

Chapter 1

Unapologetically You



Someone once told me the definition of Hell:

The last day you have on earth, the person you became will meet the person you could have become.

~ *Anonymous*

Debugging the Code

We humans, scuttle all our life for freedom—freedom from our financial liabilities; from bad relationships; from sickness and eventually from all forms of pain. We have been sold on an idea of happiness which requires that we liberate ourselves from the miseries that overwhelm us. The notion of a ‘perfect life’ is a carefully calibrated strategy of the society in which we exist and aim to thrive in. Deviating from the societal norms tag us as a misfit. Therefore, we assume achieving these limited set of objectives will catapult us to a life of freedom and happiness.

We are conditioned to believe for instance—buying a fancy car or the latest gizmo, wearing the slickest designer label or flying off to the most exotic nook in the world is a choice we have freely exercised. We often don’t understand how deeply we’re influenced by society. This conditioning takes us away from lasting contentment and joy. For the ultimate form of bliss is devoid of materials but remains hidden under heaps of expectations from our communities. We get pushed into disappointments for not having what we yearn for or what others possess. An idea that has propelled with the incision of social media networks.

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What started as the means of joy, retracts and collapses into existential crisis, anxieties, depressions or fears.

And yet, when we pursue to act on our construct, we can pull ourselves out of this web by debugging our algorithm of emotions. The change we look to bring on ourselves by altering the external surrounding is nothing more than an internal shift of thoughts, actions and habits. Akin to troubleshooting a software program and testing it early before delivery. Only to ensure the program is devoid of any future mishaps. A phase termed as ‘Shift Left’.

You have been made to believe that buying a plush house on the most expensive strip in town, earning a seven-figure income or dating a charming partner will bring a lifetime of happiness. Have you also been informed that to sustain this happiness; you need to keep upgrading your lifestyle, be glued to a job you might hate or live in a relationship that is going nowhere? Would you call this enduring happiness—or is it just you adhering to society’s command? Have you ever visited a research center where scientists experiment with mice? You would observe a mouse having electrodes connected to their brains which are controlled by the scientists. The scientists play around with the controllers making the mouse move from one direction to the other through the electrodes. This is to study the effectiveness of signals passed on through the electrodes. The mice, however, are convinced that they have been moving freely of their own accord.

Humans have connected antennas assembled out of societal dogma, their own (sometimes) irrational desires and diktats to their brains. They catch random signals from strange sources and make decisions under their influence, convinced those choices are a product of their free will. But are they?

How do we break through such beliefs? How do we let our innate abilities and desires dictate our choices rather than outer influences which only add unhappiness, anger, frustration, impatience into our lives? Despite spectacular medical marvels to our credit, we still struggle to get out of mental stigmas. How do we strike a balance and bring our emotions to an equilibrium?

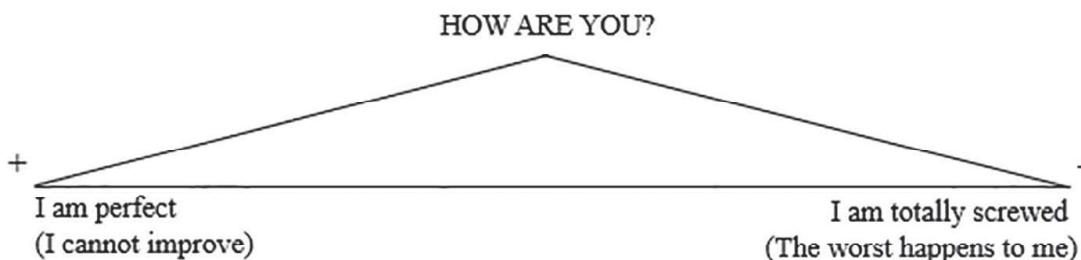
I invite you to consider a paradigm shift on the issues that form your actions and habits, shaping you to be a caricature of society rather than reflect your true self. This book draws heavily from my personal

experiences though my experiences are by no means unique. I have come across numerous people who have gone through the same upheavals in their lives.

The challenges I speak of on these pages are not mine alone; they have also been experienced by a thousand others. None of us has been singled out in this world. We feel we've been singled out and thrown rudely into challenges. This makes us feel victimized. What we tend to forget is that the same problem has been dealt with by someone else somewhere. This understanding helped me overcome the issues that entangled me. I learned the methods used by others and see it as my duty to pass it on in the form of this book.

The Goodness Scale

People live under two popular societal assumptions. In their heads, they are either perfect or a complete screw-up. Perfect because, 'I can never go wrong, it is the world that needs counseling' or a screw up because 'everything bad in this world always happens to me'. They lock themselves into these two extremes without ever finding a balanced field. When you gloat, 'I am perfect', you shut yourself to any form of upskilling, learning or an alternate form of thinking. Likewise, when you play the martyr to everything bad, you ram yourself to a point of no return and seek entitlement to every problem. I designed 'The goodness scale of life' to explain this:



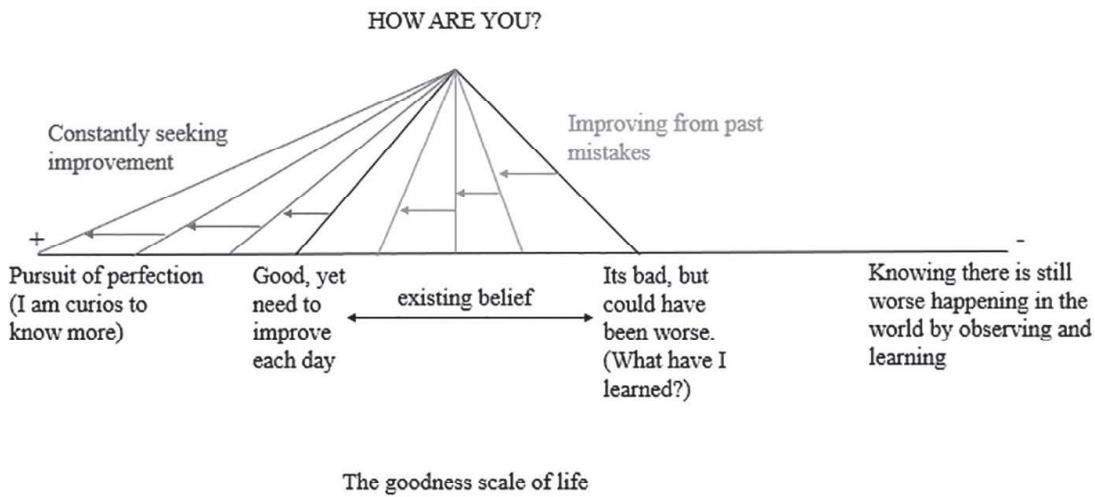
The goodness scale of life

But you can tweak this scale by altering your mental makeup.

Change the 'I am perfect', to 'I am improving each passing day in every aspect of my life'. Similarly, instead of playing the victim, you could simply say, 'It could have been worse' to any bad situation you

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might encounter. In altering your thoughts, you give yourself the space to improve by shifting towards the positive. Improving to be better or acknowledging and learning from your mistakes. Your perspective towards the bad, therefore, changes to be a hard master than the source of grief. I present the above goodness scale of life with a minor alteration which has been the guiding principle in this book.



Note: Excuse the drawing, I am improving, it could have been worse!

Each chapter in the book investigates a flawed societal issue. I explain why the issue is flawed and how it is fatal in the long run. By acknowledging and being aware of the problem you can chalk out your path to get out of the rut. Where possible, I present techniques and solutions which have helped me transform into the person I have become. You may adopt these techniques or choose your own with alterations. The end goal is to find the means to achieve ‘your’ everlasting happiness.

The recognition of the law of the cause and effect, also known as karma, is a fundamental key to understand how you have created your world, with actions of your body, speech and mind. When you truly understand karma then you realize you are responsible for everything in your life. It is incredibly empowering to know that your future is in your hands.

~ Keanu Reeves

The way humans live today, breathe, eat, poop, work, sleep, love, pray are all manifestations of a rule book. The said rule book is created, manipulated and imbued into people's consciousness by their ecosystem. The ecosystem could be people, circumstances or their own emotions towards which they tend to be extremely biased. Humans cut a sorry figure by limiting themselves to the orders of society. Orders that shape them over a period, forcing them to believe what is good or bad without having an empirical experience of facts.

The Value Economy of Nurturing

This is not a book on parenting, but to decipher the human code, let us examine the source from which our flawed ideologies emerge. Society leaves no stone untouched in conditioning us to its club rules. As infants begin to develop their cognitive abilities, they are given a rigid framework of societal norms to obey. Most parents are blessed with plenty of hindsight but not enough insight, they thrust this rigid framework onto the tender psyche of their children. I am not suggesting that a parent should not stop a kid from picking up a knife and hurting themselves or eating something that would choke them or abusing anyone that does not bow to their demands! I am referring to the discomfort of parents in allowing their child to develop the ability to reason and be logical. That ability is the right of a child, it is what their survival depends on.

I observe a certain routine in parenting. It is so well defined that you can now forecast what a parent would do to align their child to society's one-size-fits-all frame. Instead of thinking, 'If other parents are enrolling their kids for Karate classes, why should my kid be left out?' maybe the parent could spend some time in observing the kid's inherent ability towards the sport before blindly following the rest of the sheep. Soon enough, the child loses interest in pursuing the activity, turning it into a chore instead of turning it into an inspiration that drives their life-purpose.

This is not all. We also sit in judgment of the kid's ability and declare him mediocre in comparison to the great Bruce Lee when the poor thing hates martial arts! Karate happens to be one example of the many ostentatious asks that get fulfilled without a pushback. By bowing to the

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demands of an invisible eye, parents kill the curiosity of the child to figure out the merits of Karate. With it, they limit their power to understand their children. We reduce ourselves to explaining how the earth revolves around the sun or how flowers bloom; why humans walk on two legs and animals on four. We limit our kids just as we were limited ourselves.

“Why is the sky blue?” our child asks us happily.

“It is blue because it IS blue,” we answer tersely with zero imagination, killing a part of her curiosity too.

Essentially, it means this was the answer we were given so you better accept it as an answer or solution too. We dare not challenge society’s diktats. We are better off being a part of the community than question its ways.

Today, the old framework has shifted a little. Instead of giving curiosity killing answers to a child’s free-flow of questions, parents prefer handing him a smartphone. The internet is a quagmire of information the child will surely get lost in. The information overload will tire the child and he will give up the information quest—but not let go of the phone. When the kid is glued to the smartphone playing games or watching videos, the parents go to town complaining that the kid is addicted to technology and does not converse with the family. Smartphones and technology take the rap as the new age devil. The truth of the matter is a child would rather interact with a person than a device.

The modern rules of engagement have evolved into a thug’s premise of *push or be pushed*. This kind of self-centered focus leaves no room for any human values and turns one into a thoughtless beast who knows only how to survive in the most basic way possible.

Yet, we fare better when we are allowed to hone, display and use our unique endowments and skills rather than be pushed to take up the most *fashionable and popular* profession in vogue. We are presented with a list of to-dos before we can tap into our resourcefulness because everyone else has signed up for the same program.

Kids are first admitted to a school for education and academics. Besides, there is a plethora of programs and skill-development classes that are deemed mandatory for the all-round development of a child. Essentially, what they mean is that a kid is not innately able to face the world. This seeds a sub-conscious pressure on the child to perform

well at these programs and academies and always stay in the race to be relevant. The thinking grows into the child turning into an adult where the impression remains. This has turned society into a limiting, competitive field rather than a limitless and boundaryless collaborative one.

Going back to the example of shoving Karate down a child's throat - what if the child figures out that she has no affinity for Karate? She can see other kids managing it with ease so she too, pretends nothing is amiss. Sadly, she has no idea that most of the other kids are in the same boat as her, and are only pretending to cope. She becomes adept at it by adopting twisted coping mechanisms. This builds a validation that they are doing fine. The kid develops this pattern of thinking and seeking validation which could go on to be fatal as they move towards adolescence.

As individuals and parents, we have failed to recognize this because we generally tend to follow the trend. A reality-check here: According to research, the top ten jobs or business ventures in the world today are those which did not even exist ten years ago. So, what are we preparing the next generation for? We are better off helping them to find something that allows them to voice their opinions, attract their interests, and sustain their curiosity. A sustained interest will fuel their passion, making them stand out and be noticed. Choosing the same thing your neighbor's child does, will not.

In our desire to bring out the best in our kids, we scramble to provide them with all possible resources. We forget that real disruptors are those who are innovative—charting new paths. And innovation comes alive in an atmosphere that is strapped for resources. A resource fed child is not going to do better; he's just going to become dull, complacent and bored! Where is the challenge to make things work despite impossible odds? It is easy to build a tree-house when everything needed to build it has been made available—including an expert handy-man!

Don't give me good news. Good news weakens me.

~ Charles Kettering.

Countless young graduates join the corporate world expecting to be provided all possible resources. They expect an environment that is

as accessible and comfortable as their homes, only to plunge into a state of panic when met with reality. Social media resounds with the plaintive cries of folks who have had to make a shocking acquaintance with reality.

They want a spectacular sense of victory in the most mundane task—as if they just finished inventing the wheel. They want a world where they just name a wish and it shall pop out of thin air, even before the paint dries on their smooth nails. I have witnessed top rankers from premier institutes join us at work. They are exceedingly talented in planning and developing strategies but fail miserably at execution.

They are not on familiar terms with ground realities and the practical issues a department or a company faces. At their colleges or universities, they have been trained with varied plans for earning profits. As a result, they are unable to function in an environment with limited resources, fierce competition and terrible work-pressure. The interns eventually end up quitting their jobs, looking for another organization where they can fit in or reducing themselves to a nobody whose opinion does not matter. Very few amongst them take up the pain of learning the nuances of a workplace. Those who stay put and keep learning are the ones who eventually start ascending the corporate ladder.

Success isn't owned. It's leased. And rent is due every day.

~ J.J. Watt

We are better off building a culture that everything that we desire needs to be earned. The desire then helps us develop the right ethics and temperament. We are not lost in an unfair or unjust world—a common lament nowadays. When we blatantly pamper our children, it becomes equally difficult for the children to deal with the world. They find it increasingly tough to communicate with others.

Parents are often reluctant to be so brutally honest with their children, afraid of hurting their feelings. At first glance, this might seem discouraging but that's not true. An unrealistic assessment of his abilities sets the child up for a future filled with dashed expectations. Instead, the plain-speak helps build trust and genuine self-esteem, untouched by

boastful arrogance. The children know they were not sold on something they are not. They would respect their parents even more for not turning them into another version of some other child—or themselves.

In high school, my father urged me to take up a subject that I would need to study to take over his business someday. I rebelled against this thought constantly and told him that I didn't see myself managing what he did. Eventually, he agreed to my point of view. Today I am on my own doing considerably well for myself. Had I bowed down to the pressure under the mistaken idea that I was being respectful towards my father's wishes, I would be sulking within and probably even hating my father for it. Instead of brow-beating children to outdated social structures, it would serve everyone much better to help them develop the ability to reason, love and form genuine connections with people. It is much fruitful explaining the importance of bonding as a family by respecting and supporting the family member's decisions and choices in life.

Circle of Friendships

Speaking of your support system, let's move on to our ecosystem of friends and companionships. Most of us tend to conform to the same ideology our friends and family do. Even if they are wrong, we are reluctant to point it out to them for fear of losing the friendship. We tend to overlook their faults. Like everyone else, I too have been wary of pointing out a friend's faults, for fear of losing the friend forever. Over the years while evaluating relationships with my close friends, I realized I preferred expressing myself frankly if I felt they had taken me for a ride. I would rather not remain loyal to relationships that require me to lose something to remain alive.

Some friends appreciated where I was coming from and immediately corrected their behavior. Today we share an extremely close bond because we respect each other's values, challenges and stand for each other in times of difficulties. To the ones who did not realize, I have conveniently excused myself from their lives, liberating myself from the toxic relationship. We also have ourselves to blame for encouraging behavior that does not flow with our values right from the beginning.

Extremities of Life

All societies have their own Dos and Don'ts. They have their own beliefs, ethics, values and moral code built into them. Growing up, you too were introduced to a system of ethics. What were the most important values you were given? Honesty, love, trust, compassion, care—all are excellent values. Our definitions of success, competition, prosperity and power also stem from societal beliefs. But very few of us would relate with the realities of adversities, dealing with failures, how to cope with situations when all the above good values fail. Of course, we would have been better off if these unpleasant facts of life were introduced to us as something which was a part of life, without making a big deal of them.

We are so engrossed in chasing the good things in life that these elements become the only things in life. We've never been told that finding a balance in a life that see-saws up and down is the way to live. Often there are more downs than the ups. If we do not get disillusioned with our ups, we will not falter during our downs. This would help make us more robust and 'anti-fragile'. To understand the value of wealth one must understand poverty, to understand the value of family one must know the meaning of being isolated, to understand the value of food one must understand hunger. The list is endless.

Understanding that life swings between the extremities of good and bad create a built-in tipping balance for us. Knowing that I can improve even if I am the best or my situation could have been worse even if this is the worst I have experienced, gives me the strength to push my boundaries.

There was a king in India who showered his child with all the luxuries and indulgences one could ask for. He kept his prince at bay from the misery of the people in his kingdom. For a large part of his youth, the prince believed his palace was the entire world, with an unlimited supply of materials he could ever need. One day, the prince accidentally wandered outside the palace gates. He was aghast at what he saw.

The prince's definition of the world came crashing down which led him to the path of understanding the meaning of suffering. Post deep meditations, he concluded the real reason for suffering was the weight of expectations and ephemeral pleasures laden on human beings. If these

expectations and their emotions are wiped out, humans shall not suffer. The prince's name was Siddhartha Gautama who went on to become Gautama Buddha.

Buddha himself preached to strike the balance between extremes. Those who have read Gautama Buddha, know the profound impact of his teachings all over the world today and is seen as the ultimate solution to one's problems.

The Failure Paradox

In school and early college days, I loved to play Cricket (a much-loved sport in India) and wanted to play at the bigger clubs after representing my college team. My parents felt it was a lost cause and wasteful exercise. They believed Cricket would divert me from completing my education and I must pursue a respectable job in the market (again a typical social response). I was generalized into a category of the working class which would be safe and secure for my future as the risks of failing were low. I never got to assess what I might or might not have become. Maybe I would have failed miserably and in the failure, I would have learned to prosper and embrace failures in other endeavors of life.

For me, failure only meant the end of all options and dreams. I did not know that failure could also mean new learning, trying something else which might help me improve, strategize in a way that no one else ever has. Maybe by trying out something different and failing repeatedly, I would have succeeded. Maybe! I wonder how many of these learnings I gained through my educational degree. I guess none. My academic credentials defined by the society only prepared me for staying safe and sound but never mentioned what failure is to me or how could it help me overcome my limitations.

Failure has been depicted as an evil ghost rather than a friend who pushes you to learn and question the status quo. If we are acclimatized to failures, we will find the means to succeed on our own when directed to a goal. We would stop being obsessed with success and no longer let the thought of failure make us anxious.

When we keep succeeding it indicates something is working well for us. This also forces us to focus on only those actions and behaviors

which made us successful and with time we cease to look at other ways to attain or expand our goal. Not knowing the alternate methods might be productive for us in the short run but if the demographic shifts, we would be facing despair. We cling to our success so firmly that we develop a trepidation of losing it all by trying something new. Success should not be the peak of a mountain where we end our exploration but the opening out of a fresh new world to march on ahead. When we analyze some other fundamentals touted as bad by society, as a failure in a more holistic way, we would see them as enablers for a healthy and more meaningful life than eluding them.

Indulging Happiness

Our happiness too, when dissected presents to us nothing more than a box of materialistic pleasures. We can be joyful with a luxe lifestyle and all the fleeting passages of pleasures. I have come across many with all the resources for happiness in their lives, yet living in abject misery. We are conditioned to believe that happiness is a goal that you achieve with worldly materials, instead of choosing it as a way of life.

‘FOMO’ (fear of missing out) is the new angst. In a cheeky turnaround, psychologists have introduced the philosophy of ‘JOMO’ (joy of missing out)!

It is okay to not go partying with friends at times but lie down on the couch and relax. Instead of focusing on the time you are missing out with friends and not taking pictures for your Instagram account, think about the time you are giving your body to unwind and rest. Chasing happiness only takes us away from it. At every event, instance or action we set an expectation of an outcome in our favor. If the outcome is not to our standard or expectation we start sulking until some other event, instance or action makes us happy. This invariably yanks us into a loop of varied emotions and in the pursuit of happiness. We are much better off not chasing happiness for every action performed but stay curious about the surprises the action brings us. It is this element of surprise in our life events that bring in contentment and joy.

One might argue that this is not true for every event in life. What about the loss of life? Losing someone extremely close? The pain of

losing a loved one is subjective. I have wept desolately on losing some individuals in my life. But again, theories of life and death are convoluted by our society. Death, however painful, is a part of life. It is the only guarantee to one's life amid every other achievement of a living being. I soon realized; we would be better off in celebrating the life lived of the loved one who is no longer amongst us rather than forever drowning in grief. We can draw immense inspiration from the departed into our own lives, from the principles they followed and for which we loved them.

Moreover, when we talk of staying curious and being ready for life's surprises, one doesn't imply that even tragedy is a matter of hilarity. It is not; it is heartbreaking. It is okay to grieve and be sorrowful. Losing someone precious cannot be brushed away. But once the grief has been processed, it is time to bounce back. To rediscover one's passion for life and be ready once more to go where she leads. What is your turn around time to normalcy when you are stuck with a life-changing experience that brings immense grief?

If you look back on your life, you will discover that the most significant moments of your life were, in fact, the toughest, most adverse moments of your life.

Times where you stood strong in the face of adversity, overcame heartbreaks, recuperated from your losses to create something profitable and sustainable are the events which were the mainstays of everlasting happiness. A promotion after toiling hard at work, a start-up venture taking off after days, months or maybe years of ups and downs or holding on to a long-distance relationship which eventually works out, are such defining moments that create everlasting happiness. It reminds us of our ability to bounce back even if we hit rock bottom or lose the faith of the people around us.

We must nevertheless, detach from the misery that deceives as happiness. With such deceptions, we go on to form toxic relationships with people. Our pursuit of happiness and success goes to extremes where we tolerate harmful people in our lives for varied emotional reasons. No matter the pain and negativity they fill us with; we still cling to them even though they add no value to our lives. Men and women hold on to marriage despite mistreating each other and put up a façade of being a happily married couple to the society.

It is okay for couples to have a difference of opinion and constructive arguments as it forms the basis of a stronger bonding. Adultery and physical abuse, however, should not be tolerated as there is no coming back once these vices enter a relationship, however hard the oppressor tries.

Let's Talk Money

Money has been advertised as a magical solution to all problems. This would mean those who have achieved their financial goals should have no challenges in life. Their lives should be smooth sailing and they ought not to have any complaints.

The contradictory premise about money is to be the root of all evil and should be detested. Money leads to corruption and poisons the minds of the able. Both these hypotheses about money are false. Wealth, like all other values we seek to possess, is a vital ingredient for our well-being. However, it is not the only value we should possess or keep hustling for. Consider a shelf placed within our bodies, you would want to have a jar of happiness in it, a jar of trust, one for ability, for love and so on. Money is no different than these jars within us. Simply having one value jar in our life doesn't complete us and so it is with money. Therefore, placing more or less importance to the value of money is disastrous.

Having money by trading our relations, love, trust, happiness is disastrous. For if you do, you would always have to pay a price to buy those values or experiences which exist only temporarily. Since you have valued money higher than love and let go of your loved ones in a bid to amass wealth, you would only end up paying people for love to bring that fraction of compassion in your life which was otherwise unrestricted. You would spend to buy comfort, convenience and luxury to make yourself happy which was otherwise free through non-materialistic pleasures. I have lost count of people I know who despite being married or in a relationship opt for paid sex or shower gifts to people elsewhere soliciting for physical relationships. They feel stuck in their relationships and seek no happiness in it as they never attempted to define the fundamentals that bring joy between partners and are now simply got bored with each other.

For years, I enjoyed visiting the top of the line hotels and restaurants. It was a pleasure being pampered by the service offered at these outlets,

served food in Michelin styled aesthetics and posting pictures. I didn't mind the money I splurged, as it gave me immense gratification in seeking validation through social media platforms on the places I visited. Any new chic restaurant or luxury stay pops up in my reach I would be there and rave about it. This happened for a while and eventually, I realized that every restaurant or hotel I visited ended up offering similar service or food. I got bored with the indulgence I craved and did so much of it that it did not matter to me anymore what novelty was being offered.

I was made to feel happy only because I paid for it and seeking validation about it with an online community meant nothing. It only made me happy momentarily until my feeds appeared on the walls of my friend's accounts. Once a post got older, I had to look for new posts to show up for likes and comments and feel happy about it. Today after deliberations, I am happy spending time at home reading, writing, conversing with family members or visiting our loved ones which helps in creating meaningful bonds. All of this doesn't require me to seek validation of my actions through strangers on social media and above all doesn't cost a dime! This doesn't mean I have stopped visiting restaurants, but the reason for visiting has now changed.

We've all heard it said, *Money is the root of all evil*. The correct saying is *The love of money is the root of all evil*.

This quote has been misinterpreted by somewhere they pass a blanket judgment on money—turning an inanimate object into being evil, ignoring the purpose for which money is used. Money is a medium for humans to meet ends and fulfill the basic needs of existence. *Kindness projects* conveniently forget to mention that they too work with money—usually, someone else's money, or with money the dispensers have not earned. Even so, it can help you survive only for a while and is by no means a sustainable substitute for money that is hard-earned and well deserved.

Money creates a balance in all trades and is universally recognized. We cannot practically live a life without money, as we would not live a life only with a single jar of the above-mentioned values in ourselves. Instead, we are either programmed to inflate this value amongst others or deflate it by raising the importance of other values. It stands on equal ground to the rest of the virtues we pursue.

The corruption of money is the way in which we use it to bribe or create a bias. This corruption can be caused by any other commodity and not just money albeit being widely used. It is not the real essence of our problems, human intent is. Money can also be a great help to you in knowing people and their aims of developing a bond with you. Look out for those who rate wealth, money and luxury above any other value. For those who fall only for money constantly, will never rise for any values or relationships. Man has gone to extreme limits in his relationship with money which have destroyed the very tenets of humanity.

This can be changed when man realizes the real purpose of wealth. Money which can be used for self-development—building knowledge, education, and research, for instance. The same can be extended to a group of people to create a viral effect on society. Knowledge which propels a society to build bridges that connect instead of building walls which demarcate, improve healthcare rather than undermine our well-being, conserve the ecology instead of destroying it. Funnily enough, we see the poor choosing to laugh and dance to divert themselves from the pain of poverty and the rich worrying about the productive reinvestment of their wealth!

Limitless

Whatever we pursue in life—personal relationships, career, business or marriage—we would prefer that success is reached via a linear path from which failure is banished. The peaks of success are only to be accessed after you have traversed the valleys of setbacks. More often than not, success comes camouflaged as something others will mistake as an abject failure. Only you can define the levels of excellence you can reach. This is to be true with all the successful people we hear and read about, they never let their dreams be beaten by third party facts or limited by society's gauge.

If Steve Jobs surrendered to the belief that he can never be hired in the company he was expelled from, he wouldn't have built an iconic and one of the most revered brands the world has seen. If Roger Federer believed that tennis players should retire at the age of thirty, he wouldn't have won a record twenty Grand Slam singles titles or eight Wimbledon championships and still vouch for the next championship title as I write

this chapter. You can pick up any of your idols from any walk of life and find this to be a common characteristic between all. The reason at times we are not able to emulate our idols is because we only attach their success to their greatness. That's the only reason we idolize them. Their success. What we need to revere in their story is the despair and suffering they have been through and accordingly stand up for those despairs and sufferings in our journey towards a goal. All our heroes have faltered miserably but chose to keep coming back at their goals with renewed ideas.

Failure to them was not an end but an important master through their journey to success. They did not bother what the limitations of their predicaments were, but focused on rewriting what their standards should be. While defining those standards they accepted challenges and embraced them by giving a whole new meaning to competition. They are unapologetic to the events and people who don't bring any value to them or their endeavors and stay relentless in their pursuit. They let go of the smaller things that would suck them into the tunnel of mediocrity. They analyzed the facts but were never bound to those facts that could bring them down or halt their march.

You are successful the day you reject the popular definitions of success and still find the means to create everlasting happiness. Happiness for you and for those who matter to you—achieved through ethical conduct. To be the most powerful, disregard power.

By sticking to a job and bowing down to an existing order, detach from the thought of losing your job and then see the wonders you can create within your workplace. The same is true if you are an artist, sportsperson or leader. Existing formulas work well to give you a known answer. We need to constantly challenge the status quo to create breakthroughs. We are accustomed to focusing on the consequence that distracts us from the action. For instance, forget attaining loyalty of a loved one but focus on giving unconditional love—and watch love bloom as a by-product.

Forget garnering wealth and fame, focus on working tirelessly on an idea you are crazy about. Wealth creation or prosperity then happens spontaneously, without you trying to make it happen. There is no better feeling than being liberated from the pre-set notions, compulsions and falsehoods of society. The feeling that helps you propel to your goal irrespective of the facts and circumstances.