

Buried Thoughts

One life, many stories



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Joseph K Jose



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This book is Dedicated to

Appa, Amma, Adarsh and Arun

For protecting me with your love

Karla

For the best memories of my life

Nibin Kurisingal

For being my confessional

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Message

I have known Joseph and his father for a long time. Though Joseph has given his book a fancy title, I feel that the thoughts that have been resurrected are really insightful. As confessed by the author himself, every episode has a biographical touch. What impressed me in the book is the conscious effort made by the author to portray his vivid memories and to provide them with meaningful insights in a simple, lucid and forthright style. This book reminds me of the short stories related to school days ending with “the moral.” Positivism and creative reflections are the other two special features that I noticed in the work.

I wish the young author all the best in his work and all success in his endeavour.

Justice Kurian Joseph
Judge, Supreme Court of India

New Delhi

November 4, 2015

Preface

I strongly believe that writing a preface to my book would be as good as writing a preface to my own life—thoughts I have buried within these pages are my own encounters with life. There is nothing special in them, but I am sure that all the incidents, memories and stories that are shared here could easily be related to everyone's experiences. What makes it different is that I tell these stories from beyond a certain point of reckoning in my life, a point so critical that I do not really care even if my image would shatter in the eyes of the people who adore me. This is a vivisection of my life through a third person's eye. Socrates once said, "An unexamined life is not worth living." If we look at our own life experiences from a third person's eye, we might see some light in it; if we share that light, it can guide a few and not necessarily ourselves.

These are my intuitions, which are not judged and narrowed down to a mere binary classification of right or wrong. The destinies here are not just heaven and hell; they are the crossroad in between. A confused boy's way of making sense of the world around, and the strange ways all our lives are woven together. This is my version of the chaos theory, trying to realize the underlying patterns in the randomness. Everything happened for a reason—the people who crossed paths in my life, those who gave me lessons and those who shared moments with me. In the midst of all this pandemonium, I can see the light: the lessons instead of the meaningless story; the eventual dawn instead of the darkening dusk and the element of hope instead of the doom that comes before it. I believe that the greatest thing life has ever taught me is about hope—the light ahead of the curve. Some years earlier, I began writing as a way

of liberation for feelings that were smouldering inside my mind. I wanted to share my experiences with the world so that others could see and learn from my mistakes. I wanted to confess the bad things I had done so that I would not see haunting faces anymore when I go to sleep. That was the reason I began writing blogs. The thought of making them into a book was first put forward to me by a friend who said, “Joseph, we have only one life and you should leave a little mark behind before you leave the world; make your writings into a book.”

In a nutshell, my writings arise from the idea that humans do not evolve in isolation. Evolution occurs when we share our experiences and create a collective consciousness. This book is a revisit to the inner demons I have hitherto hidden from the world, and I believe that everyone can relate to it.

So, here I am with my first book and the tools that I have used for narrating each story are: An extra eye that saw the unseen, an extra ear that heard the unheard and an extra heart that felt the unfelt. I had spent four years on this book, as I really wanted it to be worth the reader’s time and I am not sure whether I would pen another book.

With Love
Joseph

Acknowledgements

There are many who supported me in this journey and it would be a crime if I do not mention the names of a few people who invested their time and hard work into this book.

Big thanks are due to:

The people behind the book

Nima Muraleedharan, the chief editor of this book, has been with me from the inception of the idea of this book to its realization. Amritha M. Nair, who has provided valuable guidance and inputs to make this book better. Ashif Shereef, himself an author, has helped in proofreading and fine-tuning the final work, which further improved its quality.

The great hearts

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My family

Mom, I am indebted to you for your relentless prayers, late-night coffees and assuring touches while I was writing down my stories. Dad, you are the man I have loved the most in this world, and I want to thank you for giving me stories

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to write. Arun, thank you for being what you are to both me and our entire family. Adarsh, my elder brother, I am inspired by the silent but deep love you have for me. Syna and Alina, my sister in laws, for loving me like your own brother. Deepu, Shalini and Anand, there is nothing on this earth more to be priced than true friendship, needless to say, you are family.

Kancor and colleagues

I am really indebted to you for all the love and support showered on me. Especially to you Jinoj, for not giving up on me.

Love

When we love, we always strive to become better than we are. When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.

—Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Chapter 1

To Mariyu, with Love

Nothing is lost until you rediscover it.

—Nilathezuthu, Bobby Jose

I used to hate my mother for her nagging questions; sometimes, things went out of hand and ended in an exchange of harsh words between my mother and me. Today, it was different: All her unnecessary questions led me to my childhood and also to the most important person who made my childhood days memorable.

I was busy typing away, as I wanted to complete some work before I leave for Mumbai the next day. Mom was standing nearby and was involved in her customary chatter to which I was only giving half an ear.

“Joseph, shall I prepare some pickle and pack it up? You can take it along to Mumbai.”

I pretended not to hear her and she repeated the question. Without looking up, I replied,

“Mom, I am going on an official trip. I will be eating out most of the time and travelling a lot. I don’t think I will be cooking any food to mix your pickle with,” I said, warily.

“You told me you would be staying with a friend there. What if he prepares something?”

She tried to justify her decision to pack up some pickle for me. I knew my mom well.

She would not leave me in peace until and unless I agreed to her decision. Usually, this was preceded by a long argument in which she won every time. As I had neither the mood nor the time to argue, I just smiled at her politely and said,

“Yes, do pack some. I might need it.”

She gave me a triumphant smile, then turned to my open suitcase and started a final check to see whether I had packed everything.

“So, would you be travelling the whole of Mumbai or just some parts of it?”

She asked this as if she knew the city inside out.

I breathed out in frustration. I really needed to get this work done before I left and with all these questions, I was finding it difficult to concentrate. Without looking up, I told her, “I will be visiting quite a number of places, mom, and you may not know all of them.” My tone declared that I was busy and wanted to be left alone.

She looked at me and said, “Why don’t you just tell me the names? I don’t think you would need your hands and eyes to speak.”

“Lower Parel, Andheri, Navi Mumbai, Kandivali, Thane,” I said in a breath without looking up. I just could not allow her to start again about how I never gave her enough attention and how it was difficult for her to make conversation with me, blah, blah, blah.

But neither my tone nor my disinterest encouraged her to back out. When it comes to arguments, never expect a

woman to back out. There is always an unquenchable thirst in them to win every one of them, a gift from God.

“Did you say Kandivali?” she asked in excitement.

I looked up. “Why? Do you know someone there?” I asked doubtfully. I really did not want to carry another package of pickle, or worse, some home-cooked delicacy to some unknown relative there. It always worried me. It is no fun to open one’s well-packed suitcase only to find pickle stains on neatly pressed shirts.

“If I am not mistaken, our Mariyu was from Kandivali.”

My heart sank. I started mentally preparing plans to save my shirts, *probably, wrapping them in plastic bags would do the trick.*

“Who is Mariyu?”

“Don’t you remember her? She took care of you when you were little.”

She left the room and went into the kitchen. She had my attention now. I scowled while trying to remember something. I closed the laptop, leaned over my bed and screamed towards the door.

“Who?”

Getting no reply, I shifted the laptop to my side and got up from my bed. *Women (that includes my mom too) never talk when you want to listen to them,* I thought.

I went into the kitchen and said,

“Tell me more, please mom.” I flattered her to talk more.

“Your aunt, Sr. Villanova, had brought her from Mumbai to take care of you. She was here till you were four years old—your Mariyu chechi.”

Some faint memory struck me when I heard the name; it was similar to trying to remember a favourite movie scene that was buried deep under time.

“Oh yes, I remember. Where is she now?”

“God knows. Your aunt had taken her back when you became four. I think she went back to the same convent that she had come from.”

It has been long since I remembered her. Strangely, when I remembered her, I felt warmth in my chest and a longing to see her and know more about her.

“How did she end up in our home from Mumbai?”

My mom looked at me and smiled. I knew that smile, one that led to a long nostalgic story. I hopped onto the kitchen counter to listen.

“Well, you know, you were a surprise to us. We never planned to have you and you came along most unexpectedly.”

I smiled at this. This information was not new to me. My mom used to tell me this throughout my childhood whenever I used to play naughty pranks on her.

She playfully pecked my cheek and continued,

“I had taken leave from work, for a year, after having you. My vacation was up and I had to get back to work. You were just a year old and I did not know how to manage. It was easy to get a servant but very difficult to get a nanny, that too a good one. I had to leave my precious one in someone else’s hands and I really wanted it to be someone I trusted. I had told all this to aunt Villanova when she called from Mumbai, where she was working at that time. Listening to my difficulty, she brought Mariyu to us,” she said with a sigh and continued.

“Mariyu was 15 then. She was orphaned after her father and mother had died and was being brought up in the convent where your aunt worked. I was a little scared, because the girl was only fifteen. *What did she know about taking care of a baby?* She did not even know the language and I had a tough time communicating to her. She was humble and patient enough to learn and understand my instructions. I taught her everything for the next few weeks, how to bathe you, feed you, how to console you when you cried. She was quick to learn things and you too began to like her.” A smile flashed across mom’s face as she remembered those days and continued.

“Soon, I started work. However, I was a bit nervous in the beginning. I used to rush back home, taking half the day off, but all the time I found that she was taking care of you lovingly. Slowly, I began to be at ease and trusted her with you. And you too wanted Mariyu chechi for everything. You never wanted me. You would cry if I tried to bathe you. You were very attached to her.”

“Hmmm!” I nodded and waited for her to continue.

“Do you remember how, when we took you to ‘Ashathi’ (an old lady who taught children the letters of the alphabet for the first time) you bawled for Mariyu, saying you wanted her to come along?” my mom asked me in excitement.

A frail memory soon evaded my mind—that of her smile, her voice and her cotton cloth brushing against my skin when she hugged me. It was similar to one getting the flashes of a dream that one had the previous night, something in bits and pieces.

“Yeah, I remember it vaguely. Tell me more about her,” I said, longing to hear more from my mother.

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