

written by ADITYA SHARMA

WHISPERS OF LIFE



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This book is dedicated to my mother, who planted these lessons in me, and to Oindrila Ma'am, whose encouragement inspired me to bring them together. I hope these pages help you stand tall through every up and down—and remind you to live fully, with courage, gratitude, and grace.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

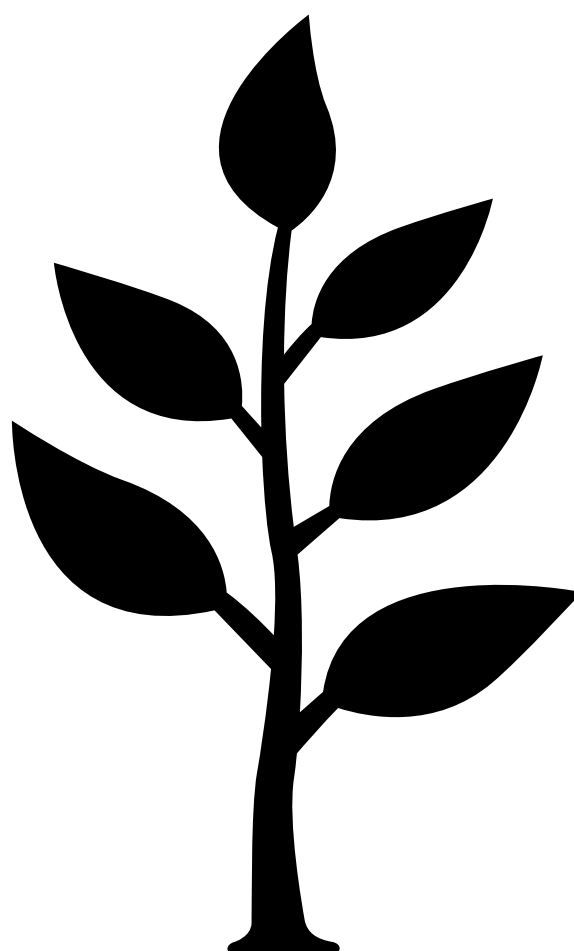
A graduate of **VIT Vellore** with **distinction**, the author completed a capstone on **soil mechanics and its applications in earthquake engineering**. He has appeared in **three UPSC Civil Services Interviews**, taught at multiple civil services institutes, and later founded **Karmayogi IAS**, a learner-first academy with a community of **100,000+ students** across Telegram, YouTube, and Instagram. He has **personally coached 50+ civil servants**, including several in the **top 100 ranks**.

An **avid reader** and **motivational blog writer**, he distills lessons on resilience, purpose, and service into practical guidance for aspirants—principles that shape both his classrooms and this book.

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1.

From Cursed to Blessed: A Journey of Transformation

For the first twenty-three years of my life, I complained. I wore self-pity like a second skin and called it bad luck. Whenever something slipped through my fingers, I took it as proof: my life was cursed.

Then, one ordinary journey untied that knot.

I had just appeared for my first Civil Services (CSE) interview and was travelling through Tamil Nadu to meet a professor about admission to a university in the United States. After the meeting, I reached the platform for a train to Chennai and ran into a batchmate—**Giri Dharan**. He was headed the same way. We found seats across from each other, the carriage filling with the usual music of vendors and announcements. Somewhere between two stations, he told me about his foundation, **Third Hand**—a small, stubborn effort serving the homeless and the elderly who had been beaten, abandoned, or simply forgotten by their own families.

I listened, then fell quiet. There are some truths you don't argue with; you just carry them for a while.

“Come with me tomorrow morning,” Giri said. “When is your flight?”

“Tomorrow evening,” I replied.

“Good. Come before you go.”

I went.

At first light we stepped into narrow lanes where the day wakes slowly: a kettle boiling, a door creaking open, the shuffle of tired feet. What I saw pressed something tender in me. Old men who could no longer see well enough to thread a needle; women whose legs trembled under the weight of years; clothes ripped thin by time. Some were crying softly. When Giri offered a shawl, a packet of medicine, a few clean clothes, they folded their hands as if he were a deity. That simple gesture shook me. Tears came without permission. I felt suddenly, fiercely grateful for things I had never noticed—a strong back, a hot meal, a door with my name behind it.

In that moment, a sentence formed inside me, quiet but firm:

What I thought was my right was the luxury of many.

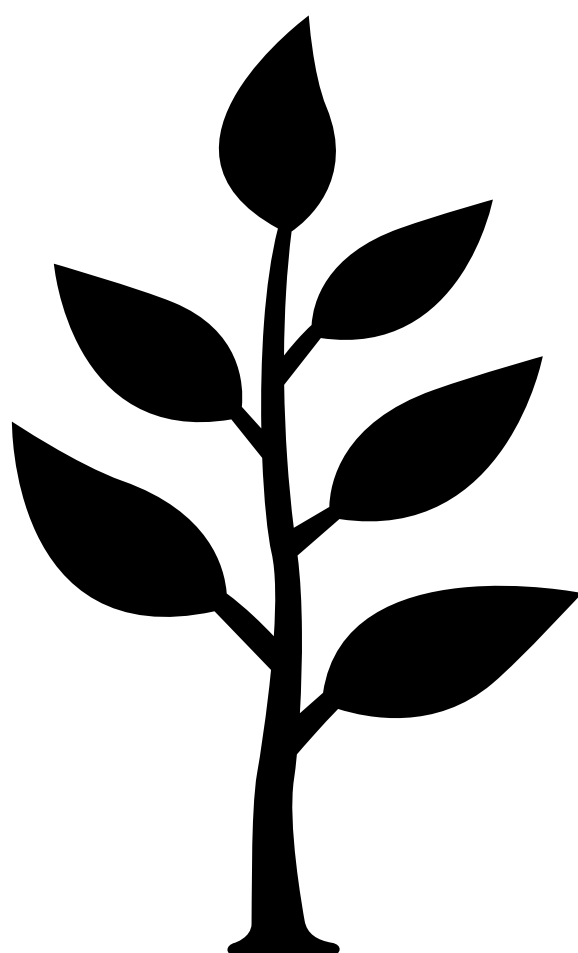
By the time we walked back, my plans for America felt different—like a suit that no longer fit my shoulders. I cancelled the idea. I didn't make a speech about it; I just knew the road had turned. The scene of that morning would not leave me: two hands raised in thanks for a thin blanket, eyes bright over a steel tumbler of tea, the relief of being seen.

I joined **Third Hand** in the small ways I could—time, money, presence. It wasn't grand. It was honest. And it gave me something I had been chasing in all the wrong places: strength. From that day on, whenever I met a setback, I returned to those lanes in my mind. The memory steadied me more than any success I had claimed before.

Looking back, I realise the transformation wasn't sudden. It was an accumulation—the way water, drop by drop, wears new paths into stone. I began the habit of gratitude, beginning each morning with a quiet prayer to **Lord Hanuman**, thanking him for the thousand ordinary blessings I had once ignored. The world hadn't changed. I had. The same life, seen with a different heart, became a blessing.

If my early years taught me how loud a curse can sound inside your own head, that morning taught me how powerfully a single act of service can answer it. The years that followed were still hard; nothing dramatic fell from the sky. But I was no longer running from difficulty. I was walking toward purpose.

This is where my journey truly began—not with a result, not with a medal, but with two folded hands, a borrowed shawl, and the knowledge that I had more to give than I had ever allowed myself to believe.



2.

The Most Beautiful Things Are Free

As a child, I thought beauty came with a price tag. A new watch, a shiny pair of shoes—surely joy lived inside the box. It did—until the thrill wore off. Then the want returned, a little louder each time.

Exams changed my hours. I was a night owl forced into mornings. One day, half-awake, I stepped out just as the first light broke. The sky blushed, quietly. No receipt, no discount code—just grace. Unlike things I bought, its beauty never faded the next week or the week after.

On other nights, the terrace became my window to the moon. I watched it wax and wane, becoming itself again and again. When it hid, the sky felt incomplete—like a mountain without a river. When it returned, it brought a calm only the patient know.

Once, during an evening walk, two street puppies tumbled across my path—tiny bodies, oversized courage, eyes full of innocence. They didn't own anything. They didn't need to. Their play was a prayer I understood without words. I stood there longer than I planned, lighter than when I came.

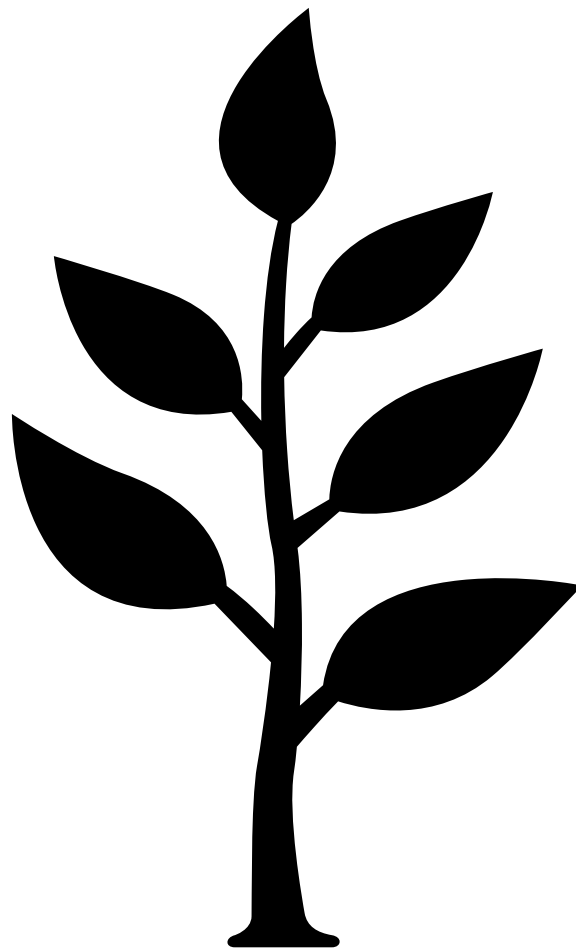
Slowly, the lesson arrived. Some joys are immediate and noisy; others are quiet and durable. The quiet ones require no purchase—only attention. Dawn, the moon, a passing breeze, a kind word, a shared silence: none of them cost a coin, all of them change a day.

I began to see how I had been pricing my life wrong. I was paying for excitement and overlooking value. When I started counting

sunrises instead of sales, I felt rich in a way money could not measure.

In time, it became a simple truth I could say without ceremony:

The best things in life are free. The second-best are very, very expensive.



3.

The Biggest Inspiration of My Life

When I think of courage, I see my maternal grandfather—my **Nana ji**. His life began with loss. Five days after his birth, his father passed away. His mother, stunned by grief, slipped into a long silence. Relatives seized the family's ancestral land, harassing a young widow who had no one to defend her. A mother is still a mother, though; she began working in other people's homes so her son could eat.

He, meanwhile, wanted to study.

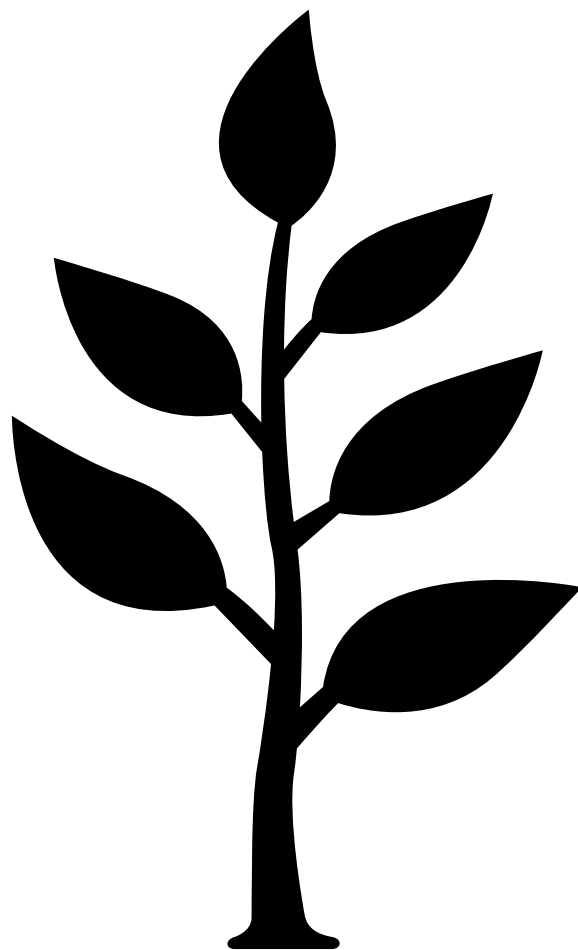
At seven, he found work binding books. The payment was small, but the permission was priceless: he could read. Every stitched spine became a doorway. He made **books his best friend**—a friendship that never left his side.

In 1958, he topped the entire district in Class 10. Only one student in the district earned a distinction in English—that student was him. After school, he took a job as an accountant in a moneylender's office. With that income he told his mother to stop doing helper's work. He kept studying—topped Class 12, then graduation—and kept climbing, step by step, until he became **Chief General Manager at the Head Office of Punjab National Bank**.

Success never narrowed his heart. He joined the **Ramakrishna Mission**, serving quietly where service was needed. Before leaving this world, he donated all his savings and property to build **computer labs in ten villages** and to establish a **home for widows**—a place where **250 women** could live with dignity.

He shared his name—and some of his virtues—with India’s first President: simplicity, integrity, and a life anchored in service.

His story taught me what wealth truly is. It is not land you inherit or titles you collect. It is the **habit of learning** and the **duty to lift others**. Because of him, I too made **books my best friend**—and I carry his example like a lamp, lighting the road ahead.



4.

Some Days Shape Who You Truly Are

CSE Mains, 2019. I had just finished GS-1 and GS-2, eaten quickly, and sat down to rest. A sharp ache began in my abdomen. It grew, minute by minute, into something I had never known—pain that bent breath and thought. My parents watched, helpless; my mother in tears, my father asking softly, “How will you write tomorrow?”

“I will go,” I said.

Night offered no sleep. Two paracetamols did nothing. By morning, resolve was all I had left. My father tried again—life is bigger than an exam—but some decisions are quiet and final. I took two more painkillers and walked into the hall.

As I wrote, tears ran without drama. The invigilator came over and whispered, “Please leave the exam.” I kept my head down and kept writing.

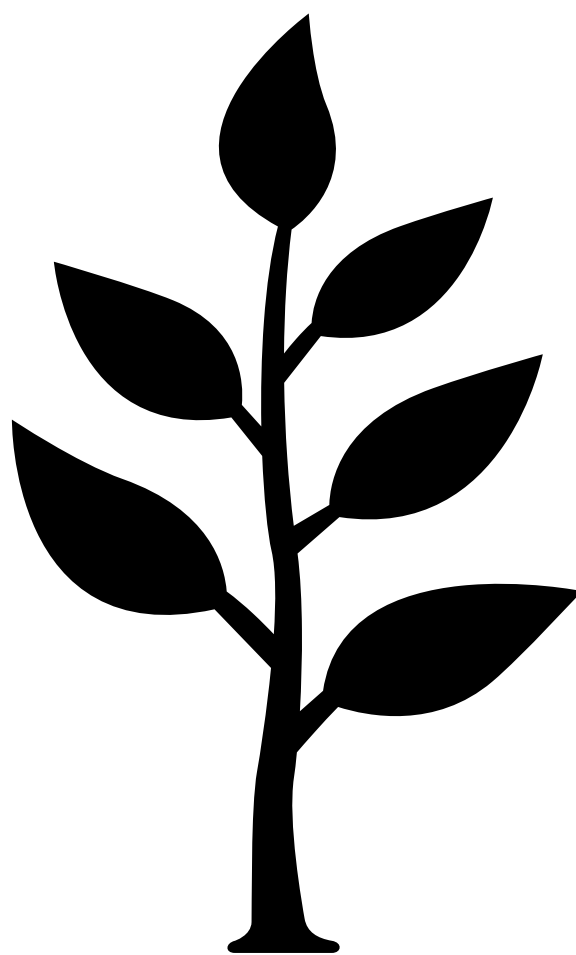
GS-3 was a blur. The **Ethics** paper was worse. I leaned hard on the desk, willing my hand to move when the body would not. When the bell rang, I went straight to the hospital and was admitted. Tests followed; the diagnosis came: a **multi-drug-resistant intestinal infection**.

My mother was bedridden then, so I had been eating outside during the exams. Perhaps that is where it began. I spent three days in the hospital. There was no revision for my optional. Still, somehow, I showed up for the paper.

The results arrived. I had cleared Mains—but missed the final list. I scored **71** in GS-3, the paper written almost entirely on willpower.

People often ask what that felt like. Disappointing, yes—but also defining. That week taught me something no classroom could: that I could walk through pain and still choose the work. A small flame was lit in that hall, and it has not gone out since.

Some days you measure yourself against a mark. Some days you meet the person you are becoming. This was the latter.



5.

The Journey Matters More Than the Size of the Achievement

I grew up in a single rented room where three families shared one toilet. No kitchen. No space. My mother left early and returned late, working through migraines that dimmed the light in her eyes but not her will. My elder brother went to school; I waited for evenings. We had one luxury—a small TV. On DD National, *Chamatkar*, *Baadshah*, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* stitched a little window into a bigger world.

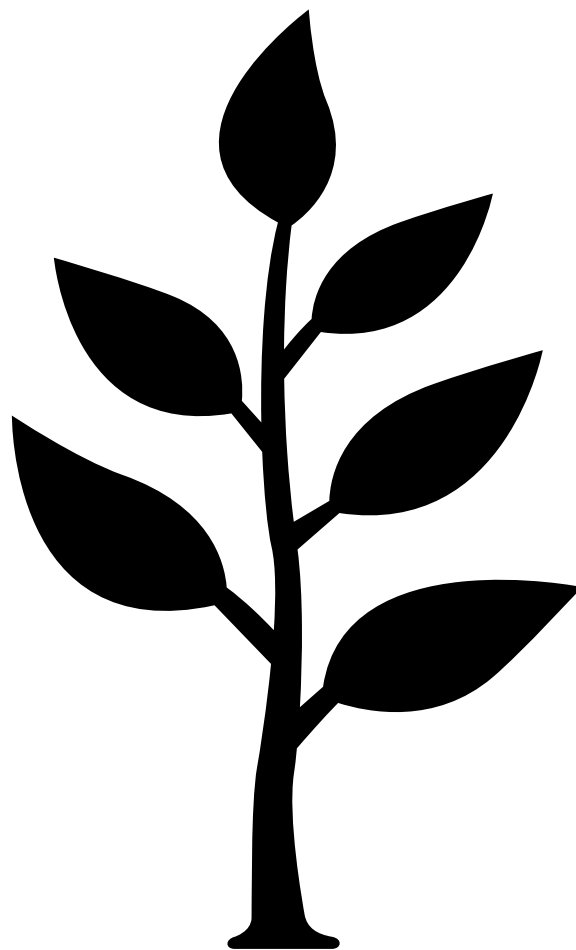
Life moved. From that tiny room to our own house. From there to a flat that felt almost unreal. But the distance between those walls taught me something the walls themselves could not: happiness lives in small moments. I remember my mother pausing outside a restaurant we could never afford, looking a second longer than usual. Years later, I took her there. It wasn't the food; it was the circle closing.

I work the way I do because I watched my father search for work. When life opens a door, you don't walk through it—you run. As a child, Shah Rukh Khan's films were an escape and, in a quiet way, a lesson in momentum. One day in Delhi, I saw him shooting for *Main Hoon Na*. He spoke about something his mother told him: "*Jitni chadar hai utne pair failao is wrong. Chadar badi karo aur pair failao.*" Don't shrink your dreams to fit the blanket; make the blanket bigger. It landed inside me and stayed. Funny thing—my

first rented house stood not far from where he once studied. Perhaps that's why he still feels woven into my childhood.

Over time I learned to measure achievement differently. Becoming a billionaire when your father is a millionaire is arithmetic. But when the son of a daily-wage worker becomes a clerk—that is a revolution in one household. The journey is the story; the title is just the last line.

If there is a rule I trust now, it is this: hold on to the small joys, keep widening the blanket, and never forget where the road began.



6.

The Biggest Lesson Life Taught Me: Hard Work Wins

All through school, until Class 12, I coasted. A sharp memory carried me through quizzes and Olympiads. I did little and still stood out. Somewhere inside, I decided hard work was for others.

Life corrected me.

JEE was the first crack. Chemistry didn't care for cleverness; it demanded effort. I hadn't put it in—and I paid the price. For the first time, I met the truth without excuses: talent can open a door, but only hard work keeps you in the room.

College made that lesson louder. I struggled. I wasn't used to pushing myself; the old shortcuts didn't work. Some days I felt broken. That's when a quiet decision formed: **I will not let a day pass without learning something.**

Twelve years have gone by. The rule stayed. Hospital bed, train berth, late night—still a page read, a note written, a small improvement made. Five quiet minutes done daily beat one loud plan done never. Consistency over intensity.

Slowly, everything changed.

My notes for students got sharper each year.

My YouTube videos gained clarity, then confidence.

The difference between my first video and now is visible—because the work behind it is.

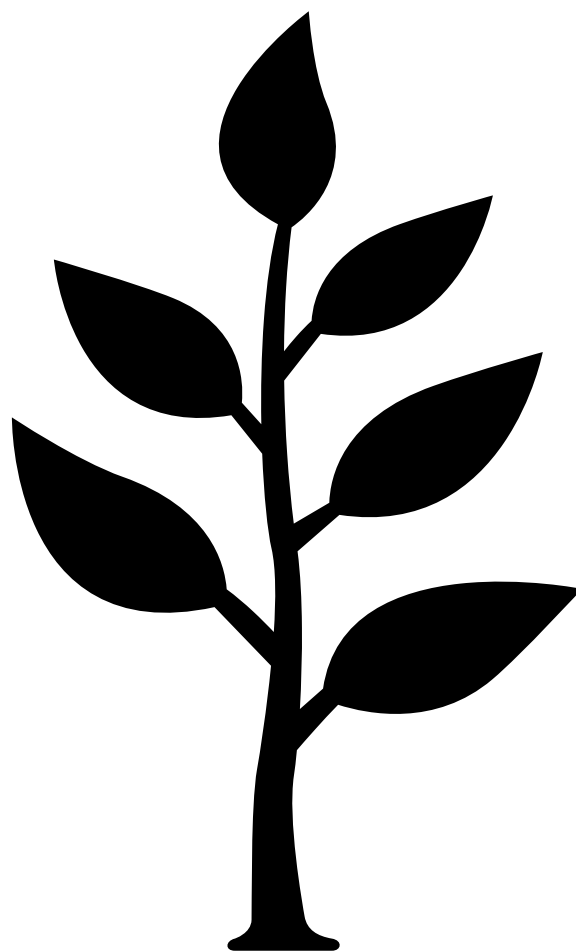
The biggest shift wasn't in output; it was in ownership. I stopped blaming luck. When something went wrong, I asked, **What can I do better?** Then I did it—again tomorrow, and the day after.

If there's one thing I can offer you, it's this:

Take charge. Do the work. Learn every day, even a little.

Results will come when they're ready. But you will change right away—stronger, steadier, surer of yourself.

Hard work wins. Not because it makes life easy, but because it makes **you** equal to life.



7.

The Hidden Cost of Growth: A Lesson from Delhi & Civil Services

I grew up in a Delhi of clear mornings and quiet roads. Kamla Nagar, Defence Colony, Model Town—modern comforts with a familiar soul. Two decades later, the city's GDP has tripled, but the air stings, drains drown the roads, and the old calm feels like a rumor. We grew, yes—but at a cost too high for breath to pay. Was it worth it? No.

Ambition can make a person repeat a city's mistake.

I've seen it up close. A young IRS officer with a spine that wouldn't let him sit. An IAS friend living on anxiety meds, asleep only when the pills say so. Civil services don't fix life; they rearrange its pressures. After the first applause come files, fires, politics, and the kind of fatigue that clings to your bones. Appreciation is rare. The stress is not.

If you spend health to buy success, your 30s will feel like your 50s; your 40s like your 60s. You will live—but not fully.

Grow, but don't outgrow yourself. Let the result arrive on the strength of a body that sleeps, a mind that breathes, a schedule with room for sunlight and silence. The work will still be there tomorrow; make sure you are, too.

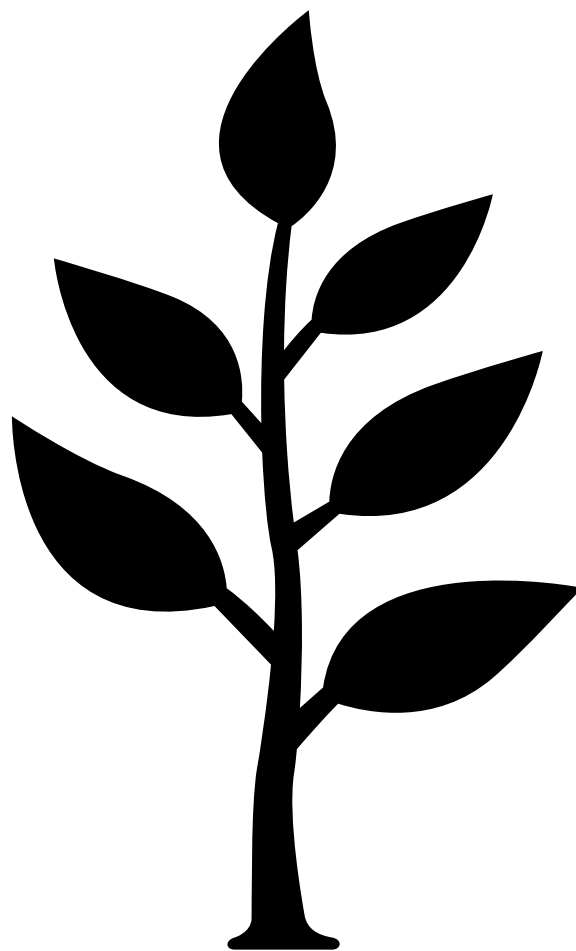
What I learned:

- Build without breaking.
- Win without withering.

- Do your duty, but keep your body.

Let success come—but not at the cost of your body and mind.

Health is non-negotiable.



8.

Son, I Am Proud of You

In a middle-class home, a boy often grows up chasing one sentence: “*Son, I am proud of you.*” I did too. When I began preparing for the civil services, that dream wasn’t mine alone—it carried the weight of my father’s unfinished story.

Years earlier, my father had wanted the same road. The times were different—early marriages, strict family rules, duty before desire. My grandfather allowed him two years to prepare. He worked hard, held his hopes tight—and then fate struck.

A bus he was travelling in plunged off a forty-foot bridge into a river. Everyone died—except him. He survived, but six months in bed ended his preparation. Soon after, he married and took the first government job he could find. Dholpur House slipped out of reach, but the dream did not die. It moved into me.

“Just enter Dholpur House,” he told me once. “That’s all I want.”

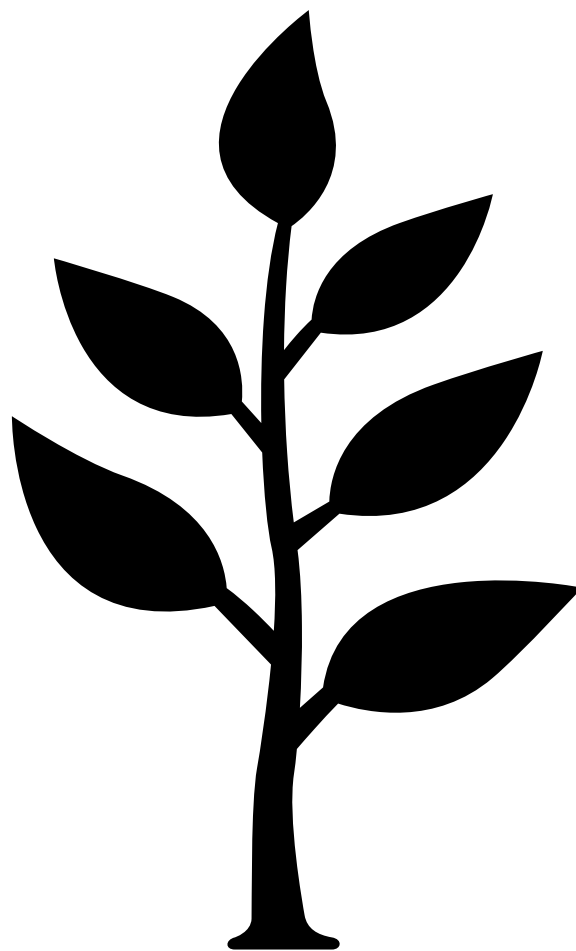
I reached there sooner than either of us expected—**twenty-three and a half**, second attempt. Outside the gates, he hugged me and said, “*Son, you’ve made me proud. You fulfilled what I couldn’t. Whatever happens now, I am content.*”

I went on to enter Dholpur House **three times**. Each time, I carried his voice with me.

My father loved to tell the story of his cricketing idol, **Vinoo Mankad**—the man who helped script India’s first Test win, was dropped unfairly, then returned to bowl more than seventy overs,

take five wickets, and score a century in the same match.
Resilience not as a line in a speech, but as a way of living.

That is what I learned from him: when life knocks you down, you rise—again and again, until standing becomes your nature. The hug outside Dholpur House, the pride in his eyes, the quiet finished sentence—“*Son, I am proud of you*”—are etched in me forever.



9.

Slow Growth Is Strong Growth

There are seasons when you're giving your best and still feel success slipping through your fingers. Others seem to sprint ahead on half the effort. It stings. You wonder if you're falling behind.

Slow growth answers softly: **I'm building what lasts.** It lays roots—resilience, steadiness, grace.

I've seen both roads up close. Some friends cleared the civil services on their first attempt and basked in quick glory. One now faces a heavy departmental inquiry. Another spiralled into depression when the applause faded. Meanwhile, those who made it on the fifth—or last—attempt wore success lightly. They didn't shout. When life threw transfers, criticism, or fresh failures, they stood their ground with quiet strength.

Think of **Hrishikesh Mukherjee**. Early on, people called his films “too ordinary.” He kept going, step by step, and became the master of middle cinema. *Gol Maal* spoke to unemployment without noise; *Anand* held the fragile emotions of terminal illness with dignity. These weren't trends. They were truths. And truths endure.

Slow growth teaches you to endure, adapt, and shine when it counts. It makes you the kind of person success can safely sit on.

Don't fear growing slowly; fear standing still.

Your journey is your timing. Trust the process. Keep moving.

10.

The Secret to True Success: Beyond Business Schools to Inner Peace

When Mark Zuckerberg once asked Steve Jobs for advice, Jobs didn't say "enrol in a program." He said: **go to an ashram in India**. Why? Because some things a classroom can't teach—quiet, clarity, and a mind that obeys you.

The **Bhagavad Gita** calls it *sthitaprajña*—steadiness of mind. A calm mind sharpens intellect; a restless mind blurs it. You can be gifted, trained, even brilliant—but if the mind is agitated, judgment wobbles and action suffers. Business schools teach models; the Gita teaches **mastery of the mind**.

There is another secret the Gita repeats: **abundance is a mindset, not a bank balance**.

If you live from deprivation—*I don't have enough; I am not enough*—you drift into boredom, frustration, and envy. Live from gratitude—*I already have something to give*—and energy returns. Even Sudama, poor in coins, was rich in heart. The richest can feel deprived; the simplest can feel full.

Then comes **dharma**—your right work. Identify what you love enough to serve beyond yourself.

Don Bradman played for the love of the craft, not headlines. Ustad Bismillah Khan offered music like prayer. Einstein gave his life to the beauty of truth. When the work is larger than ego, **selfless**

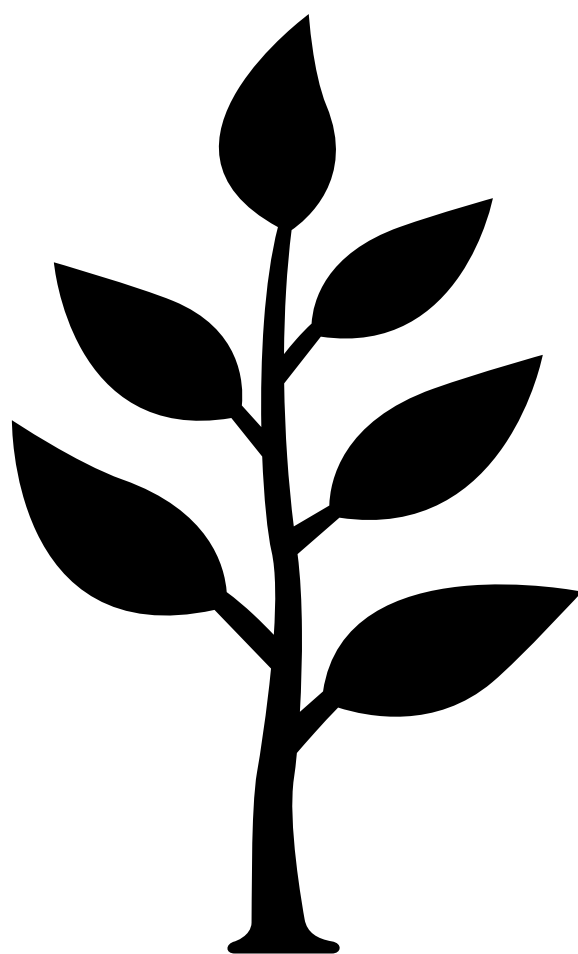
action follows naturally. Eric Liddell ran not for applause, but because “God made me fast.” The medal became a by-product.

Finally, the Gita’s most practical line: **you control action, not outcome**. Do the work with full sincerity; release the result. This is *karma yoga*. This is the **true sannyasi**—not one who escapes the world, but one who is independent of the fruit of action while standing in the middle of life.

What I carry from it all

- Quiet the mind; clarity will do the rest.
- Choose gratitude over scarcity; it fuels creativity.
- Find work you can love beyond yourself; serve it fully.
- Act with discipline; detach from results.

Success then stops being a chase and becomes a **state**—a calm, steady excellence that no exam, market, or opinion can shake.



11.

Two Lessons My Mother Whispered for Life

In the quiet of many evenings, my mother would sit beside me and say things I didn't fully understand. The words waited—then grew with me.

Lesson One: Be proud of how you carry yourself.

“Never be proud of your marks, money, or status,” she'd say. “Be proud only of how you carry yourself. That is self-respect.”

I learned the difference later. Pride makes you loud; self-respect makes you steady.

“God has given everyone dignity. If someone tries to take yours,” she added, “don't argue. Walk away. Don't meet them. Don't greet them. Forget them.”

Her silence was not surrender—it was strength.

Lesson Two: Bring warmth, not wounds.

“When you meet people, don't burden them with your sorrows,” she told me. “Everyone carries their own. If all you do is pour out problems, you're not meeting them—you're unloading on them.”

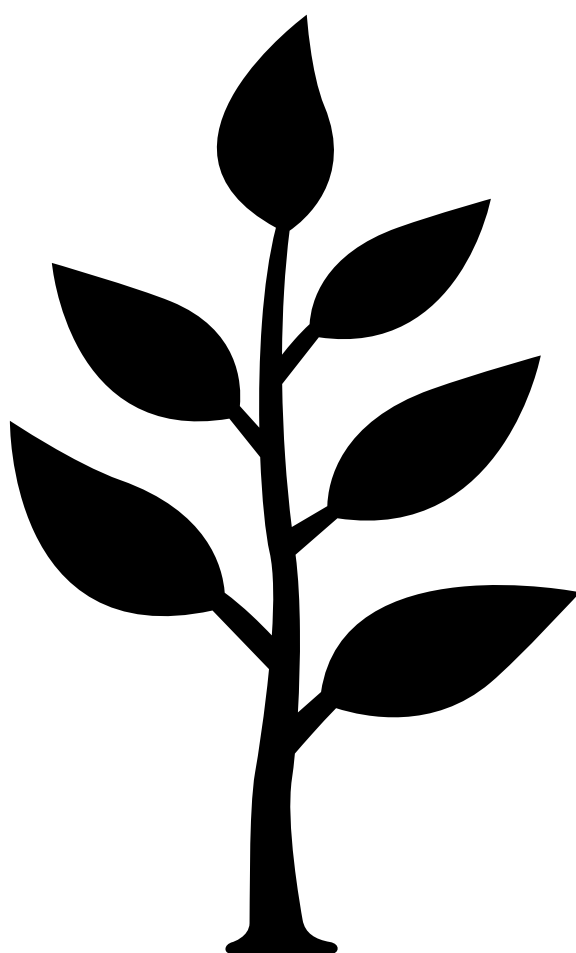
A conversation, she believed, should leave both hearts lighter.

I began to measure days not by applause but by composure; not by how much I spoke, but by how gently I left the room. When faced

with disrespect, I chose distance over noise. When faced with a friend, I brought presence, not weight.

Her refrain remains my compass:

Respect yourself, and others will learn to respect you.



12.

When Grief Walks In, and Strength Walks With It

I was narrating a story of resilience when a message arrived that stopped me mid-sentence:

“Sir, I’ve lost my father. My exam is in five days.”

My hands trembled. Words felt small. Before I could reach for comfort, she reached for courage.

Five days later, she walked into the exam hall—steady on the outside, carrying an absence on the inside that no one could see. She wrote because that is what resolve does: it keeps moving when the world wants to freeze.

Then life tested her again. Within months, her mother was gone too. A house turned into echoes. Grief filled the rooms. She did not surrender.

She prepared, showed up, and sat for one of the toughest interviews in the country.

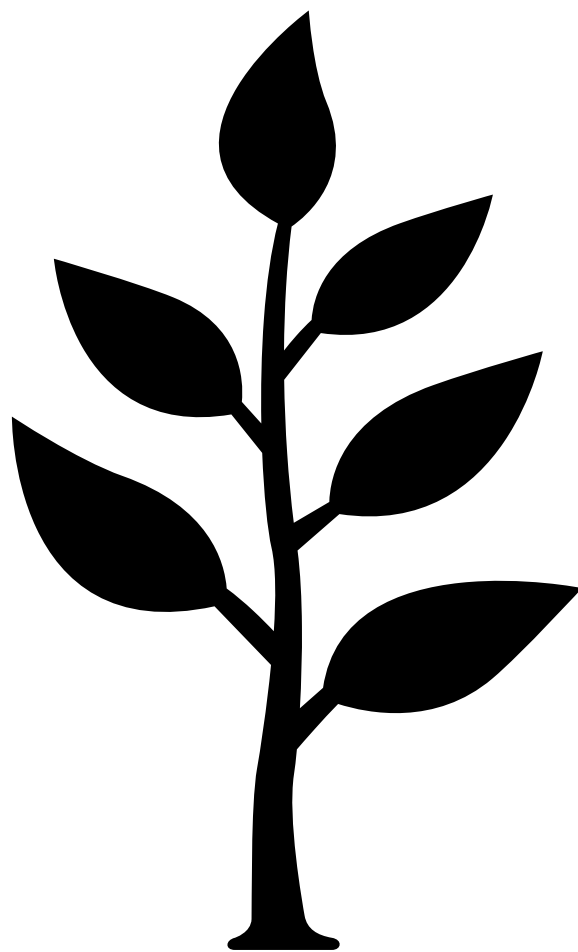
She cleared it. **IIM Ahmedabad** opened its gates.

What most will never see is what she did quietly while others studied: answering doubts at odd hours, structuring sessions, holding the thread of learning when it frayed, standing behind the mission when the rest of us were tired. If the words “**CSAT Nahin Rukega**” ring with certainty today, it’s not only because I said them—it’s because **Oindrila Ganguly Ma’am** lived them.

She is not just a name. She is a lesson.

That even with a heart in pieces, you can still be the reason someone else keeps going.

And that, to me, is the purest form of strength.



13.

Fathers Are the Biggest Superheroes

We write endlessly about mothers—poems, shayari, tributes to her love. Fathers rarely receive the same praise. Yet their love is no smaller; it is simply quieter.

When festivals arrive, he buys new clothes, gifts, sweets—for everyone else first. His own wishes stand at the end of the line. He spends on our education without blinking—selling land if needed, taking loans if that's what it takes. He wants our life to be larger than his.

He also carries the hard duty of shaping discipline and morality. To do that, he is sometimes firm. How difficult it must be to be strict with the person you love most. How heavy it must feel to hide emotion when your heart is overflowing.

I remember my father during my Mains—five rainy, humid days. I told him I would manage. He stayed anyway, waiting outside, soaked and stubborn. His love spoke in actions, not in speeches.

If there is one person who absorbs pain, hurdles, and sorrow so you can stand taller—and still wants nothing but your success—it is a father.

He may not wear a cape. But he is, quietly and completely, a **superhero**.

14.

A Mother's Wisdom

Growing up, my mother was my quiet North Star. In a time that was unkind to educated, working women, she finished her graduation, cleared a government job—and then chose us. She set her own dreams aside so ours could stand upright. What she never surrendered was her hunger to learn.

Our home was a small library disguised as a living room. Newspapers and magazines piled up—recipes beside business, art beside science. She would sit with them for hours, turning pages with the same attentiveness others reserve for prayer. Discovery and BBC Earth filled our evenings with the Serengeti and Saturn's rings. Even when illness left her bedridden, her curiosity refused to lie down. She learned voice search, browsed e-commerce with ease, and made me teach her every new gadget as if it were a new word in a language she loved.

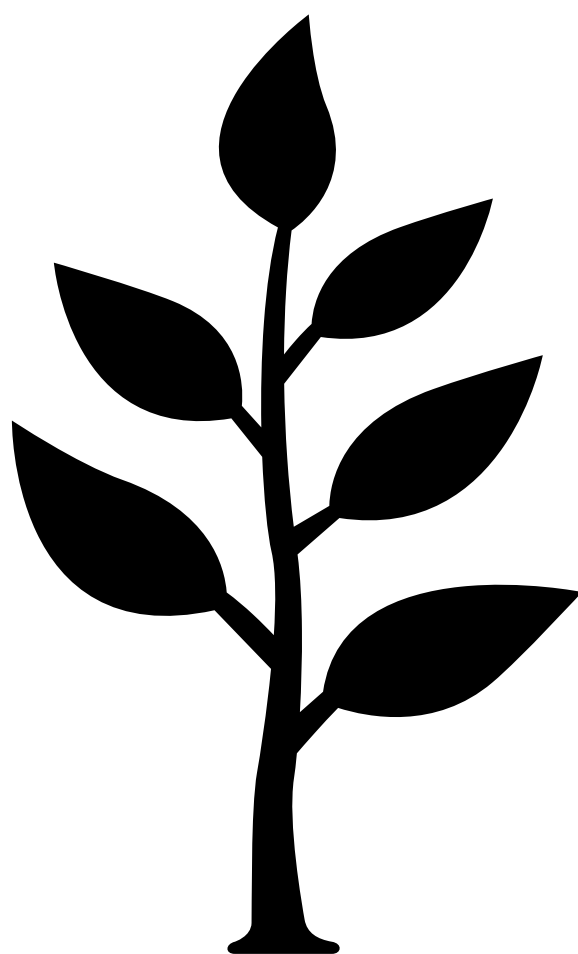
One afternoon during the Delhi elections, a journalist dropped by. He asked sharp, political questions, expecting simple replies. My mother's answers—precise, nuanced, unhurried—stopped him cold. He couldn't believe she was a homemaker. I could. I had watched that mind gather the world, piece by piece, without leaving the house.

We underestimate homemakers because we mistake quiet for emptiness. But some of the deepest wells make the least noise.

Millions of women like her gave up professional ambitions so their children could dream beyond the ceiling of their time. The

victories of today's girls rise on foundations poured by those uncredited hands—resilience, wisdom, love set like stone.

If I carry any compass from her, it is this: keep learning; wear dignity even when no one is watching; let curiosity be an act of courage; and remember that the future is often built by those whose names never appear on the plaque.



15.

The Real Alpha Male

These days, the internet is loud with labels—alpha, sigma, lone wolf. Strength sold as swagger. But on a small street near my home, I kept noticing a man who never said a word about strength. He simply **showed up**.

He was differently-abled, running a tiny pani puri stall. For almost a year, I never saw the shutter down. Morning heat, evening rush, rain that turned the road into a mirror—he was there. Calm. Steady. Present.

One evening I stopped.

He told me his story without drama. His father died when he was very young. His mother raised three children alone; he was the eldest. Born with a disability, life asked more of him than of others. At fourteen or fifteen he became a helper at a pani puri stall. He saved in stubborn handfuls and, one day, opened his own.

Then he said the line that stayed with me:

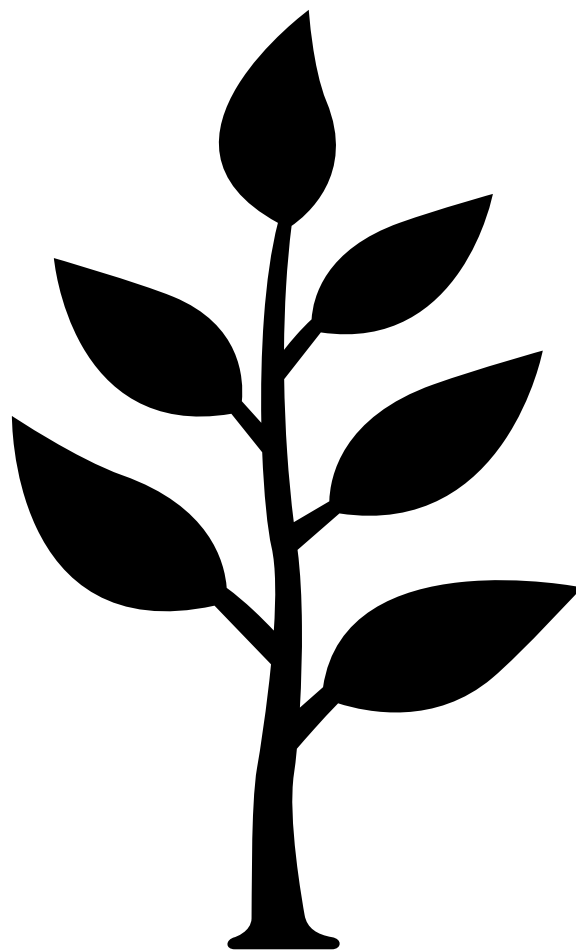
“I have only one daughter. She studies in a private school. I don’t want her to suffer the way I did. Being a father means giving her a better future.”

That was it. No speeches about grit. No hashtags. Just a vow a man makes to his child and honours every single day.

I walked away understanding something simple and large: being progressive isn’t a degree or a designation. It’s a daily choice—to rise from hardship, to work without complaint, to dream bigger for the next life after yours.

We pass such people all the time—shoulders squared against the weather, hearts set on a child’s tomorrow. If the world needs a definition of “alpha,” let it be this:

Show up. Shoulder the load. Choose gentleness. Build a future you may never fully enjoy, but your child will.



16.

**“Bana hua Shah Rukh Khan
sabko pasand hai, banta hua
kisi ko nahi.”**

We love the finished product—the polished star on the poster. But the making is messy. Personalities are forged in struggle: when you question yourself, strip away excuses, and do the small, stubborn things that quietly change the situation. That is how improvement happens—not in leaps, in layers.

We live in a world of trademarks and tags—IIT, IIM, Civil Services. Yet look around: a school dropout built a company the world watches; a boy who didn't clear board milestones became a legend with a bat; a child who once sold tea rose to the nation's highest office. The point isn't to romanticize hardship; it's to remind you that **labels are not destinies**.

Don't let other people's timelines make you feel left behind.

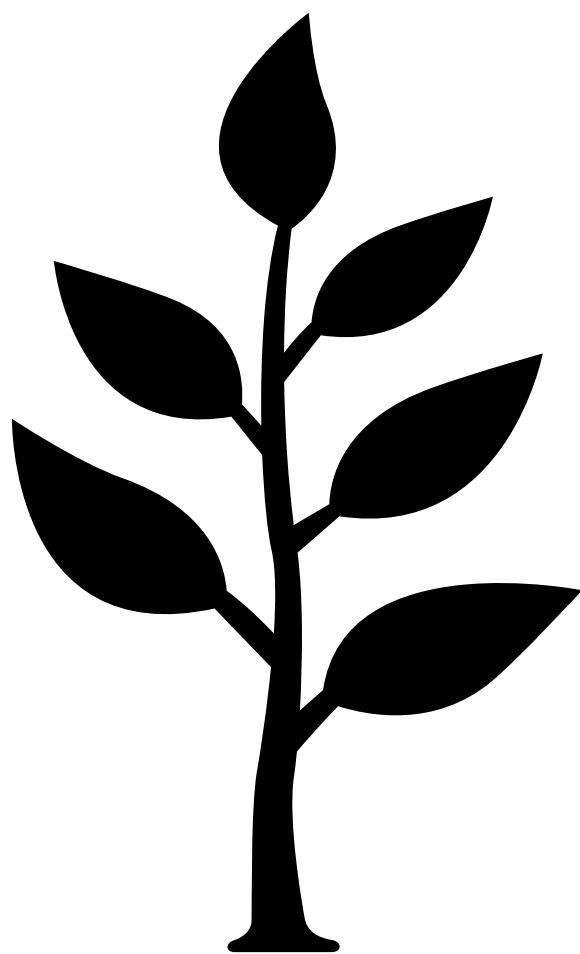
Today I read about **Akashdeep**—yes, the same young fast bowler who turned a match on its head. As a teenager, some relatives called him “**awara**.” There was little support, many closed doors. The same boy is now an idol in **Sasaram**—proof that the world often laughs at the becoming before it applauds the become.

Remember this:

Jab lage ki sab khatam ho raha hai,

shuruaat wahi se hoti hai, mere dost.

When it feels like everything is ending, that's exactly where many great beginnings start. Keep becoming.



17.

Validation Is a Poison

The slide is gentle at first.

You wear what gets praise, eat what draws approval, post what wins likes.

Soon your choices become a mirror of reactions—and when the applause fades, so does your sense of self. You weren't living; you were performing.

Ask yourself: **What is my why?**

For some, it's writing.

For others, building something useful from scraps, or playing a sport until the body learns honesty.

When you chase validation, you don't just lose originality—you lose *you*.

I've met thousands of civil services aspirants. Too many study for the gallery—parents, peers, strangers online—waiting for a rank to make them feel real. It's a fragile life: one algorithm change, one bad paper, and the ground trembles.

Trends tempt all of us. A singer's audience surges after a high-profile moment; friends go for the buzz, post the story, call it joy. Maybe it is, for a minute. But a life built on minutes of approval cannot hold you for years.

Pause. Breathe. Is this how you want to live—chained to the next spike of attention?

Or do you want to live your truth—the work that brings quiet, durable joy?

What helps

- **Name your why in one sentence.** Keep it where you can see it.
- **Create before you consume.** One page, one practice session, one small build—daily.
- **Measure inputs, not applause.** Hours trained, pages written, problems solved.
- **Keep some wins private.** Not everything needs a post to be real.
- **Choose your audience of three.** Mentor, peer, friend—people who tell you the truth, not clap by default.
- **Schedule no-post days.** Let your nervous system remember who is in charge.

Applause is dessert, not dinner.

Let the work be the meal.

When no one is watching and you *still* show up—you're free.

18.

There Is Always a New Beginning

First year of college, I was terrified of stages. A talent hunt was announced; I kept my head down. My math teacher—someone I deeply respected—asked, “Why not?” I mumbled something about not being ready. He said quietly, “If you keep hiding behind fear, you’ll never unlock your true potential.”

That sentence followed me home. By morning, it had become a dare to myself. I signed up.

When my name was called, my palms were wet, my throat dry. I chose an old, forgotten song—safe, simple. The first note trembled; the second found its footing. Somehow, I reached the last line. The hall clapped. More importantly, I could finally hear my own heartbeat without panic.

That small step changed my map. I joined the college music band. Stage fright didn’t vanish overnight—but it shrank each time I faced it.

Here’s what I learned: **fear stays until you face it.** Motion is the antidote; action is the cure. Don’t wait for courage to arrive—invite it by stepping forward.

Every beginning is new. Most are small. Start anyway.

19.

When Strength Becomes Weakness: A Lesson in Humility

“Life goes full circle” was just a phrase—until I lived it.

Mathematics was my fortress. Olympiads, state quizzes, full marks in Class 10—paper after paper, math felt like home. No exam frightened me when numbers were involved.

College changed the grammar of that comfort. Math became less about calculation and more about derivation and proof—still familiar, but different. My interactions with the professor were uneven; I questioned, suggested, and something in that rhythm didn’t land well. Around me, everything shifted—Delhi to Tamil Nadu, new food, climate, language—along with a stubborn bout of ill health.

Days before the math exam, I was in the hospital. I went in under-prepared and came out just strong enough to attempt 70–80 marks. Results were announced while I sat outside my hostel block—ironically named after **Srinivasa Ramanujan**. I logged in. Logged out. Tried again.

I had failed.

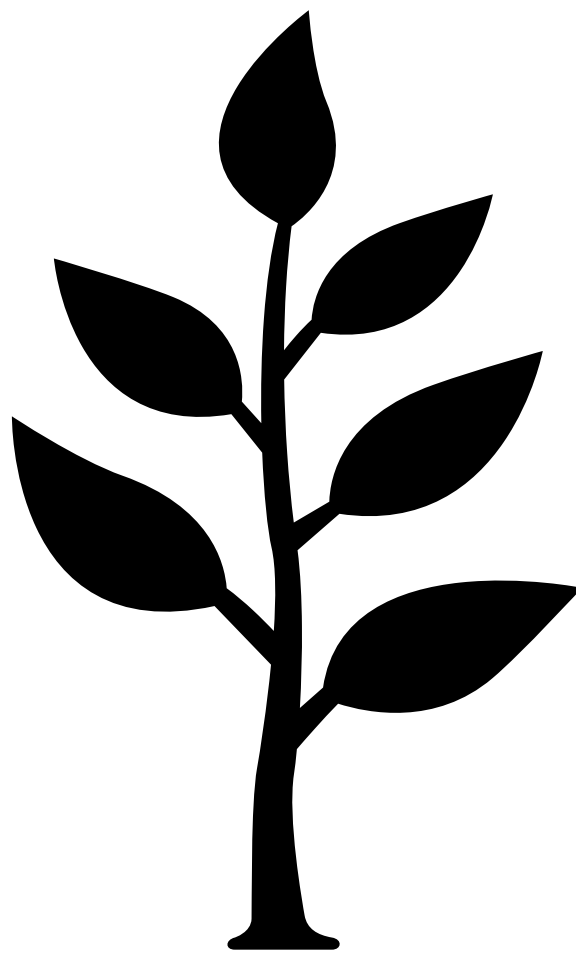
The subject that had carried me for years dropped me without warning. Disbelief. Then a quiet, hollow stillness. Re-evaluation said I was one mark short. The professor did not reconsider. The result stood.

That afternoon reset me. I learned the hardest truth: **your greatest strength can become your greatest weakness if you take it for granted.** Nothing is permanent. Nothing is guaranteed. The only safe posture is humility—show up, learn, earn it again tomorrow.

Years later, I rebuilt. I worked, and then worked some more, and scored among the highest in the **CAT**. But the grade I remember most is the F. It was my real teacher.

Life humbles you when you least expect it.

Stay grateful. Stay prepared. Keep learning.



20.

Failures and Success Arrive When You Least Expect Them

As a child, my biggest dream was to make the school football team. On trial day I tried too hard—fancy touches, forced runs, nerves louder than the whistle. I crumbled and was rejected. At ten, that felt like the end of the world.

Fifteen days later, the inter-school tournament began. Two players were injured. I was called in—unexpected selection, unexpected second chance.

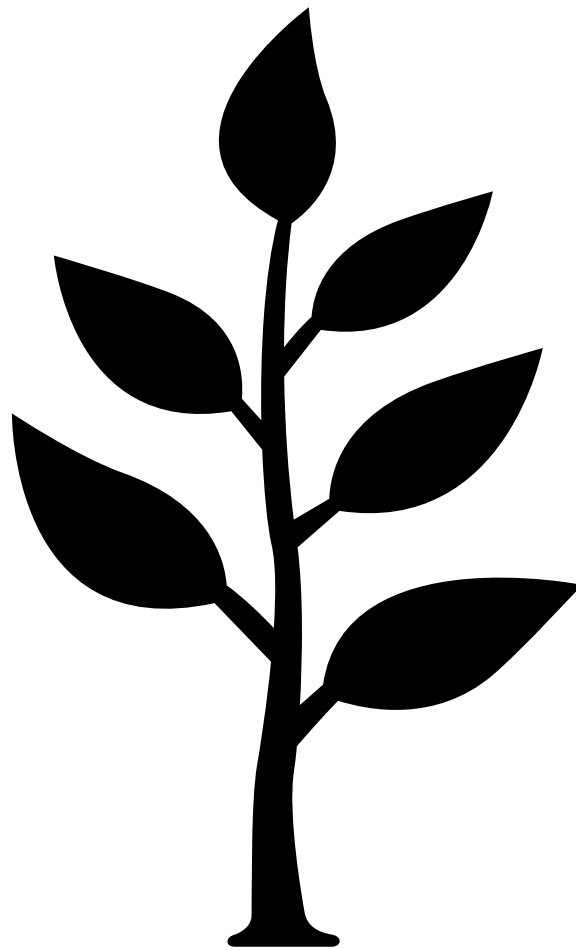
I warmed the bench for two matches. In the third, we trailed 4–0 at half-time. The coach sent on three attackers, including me. We played with nothing to lose. 4–1. 4–2. 4–3. In the 88th minute, a loose ball fell kindly; I struck it clean. 4–4. From a rejected kid to the one who rescued the match.

What changed? Not my talent. My **grip** did. I stopped clutching and started playing. Desperation had made the ball heavier; a calmer heart made it simple again.

I've learned this pattern repeats. The tighter you cling, the faster things slip. Show up, do the work, keep your palms open—and success often walks in from a side door.

It happened off the field too. At one of my lowest points, I met one of the finest people I know—by chance, or maybe by grace. The right presence, at the right moment, changed my road.

So I live by this now: trust the plan, do the work. Pray with humility, prepare with honesty. Failures will surprise you; so will victories. Both arrive unannounced. Keep moving, and sooner or later, you will be blessed.



21.

Four People Stood Together, Yet None Were Happy

A policeman watched a luxury car glide past and envied the businessman inside.

Beside him, a poor man polishing the policeman's shoes wished he could afford even those shoes.

A daily wager in worn-out slippers longed for a pair like the polisher's.

And a man with no feet looked at them all, knowing he could not wear shoes at all.

The ladder of comparison has no top step. Climb it, and you carry emptiness with you.

We forget: the deepest poverty is not of money, but of **health, love, and dignity**.

A full wallet cannot steady a failing body, replace a lost parent, or buy respect in a cruel room.

The key is simple and difficult: **gratitude**.

Count what you have—breath, hands that work, someone who cares, a mind that can learn—and the ground steadies beneath you.

Without gratitude, no achievement feels enough.

With it, even small things become a life.

22.

Be Proud of Your Own Story

You are not a passenger in your life; you are the architect. Every thought, every feeling, every small action lays another brick. Plans fail, detours appear, results wobble—but the very act of trying reshapes you. The journey may not always give you what you want; it will, if you let it, make you who you're meant to be.

No one else carries your mix of scars and strengths, your angles and echoes. You don't need a borrowed voice or a secondhand dream. Treasure your difference—it is the one gift only you can bring.

Think of **Srinivasa Ramanujan**. His mathematics didn't arrive in the standard package. It was raw, luminous, unorthodox—and easy to dismiss because it didn't fit the mold. Then **G. H. Hardy** read his letters and recognized the signature of genius. A door opened. The world shifted a little to make room for what only Ramanujan could see. His story reminds us: if you honour your uniqueness, the right eyes will find it—or your courage will create the stage it needs.

So stop shrinking to fit rooms that were never built for you.

Stop measuring your pace with someone else's clock.

Stop apologizing for the way your mind works when it is the very thing you were given to serve the world.

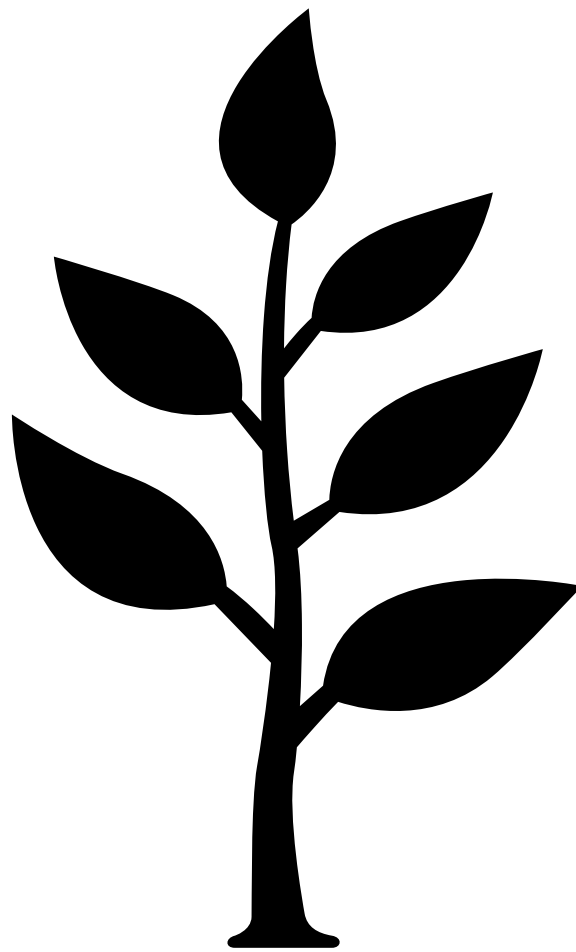
If you must compare, compare yourself with yesterday: a quieter fear, a kinder word, a page more written, a skill one shade sharper. That is enough.

Be proud of your path—not because it is perfect, but because it is **yours**.

Walk it with steadiness. Work it with love. Tell it with honesty.

The world doesn't need more copies. It needs originals who are willing to stand where they truly belong. You were never meant to follow someone else's road.

You were meant to make one.



23.

The Best Things in Life Are Built on Truth

When love rests on truth, it frees you.

Not because truth is easy, but because it is solid.

True love isn't measured by how much someone can give you back—money, attention, touch. It's the love that stays even when the other cannot return it. Think of **John Nash**—a brilliant mind lost, at times, inside delusions. At his worst, his illness put his family at risk. Almost everyone stepped away. **Alicia** didn't. She stood like a rock. Years later, when his work was recognised, he acknowledged what the world often misses: it was possible because **she stayed**. She went on to support others walking the same hard road. That, too, is love built on truth.

So be careful when social media tries to sell you fear—one headline is not the whole story. One bad incident is not proof that love is fake. Good people exist everywhere; quiet courage lives in ordinary homes.

Anything built on lies—relationships, goals, even nations—doesn't last. You can sprint on falsehood for a while, but sooner or later the ground gives way. Fast starts built on hate or hype collapse under their own weight.

Truth, on the other hand, stands. Sometimes alone. Sometimes without applause. But it stands.

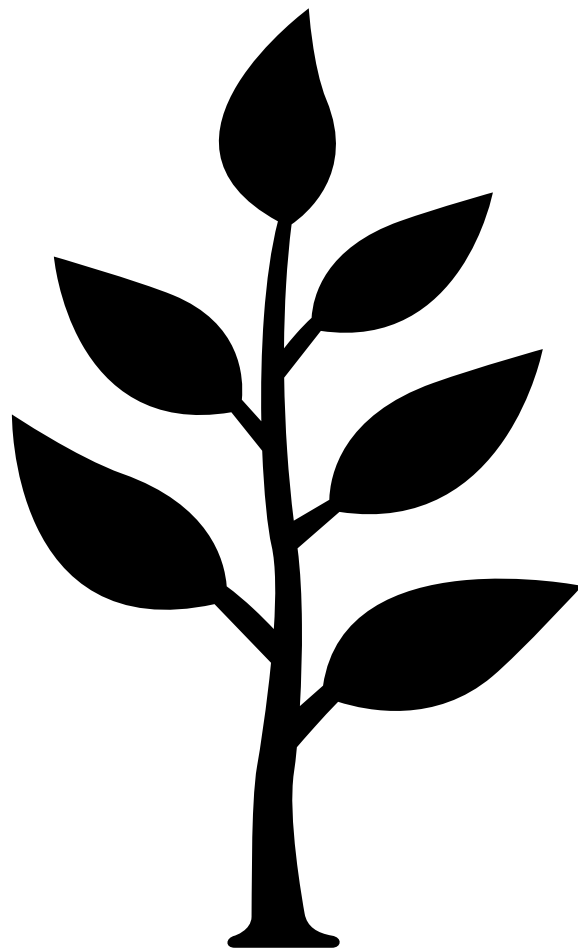
Choose it—

in what you say,

in whom you love,

in the work you do.

The best things in life are built on truth. And because they are, they endure.



24.

Your Peace Matters More Than Their Opinions

Stress visits everyone—especially when you’re reaching for something that matters. In a world of constant updates, it’s easy to feel small when others post wins, power, or glossy lives. If someone close achieves what you wanted, the sting you feel isn’t weakness. It’s being human.

But there’s a line we keep crossing: we push long after the mind is tired and the body is asking for rest. People around you may say, “Keep going. Take more exams. Work harder.” What if your heart isn’t in it? What if your nervous system is waving a red flag? The world might not notice—but **you** must.

First, name it: *I am stressed. I am tired.*

Clarity is the first kindness. Without it, you’ll sign up for six exams and fail them all—worse, you’ll fail your health. Burnout punishes effort; it does not reward it.

Our society often honors a narrow script—only a few careers are “great,” the rest are dismissed. That’s noise. Your life isn’t a polling booth. You don’t owe your peace to public opinion.

Choose the path that fits your mind and body. If a slower lane steadies you, take it. If one exam is enough this year, that’s enough. If a different calling lights you up, follow it. There is courage in staying with what brings you alive.

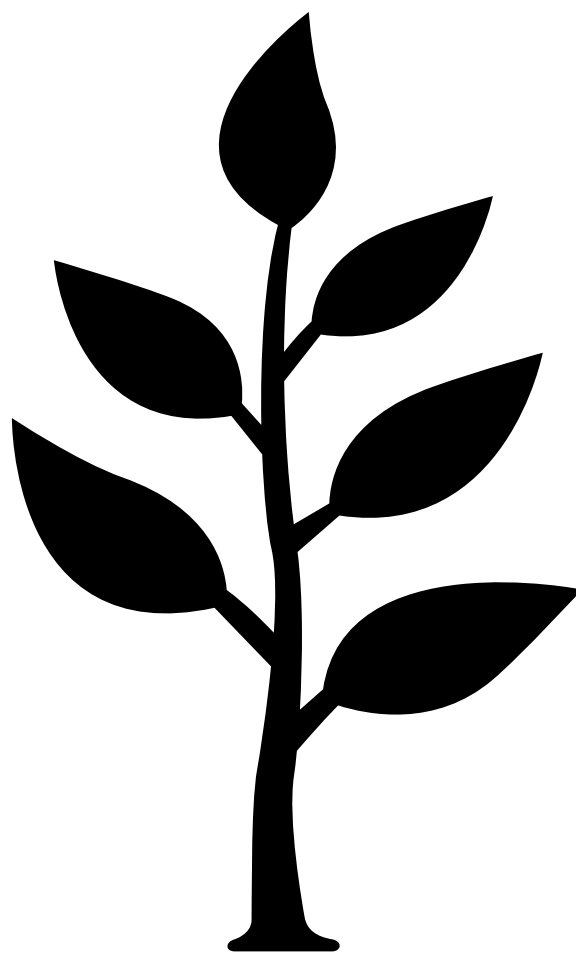
Remember:

- Rest is not quitting; it’s maintenance.

- Saying “no” to the crowd is saying “yes” to yourself.
 - Comparison starves joy; gratitude feeds it.
- People will talk. They always do. Let them.

Guard your inner weather. Find your quiet. Be kind to the person you must live with the longest—yourself.

Your peace matters more than their opinions.



25.

“The exam is a war of mind, not just books.”

25 May is close. It's normal to feel afraid, confused, tired. Remember: this paper isn't only about facts. It's about **how calmly you think when the paper tries to shake you**.

They will set unfamiliar questions to rattle your confidence. YouTube hacks may not land. Don't flinch. A steady mind with simple knowledge often beats a restless mind with notes piled high. Ask any fighter pilot or astronaut—the edge is calm.

And if someone says, “It was so easy,” smile and move on. Many say that to make others feel small. The truth: even hardworking people miss out sometimes. **Luck** sits at the table too. That doesn't make you less; it asks you to be patient.

No one in bureaucracy is born with a magic gene. If genius alone ran the world, our problems would be solved by now. What carries people through is **nerve**—to breathe, to think, to choose the next right step when the clock is loud.

There are countless stories of people once rejected who later taught the very people inside the gate. Rejection is not a verdict; it's a reroute.

So go with the flow. Trust your preparation. As the Upanishads teach: **be calm, be ready**. What is yours will come—if you meet it with a quiet mind.

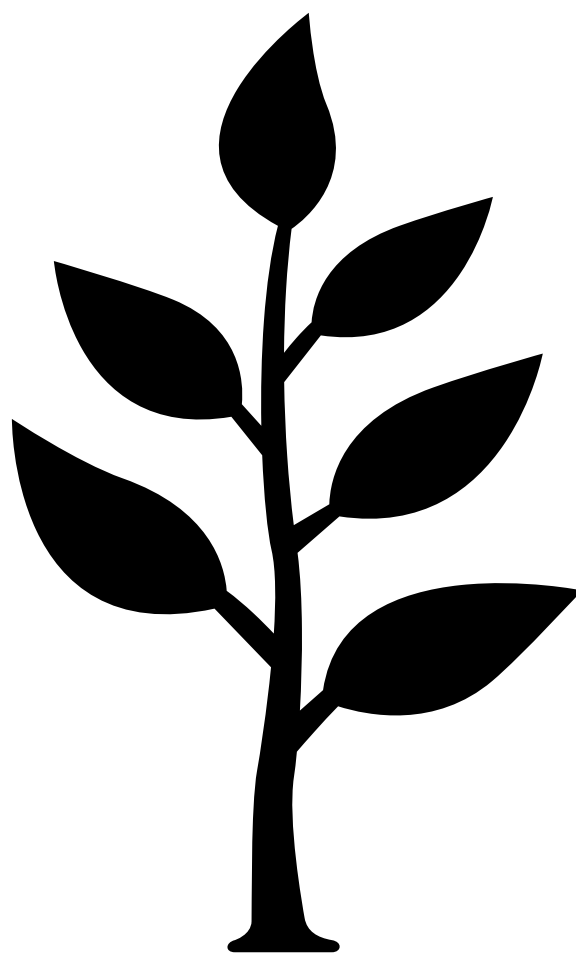
Exam-day compass

- Breathe slow for 30 seconds before you start.

- Scan the paper; begin where your mind feels warm.
- When stuck, mark, move, return—don't bleed time.
- Protect your pace; protect your mind.
- Finish strong: review, guess only when it helps, close the paper with dignity.

Hold your nerve. The real test is not the question paper.

It is your mind.



26.

Maybe

It's easy to stamp life as *good* or *bad*.

But life is more fluid than that.

A humble farmer had a strong, faithful horse that helped him till his land.

Villagers said, "You're so lucky to have such a wonderful horse."

The farmer smiled: "Maybe."

One day, the horse ran away.

"Terrible news," the villagers cried.

"Maybe," he said.

Days later, the horse returned—with ten wild, untamed horses.

"Incredible fortune!" they gasped.

"Maybe," he answered.

While taming one, the farmer's only son fell and broke his leg.

"How awful," the villagers mourned.

"Maybe," the farmer replied.

A week later, soldiers came to recruit every able-bodied young man for war.

The farmer's son, with his broken leg, was left behind.

“Your son is safe! How lucky you are!” they cheered.

The farmer looked up, eyes gentle: “Maybe.”

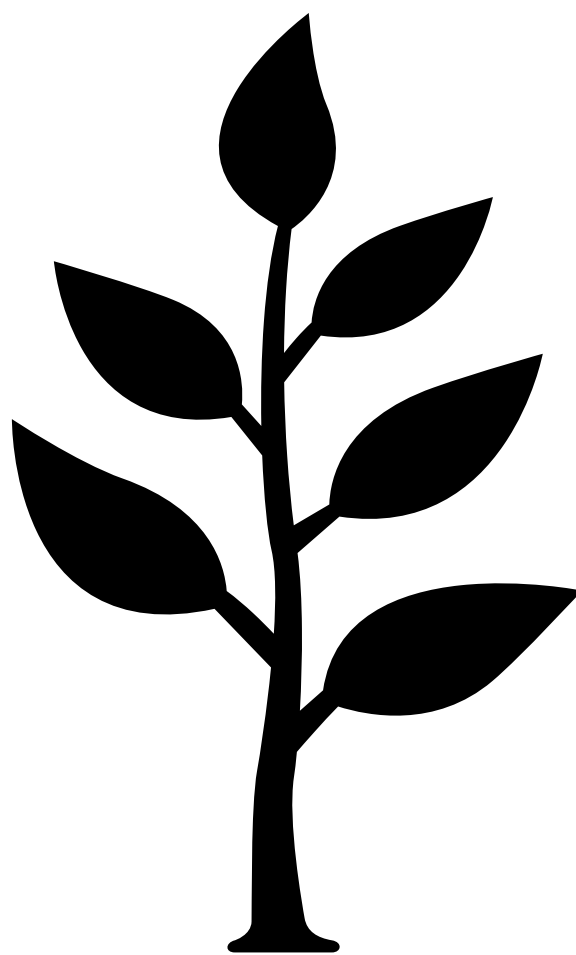
In that quiet word lies a truth we forget:

what looks like a curse may be a blessing in disguise,

and what looks like fortune may carry a storm.

Breathe. Observe. Flow.

Let life unfold before you judge it.



27.

We Always Have a Choice

Greatness is expensive.

It asks for your best—today, tomorrow, and the day after.

You will fail. You will doubt. You will want to turn back.

That is the price of building something that matters.

Mediocrity is cheaper.

It lets you settle—for what's easy, expected, convenient.

It keeps you in the job you dislike, the routine that drains you, and then asks why your days feel empty.

Your work will fill a large part of your life.

Real satisfaction comes from work you believe is **worthy**—and the only way to do worthy work is to **care** about it.

If you haven't found that yet, keep looking. Don't accept a smaller life because it's safer.

For me, the answer was **freedom**.

I walked away from high-paying roles to build my own path—to create, to innovate, to be accountable to my values.

Uncertainty came with it. Meaning did too.

What sustains me isn't comfort or salary. It's purpose.
So don't choose by other people's applause.

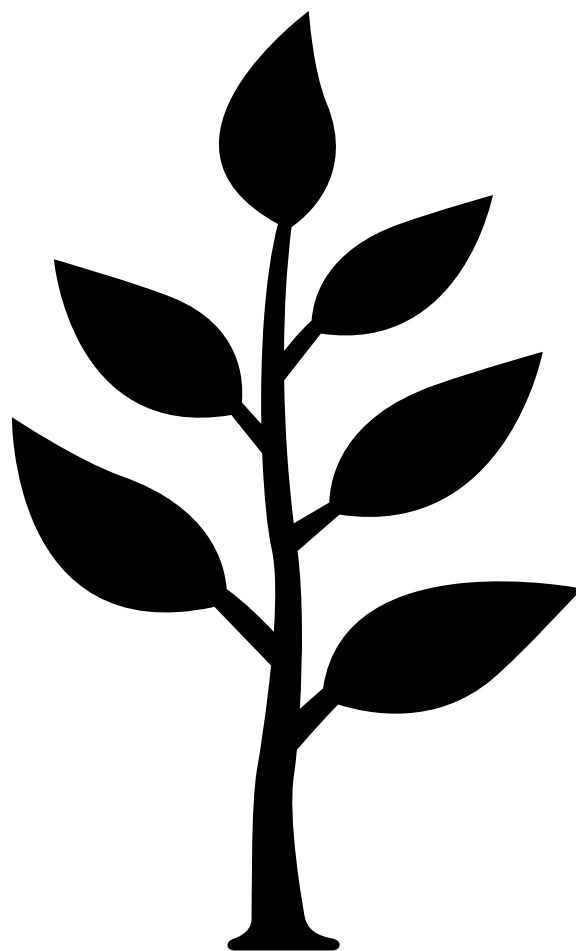
Don't pick safety over soul.

Choose the work that is truly yours—even if it demands more of
you than anything has before.

Make it your belief. Make it your mission.

Every day, the choice returns: become great, or remain average.

Choose.



28.

Live So You're Remembered Right

When jealousy rises, when anger bites, when the urge to hurt appears—pause.

Life is fragile. Headlines change in a heartbeat. None of us knows how many pages are left, so why spend them carrying poison?

Even if you become powerful—IAS, IPS, anything—what is the use if your presence wounds people? Money won't walk with you. Perhaps seven generations may enjoy it; **you** won't. What will remain is **how** you made others feel.

Remember **Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam**. A journalist once criticised him harshly. Years later, as President, Kalam didn't retaliate. He invited him in, offered food, asked about his family. The man wept. Kalam chose dignity over ego—and that's why his name still feels like light.

You don't need a title to leave a mark.

I remember **Dilwan**, our school peon, handing out water in Delhi's blazing heat—kindly, quietly, beyond duty. When he retired, the whole school cried. No office, no convoy—just humanity. And it was enough.

We are all passing through. As the poet reminds us, a life can be only “pal do pal”—a few moments.

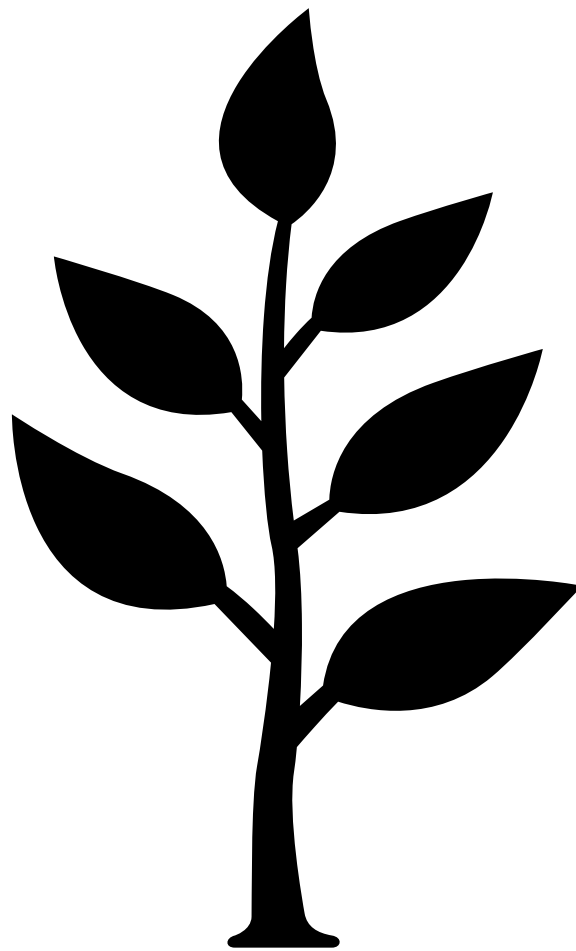
So use your few moments well:

- Let kindness be your default.
- Let silence answer small insults.
- Let generosity outlive your name.

Live so that when people speak of you, they soften—

not because you were powerful,

but because you were **good**.



29.

The Glass, the Wind, and the Wisdom

Diogenes—the philosopher who chose almost nothing—owned only a small glass and a piece of cloth. One day, even the glass was stolen. People pitied him.

He smiled. “Because of that glass, I had worries. Now even those are gone. I’m free.”

Later, **Alexander the Great** came to see him. Diogenes was lying under the open sky. Alexander stood over him.

“Please move a little,” Diogenes said, looking up, “you’re blocking the sunlight.”

Amused, Alexander replied, “I admire your philosophy. May I join you?”

“Then leave behind what you carry—wealth, titles, ambitions—and lie down like me.”

“Not now,” Alexander said. “Let me conquer the world first.”

“You may conquer the world,” Diogenes answered gently, “but you will never conquer yourself.”

The exchange became legend: peace does not come from possession, but from **renunciation**—from needing less, not owning more.

When Alexander died, stories say his hands were shown empty—not as a final command, but as a symbol. The conqueror left **with nothing**.

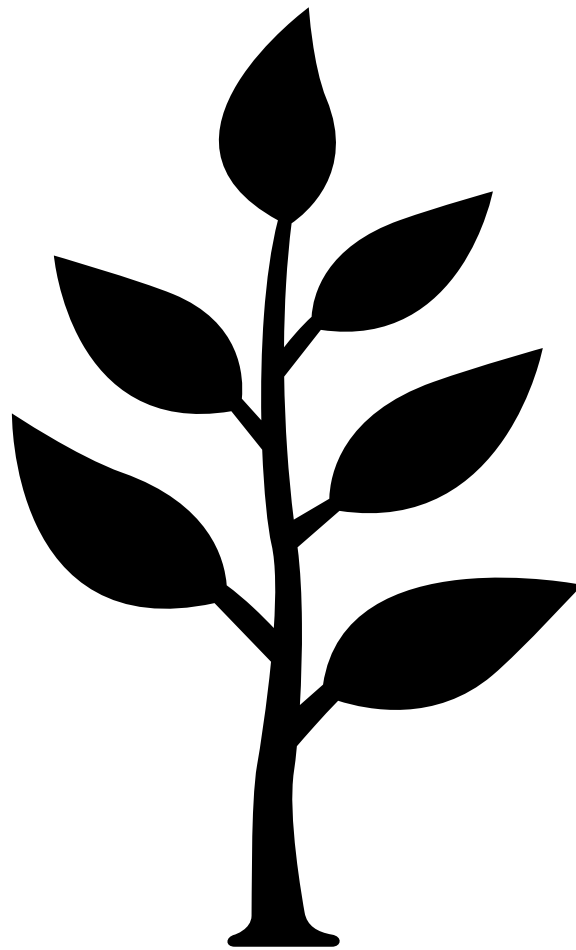
The lesson

The ego builds the illusion of ownership. We clutch the glass and forget the sun; we guard a trinket and miss the wind. Real joy begins when we stop clinging and start living.

Let the glass go.

Feel the wind.

Step back into the light.



30.

Unlearning the Chains

Most of what we're taught as children is a script: *good/bad, do/don't, stay in line.*

Dogmas. Divides. Rules that tame curiosity. Control masquerading as culture.

You are reborn the day you see the cage.

No establishment wants truly wise citizens—wisdom is disruptive. And wisdom isn't topping exams; it is **knowing yourself** and unlearning what was installed without consent.

I've met brilliant officers who turned into parrots—rote on the tongue, prejudice in the marrow. It happens elsewhere too: doctors, engineers, professionals who chose the badge over the work. When the entry ticket is status, disengagement is the destination.

Society, meanwhile, claps for pain and questions joy.

Fail—and they sigh, “What a tragedy.”

Succeed—buy a home, build a life—and whispers start: *How did he get this? Is he even honest?*

After every disaster, there are stories of looting; after every birth, the same world lectures on morals. We forget our common ending. None of us is immortal.

Designations, money, posts—these are **props**, not purpose. Hierarchies make some feel tall by making others small. In feudal

cultures, many chase “IAS” not to serve, but to be saluted. When the goal is perks, passion withers; the file moves, the soul doesn’t. Choose differently.

What to unlearn

- That approval equals truth.
- That rank equals worth.
- That loud equals right.
- That obedience equals wisdom.

What to reclaim

- Your *why*.
- Your attention (what you read, who you listen to).
- Your time (work that matters, rest that heals).
- Your courage to walk a path without applause.

You were born free. Then you were programmed.

At least—**do not die in chains.**

Know your worth. Know your why.

Know your self.

WISHPERS OF LIFE

Written by ADITYA SHARMA

My Life (Iron Man)

As a boy, I was mischievous and carefree. Life, to me, was all about fun. When I went to write exams, I believed the one who finished first would become the topper. My handwriting was so rushed that it looked as though I was scribbling in Arabic.

But life has its ways of reshaping us. My maternal grandfather became my anchor, introducing me to Swami Vivekananda and the world of books. That was my turning point. I began to discover patience and discipline. Football entered my life soon after, and the field became another classroom—it taught me teamwork, resilience, and how to fight for every inch.

There were glorious moments too. I became the CBSE Class 10 Delhi topper and was felicitated by the then Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit. Earlier, I had stood before her as well, receiving awards for consecutively winning state-level mathematics competitions. Football gave me another high: meeting my idol, Sunil Chhetri, and being selected for the district-level team. Later, academics and perseverance carried me through some of the toughest competitive exams—UPSC Prelims five times, Mains three times, CAT, NTSE, and more.

But if success gave me confidence, setbacks gave me character. At 17, I thought exams alone defined learning and happiness. College changed that belief. There, I met people who lived with purpose, and I found myself drawn into social service. Serving others taught me something no textbook ever could: “To know yourself, you must lose yourself in the service of others.”*

Then came my UPSC journey—a marathon of trials and triumphs. Prelims, Mains, Interviews, again and again. Each stage taught me courage and perseverance. More than results, it taught me how to carry pressure, how to rise after every fall, and how to keep faith even in uncertainty.

Along this path, I met kindred souls, and together we built *Karmayogi*. That little initiative soon became a world of its own. My life changed because it was no longer about my success—it was about being a part of the success stories of many others. That joy of seeing someone else rise, knowing I had played a small role, became more fulfilling than any medal or certificate I had ever won.

Looking back now, I feel a quiet gratitude. I thank my setbacks as much as my triumphs, because both shaped me. If people call me *Iron Man* today, it is not because I never broke down, but because I learned how to bend without breaking, how to fall and still rise, how to face storms and still move forward.

Life has given me gold medals, recognition, and achievements. But above all, it has given me stories—of resilience, of failure, of rediscovery. And those stories, more than anything else, have made me who I am.



Aditya Sharma
Iron Man

