Sri Burugapalli

From The Culture That Shaped The Most Successful Immigrants In A Generation

A FATHER'S CRY FOR MEANING

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SAMPLE CHAPTER

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Learning About Endings

A CHILD'S PROMISE
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I REMEMBER THE FEELING I had when I saw my father's shoes outside our front door when I got home from school on a Saturday afternoon, it meant that he had come for an unannounced visit. I was elated he was here. I have distinct, almost episodic memories of my father: a sharp looking, medium built man with lightly curling hair and a neatly trimmed manly mustache, his dark sunglasses, the expensive imported cologne, the scent of Brylcream, his brand of cigarettes, his custom-made clothes, his wristwatch, and even his steel fountain pen.

With time memories of people can fade but those memories are deeply embedded as part of my own story of my father. As a child I adored no one more than him—my father was my hero. When I grew up, I wanted to be just like him: strong, well loved, respected, principled. I

was completely overwhelmed at this unexpected, rare event, I ran into the living room with a huge smile and saw him having tea with Krishna uncle and Satya auntie. I rushed to hug him.

He looked down at me with a pleasant smile and tussled my hair, "How's your school? Do you like your new friends?" he asked while finishing his tea. I can still see him placing the empty cup on the blue deco-lam sheet coffee table.

I started to talk non-stop without even taking a breath, giving him every minute detail about my new school, my teachers, my friends, making sure I told him about my class rank. I remembered that I had my report card in my school bag, I ran to get it and Krishna uncle gestured for me to bring it to him. He reviewed it, asking a few questions. But impatiently I snatched the card from him and handed it to my father so he could see it. I softly pleaded with him, "Daddy, can you sign my report card this time? You've never signed any of my report cards. I want to show it to my teachers."

Smiling broadly, he pulled out the sleek pen from his pocket and signed his name in English.

He asked me, "Is there anything you need?"

I told him, "Yes, I need new shoes," pointing to the heel on my shoe that was falling off.

My father never really said much about his feelings, but I knew he loved me immensely and he never failed to get me anything I asked for. I was always reminded by my family how much his face lit up when he got to spend time with me, and I wanted very much to make him proud of me.

"He goes through three pairs of shoes each year and ten pairs of socks. I have never seen any child needing so many shoes," Satya auntie joked gently. He kept smiling.

After a few minutes Krishna uncle told me, "Either go out to play with your friends or go inside and study in the bedroom. We need to speak with your father in private."

I was not happy about leaving my father's side. But I knew what would happen if I didn't heed Krishna uncle's order. Normally I would go out, but not wanting to go too far from my father, I stayed

inside. Leaving the adults to their conversation, I grabbed a schoolbook from the shelf and closed the living room door behind me. I sat at the table in the dining room, pretending to read, but really listening intently to the adults in the living room while peeking through a tiny gap between the door and its frame.

Their conversation went on for several hours, and the discussion was emotional, even heated at times. Sometimes their voices were just whispers, but other times it got louder, and Satya auntie began to weep. I could hear her pleading with my father to be rational.

I can still hear Krishna uncle, "Think about what you are saying. It doesn't make much sense. Don't be hasty. What will happen to your wife, the children? Who will care for them?"

What in the world could my father be saying to them? I was mystified. What do they mean "be rational?" My father always seemed to be a sensible man. He's the man that others went to for advice and assistance, not someone who I thought needed help. I always wanted to be bold, decisive, and helpful like my father. He was well loved by his family, his cousins, and his large network of friends. In his own way he was a fun guy to be around, laughing, joking, and ensuring that everyone else was comfortable. He always stood by uncle anytime he needed help, he even arranged for my uncle's son to marry the daughter of a close friend. I was proud of how people treated him with respect, but hearing Krishna uncle cautioning my father made no sense to me.

Through the door I could hear my father say, "I am here today to see my son, spend some time with him. I realize it is against your rules, but I had no choice. I hear what you are saying, and of course I will think about it." He tried to tell Satya auntie that everything would be fine. He started joking and laughing with them, it was such an awkward pivot that even as a child I could sense that something was wrong.

Later that evening, he left for his hotel and promised he would return in the morning and asked for permission for us to spend the day together and go around the city. I could hardly contain myself at the thought of spending the entire Sunday with him. It was all I

could talk about for the rest of the evening. He had been to the city before, but he had never taken me anywhere. This would be the first time. But bits and pieces of the adults' conversation from earlier in the evening ran through my head as I fell asleep.

The following day, my father showed up bright and early for breakfast. He had hired a taxi for the whole day, and we headed out on our tour of the city. We visited his closest friends and relatives and had lunch at his favorite restaurant. He bought me the shoes I needed and more clothes.

At one point he turned to look at me and said, "I am pleased with how you are doing here. Remember always to study well and do your best. You will be the man of our house soon. You should always take care of your mother and sisters when you grow up," he pulled me close as we rode the taxi back to the apartment.

I looked him straight in the face answering, "I will study my hardest Daddy. And I will be good and take care of them."

I didn't understand why he was telling me this, but I was happy to hear him praise me. I had never heard compliments like that from him before. I hugged him even tighter. He told Krishna uncle and Satya auntie he would take the last train back home. But they urged him to stay, encouraging him to spend a few more days. Reluctantly, he agreed to stay just one more day because the next day was a public holiday.

I woke up at the first ray of sunlight, staring out the window and rushing to the door at every noise. He did not show up until around 2 pm, he looked haggard and tired. His eyes were bloodshot, as if he had been up most of the night. He spent the rest of the afternoon with us. After about an hour Krishna uncle asked me to leave the room like the day before, saying he had to speak with my father. I left but stood quietly outside, my ear pressed to the door.

Their conversation became intense, I could only make out pieces here and there. At one point, I could hear Krishna uncle making my father promise him not to do anything foolish, he agreed, promising he would think things over. He thanked them for taking care of me, but something felt off to me. The hushed tones

over the last two days, and my father's earlier conversation with me, and now this other emotional discussion? I couldn't understand what was happening. But I felt uneasy.

Around 6 pm, he was ready to leave. Karthi Bava offered to drive him to the station. Satya auntie called me in to say goodbye, he hugged me and told me to take care of myself and pay attention to what Krishna uncle told me. Unwilling to let him go I said, "Daddy, I want to go with you and drop you off at the railway station," he quickly agreed before Krishna uncle could protest. It seemed that he didn't want to leave either and he would take any additional time with me that he could, and that made me feel special.

I wedged myself in between my father and Karthi Bava on the scooter. The train was ready to board when we reached the station. Karthi Bava took the luggage. I was clinging to my father the entire time; I didn't want him to let go of me. As he slowly settled into his seat by the window, he gave Karthi Bava some money to buy him a water bottle.

After he handed over the money, he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "You will remember what I told you yesterday about taking care of your mother and sisters, you will be a good boy and study hard, won't you?" Then pulling me to his lap as he stuffed a Rs100 bill in my pocket. His voice had changed somehow, his tone was different, his eyes were different, how he pulled me close was different. He was trembling and had a deeply sad expression on his face.

The situation felt off, and my heart sank. Before I could reply, Karthi Bava returned. The train was about to leave, and Karthi Bava hurried in telling me to follow him. I ignored him, holding on tightly to my father's hand. He walked me to the door and kissed me on the cheek as Karthi Bava had to yank me from the doorway. The train began to move. As my feet landed on the platform, I looked up to wave back; I saw tears in his eyes, he pulled out his white handkerchief to dry them.

I could hear my heart pounding in my ears, louder than the speeding train, louder than the commotion at the station, it was all I could feel or hear. My father had always managed to communicate a lot without necessarily saying a lot, and here too, he managed to

communicate through the silence and the many unsaid words. Of course, I didn't know it was the last time I would see him.

The next day must be one of the most uneven of my whole life. It started out on a real high point but ended as low as it gets, the definition of trauma. The best part of school the next day was submitting the report card signed by my father to my teacher, making sure to point out his signature.

Then the flip occurred. It was 3 pm and I was in history class, when one of Krishna uncle's assistants, Sharif, came to the classroom door with the school secretary, they both had grim looks. They said I had to come with them, and I was being sent home for an emergency because my father was ill. When I arrived at the apartment Krishna uncle and Satya auntie were already packed and ready to go. As soon as she saw me, Auntie put her arms around me and started weeping.

I looked around at the bags and asked, "Did something happen to my father?"

She cried even louder. Krishna uncle kept wiping away his tears while asking her to calm down. They did not reply at first.

"Your father had an accident and is at the hospital. They asked to see you immediately, so we must go to the village right away," Krishna uncle finally said.

We rushed to the station for the first available train, and it was jam-packed. It was a nine-hour journey in a filthy, crowded third class car with standing room only for the whole trip. Indian rail journeys can require serious endurance. I was lost in thought; I didn't really believe that he had just had an accident. I was convinced it was fatal.

Most of the train ride I kept fighting back tears and wept quietly, turning my head away from Krishna uncle and Satya auntie, wiping my tears. When I felt a breath of cold air any time, I managed to bring my head near the windowsill letting the cool breeze dry my wet cheeks while I kept imagining the worst—that my father was dead.

A relative picked us up at the station nearest to our village which was about an hour away by car. It was 4 am when we arrived at the village. People had gathered around our house and as soon as we arrived, I was whisked quickly into the house. As I walked in, I saw

my father's body laid out on a small rug in the middle of the floor: he was covered in a long white cloth. With the sheet pulled all the way up his body to his neck, only his swollen face was visible; his skin was darkened with a greenish brown hue. My mother was sitting next to him, there were several relatives and friends gathered around the room. My two sisters were huddled in the corner.

As soon as I entered the room erupted in deafening wails. My mother was inconsolable and held me tightly for as long as she could, drenching me in tears, her body burning up. Many older relatives, uncles, and aunts pulled me towards them, hugging me and crying. I had no tears or feelings at that moment, as though the wind swept away all my feelings along with the tears during the train journey and left me dried and emotionless. I think that having imagined the worst, that my father was dead, throughout the long train ride made me numb to the sight of his dead body when I finally saw him.

I was already disassociated from what was going on around me. I sat silently staring at my father's body for a long time, shifting my gaze from one person to the next. I was searching for my little sisters. I saw Deepa, ten, peeking from behind the kitchen door, Sasi, eight, was next to her, clinging to a relative's leg, staring at the floor, nervous to look toward the motionless body. Both girls were tired from not sleeping, watching all the adults sobbing for hours. The dark eyeliner under Deepa's eyes was smeared all over her cheeks. Sasi was half asleep, relieved to see me, wiping her tears. Seeing the three of us together made it harder for everyone, particularly my mother and Nanamma, as they sobbed heavily, and everyone wailed louder.

At sunrise, the body was taken in procession to our farm to be cremated, I was expected to perform the last rites. We went to the spot where generations of our family had been cremated. The ceremony lasted an hour. I went through the motions, doing everything the high priest directed, holding in my emotions, unable to fathom what was happening.

Every time the high priest chanted a *mantra*[3] invoking my father's and forefathers' spirits, a spasm of emotion coursed

[3] *Mantra*, a sacred utterance in Sanskrit

through my body and his smiling face flashed across my mind's eye. I desperately wanted to see my mother and be with her right then. But women weren't allowed to attend funerals in India. But I still wanted to run and be home with my mother, Nanamma, and sisters. After the ceremony, some villagers went to the mango tree in the middle of the farm. They didn't want me to follow and told me to remain at the cremation site.

"I worry how this family will survive now, who will take care of them?" I could overhear someone say as we walked back home.

"I wonder why he did this. He was such a well-respected man. This family will be lost now. The poor little children … hmm," another said.

I knew right then why my father made me promise I would take care of my mother and sisters. "I know who will take care of our family," I thought. In my head I repeated, "I will not fail you, Daddy. I promise." But among several unpleasant ideas there was one thought that kept eating at me, "Why had my father done this?" As a twelve-year-old boy who spent most of his life away from his family, I hadn't spent an extended period with him, so I felt totally ill equipped to know what he would have been thinking. What had finally pushed him over the edge? I couldn't even really process the nature of my loss.

My father's death ended my childhood, and I became immediately aware of the real, final, and personal nature of death. I spent an immeasurable amount of time: hours, days, months, and years wondering how things might have been different had he not died and been around for me, my sisters, my mother, and the rest of the family. I even went so far to fixate on some of the smallest things leading up to the death.

What my life might have been like had he not visited, spending what was essentially his last day with me. I'm sure there is something about the fact that my father chose me to be the last person he really spoke to, but I can never get my head around what it meant. How much did I even mean to him, what had the family meant to him, and what did he expect me to do after he was no longer around?

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THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE ACT NOVEMBER 1983

My father's funeral lasted eleven days. Each day, the priest performed a certain set of religious rituals invoking the ancestors' spirits, culminating in an elaborate ceremony on the final day where everyone gathered.

My father and mother had great relationships with their friends and family, accepting invitations, participating in events, always helping people. Even when friends traveling to our village had many relatives to visit, they still stopped in, stayed, and spent vacations with us. My father's death shocked everyone and prompted them to offer their respect and condolences to the family. More and more relatives and friends kept pouring in as the news spread.

On the second day, I overheard some of my cousins talking. Listening to them it became clear that he had committed suicide. I was devastated, my heart broke; and I could feel my anxiety rising, my whole body shivering. I did not understand it, and to some extent I still don't. I kept thinking to myself, "How could someone do that? Why would my father do that? My father! What was everyone talking about? Why do they stop talking or speak in hushed tones when they see me?"

I was now determined to find out the whole story. Over the next few days, I managed to piece it together, using every means possible to collect information, pretending to be asleep while eavesdropping on adults' conversations.

It took a few days, but I was able to put together what happened over his last few hours. The morning my father got back he was home around 7 am. My mother had been running a high fever for two days and had been sleeping in the main bedroom, but she was in no condition to get up. When my father came into the home, Nanamma was sitting by the edge of her bed on the veranda offering her morning prayers. She was happy to see him and told him about my mother's illness. She had been expecting him sooner and asked him why he was late. But he did not answer, rather, he walked by without saying a word. He paused for a moment outside the bedroom door but didn't go in. Setting his overnight bag in the

corner, he went to the veranda and climbed up into the attic. He came down quickly, holding a round tin container. Shuffling past Nanamma, again ignoring her questions, he left the house with the container tucked under his arm.

My mother, being ill, did not hear what was happening outside her door. I always imagined that my father knew if he spoke to my mother, who he loved dearly, he would not be able to follow through with his plans. So, he avoided her, just as he avoided his own mother. He rushed to the farm with his dog, Jimmy, following him. To keep from being seen, he avoided well-traveled paths. He tried to send the dog home, but he would not leave my father's side.

When he reached the farm the morning work was done, and the farm hands had left. My father had made sure that he would be alone. He sat at the base of the large mango tree planted in the middle of the fields and quickly consumed the contents of the tin container. I can almost see his dog getting restless, being agitated, whimpering, and circling the tree, trying to jump on him. No one, except for Nanamma, knew that he had even returned to the village. The mango tree was in the middle of the fields, surrounded by dense coconut trees and sugar cane. He remained there alone until the farmhands got back to the farm around midday.

My father knew the rhythms of the village well enough to ensure that no one was there to stop him. It is likely that the poison caused his body to go into violent spasms for several minutes because his body, hands, legs, and neck had cuts and scratched from kicking dirt, rocks, and twigs on the ground around him. His clothes were torn in places, his face was swollen, darkened, his mouth was frothing and his eyes bulging. Unfortunately, I think it must have been an agonizing end, and I thought he must not have known it would be so violent.

He was found like that, under the tree, the tin container kicked away from his body. His dog was crying by his side, restlessly running around. Suraya, our farm hand returned to water the animals and Jimmy ran to him, and kept running back towards the mango tree, barking loudly, and circling around. Suraya followed him to my

father's dead body and in complete shock he immediately ran to the neighboring farm crying for help.

They called a doctor, but it was too late. Within minutes the news had spread through the village. People began congregating at the farm and the house. An hour later they brought his dead body home.

I could not understand why my father did this. I had known him as a strong-willed, warm, fun-loving person. Yet he killed himself in a brutal, appalling manner, leaving his family to suffer the consequences. I thought that one must have to have reached the limits of desperation to commit suicide. There were rumors that he was broke and killed himself out of shame. The absence of open conversation by my family about the death and particularly the lack of direct communication to me, his son, about what had happened made it clear that this was to be a taboo subject.

I knew we weren't wealthy like other branches of the family, but I would have not known if we were broke. If we were, my parents did a great job of hiding it. We had always been treated as if we were wealthy coastal farmers, which was certainly the image my father wanted to project. To the average Indian my father and mother gave the distinct impression they were wealthy. Most of my entire extended family seemed to be. But the reality was that my family's income was rather limited, even though they had the lands and the home for assets. Most had simply accepted their situation and learned to live within their means. Some had tried their luck at different business ventures, or trades. A few succeeded, but most did not. Those who were unwilling to adjust had to sell parts of their holdings to support their lifestyle.

Late one evening shortly after his death, I overheard a conversation between my mother and Lakshmi Pinni[4] her youngest and closest sister, about what my father had done. My mother said that my father had been depressed for months. Other than the movie theater, none of his businesses were going as he'd expected.

He had some conflict with his extended family because they disapproved of his financial decisions, risk-seeking, and "flashy" lifestyle. He had been respected for his no-nonsense attitude, so he was never confronted directly. But people talked behind his back.

[4] *Pinni*, aunt in Telugu

He was losing money. His transportation business had recently failed due to rising costs and reduced demand, and he had to sell it at a loss. His poultry business was beginning to improve, but the theater wasn't generating any big profits yet. His land holdings were the only thing that kept the household running.

He had borrowed money to start his businesses, the interest rates of local private money lenders that financed small business loans were a criminally high 24%. Even the nationalized banks in India charged 12-15% interest. It was extremely difficult to secure business financing from the national banks, given the overwhelming amount of paperwork they required. Because of the situation it was common for rural property owners to get financing through private lenders.

But the farmland did not make enough to service the loans and he had already sold some of the land a few years earlier. One of the money lenders, who happened to be related, spoke ill of my father behind his back when he questioned the compound interest levied, much higher than what was initially agreed on. He then refused to extend the loan period. Upset by the situation and against my father's wishes, my mother sold some of her inherited land to repay the loans. My father agreed out of pride and desperation. He had to endure the relative's taunts, greed and disrespectful behavior and then having to sell his wife's property was almost too much.

For families whose identity and wealth are based on the traditional landowning system, having to sell pieces of land and potentially end up landless is a real concern and a practical reality not taken lightly. The land was their source of livelihood and land ownership was the principal source of wealth. Our family's land had not come through the graces of some ruler or a get rich quick scheme, but was the result of previous generations' ingenuity, hard work and thrift. Having to part with such an important economic asset and family heritage due to poor choices was a painful and dislocating development.

India's conservative society and the family's risk averse elders would not be happy with such situations, often saying that families bring things like this on themselves. Potentially being landless is the worst thing for families in this situation. My father's money problems

deeply affected his self-image, and his sense of confidence was shaken. To make matters worse, my father's older brother, a successful farmer, who fell out with the family over financial matters, spoke ill of my father, his spending habits, business debt, and even supported the relative who had publicly insulted my father.

When word of the criticism reached my father, it hurt him deeply that his own brother would speak against him publicly in that tightly knit village environment. When I heard about this, I felt real disdain for the relative who had lent my father money and who later swindled him simply out of greed.

I vowed not to associate with that relative and never to get in trouble over debt. Krishna uncle's views on debt made practical sense. Although I did take on debt at critical junctures, with all of this I developed an innate fear of debt and high interest offers; what happened to my father always stuck in my mind. Living within my means has been a lifelong obsession for me.

Surprisingly, I did not feel any anger towards my father's older brother. I always respected him and felt warmly towards him, just as my father had. The brothers had a complicated relationship and were not on speaking terms for a few years after disputes over their inheritance. But when his brother's son was of marriage age, my father enthusiastically spearheaded those efforts: arranging the marriage, communicating with the bride's family on his nephew's and the family's behalf, and taking responsibility for the wedding arrangements, ensuring everything was done properly. His differences with his brother did not impact his sense of responsibility towards his nephew and the family. The complexity of family relationships and those related dynamics never cease to amaze me.

My father dreamed of expanding into other businesses but was hindered by lack of funds and felt trapped. It did not help that he was free with money, spending it liberally on the people in his life. He was well known for socializing with family and friends and helping the needy by donating to various community causes. All this spending clearly outpaced his income, which brought him to the point of having to gradually liquidate assets.

In addition, the sporadic loss of personal relationships and respect from his extended family had a significant impact on his feelings of value and self-worth. He was a proud man and couldn't handle that exposure. He must have lived with a sense of failure and disillusionment. Before he committed suicide, he started experiencing bouts of depression and his social drinking habit mushroomed into cycles of binge drinking, to drown out his sorrows and escape some of his troubles. He feared that his financial situation would continue to deteriorate.

During one of these periods when his demons overwhelmed him, he had told my mother he did not want to live anymore. When this wave of depression passed somewhat, as they did, he was his charming self again. Whenever those dark periods resurfaced, he would emotionally sink and was clearly battling overwhelming anxiety, stress, and depression. The reality was that he was suffering from significant, seemingly uncontrollable mood swings which led him to drink more. This problem stayed with him and was likely a contributing factor in his suicide.

After hearing my mother describe this and then remembering what had happened a few months earlier the bigger picture was starting to come into focus, even for a child. I now could see that during my visit the previous summer he was going through one of his downswings. One night he was doing very badly, so my sisters were taken to the neighboring relative's house, and I was put on a cot in the courtyard since I had already fallen asleep early.

Nanamma was away that night, but my father's aunt was there. Sometime late in the night, I woke up to raised voices. My father was talking to his aunt and my mother was sobbing quietly, by the side of my cot. I heard my father say, "My children will be better off without me than with me. I am sure of that. I cannot ruin their futures doing what I am doing."

His aunt was trying to calm him down and told him to think of his family. I was tossing in my bed, my mother tried to help me to stay still, pulling me closer to her.

I've pieced it all together more clearly now. It hadn't occurred to me earlier when my father had visited me in the city and had those closed-

door conversations with Krishna uncle and Satya auntie. What happened at the time of his death makes more sense when I see things now as an adult. As a child I understood only parts. My father was significantly depressed again. He worried the family would be ruined if his business and personal choices lead to financial collapse. He killed himself, believing he was not successful. He feared the worst and gave up.

Perhaps it was the easier thing to do. If life is a battle, he felt that he had lost. No one around him understood the reason for it or the depth of his despair. He had lost balance in his life. In his mind he was choosing his children's future over his own life, a false choice, and, I think, an unjustified act.

"My children will be better off without me than with me." The unforgettable feeling of that statement is never far from my mind. I could not understand how he could have thought like that. It led me to some unanswerable questions: "What sort of strength or courage is required to take one's own life?" and, "Is it strength or weakness, is it courage or cowardice, is it sacrifice or selfishness?" or "Did he hate himself and his life so much that he had to kill himself?"

To my surprise he had spoken to several people about his state of mind and how he was feeling, but they hadn't done anything. Maybe no one knew enough to do anything about it. Mental health is still largely a taboo subject in India, and this often leaves people with few options when they are in crisis. This is a big difference from the western world where it is a much more accepted topic. I don't know that had my father and my family not been trapped in a traditional mindset, would he have gotten help? Then I began to wonder if the fault was not with my father but maybe my family. "Did he fail his family, or did his family fail him?" and "Why wouldn't his love for his family pull him back from the brink?"

I think in the end no one really understood or knew him or his inner workings well. He kept everything hidden behind a strong extroverted personality. I always felt it was important that he chose to see me at the end, spending his last few days with me. But I wondered, "Why would he choose to do that?" For all intents and purposes, I was the last person he ever really spoke to, and he didn't say much. Realizing

this, I started feeling an enormous cloud engulfing me. I had been given so much responsibility from my now dead father, and the burden of that choice weighed on me. I began to worry, "What if I don't live up to his expectations?" With many questions but few answers, I've spent sleepless nights worrying about my promise to him.

By the twelfth day of the death ceremonies, most of the relatives had left. Lakshmi Pinni stayed for a few extra days to support my mother. I insisted on staying with my mother and sisters, unwilling to go back to the city. My father had made me promise I would take care of the family. That responsibility was mine now.

The family elders were split on what should be done. Some sided with me, but others including Krishna uncle, disagreed vehemently. He felt that my admission to the new school gave me the best shot at a promising future and was what my father wanted all along. My mother agreed with my uncle, although she was desperate to keep me home. She could not stop crying, but she insisted I go to school. She asked me to complete the academic year, promising to revisit the situation the following summer.

My mother's father, Rao Tatha was a well-to-do landowner from a nearby village. He and his four wealthy brothers were community leaders; it felt like they owned half the village, one uncle was the village president, and another was the village secretary. Over the years our family had built the temple, the school. They lived in a large residential compound, reminiscent of the traditional South Indian house. Rao Tatha was known for his generosity and affability. He was a lavish spender. He had the first car, motorcycle, telephone, and other modern conveniences in the village.

Rao Tatha tried to convince my mother to move back to his village, where she and my sisters would be more comfortable under his care, rather than let them struggle where they were. She refused; she didn't want to make any changes. She argued that her life was where her husband had been and that she would make it on her own with the resources she had. Rao Tatha was unconvinced, but he relented.

About the Author

Sri Burugapalli is a relentless seeker and teacher, a lifelong student of philosophy and human psychology.

Sri is a distinguished business leader in a wide range of industries backed by top tier academic foundation including an MBA from Duke University and an AMP from Harvard Business School. Sri has deep expertise in entrepreneurial startup environments and legacy enterprise turnarounds and is known for his corporate leadership, strategic thinking, financial acumen, client & employee relationships.

Sri spends his best time with his daughter, wife, and family dog; he also writes poetry.

A Father's Cry for Meaning is Sri Burugapalli's first book.

AN INTENSELY WRITTEN MEMOIR, *A FATHER'S CRY FOR MEANING* BY SRI BURUGAPALLI, IS THE AUTHOR'S SEARCH FOR STRONG FAMILY BONDS AFTER YEARS OF SEPARATION AND SETBACKS.

Finding love while navigating the intricacies of arranged marriages, ingenuously carving one's path to the American dream, seeking purpose and hope to overcome emotional trauma and loss, many aspects of Sri's story are shared by millions of other members of the Indian diaspora leading their successful American lives, as well as people throughout the world.

Sri's story depicts what Indianness means, giving insights into the Indian way of life and the immigrant experience through his attempts to straddle both worlds. He does this with Informative ease and entertaining personal retellings of life events at the intersection of his native Indian culture and his adopted one in America.

A relentless seeker and teacher, a lifelong student of philosophy and human psychology, *A Father's Cry For Meaning* is Sri Burugapalli's first book.

Sri is a distinguished business leader in a wide range of industries backed by top tier academic foundation including an MBA from Duke University and an AMP from Harvard Business School. Sri has deep expertise in entrepreneurial startup environments and legacy enterprise turnarounds and is known for his corporate leadership, strategic thinking, financial acumen, client & employee relationships.

Sri spends his best time with his daughter, wife, and family dog; he also writes poetry.