

HOME COMING

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Waking Up	3
Chapter 2: Entertainment.....	4
Chapter 3: Waiting	5
Chapter 4: Got to be Perfect.	6
Chapter 5: Togetherness	7
Chapter 6: Dolls vs. Balls	8
Chapter: 7 Party & Friends	9
Chapter 8: Morning affair.....	10
Chapter 9: Europe	11
Chapter 10: Pack your bags.	12
Chapter 11: Finding Her	13
Chapter 12: Coming Home	14

Chapter 1: Waking Up

*“yada-yada hi dharmasya
Glanir bhavati bharata
Abhyutthanam adharmasya
Tadatmanam srijamy aham..*

*Paritranaya sadhunam
Vinasaya ca duskritam
Dharma-samsthapanarthaya
Sambhavami yuge-yuge...”*

I open my eyes and its morning, and I know it is her, she is happy and has had a good sleep and chants the sloka from Mahabharata. We have the corona virus lockdowns to thank for this. With minimum classes for kids her age and below she has hours to spend. In the year 2020 I Usually get up at 7:00 o'clock, for my school but some days I get up at 6:00 o'clock and my sister is up too.

This is one of those days that she is up before me and being herself. At times she goes to my father's room to sleep more and then there are days when my mom wakes me or we wake up before and will brush teeth, I will take a bath and sometimes my sister will want to go to bath first. We eat breakfast and then at 8:25 am I am in front of the computer already for my first class to begin.

Some mornings are a drag, I pull myself to get to do things, but mostly because I just want to play. If am up early time just flies when you play in the bed, read books, and scatter many toys. Weekends mostly, are worse, that's fun maximized.

Well reality is when she is up, I need to be too, but if I am up first and out of the room, she gets upset. At first, I did not understand then, I got it she loves me and waits. The entire day is not exactly what you read as filled with love.

Chapter 2: Entertainment

We are a pack and an over energized one too. We did not need sugar rush for it either. My sister is very vocal, and I am let us just say physical. My maternal and paternal grandparents have been with us forever. The COVID-19 times have made us entertain day in and out with dances to Bollywood songs, ballet, plays for Dussehra & Christmas, Pictionary and more.



We are called the “*Sukriti Sisters*”, common ground we both love to dance and fool around. My sister is always cracking us all up. Once after she saw an episode of Jhansi ki Rani, at the lunch table on a profoundly serious note she asks my mom, “Do you know where the soldiers will go for a washroom break when in the middle of war”. No one had answers but we sure did laugh.

She jumps from the 5th step on the spiral staircase but is scared off Maleficent and Ursula when she lands on them in a game of monopoly. Well by now if you got the feeling that we are cute sisters, that we are, but just does not end at that. In everything else we do; we end up in an argument and third party is the only way to end.

But I guess that is why I wanted a sister, stir up some excitement and create the entertainment that we do. And I would have it no other way. She brought in excitement in our lives even before we knew her.

Chapter 3: Waiting

Though the whole year of 2020 has gone by staying at home, it has been a boon and a bane. The opportunity of having the family together is the best as we got to see more of each other. However, I think the worst moments are when you end up waiting.

My sister has many hours of waiting, everyone is busy and all over the place. I think she gets bored, I would if I were in her place. We all take out time to spend with her and do activities through the day. She loves stories, gets a lot of the Amar Chitra Katha books read by everyone for her and then there are her dolls. She does everything she does, which means she has more time in hand. My mom calls her pataka- a hindi word meaning *cracker*.

She has a go with cards, LEGO blocks, dolls, pretend play and anything else that she can without me. And I am waiting to finish my class and just squash her with my hug. My mom waited for her for 10 years and me just for 3 years. I hear the stories told with the pictures of her homecoming on the wall and being a heart baby and not a tummy baby. We always end in a group hug. Waiting makes everything super special and my sister is worth it.



Chapter 4: Got to be Perfect.

My sister likes to usually be ready to always be dazzling and being highly organized she succeeds in it. Every night she picks out her dress and accessories for the next morning. She likes to be stylish and match her clothing with color and patterns most days. Cosmetics, new dresses, colorful shoes, nail polish, fancy hairstyles is all her.

I think being organized is a wonderful quality that my sister has, and I hope to be the same soon. She also is very cheerful mostly until she has not slept well or not eaten enough or I tease her. Which is fun at times though my mom does tell me that It is a bit mean.

Together we are great as sisters but quite different. For one, i hope she does not get sick as she fears tooth fairies and if she sees her tooth fallen, she is going to be upset. When my tooth was about to fall, I was all excited about the tooth fairy coming at night and hoped for a gold coin.

To add to her fears my mother accidently said that if she sees her instead of sleeping at night tooth fairy wings will fall. So, I tried to help her and promised her that I would not tell anyone. There are days when I see her admiring her teeth and lips in the mirror and I do not remember doing that or may be just a few times.

There was this time when she stopped eating chocolates because she saw her teeth to be brown. I never did eat too many chocolates but a nice dessert after meal was always happiness.



I taught her all I knew about space when she was just 3 years old and filled her mind about sharing and caring.

There have been many days that I tend to see her getting a lot of praises, but I know that is because she is good at what she does and how she learns fast from me. I am praised for whom I am and what I am trying to be. After all I am grown up and need to learn continuously, more grown-up things.

Chapter 5: Togetherness

Considering we have been a joint family; all the festivals are celebrated together even pre COVID-19. Dhvani and I love festivals as schools are closed and we get more time with each other. Dhvani considerably is more familiar with Gods and Goddess and probably recalls all their slokas in randomness and I know them the right way. Music, dance and drawing classes are something that do together but my favorite is when every year during Dussehra we do the dandiya together with friends.

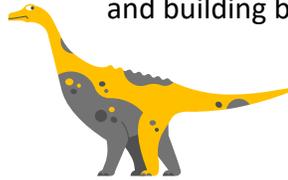
This year, we also performed for Krishna Jayanthi. I was dressed up as Krishna and my sister as Radha. Though my sister loves Krishna and is naughty like him, she did not want to be dressed up as Krishna. She wanted all the jewelry, the beautiful dress, the long hair, and the makeup.

I had the longer hair and of course Krishna is more beautiful than Radha. Somehow my little sister was not aware that Krishna wore more amount of jewelry and beautiful clothes that people could not take their eyes off. I for one did not let her in on that else am sure we would have another round of excitement and argument.

She loves to lead a lot and put all her ideas across, and at times I do let her have her way, sometimes its give and take and at other times its just give and give.

Chapter 6: Dolls vs. Balls

My first few years of birthday parties, I think everyone gave dolls as gifts. I really did not understand why and what to do with them. They did look pretty but that was it. I had a lot of fun time playing with balls, cars, cycles, paper planes, and my favorite was dinosaurs and building blocks, Lego.



The other gifts that I got more was books and I loved them, my parents used to read a lot to me when I was young and later, I started reading myself. A few times as I grew up, I did think what to do with the dolls but nah, it wasn't really my thing. So, every year, my mom collected the dolls that we had received, and put it on a shelf.

Once my sister came home, that was that she knew what to do with them. It was raining dolls for her and I was wondering what is so fun about it. But she would take them everywhere, and she knew how to change their dresses, do their hair, and pretend like she was mom. It was not long before all the dolls that we had collected in 5 years were opened and were in every room pretending to be doing something.

And this year she even got my grandmother to stitch some new clothes for them, apparently the clothes had shrunk as the dolls were growing up just like us. She likes dolls so much, that when am busy she plays with them

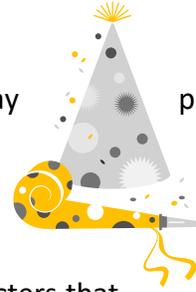


all day.

She eventually got a bit bored with her dolls and got hooked on to unicorns. She had hairbands, shirts, leggings, bags, clips all that had unicorns. I still play a bit with her and then teach her some new games, that grownups like me would love to play.

Chapter: 7 Party & Friends

For a long time, my sister's birthday parties were mine and my birthday was real fun. I would open all gifts and find a lot of barbie dolls and there ones too. For a while it was all mine till my sister decided to open gifts



parties were mine too. It were some interesting as well and wanted to play.

Every year our birthday parties were always theme based on the characters that we liked that year, Mickey Mouse, Peppa pig, Moana, Dora and more. One thing that always fascinated us, the birthday cake! Yum! My mom always got us to design the cakes and then a home baker would bake it for us. On the day of party, everyone would eagerly wait to get the hands on the cake. One common thing that we had were the guests, first few years, it was my moms' friend and then they became just my friends and their moms. In both our birthdays, we now have same friends and families. My favorite was my friend Navya, who equally thought my sister was adorable. My sister was treated like a doll for several years, till she decided to get things her way. It was wonderful till my friend moved out to Singapore, it was okay at first, but we did miss each other.

We did visit her, and she came back for holidays so it's not so bad, also since we have had WhatsApp and video calls, it's just gotten more fun. My sister also chats with my friends and now she has her own friends like Lakshmi, Swara, Smera & Anjan that she talks to on WhatsApp since the COVID-19 has set in.



Growing up without my best friend could have been hard but what really made me feel better was that I had my sister, and she was with me for good. Sisters forever!

Chapter 8: Morning affair

There was a rush every morning, we had to get ready and my grandparents were up too, my mom was always up before everyone else, she went to work for few hours, but she would always drop us to school. And I loved it. My sister would come to school even before she started going to school.

My grandmas would take turns to do our hair, sometimes it felt like a braiding competition and other days it was let's just be done with it. I always took my time to eat my breakfast during the competition.

As we grew and my sister joined the same school as me there were some really trying times when she did not want to let go of my mum. It took her several weeks or may be months to just get used to it. I tried to help but I was not particularly good at it then and that our timings were quite different too. Once I got in, my mom took her to the park, they played and she had her breakfast, looked up on plants and stretched herself running around.

Somedays, we both got of school at the same time and my sister loved being with me, and then we used to drop her to the day care and head to home. I even got to pick her a few times and realized that that my sister loved being picked up by me. We would get a few complaints about my sister being naughty, but it was all good, because the teachers always said she was a wonderful girl, and being naughty was okay.

I guess I was a travel person, going on drives was always fun till I found out in during the Sikkim mountains that I had travel sickness, may be the hills?

Chapter 9: Europe

Hertford, England early years there was fun times, Peppa pig, Muddy puddles, the Giraffe restaurant are all my memories. Shopping at the Tesco store was always fun, I was being pushed in a pram when going there and walk back as my mom was pushing the groceries on our way back. A lot of people found it funny and some others thought weirdly. Once I even went shopping with my dad and brought an excessively big green jug of milk.

Mornings in England were all about have a small breakfast, getting dressed and going to school three days a week or head with out with my dad to day care for the other three days. I had to sit on a child car seat and at the back. I remember the roads being beautiful with trees on both sides and curvy. I had to remind my dad to drive carefully too.

Going to school was fun, I could take my red mickey mouse scooter, with my mom either walking fast or jogging along by my side. One thing common we had huge fluffy jackets to keep us warm.

Weekends in Hertford was always some kids and their moms over at our place and we sang rhymes and played together at the backyard. After a while, the moms would be learning some recipes while the kids played together. Some weekends we also went to the nearby ponds and river where the ducks would be waiting to be fed, and they loved bread.

We also visited the open zoos where the animals seemed excessively big though they were far. They seemed happy and not being in a cage. I also found grassy hills and plains with little yellow flowers which I collected for my mom. My most memorable video of England was the muddy puddle incident when my mom let me jump in with my boots. Though after I did, I was not really feeling excited since my stockings and shoes were icky and cold. My dad had to walk up three hills and get me a pair of clothes.

We also traveled to see the Eiffel tower, the canals in Amsterdam, the windmills in Holland and a lot of train journey. Little did I know that my life was about to change.



Chapter 10: Pack your bags.

I used to get excited about going to a trip and packing is fun. Mom gave us each a bag and we could pack books, toys, games, swimsuits. That brings me to beach we to in Mangalore, the drive from home seemed eternal, though we pack so hurriedly, and we left a lot of things back this year, but usually packing is 2 nights affair. It was first since COVID-19 and I always hope that my mom would allow me to take my turtle and fish too with us. But over the years I have realized that is never going to happen.

Traveling is a huge family affair at *Sukriti*, as everyone and extended everyone is with us. I did count several times, eighteen seems to be minimum and going up to twenty-five seems like full. There was always cheer and fun and excitement with grownups and cousins. But at times I felt my mom she was Goddess Durga, but a happy one.



Though I do not really remember my first flight I do remember the one that I went to London in. My mom said it was First Class. Movies, cookies with milk and it was perfect. I even learnt how to put on the seat belt. Most of my travels have been great but the one travel that most memorable to all is the one that we had after we got back from London. A travel that helped us become a full family.

Chapter 11: Finding Her

The year 2015, My mom is all. Excited, a mail comes, and they are talking hush hush. It was the third one of the weeks. She waits for dad's response but after receiving nothing she asks with her irritated voice, so what are you thinking. Finally, Dad responds, yes let us go. Mom makes calls that are short but repetitive. She was new with this I could tell.

After several hours of back-and-forth phone calls, she announces that we need to travel to Ranchi. I was happy that my mom was back with her gleaming eyes and excited. I also wondered what Ranchi was. By evening it was out to everyone, both my grandparents knew that it was time. February in Ranchi is still a good weather. The easiest way to reach Ranch was to get to Kolkata or Delhi as a stopover. My Dad booked us the tickets and we started to pack bags.

I helped my mom with some packing, threw in my colors, a book and two toys. I was not sure when I would play with them, but I totally had to keep a few knowing that I will have to share. The flight was a breeze it was my first one, and I was already a pro at travelling.

We did not change flights but it sure was a long one, and my mom and dad spent a lot of time in playing games and colors and singing songs in the flight. I even managed to take a nap. Once we reached Ranchi, we checked into a hotel. Dad said it was near the airport and easy for us to go back to Bangalore.

It was not until the next day that the real action started. We were up early again and got into a car, it sure did not seem the fancy kind. And we were on the road for 2 hours. Of course, back then I didn't know how to read time, but that's what my mom was there to help with. It was out, we were finally going to see my sister. They had kept it a secret till just then.



It all fell in place, my mom had packed milk bottles and diapers and new clothes that did not fit me, and my grandpa said, your time has come to share things, and it was all just clues. My mom says I cannot keep secrets when I am too excited. And she is right, it is hard to contain happiness, its best when shared.

After that, the car ride seemed eternal and I just could not sit still. I wanted to know everything, and I realize that my parents did not know much either, except that she was going to be a healthy and happy baby sister. On the way we also picked up a lot of pastries, biscuits and milk to give to the other children who would be there.

Once we reached, I saw a home where there were a lot of children even bigger than me, I tried to count, but there were just too many. I did think for some time if we are going to take all of them home. Someone came out of the home and took us in, and finally a baby and mom come out. My mom was holding a bundle in her hand and she said there 19 girl babies and 1 boy baby.

The two days seemed like a whirlwind, we went to the hospital where a doctor checked the baby, and then to court where the judge asked me if I wanted a sister, and the lawyer ate a lot of samosa, tea and rasgolla. I would say when the judge gave the verdict everyone was happy. My dad did all the paperwork and we finally got a letter to say that baby sakshi was my sister.

Chapter 12: Coming Home

Once we got back to the hotel, dad was back to booking tickets, mom and I were being very responsible to talk to baby Saakshi and giving her a bath and feeding her. I even got her on my lap and held the bottle very carefully to ensure baby Saakshi drank up all the milk. I remembered that I could now play with the toys that my mom had packed, my first toy was now her first toy. I loved sharing and I even got her to smile first.

We were back on our flight on the fourth day, 28th February, another 4-hour flight as my dad says, but this time even better, we were 4, a full family. And I just wanted to show off. I had my mom going nuts with telling time and wanting to play with baby. By overnight, baby Saakshi, had a new name, my mom. Dad & I decided she would be named Dhwani- meaning voice.

Though I did wonder why we named her so, because she was an incredibly quiet one. The air hostess was overly concerned, and I was sleepy, and lost time. Finally, when I woke up, we were back in a car heading home, and it was all dark, baby Dhwani was sleeping. So it was back to being quiet in the car as well. Once we reached home, my grandparents were waiting, and the excitement began all over again.

For the next few weeks, it was guests coming over, and announcements being made and I was the big sister and would teach her everything I knew. Little did I know that when I wished to Santa or prayed to God that It was just the beginning of life changing moments for all of us. ***But truly the most memorable one.***



“As soon as I saw you, I knew an adventure was going to happen.”
— Winnie the Pooh.

Author



Niharika Ravuri is a child Author and for the first time is bringing to all her friends and families a real-life story. From early childhood she loves weaving stories and sharing with all. Her interest to read a lot of stories and sharing with her family has led her to become an Author. A kind, caring and affectionate people person, who likes the world to be filled with daisies, candies and jumping dolphins. A dreamer who tries to make dreams come true.

BLURB

The story highlights two sisters and their years together. The chapters cover a whole range concerns helping the reader to understand situations, how it all works and of course their own feelings. But as you read on you will find that relations are formed in way beyond by means of blood. The book is meant for children to understand the differences, changes, and abilities in siblings and at the same time for adults, giving a ray of hope.
