

PENGUIN BUSINESS

## THE MONK IN THE CORNER OFFICE

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Today, he works at the intersection of mindfulness, emotional intelligence and leadership, with a focus on practical, accessible tools for daily life.

As founder of Llama, he helps companies build cultures where well-being and high performance go hand in hand. He has trained leaders across five continents, reaching over 1,00,000 people from organizations such as Deloitte, the Boston Consulting Group, the Aditya Birla Group, etc., and has spoken at global forums including Nasscom as well as the governments of the UK, Germany and Canada. Gopi also teaches Search Inside Yourself—the very popular mindfulness-based emotional intelligence programme born at Google.

Gopi's mission is simple yet radical: to demystify meditation and make workplace well-being the norm. His previous book, *Creativity Unleashed: 48 Days to Unlock Your Creative Spirit*, offers a mindfulness-based DIY approach to creativity.

To learn more, or invite him to speak or train on mindfulness and EI, visit [www.gopikrishnaswamy.com](http://www.gopikrishnaswamy.com).

The  
**MONK** in the  
**CORNER**  
**OFFICE**

WORK LIFE WISDOM FOR THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

**GOPI KRISHNASWAMY**

PENGUIN  
BUSINESS

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# PENGUIN BUSINESS

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# A Note to the Reader

As we navigate a volatile and complex world where AI is competing with and even replacing humans, emotional intelligence or EI has become more important than IQ. How could one develop this kind of intelligence and the skills that make up EI? Through training programmes? Books? Perhaps there is no single answer.

However, there is one skill that helps—mindfulness. It is arguably the mother of all skills. Both EI and mindfulness are vast topics and have already been explored by many exceptional minds. My attempt though is to draw a connection between the two subjects in a simple yet powerful and engaging way that readers can relate to.

*The Monk in the Corner Office* has evolved through decades of my own meditation practices and years of teaching mindfulness and training people in emotional intelligence. Through the characters of Krish and Sid, I've tried to bring to life the timeless wisdom of mindfulness and connect it to the important skills that constitute emotional intelligence. Because time and again, I've seen that mindfulness helps build the skills that are so critical for success at work and life in the 21st century.

Key insights are highlighted through the book for your easy reference and recall. Sid's journal at the end of each chapter is a portal through which you can easily access the important points of each topic and also spark your own reflections.

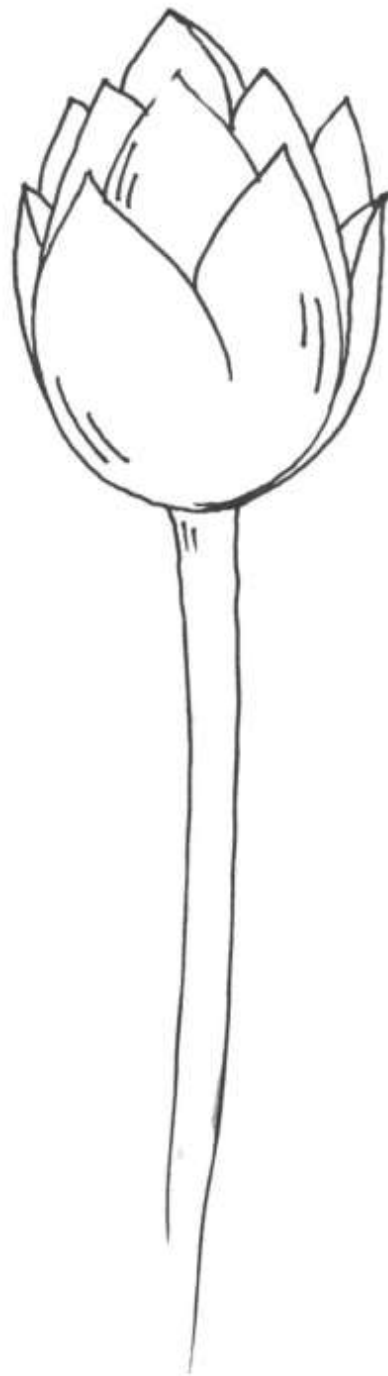
My suggestion is that you not only read the book as you would a novel—each chapter in sequence—but also go back to the different chapters. Read them again, make notes and reflect on how that particular topic and skill applies to your life.

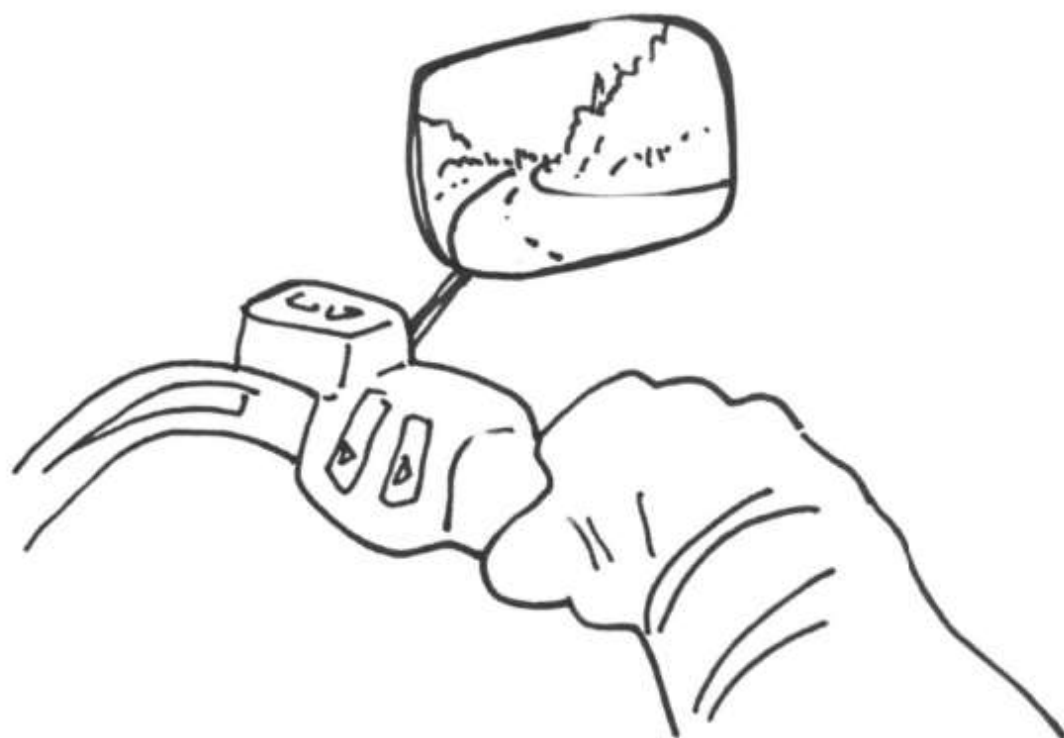
Having a separate journal would be an excellent way to further reinforce the learning. And finally, as the old saying goes, 'When you teach one person, two people learn!'. So, find a way to share your experience. It is a powerful way to turbocharge your learning.

And above all, enjoy the ride!

# Part 1

## Mastering Your Self





## **Day 0: The Journey Begins**

As he tightened the straps on the saddlebags, Sidharth looked down at the powerful V twin cylinders of his Harley Davidson. As his gaze moved along the dusty Screaming Eagle chrome pipes, a weary unshaven face looked back at him. Dull eyes met briefly and Sid quickly looked away. He was not ready to confront his thoughts. Yet.

He got up and inspected the bike. It was a fine piece, and in the years he had had it, it had earned him many admiring and envious looks.

The city was still quiet, except for the birds sensing the break of dawn. Summer was almost over and the early rains had cooled the city considerably in the last few days.

It was 5 a.m. Sid deeply inhaled the smell of wet earth as he straddled the bike. He reset the odometer to mark the beginning of the journey. 'On the dot baby,' Sid whispered as he fired up the ignition and the legendary engines sputtered to life. The first grumble of a Harley had always been one of Sid's favourite moments but he barely heard it this time.

In a few minutes, Sid was out of his neighbourhood, making his way towards the empty highway roads. A few early morning joggers turned their heads as his bike rumbled past.

The V twins were breathing easy as the bike coasted at a steady 80 kmph and soon Sid had crossed the city limits. As the morning light chased away the low hanging mist over the fields, Sid's mind kept going back to the last few months.

It was one of those things about biking that Sid liked. A good road and a good bike let his mind wander freely. These days, it was mostly in the past. He let the wind tug at the memories that surfaced as he leaned into corners with the same ease as the birds that soared overhead rode the air currents. The road whizzed past just a few inches from his feet, a blurred reminder of reality. He looked back at how it all started.

In the beginning, he had barely even noticed it. He would wake up feeling tired and put it down to the previous night's party. As a rising star at one of the world's leading IT consulting firms, Sid attended several office parties. But last year, especially, he had steadily grown to dislike more and more the polite chatter that these gatherings all started with and the platforms for self-glorification that they invariably ended up as.

That was when the drinks had started helping. A few quick ones in the first hour would dull the pain of having to smile politely at all the faces around him. The next few would allow him to provide socially acceptable comments and finally, the last few would reduce everything around into a bearable blur. The alcohol put him into a restless stupor that later passed for sleep. A sleep during which he often dreamt that he was the clown as the world passed by pointing and smirking at him. The days had been full of caffeine and nicotine. Each day had to keep pace with the restlessness of the night. Or was it the other way round? Sid wasn't sure.

The wind roared, tugging at Sid's jacket as if its sole purpose was ripping it apart but he barely noticed. The engine's steady drone was like a pulse as he effortlessly leaned into another corner. In these moments, the bike felt like an extension of his body as it gracefully bent along with him. Sid was completely in tune with the machine and it felt like time itself was taking a pause. Sid wondered if he had ever been this much in sync with anything in his life. The answer rose from the depths of his mind as if the wind had finally managed to get a grip on it. No!

It had not always been like this. For many years, Sid had been a star. Whether it was in college, or after that, he had always been known as a winner. One who had what it took to be the best and stay at the top. His career had started off on the fast track. The salary and bonuses got better each year. There were several failed relationships, but he had written off each as a testimony to his unwavering dedication to his career.

The last twelve months had become a bit of a blur, though. Caffeine-induced meetings, alcohol-induced sleep

and countless miles on flights. And then finally, that fateful morning two weeks ago. The morning he had woken up but collapsed after getting out of bed and taking a few steps towards the bathroom.

The bike slowed suddenly. Involuntarily, his foot had tapped the rear brake as the memory gripped him. Fortunately, the Harley was on a dry road and a quick tap of the front brake ensured the bike did not fishtail. Sid shook his head. Whether it was to reprimand himself for the braking lapse or a shudder resulting from the recollection of that morning, he was not very sure.

The sun was still rising behind him as Sid rolled steadily towards the hills. He could see some windmills in the distance and smiled. He had always liked windmills. They always reminded him of Don Quixote. But this time, it was different. It almost felt like he was a modern version of Don Quixote, charging on his gleaming steed towards the huge arms that sprouted from the hills and stabbed the sky with steely fingers, writhing in anticipation of crushing him.

Sid's mind went back two weeks to that eventful day. The doctors had not been kind. They had been thorough in their diagnosis and ruthless in their communication. In simple non-medical terms, he was burnt out. The writing on the wall was in bright neon letters: STOP.

For a few days, Sid had stayed at the hospital. And while he was there, it dawned on him that he had not taken a break in years. The realization had jarred at first and he had not slept that night. 'What am I doing in life?' he had wondered, as he lay in bed, counting off the hours to daybreak. And as morning approached, in that strange state between sleep and wakefulness, Sid had taken a decision. He would take that break.

It was almost as if the decision itself was an elixir. Sid had got up with a smile, something he had not done in a long time. The next few days had been spent in cementing his decision and informing people. He had sent out a few emails informing his colleagues. Surprisingly, the world had not fallen apart as he had greatly feared. Maybe he was not as indispensable as he had assumed.

For over a year now, Sid had thought about a motorcycle road trip but had never found the courage to just take off. But now, nothing was going to hold him back.



## **Day 1: An Adventure Called Uncertainty**

The truck in front of him belched diesel fumes. He had now been driving for hours and had the company of a truck every few hundred metres on the road. This one was painted in bright colours and had the ubiquitous ‘Horn OK Please’ phrase written on the back. Over the years, Sid had come across a few different stories about this.

One version Sid had heard was that that this was a custom from the Second World War. Facing a petrol shortage, trucks were often driven on kerosene and kerosene, being more volatile, was prone to exploding at the slightest accident.

And so, to warn drivers behind them, these trucks had 'Horn Please. On Kerosene' painted behind them. Post war, this had morphed into 'Horn Please OK' or 'Horn OK Please'.

There was another version with a marketing spin that Sid liked better. Somewhere in the 60's, the Indian business conglomerate Tatas started marketing a detergent called OK, which had the logo of a lotus flower. The story goes that the Tatas used the trucks they made to market their detergent by painting the backs of the trucks with the lotus symbol and OK. Over time, the logo merged with the 'Horn Please' and today you could see that trucks had 'Horn OK Please' or even 'Horn OK TATA Please' on the back.

As he held back behind the truck, Sid realized the road had a lot of potholes on the right. He slowly moved to the left to avoid the bad patches and make himself visible in the left rear mirror of the truck. He was also looking out for the ubiquitous 'cleaner', the chap who would be hanging out of the left window of the truck.

'Cleaner' was a misnomer. The trucks were almost always dirty.

The cleaner was more of a manual indicator, assistant, whipping boy and wannabe driver all rolled into one who would one day drive his own truck and have his own cleaner.

A hand emerged from the window of the truck and motioned Sid to go ahead. He flipped a gear and the Harley willingly complied.

The barren countryside was giving way to green now with paddy fields stretching out on both sides of the highway. The air felt fresher and the trees swayed gently in the breeze. Bursts of wildflowers by the side of the road added colour to the landscape.

*I'll stay on the road for the next hour or so,* Sid thought as he stopped briefly for a few sips of water. Roads could be fun if you were in the right mood for them. But they could also be painful, tiring and slow. It was often about perspective. Just like the bottle of water he put back into his rucksack. *Was it half empty? Or half full?* His mind considered the possibilities. *It's always full,* he decided. *Just that one half was full of water and the other half was full of air.*

Growing up, Sid had shown a natural talent for thinking out of the box. He often thought it was this ability that had helped him stay ahead in life. But sometimes he felt it was the same ability that made him imagine problems where there were none.

A big sign on the road informed Sid of a border check post ahead. As he started slowing down, he noticed a line of cars, buses and trucks. On nearing the post, he could see what seemed like a bit of a commotion. 'What is the problem, sir?' Sid asked one of the policemen patrolling the road near where he had stopped. 'Cross-border vehicular movement has been stopped due to some political tension in the neighbouring state, sir,' the constable replied.

'I have ridden a long way and I cannot go back. Can I please go ahead?' Sid pleaded.

'Sorry, sir. Our orders have come from the government and we cannot permit anyone beyond this point. There are many others here like you and they will all start demanding the same thing, sir,' the cop was polite but firm as he stood in the middle of the road with one hand on his rifle.

Sid wheeled the Harley off to the side of the road, parked and sat down on the kerb. He looked up at the sky and saw clouds that threatened rain. Where would he stay? How long would this take?

It was about ten minutes later that he noticed him, a tall man with long, thick silver hair speaking with the same policeman. From their body language, Sid could make out that it was an amicable conversation. In fact, the policeman was being very respectful towards the other man. *Must be some politician or bureaucrat*, he thought as he went back to occupying himself with the challenge he faced. That's when Sid saw the policeman point to him and say something to the man. Then the man started to walk towards him.

As he came closer, Sid could see that he was extremely fit. His faded and frayed blue jeans paired with a thin, loose white shirt revealed a well-toned body. It was hard to tell his age from his face; there was something almost boyish about him.

'Hello!' he called out cheerily as he approached Sid. 'Sit. Sit,' he continued just as Sid involuntarily started to get up. Something about this man commanded respect and Sid had a feeling that he might be a politician or a bureaucrat. 'Hello,' Sid heard himself respond as his mind raced to box this stranger into some familiar category.

'I hear that you are stuck! My friend, the policeman, was just telling me that you have ridden a long way on your big motorcycle. Even from where I was speaking with him, I could make out it was a Harley,' he said pointing to the bike as he plopped himself easily onto the kerbside next to Sid. The man's voice had a certain depth to it. It was a voice that effortlessly commanded attention. Not because it was loud, but because it made you want to hear it again. His eyes were piercing and when he looked at Sid, he made him feel like someone was looking deep into his soul. Sid could still not place his age. His face had a youthful quality that belied the silver hair.

‘Yes. I am a bit stuck. I’m almost a whole day’s drive away from home. Can’t go forward, can’t head back either,’ Sid said.

The man laughed. ‘You have in that sentence summed up what many people can say about their life itself. Stuck!’ he said.

Sid was instinctively beginning to like this man. ‘I’m Sidharth,’ he said as he put his hand out for a handshake. ‘Hello Sidharth,’ the stranger said as he shook Sid’s outstretched hand. The firmness of the handshake was noticeable.

‘I’m Krish. I live close by on a farm. I understand you can’t ride back right now, especially with the prospect of heavy rain also looming large. You are welcome to come by and rest till you figure out what you can do next.’

Under most circumstances, Sid would not have thought much about this offer before refusing it. Not this time, though. There was something instinctively trustworthy about the man. Moreover, he didn’t have too many other options.

‘Thank you, sir. That’s very kind of you. I would like to do that,’ he heard himself say to his own surprise. It was almost as though his gut had made the decision and he was relaying it quickly before anything got in the way.

‘Come on then. Let me turn my truck around and you can follow me,’ said Krish as he stood up, dusted the back of his jeans and started walking towards a line of cars that were parked to the side of the road.

Sid had always considered himself to be a relatively logical and rational person and yet, here he was, accepting a stranger’s offer to shelter him within barely a few minutes of meeting him. *How funny*, Sid thought to himself as he sat astride the motorcycle and heard the comforting roar of the engines coming to life again.

A dusty pick-up backed up from the end of the long line of vehicles and turned around. Sid saw Krish waving to him.

As he started following Krish to his farm, he noticed a crate of vegetables at the back of the pick-up truck.

A few bumpy kilometres later, the truck slowed down and turned into a gate. It was dusk, the hour when the light played tricks on the eyes. Sid was glad they had reached. He had never been too comfortable riding at night. He pulled up and parked next to the truck just as Krish got down.

‘Follow me,’ Krish said and started to walk into what seemed like an orchard with rows of mango trees.

Sid slung his backpack over his shoulder. He could see tall coconut trees swaying in the breeze. A few bulbs flickered in the distance. The air had the faint scent of mangoes mingled with the fragrance of damp earth and wood smoke. Something about the place felt alive and yet mysterious, as if it held many secrets waiting to be discovered.

The path wound through the trees and more lights now emerged ahead. Against their backdrop, Sid could see the tall, athletic figure in front of him purposefully striding away. He picked up his pace and followed.

‘Welcome and make yourself comfortable,’ Krish said as they finally entered a large mud cottage. The stone flooring and terracotta-tiled roof caught Sid’s attention immediately.

‘Wow! I haven’t seen this kind of construction too often,’ he remarked.

‘They don’t make these kinds of buildings anymore. Come, let me show you the spare bedroom,’ said Krish as he moved towards an open door and ushered Sid into his resting place for the night.

‘The bathroom is attached. You should find the few things that you might need there. Dinner will be ready in

thirty minutes, if you'd like to join me,' he said cheerfully and without really waiting for Sid to respond, disappeared into the back of the cottage.

As Sid stood under the shower and allowed the dust of the day to be washed away, he couldn't help but wonder at the turn of events. Here he was in a stranger's house, in the middle of nowhere, and somehow, it did not really feel out of place.

Dinner was a simple affair of salad and soup. Krish sat down at the small dining table and closed his eyes in prayer. Sid was not used to this and had never done anything like it, so he sat in silence waiting for his host to start the meal. 'Come, let's enjoy the food. I normally eat in silence, so please do not mistake my quietness for anything else,' said Krish as he opened his eyes and smiled at Sid.

'Thank you for your hospitality,' said Sid as he served himself a large portion of the freshest salad he had ever seen. The house was absolutely quiet. There was not a sound except for the background chirp of crickets as the two men ate their meal. Sid noticed that Krish closed his eyes after every bite, that he ate every mouthful very, very slowly—almost as if he were meditating on every ingredient in the salad.

*Why did this have to happen? Will things improve tomorrow? Will I be able to get to a hotel by tomorrow night? Thank goodness I don't have anyone worrying about me.* These and many more thoughts were going on in Sid's mind as he tried to enjoy the meal, but every few seconds his mind would again start its endless chatter.

Some time later, Sid realized he had eaten enough. Not wanting to seem rude, he continued sitting silently at the table while Krish finished his meal. At the end, after he had

said another prayer with his head bowed, as if giving thanks for what he had eaten, Krish finally looked up.

‘Come. Let’s put our plates away and walk around a bit if you are not too tired, Sid,’ he offered. As they stepped out into the cool breeze, Sid was struck by the freshness of the air and the clear skies.

‘So, what’s on your mind, my friend? You seemed really preoccupied as you ate. Want to talk about it?’ asked Krish, turning towards Sid with a smile as he led them on a mud path that was intermittently lit by solar lanterns.

‘Oh, not much,’ said Sid. ‘I was just thinking about how uncertain things have suddenly become for me. I had planned my trip well, but the road closure has just thrown a spoke in the wheel. I was thinking about how to work it out tomorrow.’

‘Ah. I understand. You were so busy thinking about tomorrow that you forgot to taste your dinner today!’ laughed Krish. There was something about the way he said it that Sid couldn’t muster a response. Under most circumstances, he would have taken offence to being spoken to like this, but not now. There was an easy charm to this man.

‘It’s normal to be disturbed by uncertainty, don’t you think? What would you do in such a situation?’ Sid asked.

‘Certainty is overrated,’ said Krish, stopping by a little pond. In spite of the evening shadow, Sid could make out that it contained lotus plants. The surface was partly covered with the floating leaves with one stem raising its head above the surface. At its tip was a lotus bud.

As he stared at it, little did Sid know the significance it would have on his life. ‘Tell me, what is certain?’ Krish continued as he sat on a bench by the pond and patted it indicating that Sid should sit too.

‘Was it certain that you would be born? What was the probability of your conception itself? One in a million? And then once you were born, did you know what you would study in university? Did you know the kind of career you would take up?’

‘Well, not really.’

‘For that matter, do you know whether you will even be alive tomorrow?’

‘No, I don’t, although I hope to be!’

‘Imagine there is a new movie releasing. You have heard it is a superb suspense thriller and your favourite stars are acting in it. You book gold class tickets for the first show along with your friends. On the day of the show, there is much anticipation. You go to the theatre, buy popcorn and settle down in your seat to watch the movie. The movie starts. Now imagine that before every scene plays out on the screen, you know the outcome of the scene. You know every twist in the tale before it happens. How will you feel? Will you enjoy the movie? Will your popcorn taste good?’

‘I guess not.’

‘Why not? What is happening?’ asked Krish

‘I guess there is no suspense. I think what makes for a great movie is the unexpected twists and turns!’ replied Sid ‘If I know it all, I will get bored! Why would I even watch a movie like that? Leave alone paying good money to watch it!’ laughed Sid.

‘Precisely. There is no suspense. No thrill. It’s boring! Now imagine if your life too was like that. Where everything was certain and you knew everything the way it was going to happen! How would it feel?’

‘Pretty boring, I guess!’ Sid laughed as he pictured his life the way Krish was describing it.

‘Now that’s interesting, isn’t it? Especially coming from a man who was craving certainty just moments ago!’ Krish laughed along.

‘Now let’s say you have gone trekking or mountain climbing or river rafting. What are you seeking there? Is it not the thrill of the unknown? How different is your road trip now, my dear friend? What is it but an adventure? An adventure, by definition, means you encounter surprises and challenges. There will be twists and turns in the plot as you, the protagonist, use the skills you need to navigate them skilfully.’

‘When you put it like that, I totally see what you mean. I think life is and should be an adventure!’ exclaimed Sid excitedly.

**When you embrace uncertainty, it’s called an  
adventure.**

**When you fight it, it’s called fear.**

‘The only thing you can really be certain of is this moment. Just this present moment. As the saying goes, the past is history, the future is a mystery and that’s why this moment is called the “present”. It’s the one thing gifted to you that you have full control over. Let me tell you a story to explain this better.

‘One day, while walking through the wilderness, a man stumbled upon a vicious tiger. He ran but soon came to the edge of a high cliff. Desperate to save himself, he climbed

down a vine that dangled over the fatal precipice. The tiger stopped at the edge. As the man hung there, two mice ventured out of a hole in the cliff and began gnawing at the vine! Surely it would snap soon. Suddenly, he noticed a plump wild berry growing on the vine. He plucked and popped it in his mouth. It was incredibly delicious!

Krish paused as if the story was over. Sid filled in the silence.

‘Ah! The analogy I get from this story is . . . the tiger is the past. And the cliff is the future. The two mice are like time which can slowly kill us. The berry is the present. Forget the past, do not worry about the future and concentrate instead on the present moment. Only then, we can live happily.’

‘Yes. You have understood correctly. By deeply embracing each moment, life starts to feel like an adventure. And in living one moment after the other, you design your destiny! So, breathe. You are alive and have control over this moment. Make a choice. Make a difference. With certainty. And life will certainly take care of itself.

‘And by the way, the man in the story found calm as he ate the berry. In that calm, he found clarity and had an idea. He spat the seed of the berry at the mice, scared them away and then climbed back up the cliff with the help of the vine as the tiger had gone by then.’

Sid chuckled at the ingenuity of what the man in the story had done.

‘When faced with uncertainty, I sometimes find myself stressed and anxious. At other times I feel completely exhausted. I worry about certain things, avoid other things and even people. I feel vulnerable and afraid. But then there are times when I feel the excitement of uncertainty

too! Especially when I ride my Harley. Would you help me understand how one thing called uncertainty makes me experience all these different emotions?’

‘There are many, many questions within that question, my young friend,’ Krish replied. ‘There are many books devoted entirely to explaining each one of these emotions! But I have not read any of them so I will respond to you from a place of “not knowing”,’ he chuckled.

**Everything you lose, creates space for  
everything you need!**

‘Let’s start with stress—the first thing you mentioned. People keep saying there is a lot of stress in the world these days. Can you show me where it is? Stress is not in the supermarket. Stress is not something that is out there. Stress is what *you* produce in response to what is happening to you!

‘When you think the situation is beyond your ability to cope, you start feeling stressed. A little bit beyond your ability can be good because it makes you stretch. But if you think it’s well beyond your ability, your emotions trigger your body and mind to produce adrenalin and cortisol to help you deal with it. That is stress.

‘An overwhelmed feeling is nothing but an extreme level of stress. It is a point where you almost feel unable to function. This is the exhaustion you mentioned.

‘Worry is nothing but a chain of thoughts about how the future is going to be and imagining terrible things. Worry is an activity of the mind.

‘Anxiety is what follows worry. The body reacts to that, and caffeine, alcohol and drugs are what people resort to as

they try to cope. Instead, calm the mind, eat healthy, sleep well and exercise. You'll see these worries and anxieties fade away like the shadows at dawn.'

'Hmm. I can see how you mean that. I am also able to see how I ended up creating some of my own "coping" mechanisms,' said Sid thoughtfully.

'Avoiding certain things and certain people is also a way you cope with anxiety. To avoid what might be painful, we are capable of running from anything we perceive as a "threat"—blaming others and even shutting down all communication.'

The simplicity of Krish's explanations was striking. Sid had met many brilliant people in his life, but the clarity with which this man was explaining complex ideas was something Sid had not seen before.

*What place of not knowing is this man operating from?* Sid wondered as he saw Krish close his eyes and breathe deeply as if he was tapping into some reservoir.

'Let's look at vulnerability,' Krish continued. 'It is something that every living being experiences. It is the feeling we get when faced with a challenge, a risk, uncertainty. A seedling that has just sprouted is vulnerable, as is a newborn puppy and a person talking about their feelings. Unfortunately, vulnerability is often taught to us as a sign of weakness. I say the opposite. To be vulnerable takes immense courage. To accept that one is vulnerable and then embrace that sense of vulnerability and make choices in line with our values is wisdom.'

'Fear can hold a lot of information too. Start by asking yourself if it is a real fear. For example, if you have to jump off the fourth floor of a building, the fear of breaking your bones is a real fear. But most times in life, we are not in such situations.'

**Our fears are mostly imaginary or perceived.  
We are afraid of things that are not there and may  
never even be there.**

*Like another person's judgment of us!*, thought Sid.

'When you feel fear, lean into it like you would into a curve on your motorcycle. Yes, there is an element of risk and danger, but when you trust your instincts and riding skills, you come alive.

'Adventure sports and extreme sports are the perfect example of this. Addictive in fact because of the hormones your body pumps.'

**On the other side of fear, is aliveness.**

As Sid's mind processed the depth of what Krish had just said, he glanced at the sky. After a few minutes of silence, Krish stood up. 'We should say good night now, my friend. You should perhaps get some sleep,' he said and slowly started walking back towards the cottage.

As Krish's words swirled in the stillness of the night, Sid remained seated, his thoughts racing surprisingly clearer than usual. He replayed the conversation in his mind—the way Krish had so easily untangled emotions like stress, worry and fear, reframing vulnerability as a strength. It was as though someone had held up a mirror, not to show him what he already knew, but to reveal what he hadn't yet understood about himself.

The idea of leaning into fear, like leaning into a bend on his bike, struck a deep chord. It wasn't about avoiding uncertainty or trying to conquer it. It was about feeling it fully, trusting his instincts and moving through it.

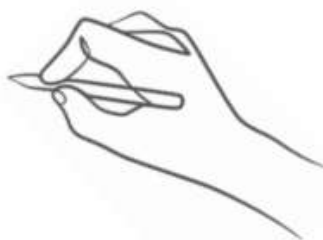
He watched the lotus bud as Krish's footsteps faded into the night. The sky above twinkled with stars. For a moment, the world felt both vast and intimate, like the universe had conspired to bring him here to have these conversations with this man.

When eventually Sid got up to follow him, he felt a strange energy along with a sense of calm. Where it came from, he was not fully certain. He had never met anyone like Krish before. There was something almost indescribable about him. His mere presence made you calm and when he spoke, it energized you and you wanted to listen.

That night, Sid picked up his journal. He had not been writing in it much or regularly. He had thrown it into his backpack almost as an afterthought.

He sat at the little table by the window and looked outside. In the distance, he could make out the outline of a large tree. Just outside his window, bamboo stalks waved in the wind.

As he stared at the lines on the page, he began recollecting and noting down Krish's words.



Certainty is overrated.

When you embrace uncertainty, it's called an adventure.

If you fight it, it's called fear.

A calm mind and staying in the present moment help you embrace uncertainty.

Many of my fears are perceived fears and are imagined.

Making choices based on these imaginary fears restricts me from living to my potential.

I must lean into the fears like I lean into the bend in the road.

Because when nothing is certain, anything is possible.

And with skill and balance, I can then come alive!

As Sid wrote these few lines, he felt relaxed, at ease. After being discharged from the hospital two weeks ago, he had trouble sleeping but that night, he slept better than he had in a long time.