

If only I knew the truth.

Jaya was 32 in 1991 when she became pregnant with a girl child, Puja. Jaya was practicing an Abrahamic religion and was going to be a single mother in a couple of months. Jaya and Puja were gifted with power to talk to each other during Jaya's pregnancy. During the 1990's, Indians already had access to birth control methods. One night as Jaya was about to sleep, she heard a voice coming from her womb. She knew it was her baby.

Puja: Hi Mom!

Jaya: Hello my sweetheart!

Puja: I can't move nor can I crawl or flip and there is completely dark here.

Jaya: (with smile) You will be able to crawl, walk, flip, run, summersault, everything dear when you come into this world. You are in my womb; this is the place where you grow into a five-pound baby.

Puja: What is the world, mom?

Jaya: The world is a beautiful place where you will come, and we are ready to welcome you. You will see me, and I will raise you. I can't wait for you to come in this world and hold you in my arms darling.

Puja: What will I do when I will come in this world?

Jaya: You will live the seven stages of life. First you will be an infant, you will be crying for me to be there for you all the time, you will be dependent on me for everything like milk, to make you take a bath and change your diaper.

Then you will be a child, and you will be going to school, doing your assignments and I will be helping you with your homework.

Then you will become an adolescent and you will go to high school and you will start to think about your career.

Then you will be young and pretty and you will get a respectable well-paying job. You will be energetic and passionate. Then you will find a handsome man for yourself and get married. And start to think about having your own kid.

Then you will be middle aged, you will be taking care of your own child and see her grow and you will get immense happiness to see your own child go to school.

Then you will start to become old, you will be all wise guiding your young child through life and you will start having grey hair, wrinkly skin, and start to become physically weak.

Then you will become senile, loose your strength, eyesight, teeth, hearing power and you will be reflecting on your life and you will be ready to meet GOD.

Puja: Ok Mother, that's nice. What will I see in this world?

Jaya: You will see me; you will meet hundreds of thousands of people. This world has in it huge mountains covered with snow, beautiful beaches, lush green meadows, breathe taking ocean, deep lakes, ponds, twisting rivers, plateaus, hills, sandy deserts ,vast plains, cold deserts, endless sky, you

will also see billions of twinkling stars, glowing and bright sun, lustrous moon, comets, eclipses, auroras , millions of singing birds, amazing animals of all kinds , reptiles, primates, big cats, uncountable species of aquatic beings ,billions of flora , you will see the beauty of rainy season , experience of heat of winter sunshine , smell of the freshly cut grass on a summer day and you would love the spring season when all the flowers blossom as you are blossoming inside my womb.

Puja: The world seems to be an amazing place mother. What experiences will I have when I come into the world?

Jaya: When you will be an infant, the experiences that you will have, you will not remember at all. When you will be three years old, you will start remembering your experiences. You have an entire life to experience, in your childhood you will be loved by everyone , and you will be the centre of attention for all the people around you, your mom , your dad, you grandparents and aunts, uncles and all the other relatives. You will be loved and taken care of by all of them.

As you start growing, you would go to school where you will learn everything and start experiencing the world as it really is, you would learn its geography, history , physics, maths , language, etc. As you would work hard to get your grades, you will feel stressed, but you will succeed. When you will travel you will see all the forms landforms that nature has to offer to you. In your youth you would be travelling for your studies and jobs and you will learn more about this world, you would meet all the wonderful, creative, talented, and amazing people. And you will meet a man of your dreams and plan to have a baby just like me , you will have something that will be the meaning of your life, the purpose of you being a woman will be complete when you will hold a child in your arms , motherhood will be the best experience of your life. As you were loved, when you were a child, you will give that love that unconditional and indescribable love to your child. After this most of your time will go in raising your child and your world will be your child.

You will experience from this journey all kinds of human emotions love, happiness, jubilation, excitement, nervousness, satisfaction, bliss, relief, amusement, contentment, pride, and what not.

Puja: Wao Mom! the world seems beautiful, wonderful, filled with experiences, joyfully mysterious place. I want to experience this world and I can't wait to come to this world.

Jaya: I also can't wait for you to be born.

Puja was born on 1st January 1991. After the birth of Puja, both Jaya and Puja lost the memory of their conversation.

After 30 years, Puja was working as a Software Designer in a reputed corporate company and lived with her mother. Jaya had been building pressure on Puja to get married and have kids. Magically, the conversation they had when Jaya was pregnant popped up in their head. On a weekend, Jaya decided to convince Puja to get married and start a family.

Jaya: what's your plan about marriage, what type of man do you want?

Puja: Mom, I am struggling to find a partner who wants to be childfree.

Jaya: What! Childfree?

Puja: Yes Mom, I want to be childfree, I won't settle down for a man who wants to procreate.

Jaya: This is your mistake. Why don't you want to have kids?

Puja: There are several reasons. I never felt the motherly instinct. I don't imagine myself taking care of a baby. There are financial issues too. I must pursue my dreams, I want to be the best in my career, if I have a baby, that will be in the way of my growth.

Jaya: But you have a wonderful career, you already have a good bank balance and you already own a house. What else do you want?

Puja: I want to own my own company like Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, Jack Ma or Steve Jobs. Do you know why these men made it, because they worked more than 80 hours per week, and there is a reason why you don't see women at the top, because once they turn thirty, they are pressurized to get married and bring a child into this world. I am an ambitious young woman. My career is my passion. Being a mother is not in my bucket list.

Jaya: I understand you want a great career, but I am advising you that if you don't get married and have a child then you will end up alone and when you turn sixty who will take care of you? I won't be around for long; you will be all alone. I want you own betterment.

Puja: Mom, don't worry about me getting old. I would say that to have a child so that she would take care of me when I will be old is a very selfish reason to have a child. I am not selfish.

Jaya: What will the people say to me, they will say that something is wrong with my daughter, she is infertile. I don't want to hear that from my friends.

Puja: I know people will judge me for deciding not to have kids. All the name calling, all the teasing, I will gladly face them rather than to succumb to their illogical pressure to have kids. I will stick to my guns no matter what. Has any one of your friends been in a position as I am in my company at such a young age, why, because I think differently. People only pass judgements because they are jealous of a childfree person, because childfree people do much better in their career, pursue their hobby, travel a lot, go to amusement parks whenever they want etc, which people with children can never imagine to do. Also, your friends will try to show pity towards me because they want to affirm their decision of having a child. I don't think bringing a child for me or for any other person is a good idea these days especially when everyone has access to contraceptive devices. I am an anti-natalist and I don't see any reason why a child must be born in this world.

Jaya: What are you saying dear? Are you out of your mind? Everyone must have kids.

Puja: I disagree. I remember our conversation when you were pregnant with me. All that you said turned out to be incorrect.

Jaya: Like what?

Puja: You said that I would see lots of creatures, seasons, celestial bodies etc. But in reality what I saw was the extinction of a lot of species because of human activities, loss of habitat due to deforestation, destruction of bio diversity. Global warming and climate change are the two inevitable truths. You never mentioned anything about them, and you did not mention anything about all kinds of pollution. There are 14 cities of India in the top 20 worst cities in terms of air pollution. All the rivers are so polluted that if I drink a glass of water from river directly, I will suffer from jaundice, our water bodies have become toxic. Forest fires are a norm, landslides, floods, cyclones, climate change, pollution, eutrophication,

ozone layer depletion, green house effect, all these are due to human activities. And not just activities, it's the number of humans on this earth. It's almost eight billion, there is no scope of improvement unless our greed and number start to reduce. All the world leaders talk about ways to reduce the carbon footprint. What if we remove the "foot"? The only way to do it is to stop procreating.

Jaya: I understand humans have been irresponsible in using resources. But we as humans can become responsible citizens and use resources judiciously. That doesn't mean one has to be an anti-natalist.

Puja: After thousands of years of human evolution we are at a point where the environmental degradation is at its worst. If there would have been anything to improve, it would have improved long back. The deadline for improvement in terms of environment has already passed.

Apart from environmental concern, I also do not have any intention to make a new soul go through life and suffer throughout her life, because ultimately "life is suffering" as said by Buddha.

Jaya: Is your life a suffering? You are a successful woman and how have you suffered?

Puja: Yes, I have suffered for everything I wanted to achieve. In school I have been bullied, I always feel pain in during my periods, I also have to go through a lot of hard work to achieve good in my studies and work. I get stressed working for long hours, when I get stuck in the traffic, I feel frustrated, also I need to tolerate some stupid people in society and in office. All those feelings like stress, sadness, anger, fear, frustrations, anxiety, depression, despair, nostalgia you never mentioned that I will have to go through.

Jaya: That's what life is. You work hard to accomplish what you want. And you get the rewards out of that feelings You only enjoy the order, only if you went through chaos, you only enjoy success only when you taste failure, you only enjoy truth only when you experience fallacy, for everything there is an opposite of it. To enjoy anything, you need to go through its opposite. This life is a test from God, every human has to go through events and experiences , whether they are good or bad, you have to show patience when it's a bad experience and you must be grateful for the good experience. When God has already asked us to be fruitful and multiply, then there must be some wisdom of our Lord when he said so. You think you are a better planner than the one who created the entire universe for his best of creation- the humans?

Puja: I understand that humans are the only species in the entire universe which is gifted with consciousness and at this age and time we must be able to use that consciousness to its fullest. The believe that God created humans to be fruitful and multiply does not imply that we breed like mice and plunder all the earthly resources and ruin the planet. The purpose must have been to benefit for all, humans, and rest of the creatures. But the question is, have we really benefitted by coming into existence? Because of existence none have been benefitted till date, all we got is endless suffering. We as humans are expected to do good and abstain from sins. That means that there is some probability that even after we go through life, we might end up in hell and that is very less chance that we can end up in heaven. If we were not existing at all, then there would be zero percent chance of us going to hell. And zero percent of chance of going to hell is much better than 50% chance of going to hell. If you consider from the Eastern religious point of view, life is a vicious cycle, and everyone must go through life in various forms unless one attains "Moksha" (Liberation). If human life is so precious, why anyone would want to attain Liberation? Is Procreating not against the very idea of Liberation. On one hand one wants to attain Liberation and on the other hand procreation is defended, isn't it a classic example of contradiction?

Jaya: That's a valid argument you made. But if you exist there is also a chance of you going to heaven by doing good deeds. Will you not miss out on seeing the bounties of God he created to show us?

Puja: To miss anything we need to be existing in the first place. If we do not exist at all, then we wouldn't be around to miss anything. Yes, God wanted to show us this world, his heavens, then he could have simply made us angels without free will. Still we would have enjoyed his bounties.

Jaya: Fair enough, your logic has started to make me think. If you don't have kids what would be the meaning of life. After thirty you already have seen almost everything, when you raise a child, the world will be a new place for the child and when you will see the child growing, that would add a lot of meaning to your existence.

Puja: Existence can't be justified with more existential being coming into existence. Suffering can't be justified with its property of being able to be alleviated. Suppose if someone is suffering from cancer and he needs money and I help him with money, that means I did a great work by reducing his pain. As life is suffering, wouldn't it be great to rid someone from inevitable suffering by deciding not to bring that soul into this world. Just now we saw, how corona virus had a catastrophic effect. People were gasping for air, hundreds of thousands of people died because of shortage of oxygen, and many of these people were so called successful as society would call them, were their life worth of suffering. Had they not existed at all, there would have been no death and no suffering. Suppose someone asks me about the locality I live in and he or she wants to purchase a house here, I know that there are a lot of street crimes and burglary in our locality and even then I advise my friend to go ahead with the purchase, will that now be unethical?

As far as meaning to life is concerned, life can mean differently to different people. For me instead of raising kids, I will be raising myself on intellectual level by reading, writing, following my hobbies, taking care of animals and birds and spread the word of anti-natalism, especially in India because it has a landmass which accounts for just 2.4 percent, but it is home to more than 17 percent of world population.

Jaya: You make sense, corona virus showed us that as humans we are still weak, even micro-organisms can make us suffer to such an extent that we might feel helpless. And yes, it is unethical to say half truth and hide the other half of truth which might affect someone miserably.

If you decide to spread the word of anti-natalism, you will face lots of backlash from the people.

Puja: I know that any new idea faces lots of challenges in its stage of genesis. And people who spread the message might face lots of friction, challenges and even be killed. We know how Christopher Columbus faced the challenge, Jesus was crucified, Mohammed had to leave his city, and Socrates was killed by the mob, but eventually people accepted their message.

Jaya: Suppose everyone becomes anti-natalist, after a few years the world would become devoid of humans. How would the world run? If you see no utility in the suffering that life brings, is it a kind of nihilism?

Puja: Well, the idea of anti-natalism is just budding. There is no way that everyone in this world would become anti-natalist because as humans we are very different from each other, and ever after millions of years of evolution, humans are not following a common religion, let alone a common perspective to life.

Being an anti-natalist may seem like nihilism because it entails that human suffering could have been avoided by not coming into existence, but anti-natalism does not imply that from this suffering nothing

can be attained, we can benefit a lot from this suffering too, like we can learn a lot from this suffering and convert this suffering into steppingstones to enrich ourselves with knowledge of life and spread the message. The beauty of anti-natalism is that although it talks about stopping new lives to come into existence in physical form, it does not imply that the already existing lives must commit suicide or cease to exist.

Jaya: Are you open to changing your mind?

Puja: As I said mom, I will stick to my guns no matter what. I understand that the concept of anti-natalism existed from long back, but this took a back seat because no one talks about it. There are innumerable advantages of this choice of lifestyle, I can have all the time for myself which I can spend for personal growth, contribute to community, take care of animals, there are financial benefits too, I can afford to retire early. The environment can benefit a lot, huge amount of carbon footprint can be avoided and there will be no new human to add to this mess of pollution, greenhouse effect, ozone layer depletion, deforestation, global warming, and climate change. The new human life will be spared of all the suffering that it would go if it were to come into existence. That new human life will be spared of all the expectations and unnecessary obligations that society would have put on it. The new life is spared of all the anxiety, depression, heart- break, despair, frustration, anger, toxicity, bitterness, resentment, regret, disease, mid- life crisis, dotage, senility, and death. And there is no chance that new human life would become a thug or criminal or mafia or addict. The best thing is that new life is spared of any chance of going to hell for eternity as that soul which does not exist can't be held accountable on the day of judgement. This is the win-win step for me, the society, the world, the unborn human, the environment, the planet and even God.

Jaya: I wish you find an anti-natalist husband. I will still pray that you change your mind someday and enjoy the pleasure of motherhood, but still you have opened my eyes to think about life from a different vantage point. Now let's prepare dinner.