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A photograph of a woman with long dark hair and glasses hugging a young girl with pink glasses. The girl is wearing a floral patterned top and a yellow skirt. They are in a room with a window showing green plants outside.

UNSCRIPTED GRACE

A MEMOIR OF LOVE, LEADERSHIP, AND LETTING GO



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Part 1



ORIGINS AND ANCHORS

Chapter 1

BETWEEN SILENCE AND SPARK



Early influences, and the questions that never stopped.

Prologue: *Didibhai, Khub Bhalo Likhecho*

Where growth began—not in frameworks, but in love.

I grew up in a steel township in West Bengal, in a Bengali home where growth was not a goal—it was a way of life. We are two sisters. Our days were filled with discipline and delight.

Like, waking at 5 a.m. in the bitter cold to practice classical singing, the harmonium wheezing like a loyal companion.

Writing essays during holidays—not for grades, but to reflect, to learn, to stretch the mind.

Riding a Lambretta scooter with wind in our hair and permission in our hearts.

Growth was everywhere.

In the school library, where books whispered.

In the cardboard cut outs as crafts submissions.

In the home courtyard, where elders debated ideas with the seriousness of philosophers.

In the way my mother whipped up fusion food with staple ingredients before I learnt the term “fusion food”.

My paternal grandparents had passed away when my dad was young – I never could meet them. My maternal grandmother and her siblings were believers in the mind’s infinite capacity.

They taught us that intellect must be nurtured early, like a sapling. That curiosity was sacred.

That reflection was a daily ritual. We were raised in a home where education was sacred, and gender was never a barrier. Curiosity was currency. Books were inheritance. Growth was non-negotiable.

The memory I return to most—especially when I seek inspiration—is of my dadu.

I was twelve - thirteen. It was raining—torrential, unforgiving. I had written a poem for the school magazine, and I wanted his help. He lived about forty-five minutes away by rickshaw. I didn’t expect him to come.

But at 9 p.m., soaked to the bone, he arrived.

He handed me the poem—edited, gently. My mother scolded me for troubling him. She made it a point to tell him that he must stop indulging me in my tapestry of ideas!

And he replied:

“You forget that she turned to me with trust that I can add value to her. How can I not be here? It is also my way to keep myself relevant in her life.”

Then he turned to me, eyes twinkling, voice soft:

“Didibhai, khub bhalo likhecho. Ami ektu change korechi. Dekho toh, tomar bhalo lagey kina?”

“My dear granddaughter, you have written well. I’ve only made a few minor edits.

Can you validate for yourself whether you like the way it reads now?”

It wasn’t just an edit. It was an invitation. A treatment of equals. A lesson in trust, relevance, and the humility of offering—not imposing—an alternate view.

Shortly after, he passed. But that moment stayed.

It shaped how I listen. How I design. How I show up—for my daughter, my team, myself.

This memoir begins here. With a poem. With a grandfather. With a rain-soaked act of relevance.

Because leadership, for me, has always been personal. Relational. Always rooted in grace.

Reflection

- ◀ Who showed up for you when they didn’t have to?
- ◀ What early memory shaped how you lead today?
- ◀ How do you offer edits—with humility, and/or authority?



Chapter 2

LEAVING TO BECOME



The beginning of my outward journey, and the foundation of my inner compass. *Where independence began—not in isolation, but in interdependence.*

I left home at sixteen after my 10th grade. It was my boromashi's (my mother's eldest sister who used to reside in IIT Powai, Bombay) resolve and support that gave confidence to my parents that I will be ok.

I moved to Pune to study at Fergusson College. It was my decision—and it was respected. No drama. Just quiet trust from my parents that I knew what I was doing.

I carry immense gratitude for that. They gave everything to ensure that my sister and I could build a life grounded in financial freedom and intellectual prowess.

I was a hosteler. This was a time when phone calls were a luxury.

We, the hostelers – the young girls, waited for 9 p.m. IST, when the rates dropped to a quarter of the daytime cost. We'd rush to the phone

booth, hoping to beat the queue. The calls were short, precious, and packed with emotion.

“Ma, I’m fine.”

“Yes, I ate.”

“No, I didn’t cry today.”

Sometimes, that was enough.

In my new environment, everything felt too large—too loud, too unfamiliar. The hostel food tasted like someone else’s childhood. The local dialect – alien. The city moved fast, and I moved slowly.

At night, I curled into myself, trying to make sense of the choice I had made. I had left home to chase something—growth, perhaps, or the promise of becoming. But all I could feel was the ache of absence. One night, over a shaky phone call, I told my father I couldn’t do it. That I had made a mistake. That I wanted to come back.

He didn’t argue. He didn’t ask me to reconsider. Within a few days, he was in Pune, staying at a hotel near the college hostel. I still remember the hotel. Eventually, my parents would come to this hotel many a times because both my younger sister and I studied at Fergusson. She left home after her 12th grade.

Coming back to the situation - my father didn’t hover. He didn’t intrude. He simply stayed for 10 days —close enough to be felt, and yet with distance to let me think.

Each day, he asked me one question:

“What would life look like if you got back?”

And then, gently:

“Think five years from now—will you regret the fact that you gave up too soon?”

There was no admonition. No binary of right or wrong. Just a question that invited me to imagine myself beyond the fog of now.

I didn’t know then, but he too was navigating his own ache. The train ride to Pune wasn’t just geography—it was emotional terrain. He had watched his daughter leave home with determination. And now, he was watching her falter, unsure whether to hold on or let go. In that hotel room, he carried the weight of restraint—wanting to fix it but choosing instead to trust me. His love was not loud. It was deliberate. It was the kind that waits.

When I went to drop him off at the Pune railway station, my heart was heavy. But something had shifted. I wasn’t sure I could do it—but I knew I had to try. For my parents, yes. But also, for the version of myself they believed in. The one I hadn’t yet met.

That’s what parenting was. Not rescue. Not instruction. But presence. The kind that sits quietly in a hotel room near your hostel, asking you questions that only you can answer. The kind that takes a train across states, carrying both hope and heartbreak, and leaves behind a quiet faith that you’ll find your way.

Time management and money management weren’t skills—they were survival strategies. We learned to stretch coins and minutes. We learned to share.

At the end of the month, when most of us were broke, we pooled our money and shared a meal. There were Sundays when we’d bevy up the thalis—extra pooris, shrikhand, sabji, pulao—so that dinner could be a repeat performance.

Relationships were intense.

Interdependencies were real. Fights were fierce. Possessiveness was poetic.

If you were my best friend, you were mine.

There was no way you were allowed to be someone else's best friend.

It wasn't insecurity—it was loyalty, unrefined and unapologetic.

We grew up together. We grew into ourselves.

We learned that freedom wasn't about being alone—it was about choosing who to be with, and how to be.

Later, when I entered the world of leadership, I often thought back to those days.

To the shared thalis.

To the phone booth queues.

To the possessive friendships.

To the quiet trust of my parents.

Because leadership, I realized, is not just about vision.

It's about resourcefulness.

It's about acknowledging interdependence.

It's about being trusted before you've proven anything.

And it's about leaving—not to escape, but to become.

Reflection

- ◀ What did leaving home teach you about trust?
- ◀ How did scarcity shape your creativity?
- ◀ Who held your story before you knew how to tell it?



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