

The story of a lifetime by  
**VIBHOR TIKIYA**



**DADA**

THE JOURNEY OF A FRIEND. A FIGHTER. A BELIEVER

# DADA

The Journey of A Friend. A Fighter...A Believer

*Vibhor Tikiya*



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## ABSTRACT



I am a man who has been lost for the most part of his life and hardly someone who deserves to have a book written about him. I am the boy you write off because you are supposed to. I had written myself off when I was in my teens and was devoid of hope, dreams and direction.

My early failures are not without reason. I have given the minimal amount of effort everywhere I have gone. I am not proud of that fact. I have copied in examinations, forged certificates, never listened to my parents and manipulated systems. I still remember begging Mr. Pandit, “Sir, I request you to clear me. I need only 15 marks to pass. I promise you I won’t be involved in theory in my life.” One needs guts to do what I did and yet ask the professor to let him go.

I’ve had my share of twists and turns. I’ve suffered some irreparable losses which many believed damaged me for life. Some people called me a street smart kid. But every second person calls himself that nowadays. I guess more than being street smart, I was hard. My childhood taught me how to get what I want without working for it. I learnt not to work and went off in a direction which was headed straight to no-man’s land.

Things however changed when I met my friends and Prof Mukherji at Premiere. I was plain old Aditya

before that. They gave me a different life and helped me achieve a level where I could fulfill the expectations of people I revered. They helped me don a new persona – DADA and made me what I am today.

This book is not about my failures or my confused childhood. It is about that persona that was conceived at the gates of Premiere by Rohan. It is about the man who was moulded by Divya, John and Vivek's friendship and by Prof. Mukherji's mentorship. It is the journey of a character who deserved nothing, but got everything.

All through the journey I experienced ups and downs. I experienced the joy of gaining new friends and the loss of people who cared for me and held me close. I saw concrete foundations where I experienced safety reduced to ruins, and the joy in making dreams out of rubble. I've been to places that I never thought I would reach. I've had the honour of standing next to people who were better than me in every way.

This book is about my journey as 'Dada'.....

*Dedicated to my loving wife, Divya Tikiya whose support and hard work made this project a reality and to my loving family who are always by my side.*



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# CHAPTER 1

## LIFE BEFORE 'DADA'



I was a good student. Until the 4<sup>th</sup> Standard, I remember being among the toppers.

My father would boast about his trophy son to his relatives. I remember going to this relative's marriage. Lots of people heard my father talk about my achievements and they said: "This boy is meant for big things. He's our son as well."

"Sanjay, I've heard your son is very good in studies. You're a lucky father. What are you going to make him?"

"He's going to do his PhD and become a renowned Professor."

"Well, we are all there for him." It felt great to hear all these compliments. I felt special and secure with so many people there to take care of me.

My father was an engineer and he worked hard to ensure that my mother and I had a good life. He also spent a lot of time with me. I remember playing table tennis with him in his spare time. He was an expert in the game and taught me tricks to beat my opponent. He would often say: "Play with your mind, son. Beat the opponent in your mind first. Identify his weaknesses and then finish him off."

My father always taught me God was one and the same for all. He was deeply religious but was secular in his beliefs. He always said, "We pray to different gods but the

underlying belief system of a divine power is common to all of us. We are all the same.”

When I was about eight, my father accepted a job in Dubai with a nuclear engineering firm. Prior to that, he worked with a Government-funded nuclear research organization in India. He felt he needed a nest-egg which would come in handy for my higher education. After a few months in Dubai, apparently as he was correcting some deficiency in the water reactor, he fell into the water and died instantly.

Our entire life crashed in the moment we heard the news of his death. I didn't understand the concept of death at that age. I just remember my mother crying and telling me that my father wasn't ever coming back home again. My mother shook me and kept on telling me this fact again and again. I didn't cry. I just stared silently at her while she sobbed. I just did not know what to tell her, or even myself for that matter.

My father's company did not release his body for three months lest we demand compensation. Only after we gave them a million documents saying we just wanted his body, did the company send it home. Memories of my mother crying through the entire three months are still fresh in my mind. Every day, I just wanted to call someone and in some way get his body back so that my mother would stop crying. When his body finally came home, she sobbed her heart out. It took her a couple of months after his last rites to slowly start to recover from the shock.

When my father died, he took a part of me with him. I would keep staring at the door, hoping and praying he would walk in. I would keep waiting for someone to tell me

everything was fine. But, it wasn't. I expressed my anger against God by not reacting, talking or blaming him. I had no idea what to feel. Nothing I did or said could change our circumstances.

Meanwhile, all the relatives who had said they were there for me vanished. My father's death meant that we were now of limited utility to them; there was no gain in associating with just a school teacher and her son. It was now just me and her.

As a Government employee, my father had had a limited salary. He had spent a large portion of his earnings in constructing our house. After his death, my mother did not have enough savings to fund my education. She was a teacher in a government school and had a limited income. I used to go to this prestigious school, Kolkata Cathedral, and my mother wanted me to continue in the same school. It was slightly on the expensive side. She had to cut corners and curb her needs to fund my schooling.

She worked hard to get me through school, making sure I never lacked the basic necessities in life. I, on the other hand, stopped asking her for anything. I would make do with whatever was given to me without any complaints.

As a teenager, I wanted to help my mother in running the household. And this was when I learnt the concept of trading – “Buy cheap, sell high”. I picked up this concept from a friend who was my playmate. He used the money he made for alcohol and smokes.

It started out for me with this aunty who stayed in a posh building nearby and wanted a driving license. I told her I would get it done for Rs 400. She said she would give me

the money, but only when the work was done. I borrowed Rs 300 from my mother and gave aunty's details and the money to a tout seated outside the Department of Motor Vehicles. The agent got the job done and I had earned a cool Rs 100.

People want everything done without stepping out of their homes. If a pizza can be brought to your door, so can things like a license or a ration card. The aunty told other people about my ability to get this kind of work done.

I was pretty well built for my age, so people never thought I was a kid. They gradually started trusting me with this kind of work. If someone wanted a license or a ration card made or renewed, they would hire me to do the job. I learnt how to bribe the agents, take my share and get the work done. For every document I delivered, I made a minimum of Rs 100. On an average, I would cater to two to three such requests every month and make Rs 300-500. It was a huge amount for our household.

The more I was exposed to the corrupt outside world, the more cynical I became. As opposed to children who spend their time immersed in studies and other childhood activities, I spent my time in trying to get more and more "trading" opportunities. I interacted with a wide variety of people. Some people rejected my services while others would be open to the idea and just needed convincing. I got cheated a couple of times and lost money. Gradually, however, I mastered the art of getting things done.

All these activities meant I never got time to study. *Maa* would often shout at me saying I should devote myself to my studies. But I slowly started to lose interest in school

and devised ways to cheat in class so that I at least cleared my exams. My childhood was split between my mother's desire to make me study and my desire to contribute money to the household. It got confusing at times as to what would make her happier. I tried hard to meet her expectations since I never wanted to hurt her. She had already experienced her share of grief.

My childhood was a long time ago and it has gotten very hazy. I guess I just don't want to remember much from back then. Mom and Dad are the only aspects of my life which made sense, the only memories I wish to retain before the coming of 'Dada'.



## CHAPTER 2

# DADA HAS ARRIVED



“Have you studied for the exam, *Beta*?”

“Yes, *Maa*. Stop bugging me.”

*Maa* always had a smile on her gentle and soft face. But she freaked out every time I had to give an exam. She wanted me to become an engineer, for which I would have to join the Science stream. I got 55% marks in my 10th Standard board exams, hardly enough to get into Science.

“Mrs. Chopra’s son got admission to Pune’s leading engineering college. God knows what will happen to you!” Thankfully, for her peace of mind, I managed to get into the Science stream in a less prestigious college.

My aversion to studies continued; I didn’t study at all for my 12<sup>th</sup> Standard exams. I had never understood Physics and Math much. In the finals there was a question on Probability in my Math exam. I vaguely remembered my math professor, in the only class I attended, talking about a coin flip and some concept there. The answer he got was 0.5. I didn’t understand the problem I was attempting at all. So I started the answer saying that this was similar to the coin flip hence the answer was 0.5. When I came out of the examination hall, a boy came up to me and asked me: “What answer did you get for this problem?” I confidently replied: “0.5. It was so simple. I’m surprised

# Dada By Vibhor Tikiya



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