

EPITOME OF SUCCESS

Ram Pavan Kumar Melam

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CHAPTER ONE

Prologue

Dear Readers,

I request all the readers, especially the students, to benefit from this book in the constructive preparation of examinations.

If you are further interested, please follow me on the platforms:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ram.melam.1/>

Twitter: @RamPavanKumarM

YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/3wEUze6>

I post around 15 terms of English vocabulary in the Telegram Group, Wizard Winning Tribe. If you to join the group, please subscribe to it with the link below: <https://t.me/joinchat/HfSpmDNxndU2ZjBl>

Yours

Ram Pavan Kumar Melam., B. Com., LLB., FCA., ACS.,
ACMA

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

The year 2013 dawned on Tuesday. It is the day of planet Mars. That planet is full of the element fire. That day blazes the aspirations of the people, whoever goes against its rules.

People in the East who believe in the cosmic power hesitate to start a new venture on Tuesday. They further fear that the day influences their own things to fight against them like a fiery male sheep ram fights.

Robin is an Aries born iron-willed guy. This ram never follows any superstition. When the dreaded people fear to start new ventures that year, this bohemian entered into a life turning pursuit. He never goes by the conventional rules. His heart makes rules for him, and he always listens to them. His heart drives his life.

Robin is an idealist while practical on the other hand. If he commits to an ideology, he turns that idea into a reality. That is his hobby. He is not a blind adherent to the deep-seated beliefs of the system. At the same time, his thoughts and

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deeds are never aberrant.

An infant fears nothing. This six feet tall guy, too, fears nothing. So, this teenaged bohemian is also an infant. That babyish nature never inhibited his progress. At the age of thirty, this infant progressed to the pinnacle of his career. His friends employ tactics to deal with his infantile heart. If they try to over smart him, he yells at them anyhow. His needs and passions are his worlds.

The planet Mars infuses a spirit of adventure into people that impels them to risky ventures where they often fail. Yet uniquely, his life course's abrupt turn drove him into an altogether new direction by such infusion but succeeded.

From this novella, the readers may judge what brings success - luck, fate, destiny, hard work, planning, valor, or a compound of these attributes?

The protagonist narrates his story by himself from the next chapter.



Is birth Magic? Yes, to those who see it. Life on this planet is possible only by the magical power of nature. The ecosystem in this sphere is a magician.

Robinson Crusoe was a castaway adventurer on a tropical island of South America. He spent a vulnerable life among savages and cannibals. Ultimately he reached England after twenty-eight years. He was settled there for the rest of his life. Later he died wealthy there.

"Have you drawn the final accounts of Robinson?" Lord Brahma asked Chitragupta.

Introduction

"Yes, Prajapathi, I drew them," replied Chitragupta.

Chitragupta must finalize the karma balance of the soul after the death of a creature. Chitragupta tabled the report before Prajapati.

Prajapati examined the report. "We know every creature dies intestate of its karma balance. The scale of karma empowers its soul to create its own form in the next life. The soul of Robinson has a vast balance of virtue in his account. He suffered solitary life in the deep South American forest islands. Let us bequeath that balance to his new account so that he can be born in India. That noble land never endures him to a solitary life again," Prajapathi said to Chitragupta.

"Let us take the help of Indra to get state of the art quality material to form this new life," Chitragupta said.

Then Brahma advised Indra, "the next life of this soul shall take place in India. That new life shall possess valor, patience, ingenuity, and capabilities to carry smart work."

"To form a high-quality human, we need atoms for each part of his body across the universe. Let me try for the best," Indra assured Prajapathi Brahma.

Consequently, Indra arranged atoms of mighty electromagnetic energy fields from various planets. Lord Brahma fused them and formed this new hero in the womb of a noble lady. At the same time, Prajapati Brahma created a ledger book ID 'Robin.' Ultimately, Robinson Crusoe of England's soul transmigrated into Robin in India now.

On the same account, Lord Brahma opened that lad's life with a colossal amount of prepaid balance to buy something

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nice. But, Robin's parents and relatives dwindled all that heavenly advance when he reached eighteen years.

This Prajapati's cosmic responsibility is to budget each life much before the stage of the embryo. However, Prajapati was found guilty of serious dereliction of his duty for neglecting to draw the 'youthful life' of Robin.

So, Robin has an opportunity to design and account for those youthful chapters himself as he wishes. He opened some new accounts and passed the entries on that ledger book's folios from the journal register he maintained. He is Brahma, and he is Chitrugupta of his 'youthful life.'

CHAPTER THREE

My story begins

Iswardham, in Andhra Pradesh, India;

April 30, 2013, Tuesday:

I am excellent at discerning sounds from my childhood. While watching a cricket match on television, I heard from far-off the horn of an approaching two-wheeler. I lept from the chair, stretched my legs, thrust the ground, and plummeted outside the threshold like an Alsatian. Quickly reached the hedge of the compound wall abutting the main road without loss of time. I tear open the gates on seeing papa from a distance to let him a thoroughfare into the premises without any pause at the barrier. He rode on to the shady portico from the scorching sunlight without glancing at his janitor. His photochromic lenses veiled a dark tint over his eyes. Otherwise, I would have read the emotions spinning from his stiffened face. I swiftly submerged under thoughts about faded shades on his face. I gently shut the gates while he was parking the two-wheeler beside the sitting room.

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I quickly joined him at the main entrance. He handed the files held by him as if he can't even bear the weight of a thin paper anymore. He removed his shady eye-glasses, folded and slipped them into his shirt pockets. We both walked into the house next to each other without uttering a syllable. He is not the same as usual; his face grew pale; eyes are reddish; warm sweat dewed on his lashes and trickled into his eyes as he steamed profusely. His shirt got almost damped as if he drenched in the stream of the brilliant sunlight he came through. I alarmed a moment, recovered from the shock instantly, and placed the files on the table, darted to the switchboard and dashed my finger on the ceiling fan switch, deregulated the regulator to run the fan at high speed. I grasped his left arm, took him by hand to the sofa. Ushered him to take his seat politely. Grabbed a narrow-necked bottle of cooled drinking water from the refrigerator, splashed it into a tumbler, and offered him to take it in. He held it for a while, looked aimlessly at a distance, lifted it gently, and gulped it with a racing pace. I imagined a sunstroke initially, but now I could perceive, something is bothering him intensely. Since I don't want to disturb him, I kept quiet. I wandered around him, keeping him unaware till he comes to his normal senses.

He raised slowly from the sofa to wash the mucky sweat that ran over him. He took out things from his pocket, kept them in the cupboard, washed his face, donned fresh clothes, and returned to the living room, where I am waiting for him. He looks much better now. Meanwhile, mama is unaware of

My story begins

this whole incident, prepared cold lemon water, and kept on the tripod lying before him. It is not a topic I could discuss with mama, and mama certainly had not the least suspicion of what had passed.

He had the lemon water, took the files on the table, and reinstated them in a dejected spirit in the cupboard. He carried them with him in the morning while visiting a legal counsel. He sat down again on the sofa there in silence. I am looking at him gravely without a word.

CHAPTER FOUR

A loss

After the continued silence for a few minutes, he beckoned me to sit next to him. His hand has fallen softly on my shoulder, patting gently without pronouncing a word. He continued to pat me affectionately while looking aimlessly at the infinite void through the window. His face seems thoughtful, pondering something profound. As soon as he came out from the buried reflections, he cleared his throat, "Ahem."

"Yes, papa," said I, as I hang in there to listen to him vocalize his agony.

Papa broke that awkward silence in the following manner.

"I spilled cold water on all your bright hopes. Five years ago, I ventured into this partnership business more for my social standing than for the fiduciary duty of your benefit. I breached my duty to protect the ancestral property from dispossessions. That trust bestowed upon me by your grandfather, employing me as a reliable custodian and

A loss

trustee for the benefit of his progeny. I infringed the general custom of the trust reposed in me. I would have never ventured into a business if I was aware of this loss. But unfortunately, I did."

"What happened, papa?" I asked.

"Can you depend more on your skills than the properties we had, my child?" he shot a counter inquiry on me.

"Properties we 'had!' Why, papa? What is the matter?" I begged.

"I am worried about your future, my child. We lost everything now. The value of our investments in the partnership business dwindled utterly. Moreover, the liabilities of that business may shadow the entire ancestral property we hold. So, we may left with none - we lost the investment in the business and our assets. As your mother is the owner of this house, we may retain only this house and a few pieces of her land," thus he revealed his distress.

"I never intended to depend on the ancestral properties for my living. I only wished to employ them productively for the good of society. Did the firm incurred any liabilities, in addition to partners' capital contribution?" I urged scrupulously.

"Yes, caught into debts, partly due to losses in the business and partly due to my negligence," he replied.

"Your negligence!" I startled.

"Yes, as per the Indian Partnership Act, 1932, the liability of the partners is unlimited. Every partner of the firm is jointly and severally liable for the debts incurred by the firm.

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So, every partner is responsible for the notes signed by any partner on behalf of the firm," he stated.

"Do you suspect any fraud, papa?" I chased him politely.

"Of course, but I can't attribute the losses to 'fraud' or 'misappropriation' alone, as myself negligent being an active partner, omitted to check the books of account before signing the financial statements. The tax practitioner had misled me while signing the reports. He said that the reports I was signing were for tax filing. He assured me that the actual state of affairs was much better. To cover-up my ignorance on this matter, I used to listen to him in silence. I realized now; we should never gamble with books of account, especially in a partnership business. I listened to that scoundrel since the rates of taxes were high. My silence and my ignorance are the foundation for the misfortune now we are facing - which I call it as my negligence," he surmised.

"I don't believe in associating every effect to some cause. The reasons are multi-fold in this intricate world. We cannot deduce the effects to a single cause. You entered into the business for a bona fide reason. We can't hold our good intention transforming into actions for fear of repercussions. What is our share of profits or losses?" I pursued him.

"forty-five percent," he replied curtly in a choked voice with the fear of the impending loss.

"What is the total amount of liabilities of the firm?" I nagged him.

"The firm has a negative net worth of rupees 5 million," he sighed.

A loss

"What is negative net worth?" I pestered him with my inquiries.

"If the liabilities of the firm are greater than its assets, it has a negative net worth," he explained patiently.

"What is the total value of our assets?" the tone I inquired is in a manner I am winning over his logic.

"The total value of our assets may amount to rupees 5 million approximately. Your mother also has small urban land pieces abutting the main road. But they are non-revenue generating assets. However, they may fetch a capital appreciation of 15% every year on an average, which is unrealized passive earnings."

"Ok, papa, then let us sell assets worth our share and clear the liabilities," I suggested with a triumphant tone.

"My child, I too thought in the same way before visiting our legal counsel. As per him, every partner is jointly and severally liable for the debts of the firm. As the other partners of the firm are personally insolvent, their estates could fetch nothing. Consequently, the entire burden for the debts of the firm falls on us now," he unraveled the shocking law.

"The deed of partnership is a mutual agreement between the partners. It explicitly defines the share of profits or losses of partners. In such a case, how the burden of the one partner can fall on the other partner?" I annoyed him further.

"Precisely what you said."

"Precisely what I said!" I astonished.

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"As you rightly said, the deed is only a contractual arrangement between the partners. Unlike a company, there is no legal obligation on parties dealing with the firm to know about the partners' arrangement. The clauses of the partnership are valid between the partners. But the outsiders may disregard them lawfully. When the question of solvency arises, the provisions of the Partnership Act supersedes clauses of the deed like the situation we are facing now."

"Do you mean to say clauses are void at law?"

"No, they are valid, but the lenders and creditors have the right to recover their debts from any partner of their choice when the firm is collectively helpless to honor their debts. The lenders choose worthy partners in such a scenario. On discharging the firm's total liabilities by us, we as a partner subrogates into the creditors' shoes to the remaining extent of share. If we discharge their share of debts, we get the right to sue the other partners to recover the amount paid on their behalf. But, when their estate could fetch nothing, we can't even recover the lawsuit expenses from them."

"Is it an equitable law, papa?" I asked.

"Let us think of that later. I am more worried about your career now. You are never good at your studies. You never want to do a job. At this juncture, I can't fund anything to your dream project," papa thus jabbed at my aspirations.

It took a moment to stabilize myself.

"I am not that heartless papa. I am with you," I continued my unwavering support in the face of that great financial misery.

A loss

"Thank you, my dear," papa uttered them lightly with his faltering tongue.

I remained silent for a while.

"Let us break for lunch now. You are not at the luxury of wasting your valuable youthful moments from now on. To the young, this is a world for action, not for dreaming in," said papa.

"As you do now," added mama when she came to announce the lunch.

"I wish to hear a clear cut path from you that you want to travel in the future. Remember, whatever the path you choose, that should be socially responsible."

"Listen to papa, end your loafing and dreaming," suggested mama.

Though their allegations can't convince me, I listened to them quietly.

"Don't venture into any revenge on the fraudsters, my child," warned my father.

"Revenge, how ordinary it is? I can never be a criminal or go on a negative path. Sometimes, even extraordinary people may bet into revenge, but I am not of that sort," I assured firmly.

"Man, as he does and behaves so, he grows. He gets good by good deeds and bad by evil deeds; virtuous by virtuous deeds and vicious by vice. You are in the early phase of your life, where you have a chance to mold it. Good deeds put you into virtuous infinite and evil deeds into vicious infinite. You have to face these circles not only in this birth but also during

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the cycle of your next births," he aired a poetic tone philosophically that astonished me. I never knew this aspect of him previously.

I understood that the nemesis struck me to lead the life myself.

CHAPTER FIVE

Relatives

The news about the losses of the business spread among our relations. The next morning the sitting-room is full of unbidden guests to sympathize with our losses.

One of them attributed the losses to children's misfortune while looking at me. Simultaneously, another relative imputed the misery to the family's karma; some others to the house's Vastu. None knows the reality. Their kind of melodramatic sympathy seems to be sheer preposterous to me. I know the losses are a clear case of deceit, a white-collar offense. For the first time, I began to hate our irrational society and its absurd beliefs.

Apart from the continuing onslaught, a newer kind of attack emerged abruptly.

"Did the pandit wrote 'horoscope' of your boy?" one of them asked my father.

"The computers can generate horoscope now more accurately than a pandit," suggested another.

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"Whatever! If you have either, I have a solution," said the first one.

My father stepped out of the sitting-room and went inside. In a while, I heard the cabinet doors opening and closing. Later, he stepped into the sitting-room with a bunch of turmeric anointed papers in his hand. He delivered them to the one who asked for them.

That guest of a lean face, aquiline nose, and piercing eyes watched on them intensely like a hawk as if searching for the losses from that manuscript. Everyone looked at him curiously, waiting to listen to the reason from him. At last, he opened his mouth.

"I could see no malefic effects in this horoscope. I know a pandit who is an expert in astrology. If you can spare this copy, I will carry it to that pandit. He may suggest some remedy to minimize your damages," that guest said.

My father agreed, but I am skeptical of this dramatic hocus-pocus taking place there.

Meanwhile, somebody presented Vastu pandit there, who scaled the house inch by inch, made some suggestions for additions and demolitions to the building. I am a silent spectator there.

The next day I presented myself before that pandit. He has a high forehead till the top of his head with a short radius like an egg. He has no hair on his head but has only a few wisps. He lounged on an easy-back chair and looked at me carelessly. He waved me to take a seat on a short-stool before him while chewing betel leaves to stimulate himself.

Relatives

"I studied your horoscope. Your chart has no luck. I suggest you depend on your hard work. Your Ascendant is Leo and Ascendant-lord is the Sun. Being Sun placed the eighth house; it may deliver the desired result. Mars happens to be a benefit-giving planet for you.

"However, it is challenging to remedy your chart. The Sun in the eighth house also indicates you are likely to have a dare-devil nature and longevity. You listen to none.

"You may ask me some questions relating to your job and personal forecast," he said.

I am cynical about the belief in astrology. To get out from there quickly, I asked: "what activity will I take up for my living?"

"You will earn reputation and status by the business. You will acquire the property through your hard work alone. The loss now you suffer will duly compensated by having a rise in life by the strength of your own merit. You will be 'faithful in love and dauntless in war' - a worthy friend and generous enemy. You can do wonders in business," he declared.

I know the pandit has received a tip-off about the losses from our relatives. Moreover, astrology being a pseudoscience, one may find the same predictions from the East to the West, whether they are right or wrong. From that science, every astrologer predicts the same fate.

"I don't have the required investment to engage in business. So, I want to pursue an education. Previously I was not good at studies," said I.

"I don't see any line of education in your horoscope. As

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your fate is deficient in learning, you will be an unfinished scholar forever," the pandit discouraged.

I understood that drifting life away by these dogmas is ridiculous. I decided to do something beyond the imagination of this prejudicial view of society. I have to fight against my acquired naivety these years and to unlearn such an acquisition.

I started the new journey by fighting against the entrenched beliefs of society. I call that tour a transformational journey to serve myself as a piece of conspicuous evidence of change to society.

What is that I can do differently. I recollected the pieces of advice of Dale of Carnegie, Napoleon Hill, Herbert Fensterheim, and Stephen R Covey that I studied in Libraries during my last visit to New Delhi. I also read Vedanta from Upanishads.

I have a strong belief in God. But not in the format of the current practice of the religions. Society relegated God next to rituals of the occult, astrology, and all mumbo-jumbo. If God has a place, how the occult has a place in the minds of our people?

I purchased some used books on the philosophy of the East and the West at a Sunday book sale at Daryaganj, New Delhi. I decided to study them, to know who God is? Who am I? I spent three days on an intense study—the answer is that it is a long journey to get a reply to my questions.

CHAPTER SIX

Meeting legal counsel

May 3, 2013

On my insistence, papa took me to the attorney. He took the appointment to discuss the legal matters relating to the partnership firm. We reached his office by 10 am. Papa rang the doorbell at the door open ajar to signal the lawyer about our visit.

I heard a heavy puffing and blowing noise coming towards us. Soon, an older-looking gentleman stood before us. He asked us to wait in the demarcated office in his house. As we sat waiting on the visitors' chairs, he slowly walked on to his chair.

"You derive more satisfaction by street vending onions than sharing a great partnership business under a luxurious roof," the lawyer said to himself.

We listened to him in silence.

"I read the deed between the lines. There is nothing odd presented by it. Your partnership is at the will of the

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partners," he said, turning towards papa while groping for some documents in the table draw.

"I don't know what does that means," said papa.

"Partnership at the will of partners means, partners together can dissolve the firm. Even one partner can do that at any time. Just service of a notice of dissolution on the other partners is sufficient," said he.

"How does that affect the affairs of the partnership business?" asked papa.

"I will explain it to you. As you know, the estimated payable debts of the firm are rupees five million now. However, we are not in a position to know the actual liabilities. There is a possibility that other partners can create further debts fictitiously in bad faith."

"Of course, there is a possibility," agreed papa.

"So, let us give public notice of dissolution in a newspaper circulating in the vernacular language of this locality and also in the public gazette. Simultaneously we serve such notices on the rest of the partners through a registered post."

"Does that action creates any chaos in the business circles?" asked papa.

"Exactly! We have to create that chaos. Then only, we may know the exact picture of the firm's affairs. We shall disclaim all liabilities in the notice. That disclaimer creates panic among your lenders. They run amok after your office for payments. Then we come to know the truth."

"I don't know much of these implications. I rest my confidence in your skill and experience. Deliver the best in

Meeting legal counsel

the interest of my person and property," pleaded papa.

"Do you mean, the liabilities may grow beyond rupees five million?" I shot my misgiving at the lawyer.

"Yes, if the other partners are dishonest and fraudulent fellows," he replied.

"I suspect the existing liabilities have no direct relation to the firm's business. Hence, it is an act of dishonesty," I stated.

"Is he your boy?" he asked papa.

"Yes," said papa.

"I know that it is an act of dishonesty. The other partners in the saddle signed off to those debts on behalf of the firm under its seal. The burden of proving the fraud lies in us," said the lawyer to me.

Papa and I sighed heavily in great pain.

"I have your authorization to carry the things on your behalf. So, I will prepare the documents for paper publication. Serve the notices on the other partners as well," he said.

"Please go ahead," said papa under the roof of that attorney in great darkness about the law of the land.

We took a leave from him and reached home with further anxiety for the unexploded debts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A decision

After coming from that lawyer, papa shifted his focus from the losses to my career.

"What are your career plans, my dear?" papa asked me.

"I repositioned my emphasis on education now. I selected the finance profession as the choice of my career," said I.

"Do you mean Chartered Accountancy?" he asked.

"Yes."

"It is a very tough course. Only merit students can pursue that course," he advised.

I thought a neatly depicted note might convince him better than vocalizing my plans. I wound up the debate abruptly and left the place.

In the evening, I handed a neatly presented note to papa about the prospects of the profession. On that note, I outlined my precise plans to complete the course with timelines and budget.

He read and reread my note. He pleased to see the

A decision

planning of my future by myself. He is also satisfied with the option I have chosen, which allows me to stand independently.

"The note I have delivered you is about my plans to revive my education. Last time, on my visit to New Delhi, my friend Joe acquainted me with his uncle Mr. Oliver, a Chartered Accountant, the chairman of a large PSU. He told me that the sky is the limit for the finance profession. After that, I am quite impressed by its prospects," I added as an afterthought.

"Well, but don't be too ambitious. Just a while ago, I spoke to our tax consultant. He is a very clever, meticulous, and intelligent guy. He attempted the exam several times, but he could not clear it. He is not at least the semi-qualified now," papa warned me.

Papa uttered that warning to test my intuitive gut feelings.

"Sorry to interrupt you, what is semi-qualified?"

"Semi-qualified means half qualified chartered accountant in this context," said he.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "but, I am confident of myself," said I.

"Where that confidence comes from? You are never good at your studies. You are always a below-average student," he declared.

"Papa, do you know that faith can move mountains? I know I am not good at studies. I set my unflinching and steadfast goal now."

"Don't quote those cliches to me. Has anyone ever moved mountains with faith? Give me your reasoned explanation," he passed his command.

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"I never stopped reading; you know that. I am a voracious reader of books and English newspapers; subscribed to several fortnightly and monthly journals. I regularly watch English movies, read fiction, non-fiction, and biographies."

"Does that mean English is everything for winning that profession?"

"Of course, half the problem gets resolved if we have good skills in the English language. Apart from that, my acute perceptive antennas endow me to understand the business and legal complications. Besides, I have great desire, patience, energy, and strength to hit my target. Above all, it is a necessity for my survival. So, allow me to spend four years and some money on fee, my boarding, and the hostel."

"Give me some time to think about it," he said.

That night he read and reread that note. Later, he called me and said, "the investment required to your education, hostel, and boarding is not an issue when compared to the investment you seek on your dream project. However, I am worried about the difficulty in its winning. As a natural parent and legal guardian, I must ensure a good career for you to live respectfully. I know the consequences of a raw, youthful figure like you if channeled their energy into unwanted activities. I am also aware of how our laws pulled down your hopes and aspirations. So, I extend my full support morally and financially for all your future endeavors to live a life independently."

"In the evening, I called and spoke to a college in Amaravati, offering courses I wish. The fee and other

A decision

expenses seem reasonable. Classes are about to start on May 6. If you agree, I will join myself there."

"Get ready to join yourself there, my dear. I hope you are pursuing this course to lead a respectable life in the society but not with the primary motive to earn money or to recover whatever you will lose now."

"Yes, Papa, you are right. I am not after money. I love the profession passionately. That goal incidentally helps me to earn money."

"I cannot understand. Can you elaborate?" asked papa.

"We have to pursue excellence in all walks of life. Our excellence puts us in success. That success will chase us in all walks of our life. It's a cycle of infinite success originating from the excellence that we pursue. We should never chase the success. The success shall chase us " said I.

"I fully endorse your views. All the best, my dear."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Farewell

I believe in sharing life goals with three distinct sets of people - genuine well-wishers, worthy critics, and honest opposers. I traveled to my mama's maiden village. I met my uncle at his farmland in the vicinity. He is busy harvesting the crop. These are the harvesting times for paddy in this delta region. My uncle is a genuine well-wisher. I shared my plans with him.

"Hi, I am going to Amaravati next week to pursue my education," said I.

"Surprising to hear those words from you. Is it true? Do you want to resume your studies? Amazing!" He is much delighted.

"Yes, I decided last night. My circumstances drive me to make that decision," said I.

"You should not allow your life to drift away by the circumstances," he advised.

"No, it is my life goal," said I.

Farewell

"How education can be your life goal?" he inquired.

"It is not just education. But, it is a pursuit of a profession," said I.

"May I know that?"

"Yes, by all means. Finance profession" said I.

"In fact, I tried earlier for a year. I gave it up and became a successful farmer," said he.

"I don't know about that," said I.

"Yes, it is true. But, my reasons are different. As your grandfather couldn't manage our properties properly, we incurred great losses in farming. So, this responsibility befell me."

"I don't even know this," said I.

"The time has changed the objective of winning that profession as an easy task now. The books of great authors are available presently in the market. I know you can do it."

"Thank you."

"The famous adage is - become a doctor or engineer or lawyer or a failure. You have to disprove that adage," said he.

"I am weak in mathematics. I fear for that," said I.

"The syllabus contains some basic maths. Learn it in this short time. Nothing is impossible. Believe me."

"Apart from maths, I don't see any big deal in it," said I.

"I know you can overcome that. I am pleased to know that someone from our family is taking up such a challenging profession," said he.

He accompanied me to an honest opposer in his neighborhood. That opposer always sees my outward

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appearance. He views my courage fits more for civil construction contracts that deal with hard labor. I break open my plans before him.

"I am leaving this place tomorrow morning to pursue the finance profession," said I, and waited for his response.

"Wow, I congratulate you. But do you know how difficult it is? My elder brother, an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad, working for a reputed MNC as a country head, marketing attempted it. But, he couldn't complete the CMA course until now," he said these words to frustrate my plans.

"Of course, I agree. But, I put my best endeavors into completing it successfully. I believe it is possible for me. I seek your blessings."

"I wish you all the best," he said.

I took leave of them and reached my village.

Next, I visited a worthy critic, my cousin. He is working for a large public sector bank in Hyderabad. He escorted his children to the hometown for summer vacation.

"I plan to pursue the finance profession and leave from here tomorrow morning," said I, and waiting for his bouncer.

"Do you know what the job role of a CA working for an industry?" he asked.

"Yes, CAs play the role of controllers of finance. So, they implement controls and assist in complying with various laws, including taxes."

"Wow, how do you know all this?"

"I usually observe the procedure while visiting large show-rooms, and I recently visited the Chairman of a large PSU

Farewell

who is a chartered accountant. He took me to the tour of his business process very interestingly," said I.

"That's wonderful. What do you mean controls you referred to me previously?" my cousin asked.

"I went shopping for some clothes in a large show-room in the town this morning. In that shop, one person attends the customer showing the clothes; on selection by the customer, another person jots down on a slip with code, description, and measurements of the products selected. Yet, another person carries our selection and the slip to the bill counter. Biller bills and cashier collects money from us. In that process of the sale, no single person has absolute control over the sales activity. It is tough to commit fraud in such circumstances unless all the persons in the chain partook in fraud. The division of duties in that shop is a type of internal check which is part of controls," said I.

"I am very pleased, my dear, for your keen observation," he said.

"That business entity might put such checks on purchase activity as well. Purchase and sales are the two main activities of a trading business."

"Yes, my dear. Education is not just reading. Especially if you take professional courses such as CA, you should not confine yourself to read your syllabus between the four walls of your room. You have to understand business intricacies when you face them. If you wish to be the best, you should get exposed to a realistic environment. It would be helpful if you well manage your studies and practical learning together.

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Never try to *read* the books, but *study* them. Don't study the ordinary texts; get the best from the best authors. I wish to see you as a Chartered Accountant in the next five years. All the best, my dear," he said.

"Thank you," said I.

"Let us keep in touch," he said.

I took a leave from him and reached home.

CHAPTER NINE

Admission

May 6, 2013

That morning, I set off an early start to the college. I received blessings from mama, and papa drove me to the Railway station. We reached the station at 4.00 am. I purchased a platform ticket to admit him on the railway platform. Papa booked a ticket for my travel the day before my travel.

We strolled forward together on the platform. We both mingled among the fellow passengers waiting for the train to come.

"It is good that you have a goal; never neglect that," said papa.

"I promise you, my solitary duty is the achievement of my objective at the earliest," I assured.

"That's good. I appreciate you," papa lauded me.

After a few moments of silence, "my dear, the pandit suggested you take the admission in the college at 10.30 am

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today. If you can do this, luck favors you with success and fortune," he advised.

"Papa, I believe in Almighty, the creator of this cosmos. I lay my confidence in HIM and wait for the good to happen. Performing things at auspicious times, in my opinion, is an occult practice. I never rely a bit on such practices. They are the arts of illiterate and the practices of lower rung people. I put my best efforts to fulfill my good intentions."

"Do whatever you believe. But never defy a custom blatantly," papa advised.

"I keep my beliefs to myself. My demeanor is never aberrant socially," I assured.

"My dear, respect the conventional views of others. Don't be a bohemian."

"I am neither orthodox nor a heterodox," I replied.

"As you are going to live in a large cosmopolitan city, it is agreeable to me if you acquire a lifestyle of your own that is modest and normal," papa said.

The immensely long Mail crept on to the bay while we are talking, blowing its massive horns. It cruised on, shuddering the floor beneath us. With a heavy heart, I boarded the train.

"Bye, bye papa," I bid a farewell with a choked voice.

He waved his hand, seeing my face without saying anything.

As I entrained, soon it resumed rolling its wheels with a squeaking noise. From the window of that moving train on the curved railway, I saw papa waited on the platform until the train disappeared from his sight. I took my seat and went

Admission

into deep thoughts.

I alighted the train at Amaravathi railway station at nine in the morning, the same day. I came out of the railway station and boarded on a prepaid auto-rickshaw to reach my new destination. I am before college at Dickens Street in half an hour. While getting down, I saw some staff working in that 24/7 college.

A lean and tall person is at the door, talking to a sentinel. As soon as he saw me, he nodded his head to come in. After placing my baggage next to that sentinel, I stepped into the office room.

He sat in the chair before a working table and ushered me to another chair before him. I sat there.

"My name is Robin. I spoke to Mr. Simon in this office a couple of days ago about pursuing the courses offered by you in the commerce stream," said I.

"This is Simon, who spoke to you that day. I hope you are from Iswardham if I rightly remember our conversation," said he.

"You are right," I replied.

"I am working here as an office manager. Fill this application," he drew out an application from the next table draw and placed it before me.

I filled in the blanks with details of my name, address, qualifications, caste, and family's annual income.

"Simon, please take my filled-in application and check whether I loaded it with the right words," said I.

He took that form from me and glanced at it for a moment

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as I requested. He carried that paper inside the office of the dean. After a while, Simon came out from the dean's office; he opened and closed all his right-hand fingers a couple of times as a hint to wait for a few minutes to meet the dean. While waiting, I noticed a nameplate outside the dean's office. He is a well-qualified professional. A post-graduate in commerce, law, and management, possessed professional degrees from various institutes. After a few minutes of waiting, the buzzer outside the dean's office went off, indicating to allow the next visitor.

Simon let me in to see the dean.

"Good morning, sir," I wished him.

He glanced a momentous peer at my face; just nodded his head up and down while looking at my application; he waved his hand at a chair before him. I sat on it with lots of hesitation and respect for him.

"Do you have a goal?" he asked, still looking at my application as if some interesting story is available in that form.

"Yes, sir, I have. Winning the Chartered Accountancy profession is my only goal now," said I confidently.

"Well, what is your life ambition? I mean, setting up professional practice or service with any organization?"

"My immediate goal is to clear the CA exams. I may think about the nature of my job while my studies are progressing," said I.

"Then, besides CA course, I advise you to complete graduation as well in the next three years?" he suggested.

Admission

"How does that helpful for me, sir," I asked.

"Then listen carefully."

"Yes, sir. Please go ahead," said I.

"A professional course varies from an academic course to a greater degree. You will learn the required skills and techniques from the professional course. At the same time, an academic course teaches you literature, culture, and civilization, which is useful for better relations with the world-"

"Then, why an engineer or an advocate merely seek their professional course singly?"

"The universities offer those professional courses as an academic program that embeds the essential literature and art elements. In my view, graduation is essential for all finance professionals. Moreover, the corporates are insisting that a CA must necessarily be a graduate as well to join with them," he explained.

"I don't have a moment to waste on that academics, sir," said I.

"You need not allocate any significant time on graduation. The pursuit of the profession takes care of that. It would be best to focus on languages and art, which is not a big deal for you," he said.

I kept silent.

"As I see your application, you wrote, plus two examinations recently. Right?" He asked.

"Yes, sir. I am waiting for the results."

"Apply for the entrance course of CA now. The student who

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passed or appeared for plus two is eligible to apply for that. The institute is conducting exams on June 22 and 23. There are three papers in all, Mathematics, English, and General Knowledge. We provide you with coaching and guidance."

"I do as you say."

"Well, there is something more to tell you. The student pursuing the CA has to get succeeded in the intermediate and final course.

"Simultaneously, you have to register with any chartered accountant as an article clerk for practical training," the dean, Mr. Raymond, explained.

"What is the tenure of that practical training?"

"Three years," he replied.

"Where shall I go for graduation?" I asked.

"We have a university-affiliated college on this premises. In the next three years, you may successfully come out as a commerce graduate as well as a semi chartered accountant," he advised.

"I want to get training from any reputed firm in the city. Do you know anyone?" I asked him.

"Sure, I will give you some leads. After completing the entrance exam, prepare your resume and meet them personally," Mr. Raymond advised.

"Thank you," said I.

"One more important piece of information. Apart from CA, you can do one more course. You avail that for your graduation. But, your principal CA has to issue a no-objection letter to the institute," he said.

Admission

"I will talk to them about this requirement at the time of interview for training," said I.

"Yes, you should do that. All the best. This summer, we offer this entrance course at a very nominal price of INR2,500, including coaching, guidance, hostel facility, and boarding. Pay the money at reception. Apply for the course with the CA institute right away if you have all the copies of the credentials required."

"Sure, sir, I will check with Simon."

CHAPTER TEN

Revival of Education

On the first day, the dean entered the classroom. One more person followed him meekly. Dean, Mr. Raymond uttered these words at us.

"Our college has designed a concise learning material very brilliantly. It is perfectly apt for your preparation. In such a short period as this, you may keep your reliance on that brief material. You may please contact Simon to get that today itself.

"This is Mr. Azar, your mathematics faculty. He is an expert and a great talent of the college. I advise you to make use of his expertise to clear your exams," thus he concluded his address.

After the maths class, Mr. Mohan, the English faculty, entered the classroom with a pair of quick steps. He strode across further, suddenly stopped on the mid of the raised platform, just in front of the blackboard. He dropped some books on the table from a height to shudder the class as he

Revival of Education

came forward. In a moment, the entire class came to pin-drop silence.

He faked a smile on his face; stared at everyone. He stopped smiling; his face grew grave quickly.

"I am here to make every one of you speak native English. Not just native English, but English of Dutches. Are you with me?"

"Yes, sir," said somebody and echoed by few others.

"I afraid that is not the objective for our written examination" a student from the class stood up and broke open his opinion.

I struggled to repress the laughter from such a discussion between the ambitious faculty and that apathetic student.

"Certainly not, but flawless English communication is useful to your profession," said the English faculty with a broad smile to maintain his bid at the upper hand.

The students kept quiet with the intention not to digress the day's lesson.

"Well, ladies and gentleman. I advise you to look into parts of speech, sentence errors, synonyms, and antonyms. Also, look into past question papers to understand the pattern of the examination. Your learning material consists of the past question papers as well," said he.

"How English is useful for the profession?" asked a student.

"Well, the businesses across the globe have to communicate in some common language. English as a universal language helps the business community to

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overcome the difficulty of global communication," he replied.

"Till date, I pursued my education in vernacular language. Could you please tell me some tips to overcome my problem?" a student revealed his problem.

"Dear students, don't worry about your background. Just pour in your eyes and ears whatever the English words you come across; learn the meaning of those words - at least five new words a day. Commit yourself to learn. After a few days, you are accustomed to the English language," he clarified.

"What are the other benefits we have from the English language?" Karan asked.

"My dear students, though your examination seems to be simple, never neglect this language. If you master it, it has the power to place you at the helm of the affairs. I hope you understood the seriousness of mastering it."

After the class, I acquainted myself with all the students. Karan is from the neighboring village, but he stays in the hostel. He boarded the same room I stay.

This first session taught us many things about the course, its prospects, about the college and dean. I also understood coaching is for mathematics, and guidance is for other papers.

English and General Knowledge seem to be very simple. There is no necessity to venture into great efforts for these papers. My only worry is Mathematics. My logic doesn't work here. The students need to solve simple problems of maths. That simplicity is of great complexity to me. I don't even know the mere simple algebraic formula.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The first step is difficult, always: Preparation

Half the class is boarders. On the first day, after the classroom sessions, the students retired to study rooms at the hostel by 10.00 am. The onus is on me to equip myself to appear for the examination starting from June 22. I did not understand anything about mathematics in the classroom. The faculty advised the class to put forth their doubts without hesitation. At least, if I know something, I can get some doubts. When I know nothing, it is absurd to say that blatantly before the entire class.

The choices struck before my mind are, learn maths or leave this pursuit. As simple as that.

I came out from the hostel and stepped inside a public telephone office. I called papa and discussed my predicament honestly.

"I just came out from the classroom. I can't understand anything about maths. I don't know what to do now" I related my anguish to papa.

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"Don't worry. Seek guidance from your seniors and faculty. I am ready to pay the tuition fee if you take any extra classes. Never give up your goal," advised papa.

"I am under great frustration. I can't understand what you are saying," said I.

"Believe in the higher power. You can do it. Don't retreat from the war field hastily. I am there to support you," he encouraged.

"I will call you back later," said I and cradled the telephone.

The term 'higher power' from his tongue gave me some strength. I went to a lonely place in the vicinity, sat there silently under the shade of a tree on that soaring summer day. I could see around an infinite void as in my mind. After a few minutes of silence in that stillness, I gained some strength.

I chose to learn maths. Then, I have two more options: taking private classes with the faculty or taking assistance from the co-students. I selected option two.

Some senior students in the hostel are appearing for the next level examinations of this course. Mathematics is common for us.



I sat numbly on a bench in the study room, not knowing what to do. A senior in there is staring at me. I smiled at him as a gesture of greeting. I am lucky that he returned my smile warmly.

"What is your name?" he asked.

The first step is difficult, always: Preparation

"Robin," I responded.

"This is Abhinav from Hyderabad. Module one is my target this June."

"Nice meeting you. All the best for your exams," said I.

In less than 15 minutes, I briefed my personal story to him. I do not want to waste much of his valuable time. I related my predicament in maths to him honestly.

"The students are rushing for a future here. This course needs focused preparation regularly. But, students miss that. The honest self-appraisal is a strength rather than a weakness," he said.

"What is the focused preparation you are referring to?" I asked him.

"Compliance to the perfect blueprint of a study schedule you devise," Abhinav explained.

"A blueprint is useless for a person poor in basic maths. I cannot pursue the course anymore," I unloaded my frustration.

"What is your problem? You only need to learn basic level maths. I am confident that you can get through the maths by guidance," Abhinav encouraged.

He grabbed the maths book held by me. He showed me a list of algebraic formulas and expressions at the end.

"Get rough notebooks in bulk quantity from the market. Write down each formula at least five times. Byheart them. You have to do it on your free will."

"Sure, I will learn the formulas with passion. Will that do for exams?" I asked.

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While we are talking, another senior walked towards us.

"Robin, meet Pranav. He is a maths graduate and a very bright one," said Abhinav.

Abhinav briefed my condition in maths to Pranav. He came forward to teach me maths.

"Algebra is core for your maths syllabus. Using that number game, we can find one or more unknown values. Costing, financial management, and accountancy are all about finding missing prices, values, or quantities. So, basic maths is crucial for you.

"Follow my instructions. Within a week, you will be able to grasp the maths in the classroom," Pranav assured me.

"I am comfortable with the other two papers. I spend an hour or two on them. The rest of the time, I allocate to maths," said I.

"I will explain all that is necessary for the next two days. After that, you practice solving problems. Come to me only on your final failed attempt of solving them," said Pranav.

"That is a perfect proposition, which saves your time as well as inculcates a great habit of making a lasting effort in me," said I.

They both filled me with an air of optimism in me. I practiced several formulas before lunchtime that day. On that first day, we had lunch when the sun is at its zenith. In the mid-day of that hot summer, the boarders succumb to slumbers one by one. Half of the walls and the entire roof above us are bleaching under that brilliant sunlight. Rooms are humid, and we all are perspiring in a sweat. I don't have a

The first step is difficult, always: Preparation

moment to lose. Only Pranav and I are exerting.

I am disturbing him to clarify my doubts always. He showed so much interest and patience to explain them to me.

I could be able to solve five problems in the arithmetic progression that day. I presented them before him with lots of joy.

"The solutions you arrived at are correct. However, it would be best if you can accustom to express the solution step by step. You practice expressing the answer as if you are presenting before an examiner in your examination," he said.

"Thank you. I will try to improve my presentation," said I.

I called papa in the evening and reported about this new development.

"My dear, I know you can do it. See how terrible it is to retreat from a pursuit? Have you understood now? Failure is nothing but backout from the stride of the final step of success. I wish you all the best," said he.

"Thank you," said I.

I toiled myself till late at night every day. In a week, I could learn in advance for the next class with the course material's help. So I can understand the maths lessons in the classroom itself now. I begin raising doubts before the entire class. I patted on my back. I can see God everywhere and in the people around me now. I understood that an extra step of hard work could take you to new heights.

Next week, Pranav and I are in preparation. Before going to bed in the afternoon, Karan came to me, "the struggle you are undergoing is unusual. How can you make such a

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strenuous effort in this hot summer?" he asked.

"Passing this exam is a necessity to me," I replied.

"the necessity is the mother of inventions, good luck," he said and went to bed.

Pranav came near me and said, "Karan is a brilliant student. The dean expected a state level rank to him. However, his overconfidence and underbred pride spoiled him from achieving that great height."

"I, too, observed him. He can easily get through these exams," said I.

"Robin, I observed a tremendous improvement in you. All this is possible only because of your grit. Keep it up and all the best," he said.

"My grit is savagery without your teaching. The knowledge you shared is the foundation for my new life. I am indebted for your invaluable service," said I.

"I observed an innate desire in you to learn," he said.

My new friends can't understand the reason for my raptures. Passing this entrance exam is normal to them. But, for me, it is a significant hurdle.



"Karan, I have only fifteen days to prepare for the mathematics exam. I am fit to fetch only 40 marks now, that is enough to pass the paper. In the next few days, I can prepare for ten more marks to cross the aggregate," said I in an enthusiastic tone.

"Try for a mark each day from now onwards to get 55 marks in the exam," he laughed.

The first step is difficult, always: Preparation

I got his math. "Yes, I have to prepare thoroughly for three to five topics of five marks each," said I.

I analyzed the past question papers. Students are calling it scanning the past trend.

After a week, Pranav set his foot near me to assess my progress. He examined my fair and rough notes. He can't distinguish the contrast between the two, except for the paper's quality.

"Wow! Amazing! You did an outstanding job. These notes reveal the level of effort you exerted. For a beginner like you have to solve a problem five times. Out of that five, two consecutively and the other three separately at different times," he said.

I listened to him silently.

"Solve the problems the same as authoring a book that explains the theme to a simple student," he said.

"Why we need to explain somebody," I asked.

"If you keep some audience in your mind, you will try to give clarity to the problem you solve. While solving the problems, think as if you are composing this note on behalf of this college. Assume students have to benefit from your notes," said he.

"My notes are always self-explanatory. Unknowingly, I am on the same path you suggested," said I.

"Where are you now?" he asked.

"I covered twelve topics. Out of them, I am confident in solving at least ten topics correctly. Hence, I may secure 50 marks confidently," I replied.

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"Your presentation in the notes is too detailed. It may suck your time in the exam hall," he warned.

"Simultaneously, I am refining my presentation skills as if I present before an examiner," said I.

"Yes, as you are a non-maths student, this is an additional effort for you. Remember, each step has a mark - five steps - five marks," he advised.

I thanked him.

CHAPTER TWELVE

End of the session

At the verge of the mathematics course, the dean, Mr. Raymond, entered into the classroom. He granted leave to continue the lesson by nodding his head while the maths faculty is looking at him. Mr. Raymond bobbed his hands, signaling the students to remain to be seated. He walked on to the aisle till the third row and took a seat beside me.

After a few minutes of class, we all clapped on the maths faculty's announcement of its completion. Mr. Raymond raised from his seat and strolled on to the dais. He turned to us and looked around the class as if he owned every student. That dais transformed into a pulpit of preachings.

"We, the experienced teachers, pave the way for the naive aspirants to have a fair chance of success. That pavement is called a level playing field-"

"In which context you refer to level playing field to us?" I asked.

"In the finance profession, you have to compete with

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practically experienced students. Our coaching enriches you with skills and knowledge to face the competition," Mr. Raymond said.

"Is this a competitive exam, sir?" I asked

"No, but the institute always limits the results to a certain percent," he replied.

"Is it lawful to do so, sir?" I asked.

"Let's not go into the matters of the Council. Learning and teaching are critical steps in any academic pursuit. Your learning phase for this course is over, and you have to teach now. A right focus on teaching endows you with success," the dean said in a boastful tone.

"What do you mean by learning and teaching?" I chased him.

"See, your mind is a cluster of information. Your learning depends on the foundation of the database you possess. The right kind of knowledge requires unlearning many things you own in your database. If you have the wrong data, that inhibits your learning progress. You should learn things with a motive to teach and share your knowledge with others," he replied.

"What do we have to teach?" I pursued him further.

"If your objective is merely learning, you may tend to forget the thing you learned. Hence, you should learn with an objective to teach. You have to present to the examiner what you have learned. A student shall always present a convincing solution to the examiner. Examiner knows your knowledge and skill only through the paper you presented,"

End of the session

he explained.

He glanced at me for a moment to gaze at my satisfaction levels with his explanation. He found I am convinced.

"Dear students, listening to the experiences of a teacher saves considerable time learning them personally. Paying attention to my message places you directly on the path of success. Can you engage yourself for this victory session?" he alerted the students.

All the students competed to say 'Yes.'

"Then listen carefully! Step inside the examination hall at least fifteen minutes before your exam schedule. Relax your mind and body for a while. Get the answer sheets, and read all the instructions carefully. Your foremost duty is to quote your Roll Number on the answer sheet before you pen anything.

"You may get a copy of the typical instructions from the office to save your valuable time reading them in the exam hall.

"The moment you take the question paper, look at the choices you have. Chose the easy and short solutions to solve, to ensure accuracy. If you are confident of solving all problems, solve them sequentially. Otherwise, sort and allocate time to short answers to the largest answer of equal marks. Read the selected problems carefully, identify the twists that you have to unravel.

"Start with the best-known answer to win the good opinion of the examiner. Divide practical responses into Solution, Working notes, and Assumptions. At your entrance level

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exam, you may dispense with this tedious requirement.

"We provide a series of three test papers for each exam and a brief key. Answer them as if you are faring the examination. Be honest and be attentive.

"Understand the issue of the question correctly - whether to define or solve or illustrate. Give your reply accordingly. For example, when you solve a problem, never jump to a conclusion on the first line. Start with a definition. Then solve the problem step by step. Finally, give your decision. The principle is the same for maths or even theory.

"In professional examinations as this, you are never expected to give a detailed explanation. You have to answer to the point always. If you deviate from this rule, the examiner may lose patience to delve into the devious solution that lies somewhere in the depths of the content you present.

"'Brevity is the soul of wit.' William Shakespeare coined this adage in his play Hamlet. So, practice brevity. It helps to explain the short answers.

"Each line of your solution carries some marks. So, never-give-up, even if you are facing the most challenging issue. Always attempt to solve the problem.

"You should be energetic during the exam than during the coaching or preparation.

"My final advice - attempt! Attempt! Attempt! Never give up! Never exit the exam hall even a minute before the toll of the last bell.

"Withdraw yourself from debating on the exams you wrote with the faculty or with your peers. Keep that silence till the

End of the session

last exam. You may think your answers are flawless. Of course, you are under tremendous pressure of preparation and writing examinations. Errors may creep in your answers somehow. Engaging in premature reviews only disappoints you. Discussions excavate your mistakes. That may dilute your focus on further exams.

"I have one more important piece of advice to share with you. Read everything with a lot of concentration, interest, and confidence. Leave the tension of its recollection to your subconscious mind. Your subconscious mind does wonders for you. Believe me and believe your subconscious mind." Our well-attended business thus concluded.

"Mr. Raymond commands the class," said a student.

"No, he commands our hearts and minds," said another student.

"He commands our destiny," said yet another student.

The day's post delivered my admit-card. I saw my name on it several times. What a change; where was Robin a month ago, and where is Robin now. A rising student of the great profession.

My daily schedule occupies less than an hour and a half on English and General Knowledge. I allocated the rest of the time to Mathematics. For the first time, I understood the logic of education. I sensed the logic of the exam. I clasped the syllabus firmly in my hands. Due to my hard work and external guidance, I am not in its grips anymore. My diligence and instinctive courage rewarded me. I am on the upper hand now. For the first time, I harnessed my energies

into useful employment.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Exams

I stood before the gate of the exam center an hour before the scheduled time. I got into the premises, sat behind a tree, and opened the maths notebook. I cannot run through it for more than five minutes. The center is boisterous and exuberant, with most of the students I am acquainted with. I folded the book in my hand to join in their noise. We guessed the topics of the exam.

"I am expecting two problems from Surds," said a student.

"Of course, at least three from Arithmetic Progression and Geometric Progression," said another.

"The test series of our college is the prototype of today's question paper," said a loyal student.

A few minutes of such a discussion with the peers relieved me from the incredible stress I passed through.

"Hi, Robin, you seem a bit anxious," asserted Karan.

"Hi, Karan, I am alright - physically energetic and mentally sound," I replied.

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"The names Karan Reddy and Robin are from the same alphabet. So, we are next to each other in the Hall. You may prod me whenever you need my assistance," he said.

"I stored my hard work in my agile mind to access it on demand. It can grasp any twist now. I am eager to dump my learning on the answer sheets—waiting to perform, as a boxer in the ring to box his opponent," said I.

I identified my exam Hall. Reddy is right; the seating plan set us next to each other. I relaxed and balanced my physical and mental energies. I walked forward to the examination hall by holding the admit-card in my hand.

Have I not written exams previously? Of course, I wrote for my parents, teachers, and society. For the first time, I am writing to survive and live a decent life on my own.

I entered the Hall, presented my admit-card before the exam supervisor, and about to move forward to search my seat.

"Please, take your answer sheet," exam overseer drew my attention to the answer sheet in his hand.

"Thank you very much," I said and got the answer sheet.

I searched and took a seat on the desk with my roll number. Read all the instructions. I wrote my roll number on the answer sheet at the place provided for it. The invigilators distributed the question paper on time. I am ecstatic to see the paper that I can fare as I expected. I can fetch a minimum of 70 marks from this paper.

Karan at next to me indicated a thumbs-up gesture as a sign of approving the paper. I, too, returned it carefully

Exams

without the notice of the exam bosses.

I realized that only hard work could pay. I know the mantra of success now - hard work in the right direction!

I exit the Hall after the toll of the last bell. I am reluctant to venture into discussions. I went straight to a hotel in front of the examination center's gate and had some snacks for the afternoon meal. There are two more papers to fare, one in the afternoon and the other in the next morning. I remember the mantra of Mr. Raymond - no discussion. That policy lingered me on an optimistic note till the completion of all my exams.

At this level, I know only to work hard without much planning. I prioritized maths over English and General Knowledge papers unconsciously.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Next Step

My desire and my need impelled me towards my goal. For a regular student, the entry or successful exit from graduation is not a big deal. My acquaintances paint me irregular, dull, and casual at studies. But, I never trace my growth from the feelings reflected on their faces. I relied more on my efforts. My progress reports approved my spirit. After I enter into graduation, the milieu at hometown cannot influence me anymore with their feelings. I remember Napoleon Hills' famous adage, "success requires no explanations failure permits no alibis." I know that I am going to win my last exam.

A 'pass' in the twelfth-grade is the criteria to join a regular graduation course in commerce. The twelfth-grade can be any discipline. I possess that print of 'pass' now. Of course, that 'pass' is against the hopes of my acquaintance.

After summer vacation, I reached college to take admission. That tiny office room thronged with the students

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for new entries. The administration hosted a new desk in the classroom next to the office to tackle the crowd. I hold on outside that small office for a few moments. On a short respite from that rush, I took a seat before Simon.

"Hi, Simon, how are you?" I asked.

"Thank you, Robin. I am fine. You?"

"Thanks, I am fine. I seek admission into the integrated course that our college offers," said I.

"You may join the graduation course now. Start attending the classes for CA as well. But, the registration with the CA institute can take place only on qualifying the entrance exam," he told me.

"I know this rule. The integrated course saves me rather a lot of time. Please go ahead with your scheme of training," I replied.

"It is a matter of a few months delay," he assured.

He drew an application from the table and handed me.

"Fill in this application, and jot the list of originals you are submitting with us."

"Sure, I will do that," said I.

My graduation classes commenced the next day. The dean, Mr. Raymond himself, is the faculty for accountancy. I am excited to listen to his lectures.



In the month of my joining the college, time passed swiftly with new colorful faces. The stir of the youth turned that space more active and lively.

I stepped out of the college on closing hours. I saw Amar,

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my senior, waved to me from the shade under a large tree alongside the road. I reached him with a smile on my face.

"Hi, Robin! We need a treat," he said.

"What is the matter?" I smiled.

By that time, a few more students joined us.

"You conquered the CA entrance exam with a good score," he broke the great news before that crowd.

"Oh, Amar! Very kind of you. Thank you very much for your interest in me!" I squeezed him with a great hug.

"Who else got through?" I inquired.

"Whoever you know," he replied.

"I am delighted," said I.

"Let me honor my success," said Karan, who is listening to us.

"Please allow me to share your honor," said I.

"By all means," said Karan.

We broke our company for the time being.



At 7.30 in the evening, twelve of the boarders met for dinner at the Golden Pavilion restaurant. The result set the others just a step forward on the plain terrain. But it fixed me on the ladder of success and gave me a fresh life. We took a corner seat with a road view before a huge table at the open terrace. That evening, we relaxed from the routine.

A polite steward appeared before us, handed us a menu.

"Give us a few minutes to make a choice," said Amar.

"Sure," he said and left from our sight.

"Dear friends, let us order cheese balls, paneer tikka, fried

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chili chicken, chicken kebabs, and sweet corn soup," said Amar.

The team-leader got unanimous approval from the school of upcoming specialists. So, he echoed the order before that polite steward.

"Cheese balls may take a longer time. If you permit, I will replace that item with Aloo-Tikki," said that steward with an inclined head.

The team-leader glanced at us for a passive accord and agreed to the steward.

The steward noted the order on a pad and disappeared from that limits.

The restaurant crew set a waiter ready to preside at our table. He at once served a cold salad of onions, vegetables, and lemon slices. He laid a two-piece cruet set for salt and white pepper above the table.

"Have we ordered for the salad?" I inquired the waiter.

"We serve this dish to our guests as a compliment, sir," he replied politely.

"Thank you," said I.

The waiter's label 'sir' thrilled me. The restaurant crew does that courteous service for a reward. All of us get fascinated by that illusionary title, 'sir.' A frequent visit to such restaurants quench our appetite for respect. I start passing some orders on him. He obeyed them with full of reverence. This domain of spurious care is ready for sale in the hospitality trade. Many wish to dwell on it for honor, and that crew thrives on it.

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"What are the top two essentials of a valid contract?" asked Amar suddenly.

On that inquiry, I came out from the deep reflections about respect and said, "offer and acceptance."

"Is that menu an offer?" asked our team leader.

Amar commands the team. He is very enthusiastic and listens to the problems of boarders. At times, he escorts the sick students to the hospital as well. So, I titled him as our team leader. He always coaxes the students according to their interests.

"Yes, it is an offer," said Karan

The rest of us remained silent.

"If it is an offer, he cannot disagree with our unconditional order," said Amar.

"What that menu is, then?" asked Karan.

"Menu is only 'an invitation to offer," Amar said. "Indeed, our order is an offer. On its acceptance by the restaurant, it is a binding contract."

"Is it a binding contract? Enforceable at law!" asked Karan.

"Restaurant deals are not social contracts. Hence enforceable at law. But a petty matter in India to knock the doors of a court," said Amar.

The waiter tabled our order. I noticed slices of egg, carrot, and tomato on some dishes.

"What service those toppings do to your customers?" I asked.

"Sir, we garnish your dish with fruits and vegetables to delight you," he replied politely.

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"Serve them evenly to all of us," Amar ordered him.

"Please, serve me only vegetable dishes," said I.

He served the order. We all had soup, then starters. Finally, we had our dinner and paid the bill.

"On payment of the bill, the contract is 'a concluded contract,'" explained Amar.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Enrollment

I enrolled myself in the CA course. My passion for the finance profession is similar to *a wild romantic affair*. I often lost my locus. I ignored the eyes around me. It is very challenging to trace myself in the depths of the syllabus. It is easy to get into this profession but hard to get out of it successfully.

I am the co-boarder of the graduation college principal, Mr. Alberto. "What is your life ambition?" he asked me.

"A successful CA," I replied.

"How do you plan for that?" he asked.

"By study and practical exposure to the business environment," I replied.

"What life do you wish to lead?" he inquired.

"I do not have any specific plan for that. My CA journey takes care of my lifestyle, as well. A successful professional need not plan separately for his wishes. The environment takes care of that," I replied.

"If you do not plan for a joyful life, what you do with your

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success in the profession?" he asked.

"Success chase us upon the best efforts in the profession. That success gifts us with a house, car, and other luxuries. If I concentrate on luxuries, neither I succeed in the job nor can buy them," said I.

"I proud of you, my boy," he said and clapped without any audience.

Mr. Alberto always guided me throughout my college years closely. His contribution to my effort is priceless.



The yearly event of the graduation exams relieved me of the burden of regular attention to it. After my CA classes, I stepped into the graduation classroom. Karan also followed me. We reached there half an hour early than the scheduled time.

"Do we need to focus on graduation studies regularly?" asked Karan.

"CA studies are at the professional level. The strength of such professional insights rewards us with the knowledge that is sufficient to manage graduation of a similar stream," said I.

"Yes, a CA student needs no special efforts on commerce graduation except writing exams," he said.

"Of course, allocation of a day or two for each exam is necessary to score good marks," I added.

"Yes, we are pouring all these lectures into our ears. A shorter preparation may be helpful to fare the exams well," said Karan.

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"A keen attention to the classes pays us suitable reward in the times of distress. Sub-conscious mind helps us to recollect our classroom listening in that tranquil exam hall," I added.

"Are you expecting twists in the graduation exams?" Karan inquired.

"Maybe, I am not sure. But as an upcoming professional, we can handle any twist," I said emphatically.

"I, too, agree with you. After a few months, our graduation faculty can't satisfy us with their inadequate explanations," Karan boasted our efforts.

"If you take my case, I am not a commerce student in the twelfth grade. Hence, I need a special focus on classes," said I.

"The need and burning passion you have for the profession drive you to excellence. I traced those qualities in you. In my view, a lacking of commerce knowledge in you in twelfth grade cannot inhibit your success," he assured.

"The need and desire cannot pay any returns if those two nouns remain a speculative hypothesis without our practical efforts," said I.

"I mean, those two terms impels you to invent the ways and means for our success. Am I right?" asked Karan.

"Of course, need and desire are motivational factors that drive us constantly towards our goals," I agreed.

Our noble peers blabbering outside suddenly rushed into the class. The English faculty, Mr. Mohan, followed them. We wound up our discourse for now.

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The next day, on completion of mathematics class, the dean, Mr. Raymond, entered into the CA classroom with a handbill and a bulky volume of 'Advanced Accountancy.' I feared to look at that epic volume. I lost my confidence for a moment.

He placed them on the table and looked at us.

"I am going to tell you some essential tips for you to prepare for examinations. Listen to them attentively and note them down. Your syllabus is enormous, and the time available for the preparation is less than five months from now. So, you have to follow me in the class very attentively-"

"Can we use a calculator for exams?" raised a doubt by one of our associates.

"Yes, keep a simple functioning calculator with you during my class, and you may use that in the examination hall as well. I try to involve you in my class. The class, I mean the first to the last bench. While solving a problem, I repeat every line at least once. So, you may record properly in the notes and memorize, but you may prompt me to repeat further if you can't hear or can't understand.

"I endeavor to maintain the order of difficulty in solving the problems. That means the most comfortable issues first and the toughest last in every topic.

"I cover each model problem comprehensively in every topic. That means the chances of facing a new question in the examination is minimal. This approach saves a good deal of time thinking to solve the problem during the examination. I agree that many of you are geniuses, but tailor-made

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solutions help you save time.

"While you prepare for exams, open three fresh pages to solve a problem, whether costing or accountancy. Begin the first page with the solution, the second page with assumptions, and the third page with working notes. We may always have to begin with the third page, which is working notes. But the order is the solution, assumptions, and working notes.

"Read the problem once, from top left to the bottom right. Begin to answer after opening those three pages. Start rereading the problem, dump the figures wherever they are required as you read. Never cross or omit a figure placing it either in the solution or working notes. Pick the figures from working notes to the solutions page on completion of each note.

"I solve every given problem on the board from our institute's handout. Practice the solutions along with me. Catch up with my speed. After you reach your home or your lodging, practice it. Practice it till it becomes your hobby.

"Such practice shall be the foundation not only for your exams but also for your profession or service. So, to make it a hobby, I suggest you attempt each model problem a minimum of five times. The theory also, you have to read a minimum of five times. While preparing for theory, remember all the important definitions. When you find the time, read '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' by Stephen R Covey. This book may be useful to plan your preparation and to make the profession your hobby.

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"Purchase a good quantity of rough notebooks. They are available at wholesale prices if you purchase in bulk quantity from the market.

"These two and a half years - focus on coaching, preparation, good food, and sound rest. If time permits, dedicate some time for physical activity. You can socialize with the earnest students pursuing this course.

"Now, let us look into the accountancy. What are the activities involved in accounting? Accounting is a process. It includes classifying, recording, summarizing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting the results of a business or financial transactions."

His skill and knowledge enthralled me. I am an ardent follower of him. My core skills and insights into this professional education is improving day by day.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

My trip to Chennai

The institute declared a holiday on Saturday on the eve of local elections where I cannot franchise my vote. I thought of utilizing that holiday effectively for advancement in my studies. I shared my intention with my co-lodgers in the following manner.

"I am going to Chennai tomorrow to purchase the CA institute's past examination solved papers," I informed this piece of information to our college principal, Mr. Alberto.

"Why don't you try them at our local chapter?" he suggested.

"Local chapter never maintain the stocks of these books, except study material," I replied.

"Replicate your purchase for me," said Karan.

Some other peers slipped their list and money into my pocket that evening.

The next morning, I boarded on Pinakini Express. The train is pacing on time. By noon, it reached Chennai. The

My trip to Chennai

Central station is full of the hustle and bustle with up-down trains, passengers, vendors, and porters. I alighted there and arrived at Egmore by a local train.

I picked up my lightweight half-empty backpack and moved out of the station. I slowly walked on to the nearby Hotel Sudha Inn. This hotel is famous for South Indian tiffin and meal.

"May I get the single occupancy" I inquired at the reception.

"How long are you planning to stay here?" asked the clerk.

"Till the afternoon tomorrow," I replied.

"Our timing is twelve-noon checkout, without the settlement of any extra charge. Now the time is one-thirty. If you vacate about noon tomorrow, we charge for a day. Is that ok with you?" he asked.

"It's alright. That suits me well. I have to catch the train at 3-30 pm tomorrow," I answered.

"You are a special guest. The hotel doesn't charge any extra payment for a late checkout," he smiled.

I occupied the room and refreshed myself on a hot shower. The place looks decent and spacious, but a bit aged. The veneer of rosewood clad on the furniture faded away over its prolonged use. My hunger drove me to the restaurant in the basement with alacrity.

There is no special commissionaire at the entrance of that hotel. But, every staff is an ambassador there. An older person standing at the bill counter greeted me at the entrance. I returned his greetings.

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There are no separate stewards there. A waiter came to me, "Good afternoon, sir. Kindly go through our specials by this menu," he suggested.

"No, thank you. Get me South-Indian thali. Please make it quick," I commanded.

"It is ready, sir. Do you want special or ordinary?" he asked.

"What is there in the special?" I inquired.

"Extra sweet and extra chappati, sir," he answered.

"Please get me an ordinary meal. Your expedite service is highly deserving," I hastened the waiter.

"Just a moment," he said.

The waiter disappeared quickly and appeared with a plate full of bowls containing curries, cooked lentils, spicy chutney, and rice. He placed a bucketful of sambar and another bucketful of Rasam on the dining table.

After I adjusted the bowls on the table, he attempted to pour sambar into my plate. I resisted his attempt. My culture taught me the sequence of chutney, lentils, curry, sambar, and yogurt.

"Hi, are you from Andhra?" a guest sitting opposite me inquired.

"Hi, yes. I came from Amaravati," I replied.

"Do you have some work here?" he persisted his inquiries.

"Yes, I have some work at the institute," I replied briefly.

"I am a native of Amaravati. Is it the first time you are coming to Chennai?" he carried on with his misgivings.

"I planned to stay here till the next day afternoon to enjoy

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the world-famous South Indian cuisine. I visited Chennai previously many times," I replied politely.

"I am local now. But I visit this restaurant frequently. This traditional Chennai restaurant does not sell the food to its customers but serves them the food as its guests," he believed.

The natural taste and savor of the food are impeccable. The curtsy of the waiters and the friendly attitude of the people around encourage more guests. That delicious meal gave me new strength. I finished my lunch and took leave from that guest from Amaravati.

At the gate, the hired auto-rickshaw took me to the CA institute's Regional office.

"Please give me the books according to this list," I asked at the institute's store counter.

The cashier handed my list to the storekeeper. The storekeeper recorded the items on the bill book, handed over the books, and the bill book to the cashier. The cashier delivered books to me and collected cash by issuing a cash bill.

As there is no queue under waiting, "where do you update the sale quantity?" I asked the cashier curiously.

"I pass the cash entries in books of account. Storekeeper updates the stores' ledger," he replied.

"When do you pass the entries?" I haunted him.

"This counter closes by 5 pm every day. We update them after those business hours," he responded.

"Thank you very much," said I.

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The repertoire consists of all the solved papers of various years that are available at the counter. I Quickly reached the hotel and packed them in the bag.

Albert Cinema in the vicinity is playing the English movie 'Terminator 2: Judgment Day.' I purchased a ticket for the four-thirty pm show and watched it. The spectators of the film are laughing, booing, applauding every dialogue a character delivers. I cannot understand where I am. English is not the native language of Tamil Nadu. But, I do not know how they are reacting actively to a non-native language.

After the movie, I went to Parrys for shopping. The location of Parrys is near Chennai Central Railway station. Burma Bazar in that location is famous for the grey market electronic goods, luggage bags, and perfumes. I purchased a Japanese walkman and an additional set of earphones.

I reached the hotel again, packed the things shopped into the backpack. Locked the room, came down through the stairs, and entered the same restaurant. I exchanged smiles with the waiters and ambassadors of the hotel. There is a feeling of the nativity in that place just after a second visit. This time I ordered a few tiffins. First, Idly and Vada in combination with mouth-watering spicy chutneys and sambar. Then I ordered Pongal, then Dosa. The taste of these items get enhances with sambar. The local custom sets the spoon and fork aside on the table while having the tabled items. The cliché 'be a Roman while in Rome' adds value to your food in Chennai. So, I mashed the Dosa with Sambar and milked that extract with my bare right hand. What a

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delightful dish! I loved and relished it. The hall at that restaurant is aromatic. The source of that sweet-smell is suspense. Is it from the food dining by the diners or from the kitchen beside or artificial? It works as an appetizer.

I paid the bill to conclude the contract, paid a tip, bid farewell to everyone, came out from the restaurant, and reached the lodge's reception.

I took a seat beside the manager. "Does it require any booking for my next visit?"

"My name is Ronald, Manager of this lodge. It is always better to reserve a date with us. We cannot assure the walk-ins always," he advised.

"Please give me your contact details and tariff card," I asked.

"Please, here it is. You may call me between 12 pm till 10 pm on any day," he advised.

"Sure," said I.

"How do you feel our hospitality?" he inquired.

"Quiet natural. I am feeling very homely at this place," I responded.

"Thank you," he said and gave me a candy.

"I am from Coimbatore. On my visit to Chennai, I take shelter only at this hotel for the last twenty years," said the guest listening to our discussion.

I smiled at him, "What is the staple business item of the Coimbatore economy?" I inquired.

"The city is the hub for cotton and textiles. I am in that trade," he replied.

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I spent an hour there, took leave from them, and reached the room to take that night's rest.



I woke up early in the morning and finished my ablutions peacefully. My thirst for a walking tour of the city pushed me to the streets for a morning walk. The traffic droned up and down the roads with a roaring noise. I saw the Hotel Saravana Bhavan, Opposite the Egmore Railway station. I walked into the restaurant and looked for that day's special. The board displayed 'Upma Pesarattu' with chutney, Sambar, and Rasam as the day's special snack.

I sat at two seater-table in the center row.

"May I take your order, sir?" a waiter inquired me politely.

"Please get me the day's special, Upma Pesarattu," I responded.

The waiter took my order and moved on.

"Upma Pesarattu, table 27," I heard repeating my order at the kitchen.

Waiter himself carries the customer's order to the kitchen. The kitchen makes it and delivers it to the waiter for service. Once the guest finished dining, the waiter hands the bill to the customer. The customer pays cash at the bill-cum-cash counter. The waiter escorts his customer politely to the cash counter. So, the chances of unpaid bills are rare.

The waiter served me the dish. I came out of the reflections.

There is a special flavor in Sambar that is unique to this hotel. The savory of the dishes is palatable but spicy with

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added green chili and ginger flakes. The dining hall exhibits a lot of lip-smacking. Perhaps, the kick of the taste made the guests mad, so the occupants forgot the civility. But it is fine. I recollected the cliché again, 'be a Roman while in Rome.' I got involved in the crowd with no difficulty.

I reached the hotel-room at 9.30 am and unpacked the books, and tried to go through some of them. By noon, I tired quickly from the anxiety for the journey.

I called room service, "Is lunch ready?" I inquired.

"Yes, sir," replied an unknown attendant.

"Please get me Bisibelebath and Thayir Sadam at my room," I ordered.

"Sure, sir," replied that unknown male voice.

"How long will it take to serve the order?" I asked.

"Not more than ten minutes," he replied.

Within a quarter-hour, I heard the doorbell.

"Please come in," said I.

The door got opened slightly, "may I come in, sir," a voice asked my permission.

"Please come in," I repeated, and thought that I am receiving too much false courtesy - an English system rooted in India but uprooted that custom in the native English land.

A teenager in the uniform with a drooped head saw me and smiled from that slightly opened door. He swiftly walked into the room. That boy arranged my lunch on a table.

He handed me a bill, "could you please sign on this note?" he pleaded.

"Yes. Take it," I gave that boy the signed copy. "I wish to

Epitome of Success

vacate the room after lunch. Please inform your office to prepare the bill and settle that against my advance," I told him.

"Alright, sir," he said and bobbed a curtsy at me.

The train may reach Amaravathi by 10.30 pm. So, I may not get anything till the next morning. So, I ate the food to the last grain.

The same attendant came to assist me while I am vacating the room.

"Sir, please wait," he said from a distance and ran towards me.

He took charge of the vacated room and locked it. He grasped my luggage and escorted me to the reception.

"Thank you," I said to the attendant and slid a tip into his hands furtively.

The hotel settled the advance, handed over me the original bill and balance cash. I slowly walked on to the Poonamallee High Road flyover at Egmore and boarded a bus to reach the Central Railway station. On entering the bus terminal next to the Railway station, I saw a massive used books sale in good condition. I stepped into it—a wide range of novels, dictionaries, self-help books, and other genres are available.

"Could you please, guide me to the dictionaries?" I asked a keeper of the books there.

"Please look at that third row," he suggested.

I saw a good range of dictionaries from Oxford, Collins, Cambridge, and so on. But, I picked the North American English, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

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"What is the price of this dictionary?" I asked.

"The market price of this dictionary is INR350," he said.

"What is this stamp on this dictionary?" I asked.

"Nibras Leather Company sold us this dictionary in good condition yesterday. We paid them INR140. We expect fifty percent of the market price. How much do you offer?"

I negotiated and bagged that book for INR150.

There is a good range of fiction in the adjoining store. In the next five minutes, I picked up books like Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead*, Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*, Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Dale Carnegie's *The Quick & Easy Way to Effective Speaking*. Without any good reason, these books made me mad. I ventured into a panic buying. Indeed, there is no time to read them. I moved a little ahead and picked-up Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and *David Copperfield*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, and Homer's *The Odyssey*. I also got Linda Goodman's *Sun Signs*. I purchased a bag also to accommodate a safe carriage of these books.

I reached Amaravathi at the scheduled time and set the books on display before my roommates. They lauded me for the titles I purchased. Some of them start reading them—Amar and Karan jumped on Linda's *Sun Signs*. But I read only *Think and Grow Rich*, *The Quick & Easy Way to Effective Speaking*, and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. I thought they are relevant to my profession.

I used to keep that large volume of the dictionary always

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next to me. Friends commented on my extra diligence and fetish quality for searching the meanings. They suggested assuming I am an enlightened professional who requires no dictionaries.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Examinations

Amaravathi: April 2014:

"Hi Robin, how is your preparation for exams?" Karan asked me.

"I am adjusting my thoughts to paint them on the exam paper," I replied.

"You are a bit poetic, nowadays," he complimented me.

"Yes, we are going to write an English - a literature paper tomorrow. Let us not waste our time on discussion, now," I advised.

"Just relaxing," he laughed teasingly.

I, too, joined with him in the laughter.

After writing the first exam English paper, I explained the grammar and other solutions to the group. Karan prevented me from discussing the answers until the last day.

"Robin, as suggested by Mr. Raymond, we shall not discuss the answers till the last day of our examinations. Don't you remember that?" he asked.

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"Karan, I know his suggestion. He talked about the professional and competitive exams, where you get the overall result for all the exams you wrote. However, in the case of graduation, each exam carries independent marks," I replied.

"Oh! I got it," he replied.

All the papers are simple and straight, without any twists or turns. Our first-year exams are over.

"Shall we plan for a movie?" our team-leader, Amar, proposed.

Amar wrote all his exams in the morning session. We wrote in the evening session.

"Which movie?" I asked.

"'Double Impact' starred by Van Damme," he replied.

"It is alright with me; check with the others," I suggested.

"They don't know 'ABC' of Hollywood movies. There is no use in consulting them," he explained.

Our team sat for dinner at Palace Heights and quickly finished it to catch the movie timings. We watched the movie and ambled along the road to the hostel at midnight.



May 2014:

I resumed attending classes for CA after the year one graduation exams.

At the close of the session, Mr. Raymond came to deliver tips. He added a few more tips in addition to those I listened to during my entrance exams.

"...Plan the timetable of preparation from today till the

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exam. Identify your weak areas. Focus more on the weak spots in your plan. An honest assessment of yourself is the need of the hour.

“Please do not go beyond our college stuff. The time is minimal. You cannot do experiments by preparing extensively now. The expert faculty of the college designed the material aptly suitable for your exams.

“Test series: We are going to release three papers for each exam. Practice them to accustom yourself to time management.

“Revision: As I suggested, you have to complete the revision at least five times for each paper.

“Examination: Don't leave the hall before the last bell. Use those three hours effectively.

“Prioritise topics according to the marks you can fetch: Prioritization is crucial. Focus more on the practical papers, where you fetch more marks. Within the practical papers, concentrate on easy to solve and time-saving problems. You have to keep the past trend in view while prioritizing your topics.”

Students applauded him for the ease of his style and skills he imbibed into the scholars' minds.

After the day's class, we retired to the hostel study room. I began writing theory on a rough book. I do this at least for half an hour every day before the exam session starts.

"Why are you writing it?" Karan asked me.

"You know I am a right-handed writer-"

"How does it make a difference?" he asked.

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"As our mind possesses divine intelligence and, our body parts possess physical intelligence-"

"Is it!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I fixed my right hand to depict the skill in my agile mind to the examiner, which I can't do it with my left hand, though I know the solution as well as how to write it," said I.

"It means you are true. Parts of the body contain physical intelligence," he agreed.

"So, my well-practiced right hand is proficient at delivering befitting solutions at the examination hall," I replied.

"I don't know all this. You know my speed. I can dump the solutions in just an hour and a half,"

"Yes, some people possess that free flow of mind and body,"

"Then why don't you use a similar trait?" he inquired.

"I resumed my studies recently. The application of both mind and body is crucial for me. So, I am training them intelligently to work in unison to maximize myself," said I.

"I call it as yoga skill," Karan laughed.

I, too, joined him in laughter.



I wrote all the exams reasonably. I am expecting a favorable result, which is not a greedy proposition at least. I abstained from discussing the solutions with the other students till the last exam day.

My examinations are over during the first half of the day. I went directly from the examination center to shop for some books relating to the next module. From there, I reached the

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hostel, vacated it, and boarded the train at 3.00 pm.

I prioritized scoring topics deliberately over non-scoring and difficult ones in this module with the experience of appearing for the entrance exam.

A year ago, I boarded the same train. What a change the education brought into my life. I thought about my fate without this turn by now. As the losses encompassed my planned investment, I would roam as a mad tramp aimlessly. I am thankful to my friends in New Delhi who acquainted me with Mr. Oliver, Chairman of that large PSU. I am also grateful to my parents, Mr. Raymond, Abhinav, Pranav and my critic turned adviser cousin.

I am exceptionally thoughtful during the journey and reached home by 6.00 pm on the same day.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Nothing succeeds like success

At the time of admitting the second year graduation, I also commenced the pursuit of the second module of CA. The classes for the integrated course are on at a speedy pace. All the students are serious in their studies and punctual in attending classes. Despite their earnest efforts, only a few can get through the exams. All the students are hard-working, committed, and dutiful to their education. Where lies the difference between a winner and a loser? Both make mistakes—the Winner attempt to correct himself or herself.

It is August month, the month of the result.

"Hi, Robin, are you hopeful of your result?" asked our principal, Mr. Alberto.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"The students pursuing this course should know the hidden secret of success in passing the exams. One cannot gain the knowledge of that secret at once, like enlightenment under the bo tree. Our persisting efforts may gradually teach

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us that secret," he put forward his thoughts on success.

"What is that secret way?" I asked.

"Your need and desire alone can show you that path. Our dean or I can only give some valuable tips. But, finally, the CA qualification commands performers," he stated.

"How the examiner knows who is a performer and who is not?" I asked.

"Good question. The test reveals this fact. In the last module, you have written four papers from different disciplines. The examiner looks into your accuracy, communication skills, presentation skills, decision-making capability, comprehension, promptness, articulation, and so on. So, your success in the exams reveals all these facts about you," he said.

"If my result is favorable, you mean I gained all these traits, right?" I asked.

"Obviously. Latently in the process of preparation, you gain those traits. I will tell you how. How many times you reviewed before writing your last exam?"

"Five times," I answered.

"That means you sharpened your knowledge to an accurate level. Am I right?"

I said, "yes."

"While writing your test series papers, have you tried to understand the problem or issue you need to resolve?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

"How many marks you got in your test series?"

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"In the first series, only 40%. In the last one, I scored 75%," I replied.

"That means you improved a lot by correcting yourself. It also means you have good comprehension, articulation, communication, and presentation skills," he stated.

"I agree," said I.

"You might not have concentrated on each trait separately or patently. But, when you travel in the path instructed by our dean or other senior faculty, you will imbibe such qualities in you," he clarified.

"I never focussed on traits, but I came to know now that I possess them," I astonished.

Karan is approaching us rapidly.

"Let us check the noticeboard by the chapter for results. Shall we go?" Karan asked me.

Both of us reached the chapter to see our roll numbers. We groped around the noticeboard for a few moments. We both lifted our heads with amazement and looked at each other.

"I found mine," I am amazed.

"I too," Karan surprised.

"I got an aggregate of 210 marks," said I.

"I just stood on the aggregate, 200 marks," he said.

"You are a fortunate fellow," said I.

"It seems you are true," he replied happily.

We congratulated mutually. Karan wrote the second module during the last session. I wrote the first and preparing for the second now. I can step ahead in the second module with full concentration on it without looking back to

the first module.

Some students got the favorable result, including a girl from our graduation class named Sanvi. She is good at studies, scored good marks in graduation as well.

In this college, I saw multi-talented genius students who cleared intermediate course at one attempt. But some met with persistent failure.

"I don't know where from the intelligence needed travels into the minds of these young aspirants?" remarked the hostel warden to a stranger alluding me. He lost his exam for the ninth time successively.

Intelligence, according to the warden, means information to answer the problems in the examination. He believes in himself, above his company, and above our dean. So, he never trusts the tips of our dean. That negligence is the reason for his failure.

"Intelligence does not travel into our heads in the examinations hall. But it is a planned acquisition by the aspirant" I too alluded my answer to him through Amar.

"We have to work against us with the right kind of tool to shape our body and mind in a proper geometry," Amar threw a reply loudly.

"Yes, only my hard work paid to achieve this success today. I know I am not on par with the intelligent students who fare good marks. But, I have no regrets about passing with poor marks," I asserted.

"You are a genius," Amar declared.

"No, I am not. These genius students are a bit laconic. I

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don't know why or what makes them like that. But, they talk less using a few words but right words. Brevity is the soul of wit, like Mr. Raymond, who always speaks right," said I.

We entered into December. I appeared for the second module exams and wrote them well.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Semi success

"How did you do your exams?" asked Karan.

"Quiet well, you?" I asked him.

"I did well. I am expecting a positive result," Karan replied.

"I know you deserve the qualification at the earliest," I complimented.

"If I pass this exam, when can I appear for final exams, at the earliest chance?" he asked.

"On the stamp of 'pass' on the marks certificate of this exam as well, we complete the intermediate course of CA-"

"Did we get a certificate for intermediate course separately?" he intervened.

"Yes, the intermediate course is equal to a semi-qualified CA. We get the certificate issued by the institute after passing both modules of one and two. Many jobs are available for the semi CAs."

"What is a semi CA?" he intervened again.

"That term is not from the institute, but the industry and

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employment circles call the half CA as semi-qualified," I replied.

"Intermediate, you mean half-qualified?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. "We get ourselves eligible to enroll in the final course after the favorable result."

"We will get the results in February 2015. So, we cannot write in June of that year."

"Yes, a gap of six months between the registration and exam is necessary as per the institute regulations," said I.

"Can I appear for both modules of final in December 2015?" he asked.

"Yes, you can write a single module or both of them practically in December that year," I replied.

"That is precisely one year from now," he said.



April 2015:

On the last day of our second-year graduation exams, we bid a grand farewell to Amar at La Villette theme park. All the boys from the hostel of our class arranged a dinner for the solo male senior, Amar.

The same night we all drove him to the railway station to deliver a parting hug to him.

"These two years, the time we spend with you is momentous. We learned many new things from you, Amar," said Karan.

"Institute taught us the syllabus. But, you taught us leadership," said I before he boarded on the train.

The next morning, I purchased some books on the final

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course while traveling to the railway station. I boarded the train and reached home. I started home preparation during that summer vacation.

I can't play cricket well but used to spend some time on that game in the evenings. While I ball, I throw it at full pelt at the wickets. My amateur throw is an easy cake for a batsman to drive the ball to the boundary.

Though a loser of the game, cricket granted me some glow on my face by the warmth of physical exercise. Of course, mental relaxation too. Also, I rejuvenated my friendship with my old buddies.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Sweet moments

July 2015:

Two factors determined me to stick to my original plan more diligently - I set my foot in the third year of graduation and CA final course; my teenage ended early that academic year.

Nevertheless, my commitment to sternness, my classroom conditions diluted my austere boredom suddenly to the new exciting events. Boisterous youthful wind metamorphosed leaven in lumps to charming young boys.

The gallant demeanor of the boys earned 'an affable companion' brand within the wisdom of girls. The familiarity between the girls and boys is great now. The boys earned good credit in girls' books, who opened a separate account of debit and credit for each boy. In that book, my ledger account gained an excellent score of credits without any debits. The boys maintain no books, but they approved unlimited credit to every girl.

Sweet moments

On the third day, a girl of features non-native to our region stood at the threshold of our classroom. Simon escorted her to the classroom. We, boys, looked at each other with lots of enthusiasm and excitement. The heartbeats of the boys are pacing.

"Please come in," the faculty said.

She stepped inside the classroom with jingling resonance and sat at the fourth desk in the girls' row,

"May I know your name?" the faculty inquired.

"Alice," said she with a musical tone.

"Boys and girls, let us welcome Alice into our class," the faculty announced her a welcome.

She turned left from the blackboard and smirked at boys. Her glance from pair of large protruding glad eyes thrust straight into the hearts of boys. Her beauty and uniqueness of figure captivated the boys. Their hearts whispered in silence.

"What a blooming girl!" whispered a boy.

"She is bewitching," screamed another boy loudly.

The boys stayed away from listening to the class and peered at her with a beaming face. The faculty halted the lesson, stood motionless with a smile on his bare face. We understood our mistake by seeing that bare-faced smile of faculty.

"Core Banking Solution is a centralized back-office activity carried through a software...." he resumed the classes with a broad grin on his face.

Alice is a girl of decency and cordial deportment. Every

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boy in the class has chosen her as the companion of his future life. I am not one among them but have some special unknown feelings for her. I, too, tried to appear civil. All my shoes, trousers, and shirts are new now.

Alice and I are good friends now. My unknown special feeling is neither love of lust nor Christian love of agape. Our relationship is strictly platonic.

On one Saturday noon she came to me at closing hours of the college. "Shall we go to the temple in the morning, tomorrow?" she asked.

"Which temple?" I inquired with a pacing heartbeat and anxious voice.

"Nearby Lord Shiva temple," she replied.

"Sure, I will be waiting at the college at 7 am tomorrow. Is that alright for you?" I asked.

"Definitely," said she.

I got ready early in the morning, the next day, without much adornment. I walked down to the college alone. After a few minutes, I saw her coming to the college with two of her hostel mates. The presence of the other two does not disappoint me. Indeed, the attendance of her intimate friends bonded my positive opinion on her more strongly. I am not willing to create a relationship with girls.

"Hi, how are you?" I asked all of them when they came near to me.

"Fine," they said together.

An awkward pause crept at the beginning of our discussion. Alice can grasp my unsophisticated cultural

Sweet moments

background. I wish to cover my dullness at conversations.

"Are you from Goa?" I broke the silence.

"Yes, I am from Panaji," she replied.

"Where is your schooling?"

"Bangalore. "

"Where are your parents now?"

"Bangalore."

These wearisome interrogations are more awkward than that bitter pause. I want to invent something new at that moment instantly. But I don't know how to design some exciting conversation swiftly. Quite natural conversation is always right.

"Why did you join here in the third year?" I asked her to patch up my artlessness.

"To complete graduation," she replied.

"I mean,..." I hesitated.

"You mean, what?" she laughed but overpowered me slowly.

"I mean, why you joined here in the third year?" I asked.

"My father transferred to Amaravati," she replied.

"You just said that your parents are in Bangalore," I blurted out my naivete.

"Yes, they are in Bangalore now. But my father is going to join at Amaravati office in the next month. Since I have to join from the beginning of the academic year, I came now. Any more doubts?" she emphasized.

I understood that I am quite unnatural. I am trying to perform a false show before Alice to create a good

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impression. I thought no use of that show-up business anymore.

So, I gave a brief introduction of myself and my family in a relatively natural way. She, too, introduced herself, her family, about studies, the places she studied. Those talks seem reasonable and logical.

"Which color do you like?" she asked me unexpectedly.

With that question, I saw her thoroughly from top to bottom. She stood in a yellow saree looking at me for an answer.

She chuckled with delight that is unique to an urbane girl.

I forgot all the other colors. "Yellow," I replied without hesitation. The bystanders are gawking at us while we are rambling on the pathways.

We reached the temple. The stalls outside the perimeter fence of the temple are selling paraphernalia required to propitiate God. I purchased four coconuts for our temple visiting company. She is silent while I am paying money.

We went inside the temple with coconuts in hand and handed them to the priest, who snapped them one by one at a granite stone and sprinkled its water on Shivalinga. The light from oil lamps, clanking sound of the metallic bell, and the core temple room's unique adornment created an air of holiness. My feathers ruffled for a moment, for the intrusion of thought about the magnificent powers of Lord Iswara.

After the puja, we sat there for a few minutes.

"Do you visit temples?" she asked.

"No, my father regularly visits," I replied.

Sweet moments

"What? Then how do you propitiate the higher power? She inquired.

"That's is what..., my father visits on my behalf. Even if he fails to visit, the priest prays on our behalf," I replied naively.

"Do you believe in God?"

"Yes, I believe in Him. But not in the rituals," I replied.

"In my view, vicarious prayers your father performing doesn't work for you. Prayers should always primary and are not exchangeable. You should seek Him what you desire with all the earnestness. Prayers are psychic powers that help you in achieving your goals," she stated her opinion.

She possesses some unique power. I can't demonstrate my skill before her, and I am always a dumb spectator.



"You were talking to Alice about something exciting. Can you share those interesting moments with us?" Abdul asked me before the co-lodgers.

"About ourselves and our family," I said.

"Frankly? You detailed everything to her?" he asked, laughing.

"Yes, very frankly," said I.

"My dear Robin, she is not your sister to discuss such things with her," he laughed again.

"She is not my sister but my true friend. I wish to be honest with her," I replied.

"What do you mean by a true friend? Who am I then?" he asked.

I can't be able to answer him. But I said, "you are my best

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friend."

"I don't know the meanings," he laughed again, teasing me.



I am just a fat lump with a provincial background till I joined here. My charm and naivety are unsophisticated. Alice may think of my joyous moments as an incomprehensible frenzy of a local peasant.

One evening I saw her passing by a coffee shop.

"Hi Alice," I shouted.

"Hi, Robin," she shouted with a cheer.

"Would you like to have a coffee with me?" I requested.

"Let us have it," she replied.

We entered slowly into the coffee shop. That coffee bar is playing attenuated Bollywood movie songs from Sadak, Ashique, and Barsat. That relaxed ambiance of that space is pleasant for couples to exchange their views. She began talking with a rich, melodious voice.

"What are you planning?" she asked.

"Planning what?" I asked with a sense of misgiving.

"Career, marriage, abroad plans, and so on" she smiled.

"I wish to do any job, and I want to settle in any metro city in India," I replied.

"What about marriage?" she persisted with her questioning.

"I will think about it after completing CA," I replied.

"So, the happening of your marriage depends on a contingency," she laughed.

"Do you mean passing CA, a contingency?" I asked.

Sweet moments

"Of course, minimal outcome every year when compared to either new admissions or the candidates attempted," she clarified.

"My position is the clear marriageable case," I bragged.

"Well. You mean you can win the title CA before your name?" she smiled.

"Definitely," I boasted myself. "What about your marriage?" I asked.

"I fix myself to matrimony of convenience," she said teasingly.

"What do you mean by matrimony of convenience?" I was bemused by what she was telling.

"I mean, arranged marriage. I love to be a homemaker. This year is the last year of my academics," she shared the secret.

That statement is sufficient to answer the aspiration of boys in the city of Amaravati pursuing her.

"I know you have that talent of making your home lovable. My best wishes for your aspirations, my dear friend," said I.



Abdul met me in the hostel in the late evening on the same day. Our conversation took in the following manner.

"Hi, Robin, where were you at five in the evening?" he asked.

"Why?" I posed a counter-question.

"Dean asked for you. He wants your costing notes," he replied.

"I met a friend," I replied.

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"Who and where?" he continued his investigation.

I tried to evade him by searching for costing notes.

"How long you were there in the coffee shop?" he asked directly, smiling.

I stopped searching the notes, "why are you devious in probing your interests?" I asked.

"How do you address her?"

"By her name," I replied

"Come on, my dear! Have you ever addressed her 'sweetheart' or 'darling?'" he grilled teasingly.

"There is no such necessity or emotions between us," I yelled back.

"She may think that you are stupid," he laughed.

"We have a good understanding. We both are matured and healthy," I returned.

I can comprehend Alice's changing face colors at the sight of boys' fancy debuts before her. Any sensible person can grasp her feelings at such decorated shows. Their failed debut shows rescued others from repeating their mistake.

I know her marriage plans now. That consciousness made me urban from a simple halfwit rustic.

We continued our frequency to the nearest coffee shop for a chat rather than for a coffee. I shared my idiosyncrasies with Alice honestly. She discussed her interests. Her civility is unique; her behavior is frank. She can say 'no' when she wants to say that. Any advances towards her are futile. The slightest indecency may amount to lose that good friend permanently. I know I am not eligible to reach her

Sweet moments

outstanding qualities and have no hope to improve myself to that range. There is a deep cleavage between my background and her milieu.

Without smart skills, my success in CA is of no use. Alice taught me civil behavior, which is necessary to support my service to the industry. She is not didactic in her teachings. Her dynamic facial expressions taught me a lot. Such a civil and sensible woman is necessary for every office to keep the men working there lively.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Journey continued

April 2016:

At five in the evening, I handed my last exam paper on Management Accountancy to the invigilator. I quit the examination hall and entered the campus. I saw Karan chatting with our classmates merrily. He dashes his ideas on the answer sheet amazingly fast. So, he left the hall during the last hour of the exam.

"Robin is trying to score 110 out of 100," he shouted.

"Karan, we are from different backgrounds. Unlike you, I am not a student of merit from my childhood. I started my studies seriously from a recent time," I replied.

"Are you serious? Chill brother. It is the time to celebrate," Karan said.

"Where shall we go?" asked Joseph.

"Rooftop of the Palace Heights," Karan said.

We reached the hostel. Some students packed their belongings for good. Exclusive graduate students are going to

Journey continued

vacate the hostel the next morning, and some of them now. I have to write the last module of the CA in June.

Some of the students had dinner at the hostel. The same night they left for their native places. We bid farewell to our co-lodgers. I had a cold shower to get ready for dinner. All five of the roommates planned to go to dinner at Palace Heights. So, we planned to stay that night at the hostel after dinner.



After completing graduation and writing exams for the final module, I participated in the training very intensely. My principal CA office in the city is at Tolstoy street, where I train for the race. The institute scheduled the date and time of the results. I am eagerly waiting for the consequence of my efforts. On the date of results at the appointed time, I sat before the system and keyed in my roll number. After the cursor hovering on the screen for some time, under a lot of anxiety, my roll number fetched the title 'pass' with subject wise marks. I am in such a state of boundless happiness, and I don't know what I did. The people around me are also delighted. Ms. Elin, a chartered accountant, is next to me; she shook my hand first, rest of the people there followed her.

My principal offered me a partnership in the firm. I acceded to the proposal promptly.

My milestones:

2016: I am married to Elin.

2017: Elin gave birth to twin girls.

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2018: I built a multistoried villa in a posh hilly locality.

2019: I acquired and gifted the land that we lost to my parents, staying in Iswardham.

2020: The shrub of our office ramified across the country.