

Ever since I was little, I knew the whole world was mine and I belonged to everyone. I found peace in walking the streets by myself. And while those streets were of mere Mumbai — Juhu Versova Link Road and Four Bungalows, to be precise — I felt like the whole world was mine. I looked at people, deeply observant as a child from the age of four. Their lives called me. I wondered about the people I saw on the streets, the people I met through my parents, the people I met in school. It was almost a motto of mine: to stand for those whom I felt needed to be stood for.

From a young age, my desire to stand was deeper than anything else. I, of course, articulated it as standing for what I felt was missing. That understanding may have been minuscule, or not commensurate with the heart, but the intent was in the right place.

As I grew, I saw the discrepancies in the world, and they ached me. I saw that there are disparities, there is injustice, there is pain, sadness, hurt — that it isn't all as joyous as I thought it to be.

I used to sit under the shower and cry. I never understood why I did that. It wasn't as though something was so terrible in my life.

I built myself to be something of a listener, someone who drew people to me to share. Advising people came naturally to me. My childhood friends loved me; I loved them. However, when I'd be blunt, it didn't go down too well. I was accepted for just one part of myself — the kind listener. The angry or blunt expressor, people weren't a fan of. I see now how it came from my father. He only seemed to love the goodness and abhor the so-called bad.

I wanted the attention of my parents, who seemed mostly absent, and I took to bad grades, smoking, drinking, clubbing — all from the age of 12 onwards. People in my school thought I was too forward, and many friendships broke or fizzled out.

In all of the inconsistencies I couldn't make sense of, I still somehow tried to fit in. I took so many hypnotherapy sessions from my mother in order to be close to her. These sessions would feel gratifying in the moment, and yet the inconsistencies and the gaping remained. From being whole and complete, I turned into someone incomplete and searching.

After many years, I felt — fuck this search... there's no way out. People seem fine all around. People seem happy — why am I making it about my gaping and searching? It's all shit. I lived like that for another six years.

WHO I AM

ACCEPTANCE & BLISS

THE WORLD I AM IN

RESPONSIBILITY & FULFILMENT

MY LEGACY

LEADERSHIP

THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE

TO BE IN INTEGRITY TO THE SELF

THE REASON I EXIST

TO BE HEART

MY CONTRIBUTION

LISTENING & SELF-EXPRESSION

I AM

INVINCIBLE

It wasn't until the third semester of my master's that I felt hope. This hope came in the form of a human being named Anitha Manickam. The search was re-awakened, and this time with fire — I felt authenticity and purpose again, and I was not letting it go. I told myself I would put myself through anything to make it happen. In Session 14 of the Shine Program for Life, we learn that it is the mother who connects you with the world. For me, that mother is Anitha Manickam, who connected me to this world.

She introduced me to my father, Mr. Victor Manickam — and meeting him was like the answer to my search. It wasn't about what he taught, or what I got; it was about who he was, and how real he was. You see, I'd been searching for authenticity and purpose my whole life, and when you find it in the form of a human being, you just want to cling. You want to make sure you hold on with all your might.

I was a baby back then, at 22. With no logic or reasoning as to why VMKG felt like home, but with complete belief that this was my home — and that it was here that I would grow.

Anitha and Victor were dealing with a lot of shit when I entered their lives. Name the thing that could be wrong in a person's life, multiply it by at least seven, and consider that they were going through it.

Some parts I learnt in the moment; many parts, later.

In retrospect, I can see how they turned their lives inside out for me. From rations that could barely suffice in the house, to making meals possible for all of us. From no furniture, to a bed for me. Travelling for hours in the middle of the lockdown because I was screwed and diminishing in Goregaon. Staying up with me to talk about my life. They stayed with me in the conversation of my marriage. They stayed with me in the conversation of my family breaking. They gave me pathways. My Benjamin would sit for hours and listen to these conversations; he made me his in a way very few people can, and his love for me has confronted what love itself truly means. And Siddhant, the man I would marry, turned his life inside out for me too — moving his whole world to make room for mine, standing for my life and my possibility when I couldn't stand for it myself.

This family gave me their hearts and made me feel the same belongingness I had been yearning for — the same belongingness I wished to create for the whole world. In fact, the very belongingness I had been so certain of when I was little.

They prepared me for my marriage. They stood by my love and made my marriage stand. The person I loved so much — Siddhant. It had seemed like it would be so difficult for us to be together, but it sustained, because we had the will and Appa showed us the way.

From struggles, one after another, piece by piece and brick by brick, we built Victor Manickam Knowledge Group. We built a home. We built a family.

People have questioned us at every juncture — the nature of the family, the brainwashing, the cult. People have loved us too — the impact, the experience, the greatness caused in their lives.

We've been the recipients of so much love and so much hate, and with all of it, we stand in today's world as a family. Many people question me about my birth family, and attempt to pit one against the other. To them I simply say: one gave me life, and one created me. It is a distinction very few understand — but it is not mine to explain, or to dilute.

I've been a recipient of so much that I am built for service and for stand. One can imagine — I received so much when the people giving me seemingly had nothing to give; so what must it be now, when we have created so much?

I've met human beings of all kinds in my journey of 30 years. I've been slowed down; I've been empowered. There is no experience I would negate, or wish I had not felt.

IN GRATITUDE

Victor Manickam

gave me the business he created — to lead. He gave me the family he created — to share. For me, this man isn't just my teacher; he is the very embodiment of love and possibility.

Anitha Manickam

gave me herself in spite of every limitation she was dealing with. She isn't just my teacher — she's my light.

Benjamin Manickam

gave me love and leadership when I believed in none of it in myself. He isn't just my brother — he's my power.

Siddhant Mahajan

stood for my life and my possibility. He moved his whole life around to become the space for me to rise. He isn't just my husband — he's my heart.

And my siblings —

Bhavisha, you are salt, and I intend to live up to who you think I am.

Ved, you're my little one — you make me confront how much I can love someone.

Nam, you're my twin — you make me experience such nurture and care towards you.

Anuj, you've been my ride or die; when I thought the only option was death, we rode instead.

My son is nine months old now. It took nine months of him inside me and nine months of him outside me to understand the depth of gratitude I hold for my existence, and for the people who keep me going.

I've listened to and lived the lives of so many people. I've had the opportunity to contribute to so many.

My learners across six years have taught me what it means to be an educator. The ones who pulled so much from me that I had to learn to recreate and regenerate myself. And the ones who left and blamed — they taught me the art of integrity and responsibility.

The educators who walk this path with me, who have allowed me to build this community by choosing to be part of it — not out of my desire, but from their own hearts — I am eternally grateful to have such fellows, people who breathe for themselves and for the world.

And for the people who rejected and betrayed me — I have gratitude for you, for making me travel the journey from victim to victor.

THE WORLD BELONGS TO ME

I started off by saying there are disparities, injustice, etc., etc. That there's beauty, and pain, etc., etc. There always will be. The world isn't perfect, it never will be, and it really doesn't matter. The world belongs to me, and I belong to the world.

I am queen — not because I have the right blood, the right pedigree, the right status, the right wealth.

I am queen because people live in my heart. I am queen because I hold the love, the hope, the trust and the honour of many within me. I serve that honour. The day I don't, I will have tarnished my possibility and diminished my self-expression.

Thank you for the honour of being in service of what is possible for mankind.

You chose the right person.