

An Ache of Loss

- Ms. Gouri Suhas Kulkarni, MA Economics

Madhav and Uma, a lovely, charming and happily married young couple. They're in the fifth year of their marriage. Madhav is diagnosed with second stage of blood cancer; Uma has been his pillar of strength throughout. They have been there for each other through thick and thin so far. The year turns out to be a tough one with loss irreplaceable.

Uma, couldn't stop the thoughts that flood the gates of her mind. She knew in her heart of heart that the day would come anytime soon. But, she wanted him not to know of her entrenching pain. "Madhav, wake up soon, it's almost noon, we've got to go to the Shiva temple, remember you promised me to spend our day together today! Wake up, Muuuah!" Rubbing the eyes slight, trying to get a glimpse of her, all smiling, Madhav pulls Uma nearer, gently kisses her forehead and wakes up. They quickly grub the brunch and move out for their exclusive day out.

"Uma, it's been 5 magical years to our marriage, I have never asked you anything specific, but today as we head to the Shiva temple, I ask you to promise me something, will you?" Taking a deep breath to self, gathering all her might, she exclaimed, "My Love, you just say and I'll do it, I promise!" Uma kept a subtle smile on her face and waited for him to speak. She knew not what he was about to say, but she just kept the momentum intact. "My dear Uma, you have been the pillar of my life, I'm grateful to Lord for having blessed me with you in my life. What I ask of you is not going to be easy for you, but I am sure of the fact that since you love me, you'd do as I say." Uma's heart was beating at the fastest pace it could, by that time, they had reached the temple. They got down from their car and walked upto the temple, silence took to rule all this while, Uma and Madhav were both eager to continue their conversation with equal urge and intent. At the temple, "Madhav, would you apply the kumkum (vermilion) to my forehead this day?" Without a second thought and a broad smile, Madhav applies the red kumkum at the forehead of Uma. Both feel a gush of infinite divine happiness flow through them. They turn to the lord, bow down their heads take the prasadam and return to the car. "Uma! Where do we go from here to?" asked Madhav. "Let's go to the beach, if only you are okay with it." Madhav nodded his

head and they drove to the beach, still an awkward silence whispered between the two.

As they got down the car, Madhav and Uma held their hands together, slowly and steadily took small steps along the beach. "So, Madhav, what is the promise you seek, I am waiting to hear what you have to say." Madhav stopped, looked right into Uma's eyes, carrying a shimmering smile he said, "Uma, I know all about the fear that you have been hiding from me, I also am aware of the wrenching pain that is troubling you, and you didn't have to say a word. Your too soft gestures at several moments spoke out loud." Uma was trying to throng herself with the possible promise he might seek from her, she was never this apprehensive ever before. "Uma, today or tomorrow, I may breathe my...." before he could complete his sentence, she put her palm over his lips and stopped him. "Madhav, our love is all that matters, whether we live just for today or any number of days to come. There's not a thing can do us apart, not even death!" Madhav witnessed the valiant deep love in Uma's eyes. "Do you know, what you're saying, Uma? You already know, that due my cancer, I have less of time, don't you?" he asked in utter surprise. Without moving an eye, she maintained her contact with his tearful eyes; she spoke thus, "Madhav, I am very well aware of what life has in store for us. It may sound rude now, but let me tell you, my dear, I am going to continue to love you till my judgment day, no matter what! So, my ears wait to her what's the promise that you want to seek from me." Madhav, with heavy heart, wistful eyes, yet smiling, he said, "Uma, I want you to be always happy, spend the life with joy and mirth, and do all that you have wanted to do or want to do. Promise me, my love, you'll never try to harm yourself, never ever. When time calls, don't be scared to fall in love again. Remember, I'll be watching you from the heaven and if you're happy only then will my soul rest in peace!" Uma, trembling yet strong, looked at him, passed a slight smile and replied, "Honey, dear Madhav, I promise you to live and laugh throughout my life, and as for love, I have already fallen in love again!" Suddenly awakened by a jolt of several watts, he hurriedly asked, "Who is it?" Uma took Madhav's hand towards her tummy and whispered, our love is growing in me. You're going to become a Father!" Madhav shed tears of sheer joy and hugged Uma with all his warm love. The day couldn't have been any better. They both spent the rest of the day in planning and discussing all that they would do for the new entrant in their life.

The next day, Uma-Madhav bought toys, clothes, cradle, and every little thing they thought would be of significance for the love of their lives. They were super excited to welcome their baby. They filled their lush green garden with red hibiscus to pink roses to lily and much more. They also sew the mango seeds as a mark of new member in their love life. It was past two months, everything went on smoothly and both eagerly waited for the dream-day, which was far still. Everything was justly routine. A bolt struck the couple; the house that they rented was supposed to be vacated within two weeks. Uma and Madhav were terribly disturbed. "Madhav, we will do everything that we can to withstand this phase. Don't be disheartened. I'm always their backing you, with you," said Uma. Madhav very well knew that Uma was hurt deep down, yet she was consoling him and thus to reassure her he, he held her hands and said, "Uma, I know how much this house means to both of us. We began our life's journey very much from this little hutment of ours. We have had our great moments of joy and sorrow resonating in every nook and corner of this sweet home. I promise you that I'll leave no stone unturned and do all I can to save this house." They both blinked and smiled at each other nodding their heads with a hope of fulfilling their motto together.

It was that very night that the wind blew as if it would storm the place, the sky thundered and it clearly indicated the possibilities of rain. Uma and Madhav were home relaxing to themselves by watching the movie "P.S. I Love You" together. Suddenly, Uma felt a crunching pain in her stomach; the pain roared louder and so did Uma, "Madhav...Ahhh... Madhav... Ahhhhhh Madhav, please do something, quick!" said she trying to bear the pain she was undergoing. Within few minutes time, Madhav managed to get her to the hospital. She was taken to the operation theatre right away; doctors were doing their best to get her rid of the pain. While outside, "O Lord Shiva, please let my Uma and our child be alright, please take care of them, Please!Please!Please!", prayed Madhav in silence and kept waiting for the doctors to come out. It was way past an hour, the red light of the Operation Theatre was still on and the doctors were still at work, while Madhav was trying all his ends to calm his mind and console his heart and kept praying. Few minutes thereafter, the light turned green, doctor came out and exclaimed "Dear Madhav, we are extremely sorry; we could, after lot of struggle successfully save Uma, but not your child. Take care of Uma; she needs you very much more at this moment." Madhav just sank to the ground with tears streaming down his eyes and cried harder and louder than ever. Moments later, he gathered

all his will and courage and walked towards Uma. She had regained her consciousness by then. As he entered, Uma desperately stared at him and asked, “Madhav how’s our baby? I’m sure it’s doing just fine. Isn’t it?” Madhav moved close to her, gently grabbed her cheeks with his hands and looked deep into her eyes, with swallowing guts; he murmured “Uma, I am afraid to convey that Shiva has different plans for us. Our baby is not with us anymore.” Room screamed in dark silence, Uma just kept gazing at Madhav, as though she had gone dumb, mute and all deaf. Her world seemed to have fallen apart. Madhav hugged her with all his love and warmth and few seconds thereof, Uma reciprocating the hug cried relentlessly. They both cried along. The day was a nightmare for them, worst and unexpected, and left a deep scar meant to haunt them for life.

Well, the time played its role. As the days past by, slowly and steadily Uma and Madhav got back into the knots of life like before. Madhav had woken up early that day; he let Uma rest for few more hours. “Shiva, Shiva!!!” murmuring so, suddenly Uma woke up from her deep sleep. It was the first thought that came to her as she woke up. He was gone. And, soon, this bedroom, the house in whose eastern corner it sat, and the tiny garden outside with its gnarled old red hibiscus and the half-grown mango tree they had planted together, all those would be gone as well. It was the strangest feeling ever. As she was trying to get to her senses, Madhav entered, sat beside her and wishing her a lovely happy morning kissed her forehead and served tea and bread to her. “Uma, have your breakfast soon and get dressed up, so that we can go to the bank and complete the formalities of handing over the house to the owner. I really am truly sorry that I could not do much as I promised and I regret that I’m incapable and not of any worth to you. You don’t deserve such suffering at all!” Uma sighed deep, looked at Madhav and said, “O Madhav, dear, the house carries memories infinite true, but you know what? For me, you are my home, wherever you are, you’ll find me by your side. House can be bought again. I don’t feel much for losing the house, because we have lost not the most spirited essence of life i.e our love for one another. We have had our composite shares of happiness and sadness experienced here. We are good enough for each other and we will build ourselves again. Stand up and rise, for ourselves. Our love for one another is our strength and with this armour we can win any war that befalls upon us.” Madhav was re-energised on the backing support that he received from Uma, hugged her hard and kissed her; also he thanked and told her that how fortunate he felt of himself for her being there in his life as his soul mate.

With such sacrifice and stand, encouragement and grit, devotion and dedication, joy amidst sorrow, love and light and much more such stronger attributes...Uma and Madhav complete 8 successful years of their marriage. The couple is blessed with a cute little daughter Aparna, who is their universe. Madhav is enjoying his life to the fullest with Uma and Aparna; undeterred by his battle with cancer through sustained might and compassion to live long for his love of life.

About the Writer/ Author

Ms. Gouri Suhas Kulkarni, 26, Pune, India, is Masters in Economics and aspires to become Developmental Economist. She received National First Prize on her essay "If Nature is Our Mother, How do we Protect Her?" from the then President of India His Excellency Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam in 2003. She stands to be one among the top 22 best essay authors in the World Bank Essay Competition 2011. She has to her credit over 13 poems published. Poem titled 'Made for you', 'Journey', 'Shadow's Travel', 'Ruthless Time' and 'Money' in the New Academia International Journal; '21st Century!', 'Life', 'Modern Dilemma', 'Heart', 'A Wife's Desire', 'O Thy Divine', 'A Daughter's Talk', 'Is this Justice?' in the varied Cyberwit International Journals and 'Sheer Fear in Journal of ELT & Poetry' respectively. She has a flair for writing essays and poems addressing the socio-economic and political walks of life.