybe because they are true."

*There was another pause, but this one felt different—
not hesitation...*

but something soft blooming.

Then she sent a voice note.

A small one, just 6 seconds.

Her voice trembled slightly:

Akriti (voice note):

"I don't know why... but I feel close to you."

Vivek played it twice.

Three times.

His heart beat faster.

He replied with a simple line:

Vivek:

"I feel close to you too."

Another message came from her:

Akriti:

"I'm smiling for no reason."

Vivek:

"Not for no reason."

"You're smiling because you're not alone anymore."

Her reply was a heart emoji.

Her first one.

That tiny symbol said, "everything they weren't ready to say aloud.

*And that night, across oceans,
without any big confession or dramatic moment,
something shifted quietly...*

Their conversations grew softer, warmer.

Their pauses became comfortable.

Their goodnights carried unspoken emotion.

Their morning messages felt like a habit of the heart.

*It was the night their connection stopped being a friendship
and became something deeper—
a silent promise,
a gentle beginning...
the first quiet breath of love.*

A Week Before Mexico

*Their conversations had now become a rhythm—
morning greetings, afternoon updates, evening confessions,
and sometimes late-night whispers when both pretended not to be
sleepy.*

One evening, Akriti's tone suddenly changed.

Akriti:

*"Vivek... I am dying to meet you.
I don't know why, but here I feel lonely, sad... even depressed.
There's no one for me.
How long will we only talk on the phone?"*

*Vivek paused.
Her honesty pierced him.*

Vivek:

*"Akriti... what happened?"
She took a long breath before replying.*

Akriti:

*"I still haven't forgotten that accident.
My father says the case is still going on.
I'm on bail.
And I'm scared... if any wrong order comes from the court, what
will happen?"*

Vivek felt a tightness in his chest.

Vivek:

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

Akriti:

"What would you do? You are so far..."

Dad told me you also got a notice as a witness. Is it true?"

Vivek:

"Yes. Court sent a notice.

Dad told them I'm in the USA, working.

So they accepted the explanation and didn't insist."

Akriti went silent. He could almost feel her heartbeat from thousands of miles away.

Akriti:

"Oh my God... even you got into trouble because of me."

Vivek:

"Not trouble, Akriti... this is life.

And when we've done nothing wrong, nothing can harm us.

God sees everything."

She sighed.

Akriti:

"You always put everything—good or bad—on God."

Vivek smiled softly.

Vivek:

"Because I believe He gives us the duty..."

and the strength to fulfil it.

Whatever He gives, or even takes away,

it is His wish.

We must remain grateful... always."

Then he added more gently:

*“And He is not somewhere far.
He lives inside us.
But we humans—
we waste time searching for Him outside.
That’s the weakness of our mind.”*

Akriti became quiet, almost humbled.

Akriti:

*“You speak like some saint sometimes...
How do you know all this?”*

Vivek:

*“I read. I listen.
And Dad also sends me spiritual notes—press cuttings, satsang
teachings, masters’ messages.
They give me peace.”*

She teased him lightly.

Akriti:

*“You’re so deep into spirituality...
Tomorrow you might not like family life.”
He laughed.*

Vivek:

*“Spirituality doesn’t mean leaving the world.
We can walk the spiritual path while living a family life.
No renunciation needed.”*

Her voice softened, as if she was seeing him in a new light.

Akriti:

“Hmm... maybe you’re right.”

Then Vivek shifted the conversation.

Vivek:

"Listen, tomorrow I'm flying to Mexico City for office work.

I'll be there for a week.

So we won't be able to talk regularly."

There was a long silence.

Akriti:

"...One whole week?"

Vivek:

"Yes. But next weekend...

if you can manage...

come to the USA.

We'll spend time together."

She pretended not to understand.

Akriti:

"What do you mean 'spend time'?"

Vivek:

"Simple.

Eat.

Talk.

Laugh.

There's a song, you know—

'Khayenge, piyenge aur mauj karenge.'"

('We will eat, drink and will enjoy.'")

Akriti laughed loudly.

Akriti:

"You've changed, Vivek!

Flirting now?"

Vivek:

“Flirting?”

No, madam. Just being honest.”

A softer tone came from her side:

Akriti:

“Let’s see... maybe I will come.”

Vivek:

“Okay then.

See you after a week.”

Akriti:

“Same to you. Take care.”

The call ended...

but their hearts kept talking in the silence.

It was the first time they both felt the newfound gravity of their bond—

a pull stronger than distance,

stronger than fear,

stronger than the past.

A Spiritual Sign That Brings Them Closer

During the week Vivek was in Mexico City, their calls were brief, irregular, and sometimes impossible due to meetings and time difference.

But strangely, in that distance... both felt something shift.

One evening in London

Akriti was returning from her university library.

It was cold, drizzling, the kind of weather that made the heart crave warmth.

As she walked past a small square, she suddenly heard a familiar sound—

the gentle, rhythmic chant of:

“Hare Krishna... Hare Rama...”

A small group of international devotees was doing kirtan under a streetlight.

Akriti stopped.

Her throat tightened.

She remembered Vivek’s words:

“God is inside us.

We search outside, but He is with us every moment.”

As she stood listening to the chants, a saffron-clad devotee approached her—smiling, calm, serene.

He held out a small booklet and said softly:

***“Sometimes God brings certain people into our life...
not to test us,
but to guide us.”***

Akriti froze.

Her heart skipped.

The devotee continued:

***“If someone gives you peace,
that person is a blessing—not a coincidence.”***

Before she could ask anything, he smiled and walked away with the group.

Akriti looked down at the booklet.

On the cover, in golden letters, it read:

*“When the soul recognizes a companion,
distance disappears.”*

She felt a shiver—not of fear, but recognition.

For the first time, she whispered to herself:

“Is this... about Vivek?”

Her eyes softened, filling with an emotion she had never allowed herself to feel.

Vivek’s First Evening in Mexico City

Vivek reached Mexico City in the afternoon, where the conference organizers had arranged a city tour for all delegates. Three large buses were filled with nearly 150 participants from around the world—chatting, clicking pictures, and admiring the vibrant streets.

By evening, everyone gathered at the hotel’s grand hall for the inauguration party. Music played softly, snacks were circulating, and the liquor counters were crowded with excited delegates. Vivek picked up a *Virgin Bloody Mary* and stood near a tall cocktail table where six participants were laughing and exchanging stories.

Vivek smiled and introduced himself.

“Hello, I’m Vivek.”

A tall man turned toward him.

Petre: “Hello! You’re from India?”

Vivek: “No sir, I’m from the USA—though originally from India.”

A woman with bright eyes stepped forward and extended her hand.

Maria: “Hi Vivek! I like India.”

Vivek laughed. “Really? That’s great—I’m impressed!”

Maria: “Why impressed?”

Vivek: “Because you like India—my country. That’s always good news for me.”

She leaned closer, curious.

Maria: “Is this your first conference?”

Vivek: “No, this is my second. My first was in the UK.”

Maria: “I was there too! But I didn’t see you.”

Vivek: “There were thousands of people—you can’t meet everyone. See? God is great—He introduced us here.”

Maria raised an eyebrow.

Maria: “You believe in God?”

Vivek: “Yes, fully. My whole family attends satsang regularly. Our country naturally leans toward spirituality. Of course, that doesn’t mean there are no law-and-order issues—antisocial people exist everywhere. But spiritually, the majority is strong.”

Maria: “Then we should plan to visit India—learn about mindfulness and transformation.”

Vivek: “You must. Not just Indians, but many foreigners come for spiritual learning. Recently, during the Kumbh Mela, lakhs of people took a dip in the Ganga. It was incredible.”

Maria: “Yes, yes! I saw that on the news.”

Vivek: “Whenever you go, tell me. My family and my brother are there—they will take care of you.”

Petre chuckled.

Petre: “You two talk like you’ve known each other for years!”

Another delegate joined in.

Delegate: “India is doing well... good economy... Here everything is going down. You have a good leader. Lucky country.”

As the night progressed, drinks flowed freely. Around midnight people began dispersing—some heading to their rooms, while others, still energetic, shifted to the hotel bar.

Vivek found himself stuck with the enthusiastic group still drinking. After watching them order another round, he finally shook his head and laughed.

Vivek: “Sorry guys, you all have great capacity! I don’t. I must go—otherwise tomorrow my presentation will be a disaster.”

They teased him but let him go. Vivek wished everyone goodnight and quietly slipped away to his room, preparing himself for the big day ahead.

Breakfast Table Confessions— Mexico City

Early morning, the hotel’s grand dining hall was lively again. Delegates moved around sleepy-eyed, piling fruits, eggs, and coffee onto their plates. Vivek spotted Petre and Maria at a corner table, waving him over.

He joined them with a smile.

Maria: “Oh God... my head is spinning. Hangover, dizziness, everything together.”

Petre chuckled, pouring himself orange juice.

“I’ve heard if you have a hangover, you should take a small peg in the morning. It resets the system.”

Maria: “Yes, yes, I heard that too. Vivek, is it correct?”

Vivek: “Well... I’m a teetotaller. I have no idea.”

Maria looked at him, eyebrows raised.

“So that means yesterday you were drinking only virgin cocktails?”

Vivek nodded.

“Yes, exactly. No alcohol for me.”

She laughed.

“I was wondering how you took four pegs and still looked perfectly normal. Now I know—you took none!”

Petre: “You never drink at all?”

Vivek paused, then confessed with a shy smile.

Vivek: “I tried once in my life... and it was a disaster. I was riding my scooter like it was a sports bike. Somehow reached home alive. Next morning my dad scolded me so much that I promised him—never again.”

Petre shook his head in disbelief.

“In USA, nobody gives such advice. We don’t even live with our parents. Big difference between Indian family culture and ours.”

Maria leaned forward, eyes playful.

Maria: “Tell me something, Vivek... do you have a girlfriend?”

Vivek hesitated, then spoke softly.

Vivek: “Yes... there is one girl who showed interest in me.”

Maria’s curiosity sharpened.

“Meaning?”

Vivek smiled at the memory.

“We were in college. Met many times. One day she said, “we share a platonic relationship.”

Maria almost choked on her coffee from excitement.

“Oh! I’m very interested now. Continue.”

Vivek: *“She moved to London. I met her again there recently. She told me she’s alone... and wants to move ahead with me.”*

Maria put a hand dramatically on her chest.

“That’s so cute! She basically proposed to you.”

Vivek: *“Maybe... I felt that too. And now... now I’ve started missing her more.”*

Maria gave him a knowing smile.

“Oh, I’m sure the same fire is burning on her side too.”

Vivek looked down at his plate, unable to hide his quiet happiness.

Vivek: *“You’re right... I feel the same.”*

Maria nudged Petre.

“Look at him... he’s in love and glowing like the Mexican sunrise!”

All three burst into soft laughter.

Vivek’s Presentation Scene— Mexico City

The next morning, the conference ballroom buzzed with energy. Delegates took their seats, sipping coffee, flipping through brochures, and whispering among themselves. Large LED screens displayed the day’s topic, and the soft hum of translation headsets filled the air.

Vivek entered the hall sharply dressed, a calm confidence in his stride. The late-night drinking of others showed clearly—many looked tired and restless—but Vivek was fresh, alert, prepared.

When his name appeared on the screen—

“Mr. Vivek Anand – Emerging Logistics Strategies for a

Changing World”

—he took a deep breath and walked to the podium.

A warm spotlight settled on him.

He adjusted the mic.

“Good morning, everyone.”

His voice carried steady and clear across the hall.

Within minutes, Vivek had the audience hooked. He spoke about:

- shifting global supply chains
- risk management after the pandemic
- India and America’s growing logistics collaboration
- the role of ethics in international forwarding
- real case studies from his own experiences

He didn’t read from slides. He spoke, he explained, he engaged.

People leaned forward in their seats.

Even Maria, who had entered the hall half sleepy, suddenly sat upright, nudging a colleague:

“Look at him—so composed! Did he drink at all last night?”

Vivek clicked to a slide showing a humorous real-life mishap.

The room erupted in laughter.

He ended with a soft spiritual note:

***“Efficiency is important, but integrity is everything.
In logistics, as in life, the straight path is the fastest one.”***

A brief silence.

Then a wave of applause.

Some clapped politely... but many clapped with genuine appreciation.

The moderator walked up and shook his hand.

“Thank you, Mr. Vivek. That was refreshing.”

Vivek smiled humbly.

“Thank you. I simply shared what I learned.”

Petre joined them, laughing:

“You were brilliant! And look at me—I’m still recovering from the bar!”

The group chuckled.

Vivek felt a quiet warmth. Not just from the applause—but from something deeper.

He glanced at his phone.

There was a message from Akriti:

“All the best for your presentation. I know you will shine.”

He called her:

You are right, Akriti... I did. Just finished, all are praising.

Maria, came in and said,” Vivek! Outstanding. You speak like someone who has lived every line of his presentation.”

Vivek; keep hand at the phone, bowed, thanks, Maria, I appreciate.

Akriti said, who is this Maria,

Just a delegate from USA.

Akriti, you got so popular in one day, even the girls are familiar with your name.

Vivek, explaining, no this is not the case, actually she met me yesterday at opening ceremony and we were on the same table.

Akriti: “No need for explanations, Vivek. I know you very well.”

Her words made him smile.

Vivek: Right dear, “I’ll speak to you in the evening.”

Akriti: “Right, dear... looking forward.”

He blushed a little at the word dear.

Vivek: “Please don’t pull my leg.”

Akriti: “Bye... will call.”

Vivek: “Okay. Bye.”

He disconnected the call, still smiling faintly.

Across the table, Maria had been quietly observing him.

She raised an eyebrow playfully.

“So... that was her, your girlfriend?”

Vivek looked embarrassed, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Hmm... yes.”

Maria’s expression softened.

“You know, Vivek... I would really like to learn more from you.

About spirituality, devotion, this peace you speak about. It feels... different.”

“Sure,” Vivek replied. “I’ll share whatever I know.”

Maria stepped a little closer, her voice gentle but bold.

“Why don’t you come to my room? Or I can come to yours.”

For a moment, Vivek froze.

A strange silence hung between them—one that carried meaning, possibility, and risk.

After a brief pause, Vivek spoke carefully.

“No... not in the room. Let’s meet at the swimming pool or the gym.”

Maria stared at him, then nodded slowly with a half-smile—impressed by his restraint.

“Gym is fine,” she said softly. “Tomorrow, 7 AM.”

Vivek smiled back, relieved.

“Yes. I’ll be there. I think it’s on the 10th floor.”

Maria turned to leave.

“I’ll find it,” she said, giving him one last warm glance before walking away.

Vivek watched her go, feeling a curious mix of calm, caution, and confidence.

He knew the path he had chosen—and the heart he wanted to protect.

The Gym Meeting— Maria Opens Her Heart

The next morning, Vivek reached the hotel gym ten minutes early. The treadmills hummed softly, the large glass windows overlooking the waking city of Mexico. He was adjusting the settings on an exercise bike when Maria walked in, dressed in simple gym wear, her hair tied up, looking tired yet refreshed.

She smiled gently.

“Good morning, Vivek. You’re early.”

Vivek returned the smile.

"I'm always early for things that matter."

Maria paused, almost as if those words touched something deep within her.

They began walking slowly on adjacent treadmills.

For a while, only the quiet rhythm of their footsteps filled the room. Maria seemed thoughtful, hesitant—like someone deciding whether to open a long-locked door.

Finally, she spoke.

"Vivek... can I tell you something personal?"

"Of course," he said, *"softly."*

Maria stared ahead, eyes fixed on nothing.

"You know... people see me as strong, confident, bold. But the truth is... I've been lonely for a long time."

Vivek listened quietly, sensing her struggle.

"My parents divorced when I was young. I lived with my mother, then stepfather, then alone. By eighteen, I was working part-time, studying, paying my own bills. I became tough on the outside because life pushed me that way."

She exhaled shakily.

"But inside... I still want someone to sit with me, talk to me, understand me—not for my looks, not for my position... but for who I truly am."

Vivek slowed his treadmill, fully attentive.

Maria glanced at him, eyes slightly moist.

“When you spoke yesterday about family, devotion, spirituality... I felt something I haven’t felt in years—a sense of safety. Peace. Like home.”

Vivek felt a soft ache in his heart.

“Maria... life makes us strong, but it doesn’t mean we can’t be vulnerable. You’re not alone. And you’re stronger than you think.”

She smiled faintly.

“That’s why I wanted to meet you. You’re different from the men I know. You have... purity.”

Vivek laughed lightly. “I don’t know about purity, but I try to follow a path.”

“And that,” Maria said, touching his arm gently, “is rare.”

The touch startled him, but he didn’t pull away. Instead, he offered a reassuring smile.

“Maria, pain doesn’t define us. What we do with it does.”

She nodded, tears finally escaping.

“Thank you... I haven’t spoken like this to anyone in years.”

Vivek handed her a tissue.

“Sometimes,” he whispered, “sharing light reduces the weight of darkness.”

Maria looked at him with deep gratitude.

“Vivek... you are the kind of person I wish I had met earlier in life.”

Vivek felt the heaviness of those words—but also the clarity of his own path.

He smiled gently.

“Every meeting happens on time, Maria. Not early, not late.”

For the first time, she smiled with her eyes—soft, human, hopeful.

The Inner Conversation— Vivek’s Spiritual Teaching to Maria

Maria listened to Vivek with a quiet curiosity. After a moment, she leaned slightly closer on the gym bench and asked softly:

“If we attach ourselves to the inner world so much... how can we enjoy life here?”

Vivek smiled gently.

“Maria, spirituality doesn’t mean running away from life. It means understanding it.”

She looked puzzled.

So he continued, his voice calm and steady, almost like a teacher speaking from lived wisdom:

“Walking on the spiritual path is like walking on the edge of a sword. Many people say, ‘Let me enjoy now. I will think of God in old age.’

But life doesn’t work like that.

In the ***Bhagavad Gita***, our holy scripture, it is written:

If you waste your youth running behind pleasures... losing your energy in desires, anger, greed, and pride... then what will remain in your old age to offer to God?

What value is there in feeding a demon first and offering God only the leftovers?”

Maria listened intently, absorbed.

Vivek continued:

“When you become old, your legs tremble, the body weakens, the senses lose strength. You cannot sit for long, you cannot even breathe steadily... how will you meditate then?”

*Youth is the most precious time—
not to abandon life,
but to balance it.*

*Do your duties, enjoy life, work, travel, love...
but also keep a space inside for the Lord.*

*A small corner of your heart
should always remain His.*

*Because outside pleasures come and go...
but inner joy stays forever.”*

Maria exhaled, almost humbled.

*“Vivek... guide me. How do I meditate? How do I focus inward?
My mind keeps running everywhere.”*

Vivek nodded kindly.

*“It happens to everyone. Meditation is not forcing the mind; it’s
training it gently.”*

He added with warmth:

*“I’ll send you a few videos and simple steps. Start slowly. A few
minutes every day. And whenever you feel lost... just close your eyes
and silently thank God for what you have. Gratitude itself is
meditation.”*

Maria smiled—a soft, genuine smile.

“Vivek, today... I feel like I met a real friend.”

“You’re welcome, Maria,” he said, standing up. “See you tomorrow.”

They walked out of the gym together, but something had shifted silently between them—

not attraction,

but trust.

A calm, sacred bond was forming.

After few days Vivek sent the mail to Mria for guided mediation which he received from his father recently.

Guided Meditation for Reducing Overthinking and Anxiety

this gentle, grounding meditation designed to calm your mind, ease anxiety, and bring deep relaxation to your entire being.

By the end of this practice, your body will feel light, and your mind will feel clear and peaceful.

1. Settling the Body

Come to a comfortable seated position.

You may sit on a chair or on the floor— wherever your body feels most supported.

If you are on a chair, let your feet rest gently on the floor.

If you are on the ground, sit with your legs crossed.

Now, allow your back to rest comfortably against a wall or the back of your chair.

Feel the support behind you.

You don’t need to hold your posture— let the support carry you.

Place your hands in your lap, palms facing upward— open and receptive.

2. Breathing and Letting Go

Close your eyes.

Take a slow, deep breath in...

And as you exhale...

let your entire body soften.

Take another deep breath in...

And exhale... relaxing even deeper.

One more breath in...

And as you breathe out, allow every muscle in your body to loosen completely.

Let yourself feel safe... and held.

Return gently to your natural breathing.

3. Awareness Journey through the Body Top of the Head

Bring your awareness to the topmost point of your head.

Just notice... any sensations, tingling, warmth, stillness.

Forehead

Slowly move this awareness to your forehead.

If you feel heaviness or tightness here...

invite it to soften.

Release anything you are holding.

Nostrils

Shift your attention to your nostrils.

Feel the cool air entering...

the warm air leaving...

a quiet reminder that you are alive, present, and breathing.

Lips

Notice the gentle touch of your lips together.

Observe the subtle sensations here.

Throat

Bring awareness to your throat— the place where your voice, your truth, resides.

Just feel whatever is present.

Shoulders

Move to your shoulders.

If there is any tension, stiffness, or weight— allow it to melt away.

Let your shoulders drop, surrendering all burdens.

Chest / Heart Centre

Bring awareness to the centre of your chest— where your ribcage meets.

Feel the steady rhythm of your heartbeat.

Each beat grounding you...

each beat reminding you that you are here... now.

Belly

Shift your attention to your belly.

Notice it gently rising with every inhale...

and falling with every exhale.

This slow rhythm is the body's natural relaxation.

Back

Feel the sensations where your back meets the wall or chair.

The support... the steadiness...

Stay with that feeling of being gently held.

Hips

Move down to your hips.

Observe the contact between your body and the surface beneath you.

Allow your hips to soften and settle more deeply.

Knees

Bring your awareness to your knees.

See if they can relax just a little more.

Let them soften... release... ease.

Feet

Finally, bring your attention to your feet.

Feel the sensations at the base of your feet—

warmth... coolness... tingling...

or simply presence.

4. Deep Release

Take a deep breath in...

And exhale... relaxing your whole body.

Once more, breathe in deeply...

Exhale... letting the entire body loosen even further.

A final deep breath in...

And as you exhale...

feel your entire body— from head to toe— become soft, loose, peaceful.

You are safe.

You are calm.

You are present.

5. Closing the Meditation

Now, slowly bring your hands together.

Rub your palms until they feel warm.

Gently place your warm palms over your eyes.

Feel the soothing energy.

When you are ready...

very slowly...

open your eyes.

Come back to the room... grounded and at peace.

Maria's First Meditation Experience— A Quiet Turning Point

The gym had finally emptied.

The clang of weights, the hum of treadmills, the chatter— all gone.

Only a faint lavender fragrance remained in the air.

Maria rolled up her yoga mat and walked toward the corner room the trainer had suggested.

“Try meditation,” he had said,” earlier, noticing her restlessness.

“It doesn’t fix life... but it calms the storm inside.”

She had laughed politely.

Storm inside?

If only he knew.

Still, something inside her nudged gently,

Just try.

She enters the meditation room.

Soft yellow lights.

A single incense stick burning.

Silence so deep it felt like a blanket.

Maria sat down, crossing her legs the way she had seen others do.
Her shoulders were tight, mind buzzing with unfinished thoughts—
the work problems, the loneliness of her apartment,
the breakup she never healed from,
the guilt she carried like invisible luggage.

She closed her eyes hesitantly.

The trainer's recorded voice began playing softly:

“Take a deep breath... and relax.”

Maria inhaled.

Her breath trembled on the way out.

She didn't know why— but her chest felt heavy.

“Bring your awareness to the top of your head...”

She followed clumsily.

It felt silly... forced... unfamiliar.

But then something surprising happened.

As her awareness travelled slowly to her forehead,
to her throat,
to her shoulders...

she felt— for the first time in months—
her body releases a little.

A knot inside her loosened.

A warmth spread across her chest.

A quiet whisper inside her mind surfaced:

Maybe I don't have to be so strong every day.

Maybe I can just breathe.

Her breath deepened naturally.

Her jaw softened.

Her palms opened on their own.

For a moment...

something within her fell completely silent.

No thoughts.

No worries.

Just a soft, unexpected peace—

like standing in warm sunlight after days of rain.

Maria felt her eyes sting.

A single tear escaped, dropping onto her mat.

Not from sadness—

but from relief.

A deep, inner calm she didn't expect washed over her.

She didn't know how long she sat there.

Two minutes? Ten?

But when she opened her eyes, the room looked different—

brighter, kinder.

She felt lighter... as if someone had lifted a weight off her shoulders.

As she rolled up her mat, a small shy smile touched her lips.

Maybe... this is what healing feels like.

Maybe I can begin again.

And somewhere, without her realizing...

this moment of peace was quietly preparing her heart

for the next chapter—

and for someone who was soon going to matter far more than she expected.

Maria Calls Vivek After Her First Meditation

Maria stepped into her room after the session, still feeling that strange, gentle calm inside her.

Before she could overthink it, she picked up her phone and dialled Vivek.

The call connected.

Maria: “Hey Vivek... I just wanted to thank you.”

Her voice was softer than usual, almost glowing.

Vivek: “For what?”

He sounded surprised but warm.

Maria:

“For the meditation information you sent... I tried it today for the first time.”

She paused, searching for the right words.

“And I don’t know how to explain it... but I feel lighter... clearer... more confident.”

On the other side, Vivek smiled without speaking for a moment.

He could hear sincerity in her voice— a softness he had never noticed before.

Vivek: “I’m really happy to hear that, Maria.”

Then gently,

“Enjoy both— spirituality and the normal life around you. They don’t oppose each other.”

Maria exhaled slowly, as if his words touched something deep within her.

Maria: “Maybe... for the first time, I understand what you meant yesterday.”

A short silence. A comfortable one.

Vivek:

“Meditation doesn’t change your life immediately... but it changes *you*, and then everything around feels different.”

Maria smiled.

Maria:

“You explained it perfectly, Vivek. Honestly... I met many people here, but today I felt something real. Thank you for guiding me.”

Vivek:

“Anytime, Maria. I’m always there to help.”

Her voice grew softer, almost shy:

Maria:

“Good night, Vivek... and yes, one more thing.”

She hesitated for half a second, then continued with a gentle sincerity:

“Someday I want to visit India— especially the pilgrimage places. When that time comes, I will trouble you again to guide me... to tell me which places carry the most divinity.”

Her tone carried respect, curiosity, and an unexpected affection— as if she was opening a small window into her heart.

Vivek felt a pleasant warmth rise within him.

He replied with quiet confidence:

Vivek:

“It will never be trouble, Maria. It will be my honour to guide you.”

Maria smiled, though he couldn’t see it.

Maria:

“Thank you... good night again.”

Vivek:

“Good night, Maria. Sleep peacefully.”

New Relations— Refined and Expanded

The next morning, Vivek and Maria met again near the gym entrance. The early sun touched the glass walls, casting soft golden reflections around them. Maria looked fresh, light-hearted, almost glowing after her first day of meditation.

Vivek smiled gently and said,

“Maria, yesterday when we spoke... I felt a kind of affection in your eyes. You know, I have only one brother. We never had a sister. If you allow, I would like to treat you as my sister.”

Maria paused for a moment. His words were unexpected, but they warmed her.

She smiled softly. “Vivek... I’m the only daughter of my parents. I always missed having a brother. So yes, it would be beautiful to treat you as my brother. From today, our family has grown—one more brother, one more sister.”

They both laughed lightly, a new comfort settling between them.

Vivek continued, “You know, in Hinduism we have two festivals celebrating this special bond—**Raksha Bandhan** and **Bhai Dooj**.”

Maria’s eyes lit up with curiosity. “What is Raksha Bandhan? And why do people celebrate it?”

Vivek explained slowly, with warmth:

“Raksha Bandhan is more than a thread tied on the wrist. It is a sacred promise between brother and sister—of protection, trust, and

lifelong care. ‘Raksha’ means protection, and ‘Bandhan’ means a bond. Traditionally, the sister ties a sacred thread, called **Rakhi**, on her brother’s wrist and prays for his long, happy life. In return, the brother gives her gifts and promises to stand by her always. More than anything, it’s a day that brings entire families together.”

Maria laughed playfully.

“So if I tie this auspicious thread, you have to give me a gift, right? I love gifts!”

Vivek laughed too. “Deal! Even if you are in New York and I’m in San Francisco—six hours apart—we’ll celebrate. Just tell me whenever the festival comes.”

“Perfect,” Maria said. “But actually... why don’t we plan something better? You said, ‘yesterday about visiting pilgrim places in India. Maybe I can tie the Rakhi there—on real Indian soil.’”

Vivek’s eyes widened with joy.

“That would be wonderful! And you can tie Rakhi to my brother too. We’ll take you to temples, rivers, holy paths... you will feel the divinity of India.”

Maria nodded enthusiastically.

“Yes, tell me in advance. I’ll apply for the visa and make all arrangements.”

Vivek teased her, “You know we are competitors in business... your company may object.”

Maria waved her hand dismissively.

“Vivek, this is personal. Some relationships are beyond business. A spiritual bond... a family connection. No company can interfere in that.”

*Both smiled again—this time deeper, calmer.
A new relation had taken birth—pure, faithful, and blessed.*

Akriti Sensing a Shift and Calling Vivek

*That evening, Akriti felt strangely restless.
Vivek's messages were warm, steady as always... yet something in
his tone felt different.
Softer... distant... or maybe she was overthinking. But her heart
sensed a shift.*

She looked at her phone for the tenth time.

*Why is he replying late? Why does his voice sound tired? Why am I
feeling this sudden fear?*

Unable to hold it anymore, she pressed call.

*Vivek picked up immediately.
"Hello, Akriti... everything okay?"*

She stayed silent for a moment.

*"Vivek," she finally said, "softly, "I don't know why... but I feel
you're drifting away. All day I felt something is different. Are you
okay? Are **we** okay?"*

Vivek froze.

"Akriti... why are you thinking like this?"

*"Because I can sense it," she whispered. "You share everything with
me... but today, something is missing. Maybe it's me. Maybe it's
distance. Maybe it's just my heart being stupid. But I felt you...
far."*

Her voice trembled.

"Tell me honestly, Vivek...

Did anything happen? Did someone say something? Did I do something wrong?"

Vivek took a deep breath, torn between honesty and protecting her feelings.

"No, Akriti... nothing is wrong. I'm just... tired. Mexico schedule is tight."

"Are you sure?" she asked again, her voice small but full of trust.

"Absolutely," he replied gently. "You are the last person I'd hide anything from."

There was silence.

Then Akriti said, "quietly, "Vivek... please don't let this distance take you away from me. I feel safe only when I talk to you."

Her words hit him deeply.

"Akriti," he said, voice softening, "I'm right here. And I'm not going anywhere."

Inside, though, Vivek knew—

something had shifted after Maria opened up to him in the gym.

Not attraction. Not confusion.

But a new awareness of how easily life can bring unexpected people, unexpected energy.

Akriti sensed it before even he did.

And that call...

was the moment their relationship stepped into a deeper, more vulnerable space.

Vivek's Father Shares the News

Vivek's phone buzzed late in the evening. It was his father.

"Son," his father said, voice full of warmth, "there is good news. Your brother Ankush has secured a job in a multinational company. The role requires a lot of travelling. Recently he went to Bangalore several times—and during that time, his college friend proposed to him. He accepted. Her parents are coming to Delhi to meet us. If all goes well, we will keep a small ceremony to welcome the couple into our family. Once a date is fixed, I will inform you. And yes... tomorrow I'm attending Satsang again. The discourse is on Love for God from the Gita. I will share the essence with you in a day or two."

Vivek was stunned. "Dad... I can't believe Ankush hid this from me. Not even a hint! But I'm very happy for him. And yes, I will come for the ceremony whenever you fix it."

"Of course, son. Not only will we inform you—you must come. You can even invite friends from the USA. And why not Akriti from London?"

Vivek smiled. "Oh Dad... thank you. I'll invite them."

Vivek Calls Ankush

Without wasting a minute, Vivek dialled Ankush.

"Brother!" Vivek burst out, half laughing. "Dad just told me everything. Your office colleague proposed, and you didn't tell me a single word? This surprise is shocking but beautiful. Congratulations, yaar! I'm so happy for you."

Ankush chuckled softly. "Vivek, truly... there was nothing to hide. Everything happened suddenly. She proposed—and I just couldn't say no. You know what they say: relations are fixed by the Lord. Honestly,

I never had the courage to propose. She is a good, lively, affectionate girl. You will like her the moment you meet.”

Vivek’s face softened. “I’m sure she’s wonderful. I’m dying to meet you both. By the way, what’s her name?”

“**Sarika**,” Ankush replied. “Funny thing—her birthdate and our height are exactly the same.”

Vivek laughed. “So that’s it! Divine matching... height and horoscope in advance!”

“You’re right, bhai,” Ankush said playfully.

Suddenly Vivek heard someone calling his name from outside. “Ankush, my boss is calling me. Let’s talk later. Bye!”

“Bye, brother. Speak soon,” Ankush replied.

Vivek’s Father at the Satsang— A Turning Point

The hall was already half-filled when Vivek’s father entered the satsang venue. Light fragrance of incense floated in the air, and the soft sound of bhajans created an atmosphere of quiet devotion. He removed his shoes, folded his hands respectfully, and took a seat among the devotees.

After a few minutes, the master walked onto the stage. The energy of the room instantly shifted—people sat straighter, silence deepened, and a gentle reverence filled every corner.

The master began with a simple yet piercing statement:

“We are experts in defending our own mistakes, but very strict judges when it comes to others’ mistakes.”

These words struck Vivek’s father deeply.

He felt as if someone had read his own mind.

The master continued:

“Children, when you make a mistake, you bring a lawyer.

You say—‘I didn’t mean it... the situation forced me...

I had no choice... please understand me...’

But when others make a mistake, you become a judge.

You pass harsh sentences.

You say—‘He is wrong... she is careless...

they should have known better...’

This double standard keeps us away from God.”

The hall remained silent. Each listener was reflecting within.

The master’s voice softened:

“Spirituality begins when you become your own judge

and everyone else’s lawyer.”

Vivek’s father felt a strange lightness in his heart.

For years he had seen family conflicts, arguments,

misunderstandings—so much of it rooted in ego and judgement. He

realised how often he defended himself, and how rarely he forgave

others with the same generosity he wanted for himself.

The preacher ended with a gentle guidance:

“Every morning before you speak a word,

ask yourself two things:

Am I seeing others with compassion?

And am I seeing myself with honesty?

This is the doorway to divine love.”

SATSANG continue

The Master closed his eyes for a moment, then smiled gently and began:

“My children, life is full of contradictions. But hidden inside each contradiction is a lesson.”

He lifted his hand and said, “slowly,

“Rainwater drips into the farmer’s hut, yet he prays to God for rain.”

Everyone looked puzzled. Rajesh’s father leaned forward, eager to hear more.

The Master continued,

“The farmer knows that his roof will leak. His clothes will get wet. His sleep will be disturbed. But he also knows that without rain, his crops will die... and if his crops die, hunger will knock at every door. His temporary discomfort is nothing compared to the nourishment that rain brings to thousands. This is wisdom.”

The devotees nodded.

“What does this teach us?” the Master asked.

“Life will never be perfectly comfortable. Sometimes God sends situations that shake us—leaking roofs, difficult people, unexpected problems. But if those situations help us grow, purify our ego, or deepen our faith, then they are blessings in disguise.”

He then smiled and added:

“We are very good lawyers for our own mistakes, but very strict judges for the mistakes of others.”

“Learn from the farmer. Instead of complaining about the dripping roof, he looks at the larger picture and thanks God for what the rain will create.”

Rajesh's father felt something shift inside him.

He whispered to himself, "This is the real meaning of surrender... accepting discomfort for a higher purpose."

As the Satsang ended, he folded his hands, feeling lighter, wiser, and deeply grateful. The line kept echoing in his mind:

"Let the roof drip. If it grows the harvest, let it drip."

Master continues...

What a Life... What a Destiny

If you pause for a moment and observe life closely, you will see a strange and painful irony hidden within it. Cigarettes are not essential for anyone's survival, yet the person who manufactures them becomes enormously rich. Alcohol is not essential, yet the person who produces it enjoys wealth and power. But the simple farmer—whose hands nurture the grain that sustains our very existence—remains poor, forgotten, and struggling for dignity.

Such is the paradox of destiny.

Life does not always reward effort; it often rewards perception, trends, and desires—sometimes even the destructive ones. It raises a deep question: ***Why does the world value what harms us more than what feeds us?*** The answer is complex, yet also simple: because human minds chase illusions faster than they respect necessities.

In spirituality, we are taught not to lose our peace trying to understand every unfairness of the world. The mind has a habit of dissecting, analysing, worrying, and demanding answers. But the more you chase explanations, the more confused and restless you become.

So here lies a gentle truth for inner peace:

Do not try to understand everything.

Some things are not meant to be solved; they are meant to be observed, accepted, and released.

Life becomes lighter when we stop expecting perfect logic from an imperfect world. Instead, we learn to walk with awareness, gratitude, and balance—trusting that the larger design of destiny has its own rhythm, even when our eyes cannot see it.

Once you surrender to the Almighty, you need not to worry, He will take care of you.

Surrender your self to Almighty

Once Arjuna surrendered himself completely to Lord Krishna, a profound transformation began. With a heart devoid of ego, he declared:

“You are my mother.

You are my father.

You are my closest kin.

You are my dearest friend.

You are my everything.

You are my Lord—my loving Lord.

You are my only treasure.”

Only after this total surrender did Krishna truly accept Arjuna as His disciple. At that moment, Krishna assured him, ***“Do my work. Offer all actions to Me. When you walk My path, I shall take care of you.”***

But before giving Arjuna the divine teachings, Krishna did something even more important—He freed him from ***body consciousness***. Krishna knew that as long as a person identifies with the body,

spiritual progress remains impossible. Whether one follows the path of devotion, selfless service, or inner inquiry, body-consciousness keeps the mind restless and the heart impure.

Krishna explained it through a simple truth:

“If a tumbler is full of water, how can you pour in milk? First empty what is inside.”

In the same way, He said,

“Your heart is filled with attachment and the illusion of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ Unless you remove this, divine wisdom cannot enter.”

In life, no one is truly free from difficulties. Everyone carries burdens, confusions, and emotional storms. But when we learn to empty the heart—of ego, fear, and attachment—then divine grace begins to fill us.

And thus begins our story... a journey to understand why life brings challenges, how destiny unfolds, and how surrender can convert every struggle into strength.

Impurity— The Inner Pollution

Impurity is not just dirt on the body; it is the subtle pollution that settles quietly on our senses, thoughts, and lifestyle. We eat carelessly, think negatively, speak harshly, and live in ways that disconnect us from our own inner light. Slowly, without noticing, we become impure from within.

To reconnect with the inner world—where the soul resides and where God gently whispers—we must cleanse ourselves. Clean food, clean thoughts, clean habits form the foundation of purity. Meditation, conscious breathing, and the repetition of sacred words polish the mind like a mirror. When the mirror becomes clean, the divine reflection appears effortlessly.

As inner purity grows, something beautiful happens:

Confidence arises.

Positivity blossoms.

Negativity slowly dissolves.

Life begins to feel lighter, sweeter, almost ecstatic.

You start enjoying every moment without being shaken by happiness or sorrow, success or failure, wealth or poverty. You become steady, calm, and joyful—from the inside.

Once, while walking along the seashore, I watched the waves, the breeze, the beauty of the ocean, and the joy of people around. Suddenly a powerful wave crashed onto the shore, bringing with it cane pieces, plastic, algae, and all the filth that humans had thrown into the sea.

And I wondered—

When the vast ocean can throw out the impurity we dump into it, why can't we remove the impurity we knowingly put inside ourselves?

Purification is possible.

We only need the courage to empty the old so the divine can fill the heart anew.

When the Satsang ended, Vivek's father sat quietly for a while. Tears welled in his eyes—not out of sadness, but relief. He felt cleansed, humbled, awakened.

On his way home, he decided he would share this lesson first with Vivek...

and then live it with his entire family.

At home, Rajesh sat with the family and shared everything he had learned in that day's Satsang. "One thing I observed," he said thoughtfully, "is that when a person lives with love for divinity, his

life journey becomes smoother than that of someone who does not believe. With God's grace, everything in our life is also moving well. The boys are settled, and soon their marriages will be finalised—they have already chosen the girls."

Vivek's mother nodded, but a hint of worry flashed across her face. "I am only a little concerned about the girls they have chosen. Vivek's girl, Akriti, belongs to a very wealthy family. Will she adjust to our simple home? And Ankush's girl is from Bangalore—I heard she doesn't know much Hindi. How will I talk to her? How will she speak to me?"

Rajesh smiled gently. "Don't fill your mind with negativity. Both girls are educated, cultured, and good at heart. Everything will be fine with God's grace."

"But I am only talking about language," she insisted. "How will we communicate?"

"Don't worry," Rajesh laughed. "I will be your interpreter. Whatever you want to tell her, I will translate into English. Whatever she wants to say, I will translate into Hindi."

Mother shook her head. "Your English is the English of a government school. Those girls studied in convent schools. Vivek himself was saying half her English flies above his head!"

Rajesh chuckled. "Girls will hardly be here all the time. And time teaches everyone. Slowly, we will all adjust. Habits and relationships grow naturally. I am confident everything will be alright."

He paused, then added, "And yes—I forgot to tell you. Vivek has chosen one girl as his sister too. Her name is Maria. She even tied him a Rakhi. She might come to India for Ankush's wedding."

Mother's face brightened. "That is good. Now they have sisters too."

Ankush grinned. “Yes, I am looking forward to meeting my sister.”

He added, “Dad, we can invite Akriti also to my wedding.”

“Of course, beta,” Rajesh said warmly. “She will definitely be invited.”

“But Dad,” Ankush hesitated, “Vivek says she is scared to come to India... because of that accident case.”

Rajesh sighed. “That hasn’t finished yet? It’s been more than five years.”

Ankush nodded. “Such cases in India take ten years if everything goes well.”

“Oh my God,” Rajesh murmured, shaking his head. “That is too long. But don’t worry—some solution will come. God always opens a way when the time is right.”

Vivek came to India to attend brother ring ceremony

That night, after dinner, the family gathered in the living room. The ceiling fan hummed softly, and the gentle breeze from the window carried the scent of night jasmine. Rajesh leaned back on the sofa, feeling content yet thoughtful.

Vivek entered with two cups of tea—one for his mother and one for his father. “Dad, you know Akriti was asking about Indian weddings,” he said casually. “She watched a few videos online and said, “our weddings look like a whole festival.”

His mother smiled. “Then she will enjoy Ankush’s wedding. There are so much love and noise in Indian functions.”

Vivek laughed. "Yes, maa, but she also said, 'Your weddings are so long! In UK, a wedding finish in one day.' I told her, 'Here we start three days before!' She said, yes, I know. I am originally from India.

Everyone chuckled.

Ankush joined in, "My girl, Nisha, is also excited. She said she wants to wear a saree for every function. But Maa, you will have to help her. She doesn't know how to drape it."

Mother's eyes softened. "Of course I will help. She is a part of our family now. Language doesn't matter—love does."

Her words brought a moment of peace to the room.

Rajesh nodded. "That's the spirit. God brings souls together for a reason. Where there is love and respect, everything becomes easy."

After a moment of silence, Vivek spoke quietly, "Dad... Akriti is worried about that accident case. Her parents are even more worried. They don't want her to come until it is completely closed."

Rajesh understood. "And they are right. Safety comes first."

"But," Vivek added, "she really wants to be here for Ankush. She said,"she will try, but she needs time to think."

Rajesh placed a reassuring hand on his son's shoulder. "Let her take her time. When we live truthfully, God clears the path slowly but surely."

Mother looked at Vivek gently. "Beta, tell her she is not alone. We are also praying for her."

The room fell silent for a moment—soft, comforting, full of unspoken understanding.

Just then, Ankush spoke with childlike excitement, “Dad, what about Maria? Will she come surely?”

“Yes,” Rajesh nodded. “She is planning to. And it will be good for her. She also wants to see India.”

Mother laughed lightly. “Then we will have one daughter from abroad and one daughter from the south. Good, our family will become international!”

Everyone burst into laughter.

Rajeh smiled and said, “Yes, our small house will become like the United Nations—Hindi, English, Kannada, and maybe some Spanish from Maria!”

Mother playfully hit him on the arm. “Don’t tease me about languages again.”

Rajesh laughed. “Okay, okay. But remember, I am your official interpreter!”

The warmth in the room grew deeper—fears softened, worries lightened, and a sense of togetherness filled the home.

The Ring Ceremony

The house buzzed with energy as relatives, neighbours, and close friends filled the hall decorated with soft marigold strands and warm fairy lights. The fragrance of jasmine and sandalwood floated gently through the air. Rajesh walked around proudly, greeting guests, ensuring everything was in place. Today was Ankush ring ceremony—simple, elegant, and filled with joy.

Mother stood near the entrance in a graceful silk saree, nervously fixing the pleats every few minutes. “I hope I don’t say anything in the wrong language,” she murmured.

Rajesh chuckled. "Relax. Nisha understands your love, not your grammar."

Just then, Ankush arrived downstairs, looking handsome in a cream sherwani. He glanced around. "Maa, see, Nisha is coming... with her parents."

Mother straightened up, suddenly conscious of every gesture, but her smile was wide and genuine.

Nisha entered wearing a pastel blue lehenga with subtle gold work. Her eyes sparkled when she saw Ankush, and she folded her hands respectfully toward his parents. "Namaste, aunty... uncle," she said, "in slightly accented Hindi.

Mother's heart melted instantly. "Arre, perfect! Bilkul perfect!" she whispered proudly.

Meanwhile, Vivek was busy setting up a video call. Akriti appeared on the screen, dressed in a beautiful red outfit from abroad. Behind her, fairy lights glowed softly.

"Sorry I couldn't come," she said, "but I didn't want to miss this moment."

Rajesh smiled warmly. "You are with us, beta. That is enough."

The ceremony began with soft music playing. The priest recited a short blessing, reminding the couple that marriage is a journey of companionship, patience, and shared strength.

Nisha's parents placed a small plate of rings on the table. Ankush gently took her hand, his fingers trembling with excitement. Everyone watched with affectionate smiles as he slid the elegant diamond ring onto her finger.

Nisha looked up shyly and whispered, "Now it's your turn."

She picked the second ring—simple, classy, and meaningful. As she slipped it onto Ankush’s finger, a wave of applause filled the hall. Mother wiped a tear quickly before anyone noticed.

On the video screen, Akriti clapped enthusiastically. “Congratulations, you two! The ring looks perfect!”

Maria, too, joined the call for a moment. “Wow! So beautiful! Save some sweets for me!”

The families exchanged garlands, laughter, and blessings. Photographers clicked away while Vivek proudly introduced Nisha to some cousins.

Mother finally approached Nisha, speaking slowly. “Beta... hum... happy... very happy,” she said, making sure each word was correct.

Nisha held her hand gently. “Aunty, I understand everything... and I am happy too.”

Mother’s eyes glowed with relief and affection.

As the evening progressed, music grew livelier. Ankush and Nisha stood together, glowing with the happiness of new beginnings while Rajesh watched them from a distance, whispering a small prayer:

“God, keep their journey smooth. Give them love, and give us strength to guide them.”

The breeze outside carried the sound of laughter from the hall, and the house shimmered with a rare joy—one that comes when two families meet not just through rituals, but through hearts.

Sangeet Ceremony Scene

The evening sky glowed with soft golden lights as the courtyard transformed into a festive stage for Ankush and Nisha’s sangeet.

Bright drapes of yellow, pink, and green fluttered in the cool breeze, while a live dholak group tuned their instruments on one side. Cousins ran around arranging props for dances, and the aroma of hot jalebis drifted from the food counter.

Rajesh walked in proudly, adjusting his kurta. “Arre Wah, this looks like a Bollywood set!” he exclaimed, earning laughter from some relatives.

Mother, dressed in a graceful Banarasi saree, looked slightly nervous. “I hope no one asks me to dance,” she whispered.

“Don’t worry,” Rajesh laughed, “today is the children’s show. We seniors will just clap.”

Just then, Ankush and Nisha entered. Ankush wore a royal blue kurta with a golden jacket, while Nisha sparkled in a magenta lehenga. The crowd cheered loudly as they took their seats.

The Performances Begin

The first performance was by the kids of the family—an energetic Bollywood medley that made everyone clap and laugh. One little girl kept looking at the audience instead of dancing. Rajesh whispered, “Exactly like Ankush when he was small!”

Next came Vivek and his cousins, performing on a hit Punjabi song. Vivek danced so enthusiastically that even the elderly relatives laughed and cheered. Akriti watched through video call from abroad, smiling widely.

A Special Segment: English Meets Hindi

To everyone’s surprise, Nisha’s Bangalore cousins took the stage next. One of them started speaking in English:

“We are new to Hindi music... but today we prepared something special for Ankush Bhai.”

The family chuckled as they began dancing to a Hindi love song with slightly mismatched steps but full enthusiasm. Mother whispered proudly, “Dekha? Language is not a problem. Love is the language.”

Rajesh nodded, “Bilkul. God arranges everything beautifully.”

The Couple Dance

Lights dimmed, and a soft romantic tune filled the hall. Ankush extended his hand toward Nisha. She smiled shyly and joined him on stage. They danced gracefully, exchanging tender glances, as the crowd cheered and clapped.

On the video screen, Akriti got emotional. “I wish I was there,” she said,”softly.

Maria also appeared briefly on the call. “Wow! Bollywood romance! I love it!” she laughed.

The Family Joins In

After the couple dance, the dholak players hit a loud beat and invited everyone to the floor.

Even Rajesh joined in, doing his classic “government officer step”—two steps right, two steps left. Mother finally smiled and joined him with her graceful hand movements.

Vivek pulled in some cousins and shouted, “Tonight everyone dances!”

The entire courtyard vibrated with music, laughter, and clapping. Elders enjoyed watching, youngsters danced their hearts out, and the

families bonded without worrying about language, background, or differences.

A Gentle Ending

As the night settled, the family gathered for group photographs. Nisha stood between Mother and Father, who now held her hands lovingly. Ankush felt a deep warmth seeing his parents and fiancée connect so naturally.

Rajesh whispered a silent prayer, “Thank you, God. Keep this happiness always.”

Pandit Fixes the Wedding Date – A Joyous Twist

After much calculation, chanting, and checking the panchang, the pandit finally lifted his head and announced,

“Shaadi ki tithi tai ho gayi. February... exactly after three months.”

A wave of happiness spread across the room. Nisha folded her hands respectfully and then, with her usual spark, turned to the Panditji.

Nisha: “Panditji, we actually have one more couple waiting. If possible, can you fix their marriage on the same day? It will be double celebration... and honestly, double savings also.”

She ended with a playful grin.

The room burst into laughter.

Panditji smiled: “Beta, saving money is good, but matching kundli is more important. Tell me the date of birth of the second couple. Let me calculate their auspicious time too. The muhurta must suit both.”

Vivek: “I’ll note it down, Panditji.”

He quickly opened his phone, already typing before anyone could even ask.

Ankush elbowed him teasingly: “Dekha, Dad? Look at him! He is more excited for my marriage than I am.”

Even Nisha joined the teasing, “Maybe he wants to get married before his brother!”

The whole room erupted into laughter again.

After Snacks – The Surprise

Once the ritual ended, relatives began gathering their bags, thanking the family, and preparing to leave after the snacks and tea.

Just then Ankush held up his hands dramatically.

Ankush: “Arre, where are you all going? The real entertainment hasn’t even started yet!”

He winked at Nisha.

Everyone paused and looked at him curiously.

Ankush continued loudly:

“Now the music show will begin. Live singing! And after that, dance! So nobody leaves. Please take your seats. The artists will be here any moment.”

Immediately, excitement returned. Chairs were arranged again, elders settled comfortably, and children ran to grab front seats. Nisha whispered to Vivek:

Nisha: “See? Wedding hasn’t even started, but he has already become a full-time event manager!”

Vivek laughed: “Just wait, by next month he will be choreographing everyone’s dance steps too.”

As the lights dimmed slightly and the stage was set, a soft murmur of anticipation spread across the hall. Everyone waited for the musicians to arrive—smiles, laughter, and warm family energy buzzing in the air.

The Sangeet Comes Alive

The singer arrived with his small troupe—tabla player, dholak, and a young guitarist. As the lights softened and the mic crackled, he greeted everyone with a warm smile.

Singer: “Namaskar! Aaj ka shaam hum sab milkar yaadgaar banayenge.”

He began with soft, melodious Bollywood classics—songs that touched the heart and made elders sway gently in their chairs. The atmosphere warmed instantly.

Gradually, the tempo shifted.

The dholak picked up.

The guitar strings grew sharper.

And suddenly the singer switched to energetic Punjabi beats.

The room transformed.

Uncles who were shy a moment ago now clapped enthusiastically. Aunties stood up, their dupattas tied tight, ready for action. The younger cousins formed a circle near the stage.

Then came the dhol...

A deep, vibrant dhad-dhad-dhad that filled everyone with electric joy.

One Punjabi song led to another, and soon the entire hall was dancing.

Bhangra...

Gidda...

Freestyle...

Twisting...

Even the elders did their signature two-step dance with both hands raised proudly in the air.

Nisha and Ankush danced together, laughing uncontrollably.

Vivek pulled in two cousins and did a perfect bhangra step, making everyone cheer.

Kids jumped around like firecrackers.

Even Rajesh and his wife clapped to the rhythm, smiling ear to ear.

The singer, seeing the excitement, jumped down from the stage and sang among the crowd—turning the hall into a festival ground.

By the time the last song ended—a soulful farewell melody—everyone was breathless, glowing, and filled with warmth.

People hugged, took photos, wiped their sweat, and smiled.

It was not just an evening of music.

It became a memory stitched into the fabric of both families—a moment they would cherish long after the wedding.

A Divine Protection

After the engagement, the house slowly emptied.

Vivek left for the USA...

Ankush returned to Bangalore...

Rajesh and Radha stood at the doorway, watching the last car disappear down the lane. The lights of the evening still glowed inside their hearts.

Radha sighed with gentle satisfaction.

“Bhagwan ka lakh-lakh shukr hai,” she whispered.

Everything had gone smoothly. All their relatives, friends, and well-wishers had come, blessed the couple, and left happily.

Just then, the doorbell rang.

Rajesh walked over, wondering who it might be so late.

Opening the door, he found a pleasant-looking young man standing with a smile.

Neighbour: “Rajesh ji, namaste. I stay right opposite your house. I heard about your son’s engagement. Couldn’t stop myself from coming to congratulate you.”

Rajesh thought for a moment.

“Aap Sharma ji ho na?”

The young man laughed.

“Sir, Sharma toh family ka naam hai. My first name is Ankit. You may call me Ankit or Sharma—whatever makes you comfortable.”

Rajesh laughed heartily.

“Come in, Ankit ji, come in.”

He called out to his wife.

“Radha, dekho kaun aaya hai! Ankush ko badhai dene aaye hain.”

Radha came with tea and a plate of sweets prepared by Sarika’s family—soft coconut barfi with a South Indian twist. She placed the tray in front of Ankit.

Ankit took a bite and immediately smiled.

“This taste is so different... not like North Indian sweets. Interesting!”

Rajesh nodded.

“The girl is from Karnataka. Different taste, language, food... par Pyaar sabke liye ek Samaan Hota Hai.”

(“The girl is from Karnataka. Different tastes, languages, food... but love is the same for everyone.”)

Ankit hesitated before asking softly,

“Rajesh ji... if tomorrow our children also choose someone from another community or region... will it be difficult to adjust?”

Rajesh smiled, leaning back as if sharing a wisdom he had earned over decades.

“Ankit beta, yeh sab dil ki baatein hain. Caste-language-region... these differences live only in our mind. Hum sab sabse pehle insaan hain

(“Ankit, these are all matters of the heart. Caste, language, region... these differences exist only in our world. We are all human beings first and foremost.)

Today’s children live in a different world—global, open, connected.

Kal ko they may even marry a foreigner. Let them choose freely. Our duty is only to bless them.

(Tomorrow they may even marry a foreigner. Let them choose freely. Our duty is only to bless them.

Ankit folded his hands respectfully.

“You speak like a spiritual man, Rajesh ji.”

Rajesh smiled.

“I remember God every day. Whatever He gives, I accept. He knows what His devotees need—even before they ask.”

Before their conversation could continue, the doorbell rang again.

Rajesh went to open the door...

This time, a well-dressed man and a woman stood there with files in their hands.

Man: “Sir, we are from your insurance company. One of your policies has matured. We came to discuss the benefits and reinvestment options.”

Rajesh immediately recalled the policy and nodded.

“Yes, yes... it just matured. I was planning to take a loan on it.”

The man quickly extended a form.

“Sir, sign this and I will guide you to earn 20% profit within a year. Also, you must have received an OTP—please share it. It’s for office verification.”

Rajesh picked up his phone, unaware of the danger.

Just then—

Ankit stepped forward sharply.

“Excuse me. Why do you need an OTP?”

The man stuttered,

“Office... just office protocol, sir.”

Ankit’s voice turned firm.

“No. We will not share any OTP. And you two need to leave. NOW. Or I’m calling the police.”

The fraudsters panicked, exchanged a nervous glance, and ran down the stairs without looking back.

Rajesh stood frozen, realising how close he had come to losing his hard-earned savings.

“Ankit beta,” he said, *“softly, “you saved me today...”*

Ankit nodded calmly.

“These digital insurance scams are increasing. Always be careful.”

The next morning, the newspaper screamed headlines:

“Fake Insurance Gang Looting Senior Citizens – OTP Fraud Alert!”

Rajesh’s hands trembled as he sent the news clipping to Vivek.

Within seconds, Vivek called.

“Dad! See? You always believe in divinity—and today God sent Ankit Uncle at the perfect moment to protect you.”

Rajesh closed his eyes, folded his hands, and whispered,

“Yes, my son... again He saved me. Jai ho, Prabhu... aapka dhanye hoon.” (great oh god, big thanks to you)

And in that silent moment, Rajesh felt a deep truth:

Those who walk with faith are never left alone. There is always an unseen hand guiding, protecting, and blessing them.

Rajesh Visits Ankit's Home

Two days after the incident, Rajesh kept thinking about Ankit. "If he had not been there... I would have lost a big amount. God truly sent him at the right moment," he whispered to Radha.

Radha said,

"You must go and thank him properly. A good deed should never go unnoticed."

That evening Rajesh carried a small box of sweets and walked to Ankit's home.

It was a simple, neat flat with a warm atmosphere. Ankit opened the door, surprised and smiling.

Rajesh: "Ankit ji, I came to thank you formally. You didn't just stop two fraudsters—you saved my hard-earned savings. Please accept my gratitude."

Ankit folded his hands.

"Arre Rajesh ji, what are you saying? Anyone in my place would have done the same. We are neighbours—your problem is my problem."

Rajesh insisted on offering the sweets.

"No, Ankit ji. Good people like you are rare. God bless you."

They sat together and talked for almost an hour.

Work, family, children, future—everything came up naturally.

Ankit's wife, Meera, also joined them with tea, and Radha, who had come later, bonded with her instantly over household stories and recipes.

There was an ease, as if they had known each other for years.

A New Bond Begins

From that day, the connection deepened.

Ankit would drop in casually some evenings saying,

“Rajesh ji, chai ho jaye?”

and they would share a cup on the balcony, watching people walk in the lane.

Radha and Meera started exchanging dishes.

One day Radha sent homemade ***dal baati***,

another day Meera returned the plate filled with ***ragi dosa*** and chutney.

Even Vivek, from USA, started referring to him as ***“Ankit Uncle”*** in phone calls.

Whenever Ankush video-called from Bangalore, he would ask,

“Papa, how is Ankit uncle? Please give him my regards.”

Rajesh felt a quiet happiness.

“This is how God sends his angels,” he often told Radha.

“Not with wings, but with good hearts.”

A Relationship for Life

Slowly, Ankit’s family became part of every small celebration:

- ✓ They attended evening tea on weekends
- ✓ They joined puja ceremonies
- ✓ Ankit helped Rajesh with online forms and digital updates
- ✓ Rajesh guided Ankit on financial planning
- ✓ Their families visited temples together on festivals

At Ankush’s wedding meetings, Rajesh openly said:

“Ankit ji is not a neighbour anymore. He is family.”

Ankit smiled softly,

“Bas, yahi rishta sabse bada hota hai—insaniyat ka.”

And thus, a doorbell that rang unexpectedly turned into a lifelong friendship—a bond blessed, perhaps, by the divine grace Rajesh always believed in.

Ankit Returns From His Pilgrimage

One evening, just after sunset, Ankit rang the doorbell at Rajesh’s home.

Rajesh opened the door with a smile.

“Arre Ankit ji, today you are looking very peaceful. Everything okay?”

Ankit folded his hands and said, “softly,

“Rajesh ji, I just returned from Puttaparthi... from Satya Sai Baba’s ashram.”

Rajesh immediately called Radha,

“Radha, jaldi chai le aao. Ankit ji has come with divine fragrance today.”

They all sat in the living room.

Ankit looked serene, as if he had carried the silence of the ashram with him.

Ankit Shares a Story from the Ashram Library

Ankit began speaking slowly,

“Rajesh ji, I read a some beautiful stories in the library there. I want to share it with you.”

Rajesh and Radha leaned forward with interest.

The Story of the Broken Pot— as narrated by Ankit

“In the ashram library, I found a small book of Baba’s teachings.
One story touched me deeply.

There was a villager who had two pots to carry water from the river.
One pot was perfect.
The other pot had a small crack.

Every day, when he carried water, the perfect pot delivered full water.

But the cracked pot reached home only half full.

The cracked pot felt ashamed.

One day it said, “to the villager,

‘I am useless. You should throw me away. I cannot do my job properly.’

The villager smiled and said,

‘Come with me tomorrow. I will show you something.’

Next day, as they walked back from the river, the villager said,

‘Look at the path on your side.’

The cracked pot saw something it had never noticed—

hundreds of fresh flowers blooming along the way.

The villager said,

‘Because of your crack, water drips every day, and these flowers grow.

I planted seeds knowing your weakness would nourish them.’

Then he added,

‘Never think you are useless. God uses every weakness to create beauty somewhere else.’

Rajesh ji,” Ankit said,”with emotion,
“this story taught me that ***every person is special***, even with their
flaws. God uses us in ways we cannot imagine.”

Rajesh Feels the Message Deeply

Rajesh closed his eyes for a moment.
“***Beautiful... truly beautiful,***” he whispered.

Radha nodded,
“***Yes, Ankit ji. We judge ourselves so harshly. But God sees
our purpose even in our imperfections.***”

Ankit smiled,
“***Exactly. Baba always said,***— ‘You are not one person, you
are three:
*the one you think you are,
the one others think you are,
and the one God knows you are.*’”

Rajesh felt a soft warmth in his chest.
“***Thank you, Ankit ji. This story came to our home exactly
when we needed it. This is also God’s leela.***”

Ankit now listens another story, it is very inspiring

The Blind Man, the Lame Man, and the Power Within

There were once two friends—a blind man and a lame man—who earned their living by begging from village to village. Each lacked something essential, yet together they formed a complete whole. The blind man had strong legs, and the lame man had sharp eyes. So the lame man would sit upon the blind man's shoulders, guiding him

along the way, and thus their journey through life continued with mutual support and trust.

One day, while traveling, they came across a lush field full of ripe, golden melons.

The lame man became excited.

“Brother,” he said, “there are some beautiful melons in this field. Let us go in, eat a few to satisfy our hunger, rest for a while, and then continue.”

But the blind man replied cautiously,

“Brother, be careful. There may be a watchman guarding such a fine field.”

The lame man looked around.

“No, no. There is no one here.”

The blind man asked further,

“Tell me—is there a fence, a boundary wall, or a gate around the field?”

The lame man scanned the area and said,

“There is neither a fence nor a gate. The field is open from all sides. We can walk in any time and enjoy our meal.”

At once the blind man stopped and said with conviction,

“Then these melons must be bitter and worthless. If they were sweet and valuable, the owner would surely protect them—with a fence, a gate, a lock, or a watchman. Nothing precious is ever left unguarded.”

The Inner Meaning

A person may not have physical eyes to see, but if he uses his intellect, he may perceive far more than someone with perfect vision.

The blind man, though unable to see the world, understood its nature through wisdom.

It is the intellect that brings meaning to the eyes. Without intellect, eyes merely look—they do not truly see.

But then arises a deeper question:

From where does the intellect receive its illumination?

The sages say:

The intellect shines because of the ***Atma***—the soul, the inner consciousness.

Because of the Atma, the intellect is bright.

Because the intellect is bright, the eyes can see.

Because the eyes see, we recognize the light of the sun and the moon.

Because of the sun and the moon, the entire world becomes visible.

Thus, when we trace the chain of perception back to its origin, we find that:

It is the Atma—the inner light—that illuminates everything.

Without the Atma, nothing can be known, understood, or experienced.

Therefore, the ultimate truth is:

The Atma is the real source of all light, all knowledge, and all perception.

It is the inner lamp that makes the whole universe shine.

A New Spiritual Bond

From that evening, Ankit did not remain only a friend—
he became a ***guide***,
a ***brother***,

a spiritual companion,

someone who brought divine stories and peace into Rajesh's home.

Rajesh told Vivek later on the phone,

“Beta, Ankit ji is not just our neighbour...

he is God's gift to this family

Rajesh Decides to Visit Putt Parthi With Ankit

– A Turning Point in His Spiritual Journey–

Two days after Ankit narrated the beautiful story of the cracked pot, Rajesh found himself unable to forget it.

Every morning, during his prayer, the lines echoed within him:

“God uses every weakness to create beauty somewhere else.”

One evening, Rajesh sat on the balcony with a cup of tea. The breeze was gentle, and the scent of jasmine from the neighbour's garden filled the air.

Radha came and sat beside him.

Radha: “You're unusually quiet today. Anything on your mind?”

Rajesh smiled faintly.

“Radha, ever since Ankit ji told that story, I feel some kind of pull... a calling.

I want to visit Satya Sai Baba's ashram.”

Radha looked surprised.

“Puttaparthi? All of sudden?”

Rajesh nodded slowly.

“Yes. I feel that God is sending me a message. Maybe it is time to pause, to reflect, to thank Him properly.”

Just then, the doorbell rang.
And almost as if destiny planned the moment—
Ankit was at the door, holding prasad from a nearby temple.

Rajesh laughed,
“Dekha Radha! Speak of the saint and the saint himself appears!”

All three of them sat inside.

Rajesh Expresses His Desire

Rajesh looked at Ankit with sincerity.

***“Ankit ji, I want to go to Puttaparthi.
Not just as a tourist...
but as a devotee seeking peace.
Will you take me with you on your next visit?”***

Ankit’s eyes sparkled with joy.

***“Rajesh ji!
I would be honoured.
Sai Baba himself must have planted this wish in your heart.
We will go together—no rush, no pressure, only devotion.”***

Radha asked softly,
“Is it a very busy place? Will Rajesh be comfortable?”

Ankit reassured her,
***“Radha ji, the ashram is extremely peaceful. Clean rooms,
simple food, disciplined environment.
And the moment you sit in the darshan hall...
everything inside becomes still.”***

Rajesh felt something shifting within him—
a quiet excitement.

A Graceful Sign

Suddenly Rajesh's phone buzzed.
It was Vivek calling from the USA.

Rajesh answered,
"Beta, I have good news. I am planning to visit Puttaparthi with Ankit ji."

Vivek was overjoyed,
"Dad, that's wonderful! You always talk about devotion and peace. Maybe God wants to give you some special blessings now."

Rajesh felt tears form in his eyes.
"Yes beta, maybe it's time."

When he ended the call, he looked at Ankit.
"Please plan everything. I want to go with a clean mind... and open heart."

Ankit joined his palms,
"Sai Baba says—
When the devotee takes one step towards God,
God takes a hundred steps towards the devotee.
Rajesh ji, your first step has already begun."

Radha smiled,
"Then it's settled. I will prepare a small travel bag for you.
And prayer beads also."

Rajesh laughed,
"Arre Radha, I am going to the ashram, not to settle permanently!"

Ankit added humorously,
“Rajesh ji, you never know! Many people go for a weekend and end up staying for a month.”

Rajesh laughed, but Ankit continued more seriously,
“You will be surprised when you see it yourself. There are hundreds of foreigners who stay in Puttaparthi for one, two, even three months.”

Rajesh’s eyebrows lifted in genuine surprise.
“Really? Foreigners? How do they know about Sai Baba... or even about the divinity of our land?”

Ankit smiled,
“Rajesh ji, this is called faith. When God wants to reach someone, He finds His own ways.
I once sat with a group of foreign devotees. Out of curiosity, I asked one gentleman,
‘What brings you here from such a faraway land?’”

Rajesh leaned forward with interest.

Ankit continued, imitating the man’s accent gently:
“He smiled and said,
‘I love Sai Baba. He has done more for me than anyone. I have every comfort in life, nothing lacking... yet I had no peace. Baba gave me that peace. Twice He saved my life— once in a terrible accident, and once during a severe illness. I come here every Diwali to thank Him.’”

Rajesh sat silently, absorbing the depth of the devotee’s words.

Ankit added,
“The most surprising thing was his knowledge. He quoted the Gita so fluently that even many Indians would feel shy.”

Then he repeated the foreigner's message with reverence:

"The Gita teaches that to control the mind, one needs constant practice and renunciation.

Practice does not mean only rituals.

Practice means living in such a way that no attachment grows inside you.

Every word, every thought, every action must be pure and aligned with truth.

This alone is true austerity.

Truth and purity are the real tools for reaching the Divine."

Rajesh exhaled softly, moved from within.

"Wow... truly impressive. It proves one thing, Ankit ji— divinity has no borders.

Faith doesn't belong to any one country.

When God decides to touch someone's heart, His love crosses every language, distance and culture."

Ankit nodded gently,

"Yes Rajesh ji. God's grace does not require a passport or visa.

Those who feel the call... just reach."

Rajesh smiled with a newfound glow in his eyes.

"Then it's decided. I must go. Maybe God is calling me too."

All three laughed—

but somewhere deep inside, Rajesh's heart already felt lighter, calmer, blessed.

Wedding date fixed

The Pandit and palmist called Rajesh early in the morning.

In his calm, traditional tone he said,

"Rajesh ji, I have checked the horoscopes and dates carefully.

Both couples—Vivek and Akriti, and Ankush and Sarika—can be married on the same auspicious day: 25th February.”

Rajesh felt a wave of happiness rising inside him. His voice trembled with excitement as he immediately dialled his sons.

“Ankush... Vivek... listen! Just now Pandit ji confirmed it. Your weddings can be done together, on 25th February!”

Ankush cheered loudly, while Vivek said, “more calmly,

“Dad, let me speak to Akriti first. I will call you back.”

Those few minutes felt like hours to Rajesh.

Finally, his phone rang.

Vivek’s voice carried a tone of relief:

“Dad, it is acceptable to Akriti and her parents. They are happy with the date.”

Rajesh closed his eyes for a second, silently thanking the divine.

But Vivek had more news.

“Her father spoke to their lawyer again. There is nothing to worry.

The court already gave her permission to leave India for studies.

And now the complainant has filed for mutual compromise.

They don’t wish to continue the case.

So things look safe... hopefully everything will settle soon.”

Rajesh sighed deeply—one of those sighs where tension melts into gratitude.

“Thank God... He is kind.

Yes, He tests us with pain, but He also gives relief at the right time.

This is His blessing.

Vivek, share her father’s number with me.

We should discuss everything in advance—menu, rituals, customs.

Each family follows different traditions.
If we talk openly, the ceremonies will go smoothly.”

Vivek replied,
“Dad, I will share it soon.”

Rajesh put down the phone and looked toward the small picture of Krishna in his living room.

“Thank you, Lord... You are arranging everything better than we ever could.”

A Family Meeting to Finalize Customs and Rituals

Two days later, Rajesh invited Akriti’s parents for a quiet family meeting at home. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming—fresh flowers in the living room, a small plate of dry fruits on the table, and Ankush arranging extra chairs to make everyone comfortable.

As Akriti walked in with her parents, Rajesh folded his hands respectfully,
“Namaste, ji. Bahut khushi hui aaj aap log aaye.”

Akriti’s father smiled politely,
“Hum bhi chahte the ki sab baatein mil baith kar hi taye ho.
Rishton ki neev samajh aur pyaar se bani rahe.”

Everyone settled. For a moment, there was that sweet, slight awkwardness that always accompanies the first formal meeting between two families about to be connected forever.

Starting the Discussion

Rajesh began gently,
“Dekhiye, humare yahan kayi customs hain, aur humein pata hai aapke yahan bhi kuch alag reeti–riwaaz honge. Sab kuch aapas ki samajh se ho jaye, yahi hum chahte hain.”

Akriti's mother nodded,
"Bilkul. Humari taraf se koi zyada demand ya shart nahi. Bas dono bachchon ki khushi sabse pehle."

Ankush brought tea and placed it on the table.

"Mummy, yeh green tea Akriti ke liye."

Everyone smiled—the atmosphere became warmer, lighter.

Rituals and Customs

Akriti's father opened his notebook.

"Hum chahte hain ki shaadi simple ho. Haldi, mehendi, phere—sab basic rituals. Aur humari taraf se ek small 'Godh Bharai' type rasam hoti hai ladke ke ghar mein, where we welcome the groom's family."

Rajesh replied instantly,

"Bahut achi baat hai. Humari taraf se bhi ek 'Ganesh Poojan' aur 'Tilak' hota hai. Par dekhiye, hum kuch bhi force nahi karenge. Jo dono taraf se smoothly merge ho sake, wahi rakhenge."

Vivek looked at Akriti and whispered softly,

"Don't worry, we will keep everything comfortable for you."

Akriti smiled with relief.

Food Menu & Logistics

Ankush said,

"Menu ke liye main aur Vivek ek sample list banayenge. Veg, non-veg, live counters—sab options hum discuss kar lenge."

Akriti's mother added,

"Bas ek request – shaadi ke din ka lunch vegetarian ho toh accha rahe."

“Perfect,” Rajesh agreed.

“Shaadi ke din toh sab satvik hi banta hai. Koi issue hi nahi.”

Legal and Court Matters

There was a short silence before Akriti’s father spoke calmly,

“Court matter bhi almost settled ho gaya hai. Mutual agreement application lag chuki hai. Aap tension na lein.”

Rajesh folded his hands gratefully,

“Bhagwan ka lakh lakh shukr hai. Jab woh pariksha deta hai, toh uttar bhi wohi deta hai. Sab theek hoga.”

Conclusion of Meeting

Finally, Akriti’s father closed his notebook.

“Toh phir, 25th February fix? Aur rituals—combined and simple?”

Rajesh smiled contentedly,

“Haan ji, 25th February bilkul final. Aur rituals bhi mil-baith kar taye ho gaye. Sab shubh hoga.”

Akriti’s mother placed her hand on Akriti’s shoulder.

“Beti, ab officially tum dono ki nayi journey shuru.”

Vivek looked at his parents, then at Akriti’s family, feeling grateful.

“Thank you, everyone. Aaj sab kuch itna smoothly hua... lagta hai Bhagwan ne hi sab arrange kiya hai.”

Akriti whispered,

“Yes, this feels right.”

Both families exchanged warm smiles—

a new bond, a new harmony,

and a new chapter began.

Wedding date

Finally, the long-awaited day of the wedding arrived. the house was filled with excitement, gentle chaos, and quiet prayers. This time, all arrangements had been entrusted to a professional event management company, and they had transformed the venue into a breathtaking blend of tradition and modern elegance.

The wedding site shimmered with soft lights, floral arches, and tastefully designed décor. Marigolds, roses, and jasmine were woven together with pastel drapes, crystal lamps, and subtle golden accents. Though the presentation was modern, the soul of the ceremony remained deeply Indian.

A beautifully crafted mandap stood at the centre, decorated with fresh flowers and sacred symbols. The Havan Kund was placed carefully, ready for the holy fire that would witness the sacred vows. The air carried the fragrance of incense, flowers, and anticipation.

Guests began to arrive, dressed in vibrant silks, sherwanis, and elegant saris. Laughter, greetings, and blessings filled the space. Traditional music played softly in the background, setting a serene yet festive mood.

The priest arrived, arranging the ritual items with precision and devotion. Every ceremony— from Ganesh Puja to Kanyadaan, from Mangal Pheras to Sindoor Daan— was planned thoughtfully, ensuring that age-old customs were honoured with dignity and grace.

Though the arrangements were handled professionally, the emotions were deeply personal. Parents moved around with moist eyes and folded hands, silently thanking the Divine. Elders blessed the couple, while younger members captured moments on their phones, creating memories for a lifetime.

As the auspicious hour approached, a gentle stillness settled over the venue. Amid the modern décor and flawless management, the timeless essence of an Indian wedding stood untouched— a sacred union of two souls, two families, and countless blessings.

The wedding ceremony was ready to begin.

As the soft notes of shehnai floated through the air, the groom's procession arrived at the wedding venue. Vivek stepped forward, dressed in an elegant ivory sherwani embroidered with fine golden thread. A matching safa rested proudly on his head, adorned with a single kalgi that shimmered gently under the lights. His calm smile reflected both joy and responsibility— the quiet confidence of a man stepping into a new chapter of life.

Beside him walked his parents and close family members, their faces glowing with pride. Flower petals showered the pathway as friends danced lightly to the rhythm of traditional beats, their laughter blending with celebratory music. Yet, amidst all the cheer, Vivek's eyes searched for the sacred mandap, aware that this moment was not merely festive, but deeply spiritual.

As he reached the mandap, Vivek paused. He folded his hands in reverence, bowing briefly to the sacred fire and seeking blessings from the elders present. The priest guided him to his seat, where he waited in composed silence, his heart steady and grateful.

Moments later, the atmosphere shifted. A hush fell over the gathering as the bride's entry was announced.

Akriti appeared like a vision of grace, draped in a deep red bridal lehenga, richly embroidered with gold and delicate motifs. Her dupatta, edged with fine zari, was placed gently over her head, framing a face glowing with a mixture of joy, emotion, and serenity. Traditional jewelry adorned her— the maang tikka resting at her

forehead, bangles chiming softly with each step, and the nath completing her bridal elegance.

She walked slowly, supported by her parents, each step carrying a thousand unspoken emotions— love, farewell, trust, and hope. Tears glistened in her mother's eyes, while her father's expression held pride mixed with tenderness. The moment felt timeless.

As Akriti approached the mandap, Vivek rose instinctively. Their eyes met— not with nervousness, but with quiet understanding. In that shared glance lay years of companionship, mutual respect, and a promise of togetherness.

The priest signaled for the rituals to begin. The sacred fire was lit, the chants echoed softly, and under the witness of Agni, elders, and the Divine, the bride and groom took their places.

Two journeys had arrived at a single moment— ready to walk forward as one.

The moment of Kanyadaan arrived, and with it, a stillness settled over the mandap. The festive music softened, conversations faded, and even the flickering flames of the sacred fire seemed to pause, as if aware of the gravity of what was about to unfold.

Akriti sat beside Vivek, her eyes lowered, her hands resting gently in her lap. Kapoor, her father, stepped forward slowly. The confident man who had managed careers, relationships, and responsibilities with firm resolve now found his steps unsteady. This was not a ritual to him— it was the silent handing over of his heart.

The priest asked Kapoor to place his daughter's hand into Vivek's.

kapoor hesitated for a moment.

As he held Akriti's hand, memories flooded his mind— her first steps across the living room floor, her laughter during school days, her stubborn questions, her quiet tears, and her strength that often surprised him. She had been his responsibility, his joy, his teacher in patience, and now... his offering.

His wife sat beside him, her eyes moist, lips trembling as she watched the bond she had nurtured with sleepless nights and endless prayers take a new form. She placed her hand over Rajesh's, steadying him— reminding him that love does not end, it transforms.

With a deep breath, Rajesh placed Akriti's hand into Vivek's palms.

His voice trembled as he spoke, "From today, I entrust my daughter to you. Not as a burden, but as a blessing. Care for her with respect, walk beside her in every season of life, and may your bond be guided by truth, patience, and compassion."

Vivek bowed his head in humility. Holding Akriti's hand firmly yet gently, he replied, "I accept this responsibility with reverence. I promise to honour her, protect her dignity, and stand with her— not in her shadow, but by her side."

Tears flowed freely now— among relatives, friends, and even those who believed themselves emotionally strong. Akriti, unable to hold back, felt her eyes well up. She touched her parents' feet, seeking blessings, her forehead resting where she had once found comfort as a child.

Rajesh placed his hand on her head, his blessing silent yet profound. "May you always walk in light," his eyes seemed to say. "And may your home be filled with peace."

As holy water was poured and sacred mantras chanted, the act of Kanyadaan was completed— not as a separation, but as a sacred continuation.

A daughter had not been given away.
She had been entrusted— with faith, love, and the strength of
generations.

***The pandit gently announced, his voice calm and assured,
“With this, the wedding ceremony of Vivek and Akriti is
complete.”***

A soft murmur of relief, gratitude, and quiet joy flowed through the
mandap. The sacred fire still glowed, bearing witness to vows taken
and lives intertwined.

Then the pandit smiled and called out,
“Now, Ankush and Sarika, please come forward.”

A ripple of excitement passed through the gathering. Without
changing the sanctity of the moment, the mandap transformed once
again into a space of fresh beginnings. Ankush and Sarika stepped
ahead, mirroring the same rituals, the same mantras, the same
sacred steps— reminding everyone that marriage, though repeated, is
never routine. Each union carries its own destiny.

As the ceremony progressed in the same traditional style, elders from
both families watched with folded hands and grateful hearts. Two
households were not merely connected; they were gently woven
together into one extended family.

When the final mantras were chanted and blessings bestowed,
something beautiful unfolded beyond ritual.

Families from both sides rose, embraced one another, and exchanged
warm smiles that needed no words. Laughter mixed with tears.
Long-held formalities dissolved into genuine affection.

Rajesh stepped forward, his voice steady yet full of emotion. Looking at Sarika's parents, he said, "with quiet conviction, "From today, your daughter is our daughter."

Those simple words carried the weight of reassurance, acceptance, and shared responsibility. Sarika's mother clasped Rajesh's hands tightly, her eyes glistening, knowing that her child would be cared for not as a guest, but as family.

Then came the moment everyone had been unconsciously preparing for— the farewell.

As the vidaa, farewell began, the atmosphere shifted. Traditional songs rose softly, led by women whose voices trembled with emotion.

बाबुल की दुआएँ लेती जा, बेटी,
तुझको सुख-शांति से भरा संसार मिले।
मायके की कभी याद न आए,
ससुराल में इतना अपार प्यार मिले।
नाजों से तुझे पाला मैंने,
कलियों की तरह, फूलों की तरह।
बचपन में झुलाया है तुझको,
इन बाहों में झूलों की तरह।
मेरे बाग की तू नाजूक डाली,
हर पल तुझे नई बहार मिले।
मायके की कभी याद न आए,
ससुराल में इतना स्नेह अपार मिले।

जिस घर से अब जुड़ गई है तेरी किस्मत,
उस घर में सदा तेरा राज रहे।
होठों पर हँसी की धूप खिले,
माथे पर खुशियों का ताज रहे।
जिसका उजाला कभी फीका न पड़े,
तुझे ऐसा रूप-सिंगार मिले।
मायके की कभी याद न आए,
ससुराल में इतना प्यार मिले।
बीते तेरे जीवन की घड़ियाँ,
आराम की ठंडी छाँव में।
काँटा भी कभी न चुभ पाए,
मेरी लाड़ली, तेरे पाँव में।
उस द्वार से भी दुख दूर रहे,
जिस द्वार से तेरा संसार मिले।
मायके की कभी याद न आए,
ससुराल में इतना स्नेह मिले।
बाबुल की दुआएँ लेती जा, बेटी,
तुझको सुखों से भरा संसार मिले।
बाबुल की दुआएँ लेती जा...

Translation

Carry with you your father's blessings, my daughter,
May you find a world filled with peace and happiness.
May you never feel the ache of leaving your mother's home,
May your in-laws' house shower you with endless love.

*I raised you with care and tenderness,
Like a bud, like a blossoming flower.
In your childhood, I rocked you to sleep,
Cradled you gently in these arms of mine.*

*You are the delicate branch of my garden,
May every moment bring you a new spring.
May you never long for your parents' home,
May your new home give you boundless affection.*

*The home to which your destiny is now tied,
May you always reign there with honor and respect.
May sunshine of laughter bloom on your lips,
May a crown of happiness rest upon your forehead.*

*May your beauty and grace never fade,
May you always be adorned with inner light.
May you never miss your parents' home,
May your new home give you endless love.*

*May the moments of your life pass gently,
Under the cool shade of comfort and care.
May no thorn ever pierce your tender feet,
My beloved child, anywhere you walk.*

*May sorrow stay far from every doorway,
That opens into your new life and world.
May you never long for your parents' home,
May your new home give you infinite love.*

***Carry with you your father's blessings, my daughter,
May your life be filled with joy and harmony.
Carry with you your father's blessings...***

The familiar melody echoed through the courtyard, piercing hearts that had stood strong until now.

Mothers wiped their tears with the edges of their sarees. Aunts turned away, overwhelmed. Even women who had attended countless weddings found their throats tightening. Some reached out instinctively to touch the brides' hands, their shoulders, their veils—offering silent prayers for strength and happiness.

Akriti and Sarika folded their hands before their elders, seeking blessings one last time as daughters of their birth homes. Tears streamed freely now— not of sorrow alone, but of gratitude, love, and the bittersweet truth of change.

Rajesh watched silently, his eyes moist yet peaceful. He understood now what his Guru had once taught him through seva— true love is not possession, but surrender.

As the brides stepped toward their husbands, garlands brushing softly against silk, the message was clear:

They were not leaving behind love.

They were carrying it forward.

The songs faded, but their echo remained— woven into memories that would return with every festival, every prayer, and every quiet moment of longing.

A Gathering of Reflection and Grace

The next morning, Rajesh invited close relatives, friends, and well-wishers to his home for a quiet social gathering. The festive excitement of the wedding had gently settled, leaving behind a deeper stillness—one that called for reflection rather than celebration.

A revered Swami Ji was invited to address the gathering. Sitting calmly, with a serene smile and a voice full of compassion, he spoke of *love for God as explained in the Bhagavad Gita*, not as theory, but as a way of living.

He began gently:

“As long as a person builds his life upon wealth, property, and worldly attachments, true joy will always remain distant. Real happiness does not arise from possession—it arises from freedom.”

Swami Ji explained that every human being must attain *two kinds of freedom*.

The first is *external freedom*—freedom from domination, dependency, and outer limitations. It speaks of independence and dignity in the material world.

The second, and far more important, is *inner freedom*—freedom from the bondage of the senses and uncontrolled desires.

“A person may be politically free,” he said,

“yet inwardly enslaved. And such a person can never taste real joy.”

He explained that in the outer world, as long as one remains under the control of people who are unsympathetic or unjust, peace remains fragile. But in the *inner world*, as long as one is a slave to the senses, freedom is impossible.

“To conquer the outer world, discipline is needed.

To conquer the inner world, mastery of the mind is essential.”

Control of the senses alone is not enough. The *mind* must be trained—turned away from restless cravings and directed toward God. Only then does a person experience lasting joy, both outwardly

and inwardly. When the mind becomes steady, one begins to see ***divinity everywhere***.

Swami Ji emphasized that this inner victory is required of all human beings—believers and non-believers alike.

“Whether you accept God or deny Him,” he said,
“you must still become the master of your senses.”

When the senses are allowed to run unchecked after objects of pleasure, a person grows weak. In such weakness, remembrance of God fades, discipline collapses, and even useful work becomes impossible.

“Without grace,” he added softly,
“strength leaves you quietly.”

He reminded the gathering that ***the spiritual path is not easy***. It requires commitment, regular practice, and sincerity. But once adopted, its effects are unmistakable.

A person begins to feel lighter.

Confidence grows naturally.

Energy flows smoothly.

In times of sorrow, one does not collapse.

In times of joy, one does not lose balance.

“Life is never a straight road,” Swami Ji smiled.

“There are ups and downs. But when the mind is anchored in God, the road appears simple and walkable.”

Give the Mind Some Peace

Swami Ji then spoke about the nature of the mind.

When the lower mind is filled with impurities born of the senses, it becomes restless and troubled. But when it is turned toward the **higher mind**, toward awareness of the divine, it regains purity.

“The higher mind is always conscious of divinity,” he said. “It is only the lower mind that forgets.”

When the mind is directed toward God, it slowly frees itself from sorrow, fear, and anxiety—most of which arise from impure thoughts and sensory impressions.

This inward turning of the mind is called **meditation or yoga**—union with God. It is the sacred process through which an impure mind is cleansed and restored to its natural state.

The mind, Swami Ji explained, **needs peace**, just as the body needs rest.

Peace comes only when the flow of thoughts slows down.

Ordinarily, the mind rushes outward through the senses, chasing objects, experiences, and pleasures. This outward movement fuels endless thinking and agitation.

“When you stop the mind from running outward,” he said, “and gently turn it inward toward God, impurities begin to dissolve.”

This inward-focused discipline gives the mind both **proper use and much-needed rest**. It is the yoga of constant inner awareness.

A Final Teaching

Before concluding, Swami Ji offered a gentle but powerful reminder:

“You have no right to criticize others.
You have no right to think ill of anyone.”

Remembering poem two lines on this.

*I find no other soul to blame,
No heart I dare to call untrue.
The mirror gently speaks to me—
“Tell me, who is worse than you.”*

Instead, one must look inward—recognizing one’s own shortcomings.

“See the good in others,” he said,
“and remove what is unreal within yourself.”

As silence settled over the gathering, Rajesh felt a quiet fulfillment within. The celebrations of marriage had bound families together—but this discourse had bound hearts to **wisdom, humility, and inner freedom**.

When the lower mind is free of the dirt and impurities of the senses and is turned towards the higher mind, it again becomes pure. Higher minds are always aware of the inherent divinity. When you turn your mind to the divinity, you will be able to free it from all the troubles and sorrows associated with impure thoughts which arise from the impressions of the sense-organs. Therefore, you have to make every effort to turn your mind away from the senses and towards God. This can be described as *mediu* or yoga, union with God. This is the process whereby you cleanse a thing which has become impure, and again make it pure.

The mind needs a certain amount of peace. Just as the body needs rest, the mind needs peace. How can the mind get peace? It is only when you control the thinking process and slow the flow of thoughts that the mind gains some peace. The mind will always try to go out through the sense organs toward various sense-objects. This then, gives rise to the thinking process. If you control this tendency of the mind to go outwards, and instead turn it inwards towards God, impure thoughts will diminish. Then you will be using the mind properly, and giving it some rest as well. This has been described as the yoga of constant inward-directed practice. Let us look at this further.

**Swami Ji said,”softly, as the gathering sat in silence:
as story**

Darkness always seeks darkness. It thrives where the mind remains restless and trapped in desire. But light seeks nothing—it simply shines. The moment you turn toward the light, it begins to fill you from within. No matter what your past has been, if your intention today is pure, the Lord accepts you without hesitation.

Many people worry, “I have made mistakes. I have lived wrongly. Will God really accept me?”

Listen carefully—God does not look at your past. He looks at your surrender.

There is a beautiful episode in the Ramayana that teaches us this truth.

Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, came to Lord Rama and surrendered at His feet. Seeing this, many warriors in Rama’s army became fearful. One of the commanders said, “Prabhu, he is Ravana’s brother. He belongs to the same demonic race. How can we trust him? This may be deception.”

Lord Rama smiled—because divine compassion is never hurried, never fearful. He said,
“You may doubt him, but I will not turn him away. I do not accept him because he opposes his brother, but because he has surrendered to Me. Whoever comes to Me and says, ‘I am Yours,’ I give them protection. I do not ask who they are or where they come from.”

The commander still hesitated and said, “But Prabhu, when this war ends and Ravana is defeated, you may have to make Vibhishana the king of Lanka.”

Rama replied with immense depth,
“If Ravana himself had come to Me with such purity of heart, I would have asked my own brother Bharata—who rules Ayodhya on my behalf—to step down, and I would have made Ravana king of Ayodhya.”

Swami Ji paused and looked around gently.

“Do you see the greatness of this vision?” he asked.
“This is not politics. This is not reward. This is grace.”

Divine incarnations do not judge by birth, caste, family, or past deeds. They look only at the heart. Wherever there is true surrender, God stands there.

Therefore, do not condemn yourself. Do not say, ‘I am unworthy.’ The moment you turn your face toward God, you become worthy.

But remember—surrender does not mean words alone. It begins with discipline. Control your senses. A person who is a slave to the senses can never be free, even if he owns the whole world. Sense control is the first step toward a noble life. When the senses are calm, the mind becomes peaceful. When the mind becomes peaceful, the heart opens to God.

This is the true meaning of yoga—not postures alone, but the union of the restless mind with divine awareness.

When the mind turns inward, impurity dissolves. When the heart turns toward God, fear disappears. Life's ups and downs remain, but they no longer disturb you. You walk steadily, with faith and clarity.

Swami Ji concluded softly:

“Do not chase darkness. Do not fight your past. Simply turn toward the light.

God is already waiting.”

Swami Ji continued, speaking gently yet firmly:

“If you do not awaken your wisdom, your ignorance will only continue to grow. Knowledge without wisdom does not liberate—it binds even more strongly. That is why Lord Krishna warned Arjuna again and again: use your buddhi, your discriminative intelligence, to rise in wisdom.

Wisdom is the light that dispels ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed, duality automatically disappears. And when duality goes, attraction and repulsion toward sense objects also fade away. Likes and dislikes lose their grip. Once these attachments fall away, body-consciousness dissolves. And when body-consciousness dissolves, sorrow has no place to remain.

Remember this well: sorrow exists only where ignorance exists.”

Develop Wisdom Through Inner Inquiry

“If you truly wish to overcome body-consciousness,” Swami Ji explained,

“you must first overcome your compulsive attraction and aversion to

sense objects. When this happens, duality collapses. When duality collapses, ignorance vanishes. And this entire transformation takes place through the development of wisdom.

That is why the Bhagavad Gita clearly declares: It is through wisdom alone that ignorance is destroyed, and the ultimate Reality is realized.”

What Is True Wisdom?

“Now ask yourself,” he said, “softly,
“what is this wisdom that we are speaking of?

Is it the knowledge of books?

Is it worldly education, degrees, or intellectual brilliance?

No.

True wisdom does not deal with external phenomena at all.

It deals only with *inner experience*.

Wisdom arises when you develop deep confidence in the indwelling Atma. Without faith in yourself, you cannot truly have faith in God. If you doubt your own inner being, your belief in the Lord will remain superficial.

Faith in God begins with faith in the Self.”

The Practice of Self-Inquiry

“When you recognize the same divine presence shining within you and within every being, your vision changes. Fear diminishes. Ego softens. Compassion grows.

But this realization does not come by chance.

It comes through *constant self-inquiry*—by repeatedly turning the mind inward and asking:

Who am I?

What is permanent?

What is merely passing?

This inward journey gradually awakens wisdom. And as wisdom grows, ignorance dissolves—naturally, effortlessly.”

Swami Ji concluded:

“Develop wisdom, not merely information.

Seek truth, not just comfort.

Turn inward, and the divine will reveal itself.

This is the royal path taught by Krishna.

This is the path of freedom.”

Swami Ji folded his hands and said:

“That is all for today.

I request all devotees to kindly partake of prasad and refreshments before leaving.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the devotees and volunteers who served with such love and dedication and made this gathering successful. I am deeply touched by the silence, patience, and devotion with which everyone listened today.

May God bless you all.

May He keep His devotees peaceful, happy, and filled with joy.

Ram Ram.

Now, let us begin the devotional music—
please play bhajans in praise of **Lord Ram.**”

मेरे मन में राम , मेरे तन में राम
रोम रोम में समाया तेरा नाम
मेरी हर साँस में राम
वो मुझमे हैं , वो तुझमे भी हैं
हर प्राणी में समाया राम रे
गंगा में समाया राम , यमुना में भी राम
सब नदियों में पहाड़ों में हैं राम
चंदा में राम सूरज में राम
तारो मंडल में समाया राम रे
जैसे सबरी के राम
वैसे मीरा के श्याम
हर नर नारी में समाया मेरे राम रे
जैसे सीता के राम
जिसे राधा के श्याम
पते पते पर समाया मेरा राम रे
मेरे मन में राम , मेरे तन में राम
रोम रोम में समाया तेरा नाम

Translation

Ram resides in my heart, Ram resides in my body,

Your name is ingrained in every fibre of my being.

Ram is in every breath I take,

He is in me, He is in you too,

Ram resides in every living creature.

Ram is in the Ganges, Ram is in the Yamuna,

Ram is in all the rivers and mountains.

Ram is in the moon, Ram is in the sun,

Ram resides in the constellation of stars.

Just like the Ram of Shabari,

Just like the Shyam of Meera,

My Ram resides in every man and woman.

Just like the Ram of Sita,

Just like the Shyam of Radha,

My Ram resides in every leaf.

Ram resides in my heart, Ram resides in my body,

Your name is ingrained in every fibre of my being.

Call from Vivek giving good news

A couple of weeks later, Vivek called his father, his voice filled with excitement.

“Dad, I have good news.”

Dinesh smiled even before hearing it. “What is it, my son? Tell me.”

"I have been posted to Los Angeles," Vivek said, proudly, "and my salary has been doubled."

Dinesh's eyes lit up. "That is wonderful news! Congratulations, my boy. May God bless you."

Vivek paused for a moment and then added softly, "Dad, there is another good news. Akriti is expecting."

For a second, Dinesh was silent—then his voice trembled with joy. "This is not just good news, son. This is a double celebration. Thank God! When we remember Him, He takes care of us in ways we cannot imagine. Just a few days ago, we had bhajan and satsang at home, and see how beautifully God has showered His grace."

Vivek laughed. "Dad, it is not a double celebration. It is a triple one."

Dinesh was surprised. "Triple? How so?"

"Dad," Vivek continued, "Ankush also called. Sarika is expecting too."

For a moment, Dinesh was overwhelmed. His eyes moistened, and he folded his hands in gratitude.

He rushed to the other room and called out loudly, "Come here! Come quickly! There is great news!"

His wife looked startled. "Why are you shouting like this? What has happened?"

Instead of answering, Dinesh took her hand and began to dance around the room in pure joy.

She pulled her hand away, laughing. "Have you gone mad?"

"When you hear the news, you will become mad with happiness too," he said, his eyes sparkling.

"Tell me at once," she insisted.

"Our both daughters-in-law are expecting," Dinesh said, "proudly. We are going to become grandparents. You will be Dadi, and I will be Dada."

They both laughed, tears of joy rolling down their cheeks.

After a moment, she said, "Why didn't you call me earlier? I wanted to speak to the boys and congratulate them."

"They will call you in the evening," Dinesh replied gently.

As she turned to leave the room, Dinesh asked, "Where are you going now?"

"I am going to prepare sweets," she said, "and distribute them to the neighbours and to the poor."

Dinesh nodded with a smile. "Yes, you must do that. Share the joy—this happiness is God's blessing."

Months passed quietly, wrapped in prayers, phone calls, and hopeful waiting. Every morning, Dinesh and his wife lit the lamp before the small temple at home. Along with their usual prayers, one sentence was now always on their lips:

"God, please keep both the mother and the children safe."

Though Vivek was in Los Angeles and Ankush in another city, the house felt alive again. Video calls became a daily ritual. Sometimes Akriti would show her growing baby bump, smiling shyly, while Sarika would laugh and tease, "Dadi, whose grandchild will come first?"

Dinesh would smile calmly and reply, "Whoever comes first, both are God's gifts."

At night, when the house grew quiet, Dinesh would often sit near the window, lost in thought. His wife noticed the softness in his eyes.

"What are you thinking?" she asked one evening.

"I was remembering the days when our boys were born," he replied.

"How small they were... how fast life moves. Now, the same life is coming back to us in a new form."

She nodded, her eyes moist. "This is God reminding us that nothing really ends. It only changes form."

The Arrival

One early morning, the phone rang.

Dinesh woke up instantly. Even before answering, his heart knew.

"Dad," Vivek's voice trembled with joy, "it's a baby girl."

For a moment, Dinesh could not speak. His throat choked with emotion.

"A girl..." he whispered. "Lakshmi has come to our home."

He folded his hands, closed his eyes, and thanked God silently.

That same evening, another call came.

"Papa," Ankush said, almost breathless, "we are blessed with a baby boy."

The house echoed with joy, bells ringing in the temple, sweets being distributed again. Neighbours came, congratulated, and said, "Your house is completely full!"

Dinesh smiled and replied, "Yes, God has blessed us with a full house."

That night, he could not sleep. Sitting beside his wife, he said, “softly, “Today, I truly feel that our life’s journey has become complete.”

She held his hand and replied, “And yet, a new journey has begun.”

The Naming Ceremony

A few weeks later, both families gathered at the ancestral home for the naming ceremony. The courtyard was decorated with marigold flowers, rangoli, and mango leaves. The sound of Vedic chants filled the air.

Dinesh sat proudly, holding his granddaughter for the first time. She looked up at him, her tiny fingers wrapped around his.

His eyes filled with tears.

“So much trust,” he whispered. “She doesn’t know the world yet, and yet she trusts completely.”

The pandit announced the names.

The girl was named **Ananya**— one who is unique, without equal. The boy was named **Aryav**— noble, truthful, and strong.

As the names were spoken, Dinesh felt something stir deep within him.

“These children are not ours,” he thought. “They are entrusted to us.”

When it was time to bless them, Dinesh placed his trembling hands on their heads and said:

“May you grow with strength, humility, and wisdom. May you always remember your roots and walk with truth.”

A Grandfather's Silent Prayer

That evening, when the guests had left and the house grew calm again, Dinesh sat alone in the temple room.

He looked at the flickering lamp and whispered:

“Bhagwan, I ask for nothing more. Keep these children pure in heart. Keep their parents strong. And give us elders the wisdom to guide them, not with control, but with love.”

From the next room came the soft sound of a baby's cry—and then laughter.

Dinesh smiled.

Life had come full circle.

Renunciation does not mean running away from the world. It means *living in the world without being enslaved by it*. It means doing your duties fully, yet remaining unattached to the fruits of your actions. Such renunciation brings lightness to the heart and freedom to the mind.

The Gita reminds us that *truth and purity are the highest forms of austerity*. You may fast, you may sit in meditation for hours, but if truth is absent from your life, real progress will not come. Truth purifies the mind. Purity strengthens the will. Together, they become the most powerful instruments on the spiritual path.

When truth becomes your nature and purity your habit, the mind slowly comes under control. Desires lose their grip. Restlessness subsides. A quiet joy begins to flow from within.

My sincere wish is that you cultivate these noble qualities—truthfulness in thought, purity in action, and sincerity in intention.

*By doing so, you will not only discipline the mind, but also **sanctify your entire life**, turning it into a living message of the Gita.*

Walk the path with patience, live with awareness, and let your life itself become a prayer.

Concluded

It is often seen—and deeply experienced—that when a person truly connects with the Almighty, life begins to flow with greater ease. Challenges may still arise, but they lose their power to disturb. Obstacles come, perform their role, and quietly pass away. Faith does not remove difficulties; it gives us the strength, clarity, and balance to cross them with grace.

With this understanding, I conclude this book with a few timeless spiritual reflections drawn from the wisdom of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The Gita teaches us that control of the mind is not achieved through effort alone. Two pillars are essential for this sacred journey: **constant practice** (*abhyāsa*) and **renunciation** (*vairāgya*).

Practice does not mean merely performing daily rituals, lighting a lamp, or chanting a few mantras. These are valuable beginnings, but true practice is a transformation of life itself. It means living with awareness—using the body, the speech, and the mind in such a way that attachment does not take root.

When you use your body, let your actions be selfless.
When you use your tongue, let your words be truthful and gentle.
When you use your mind, let your thoughts be pure and uplifting.

This is real *sādhana*.

Practice means orienting your entire life toward one single goal—the realization of the Divine. Every word you speak, every thought that arises, and every action you perform should lead you closer to truth, not away from it. When life itself becomes worship, even the most ordinary moments turn sacred.

May these reflections inspire the reader to walk the path with faith, discipline, and inner awareness—so that life, in all its phases, becomes a journey of peace, purpose, and quiet joy.

Ram Ram.