



THE ROAD AHEAD.....

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ABSTRACT

This case is about a young woman named Sanyukta who was brought up in a traditional Hindu joint family in India during the seventies. It traces the childhood, adolescence and the adulthood of Sanyukta. The early childhood and upbringing of an individual plays a vital role in shaping his/her personality. It also determines the tenacity and stress coping ability in an individual. The present case adds a dimension to the study of stress management by exploring the possibility of heredity as a variable that effects stress coping mechanism of an individual.

Key words: stress, success, ambition, marriage, criticism

The case:

Sanyukta was born in a well to do family. She was a quiet and thoughtful child. She was a keen observer, who picked up small details from her surroundings. and tried to find a place for herself in the society. She aspired to be rich and famous when she grew up.

Her parents were a symbol of success. They epitomised successful professionals who had carved a niche for themselves in the society. They had been brought up average middle class joint families. They were both very hard working and ambitious. They were able to sail through the complexities of living in large families by sharing a caring relationship with other members of their families. There were moments of great turmoil, especially when the health issues of elders were involved. There were issues like studies of children, their

college/university problems and then their marriages etc. Though these issues were of much concern and debate at that point of time, they were dealt with amicably with a lot of deliberations by the concerned members of the family.

Her earliest memories of childhood were going to the park with her parents. She remembered how she had seen different animals perform antics at the circus. Later she had seen some of the animals at the local zoo. Her early years were spent basking in the warmth of her parent's love. To her, they were nurturing parents and loving spouses. For Sanyukta, a perfect environment existed which would mould her to become a mature, amicable and judicious adult.

When, she was in middle school, she could perceive that all was not very well in the lives of her parents. There was some kind of stress which she could not fathom. As years went by, she realized that her family spent lesser time with each other. There were fewer family visits and get-togethers. The vacations were cut short. Visits by relatives and friends also became less frequent. Both parents had busy schedules. Her mother would often attend meetings and conferences but would make it a point to keep it as minimal as possible. Her father, on the other hand would travel a lot. Being the regional head of operations, he had to oversee the functioning of Delhi and the neighbouring states. As years passed by his schedule became more hectic. By the time she was in middle school, he even had to travel abroad for the company's assignments.

Back home, her mother would try to manage both work and home. She could understand that her mother was often walking on a tightrope balancing the two. Sanyukta would spend hours thinking about bits and pieces of words picked up from her parent's conversation. She would think what might have gone wrong. She would think how she could be instrumental in resolving their conflict. Being the only child, she had no one with whom she could share her feelings. Some of her acquaintances did have siblings. At times she would envy them.

There would be times when siblings would not be discussed in very positive terms. She would then thank her stars that she was absolved of the misery inflicted upon by them. However in her moments of solitude, she would still long for a companion.

Besides, there were many nuances to the conflicts that were going on in her life. Physiological changes were accompanied with increased work pressure at school. Though she was a happy and contented child, she became extremely moody. During grade seven and

eight, she became very sensitive. Even the slightest criticism, though overt or covert would leave her feeling overwhelmed. She would feel alienated from the class. It would take her some time to compose herself and find herself in the mainstream of activities. Being intelligent, she would soon comprehend lessons at school. This made her the teachers' 'favourite' student. This had a mixed impact. Some students came to her for academic guidance and assistance, while others found her to be a threat. The group that sought her assistance tried to boost her confidence. This would bring her in the mainstream of activities. The ones who were neck to neck in competition with her would try to grab each opportunity to stay ahead in the meritlist.

She, however maintained her composure and tried to work hard and excel in whatever task she took up. She felt that the deadlines given at school had to be given highest priority. The positive streak in her would at that moment make her rationalize her priorities. In this way she would put up a strong resistance to the negative forces at play around her

There were moments when the pessimistic side would gain control. This would leave her worrying for hours together. She would be unable to concentrate at her work. These anxious moments would sometimes last for a few hours and at times linger on for days together.

She did fairly well at college and got a job in a leading MNC. She found herself a comfortable job in the Research & Development section. With her excellent technical skills; she could face the technical challenges of her job. However, the dynamics of the work environment were very volatile. This would leave her feeling isolated. A firm believer in the Almighty, she would sail through difficult moments by further isolation and meditation.

All was going on well on the job front. With the passage of time, the issue of marriage was raised by her parents. She, though not very keen at the beginning, agreed for the same after several rounds of discussion with her parents.

Within a year, her marriage was finalized with Mr Shyam. He belonged to the same caste and possessed the same technical qualifications as her. The former criteria being something that her parents had insisted upon and the latter being something that was a present surprise for her. He worked in another MNC at Mumbai. Sanyukta applied for a transfer to Mumbai as Shyam had a well-furnished flat at there and the corporate head-quarter of her company was based at Mumbai. With her excellent record of work, her company's officials quickly agreed for the transfer.

After marriage, the two were now based at Mumbai. Marriage was a blissful experience. She found Shyam to be a very rational and understanding individual. He was bubbling with energy and was had very refined taste, be it music or literature. He would try to live life to the fullest. He would narrate his experiences and give her an opportunity to express her views.

Sanyukta would feel elated in his company. In the moments away from him, she would find solace in the space provided. This was the time she spent in meditation and taking stock of her life.

When she was blessed with kids, she longed to spend more time with them. After a lot of deliberation, she quit her full time job and planned to take up part –time assignments. Shyam supported her and assured her of his support in whatever decision she took. Consequently, she was able to provide a warm and nurturing environment at home.

In this manner, she tried to strike a balance between work and commitments at home. Her inner voice and deep seated values guided her through the challenging situations of day to day life. She could also find meaning and contentment in life.

Questions:

1. Do you think that stress has a genetic linkage? Justify your views.
2. Critically examine the functional and dysfunctional aspects of stress.
3. What stress management techniques have been discussed by the author?
4. What are your views regarding the role of communication in stress management?