

SANTHARA

"Dying with Equanimity"

Episode 02

"FORGIVENESS"

Old Accounts

written by

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Approx. 60 minutes

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For producer consideration.

EPISODE NOTE

EPISODE 02 – FORGIVENESS

Ritual movement: FORGIVENESS (and the receiving of the vow's intention at temple). He asks pardon of the living and the dead; grants pardon in return. 1947 rises. Old accounts open. Not all of them close.

Picks up the morning after Episode 01. Links forward: solid food still present but wavering; Ep 03 will surrender it. Plant for 04: the silhouette Young Ram will not yet name. Plant for 05: second cup for the dead; Snehit's conditional forgiveness.

FADE IN:

INT. CHUGH HOUSE – RAM'S BEDROOM – PRE-DAWN

Ram already dressed. Notebook open. He writes one line carefully:

TODAY I OPEN THE LEDGER.

He touches the Shiva tapestry in the hall as he passes – not idolatry. Habit. The way a sailor touches wood.

In the kitchen he pours water, drinks, stands at the sink looking at his hands.

RAM (V.O.)
These hands painted cars.
These hands held a wife's hair.
These hands covered a child's
eyes at a pyre and then uncovered
them because she asked me not to
make her blind for my comfort.
Today these hands will ask for
pardon.
Hands are better at work than at
apology. Still – we try.

Sannah appears in the doorway, hair unbrushed, already watching him like a painting that might leave the wall.

SANNAH
You didn't sleep.

RAM
Sleep is a country with a closed
border this week.
I am learning other geographies.

EXT. COAST ROAD – SANTA MARIA TO THE CLIFFS – DAWN

Petrol dusk trying to become gold and failing. The Pacific below like a sheet of hammered iron. Gulls. A guardrail that has saved no one from certain kinds of falling.

RAM'S OLD SEDAN moves along the ribbon of asphalt. Not fast. The speed of a man who has decided and is still afraid of his decision.

Through the WINDSHIELD — for frames at a time — 8mm warmth: a wedding day. Marigold. RADHA laughing. Marble & gold bleeding into present glass, then gone.

RAM (V.O.)
Forgiveness is not a soft word.
It is a knife you offer someone
and ask them to set down.

His hands at ten and two. Knuckles. Paint-ghost in the creases from a century of other work.

RAM (V.O.)
I have carried accounts the way
refugees carry keys to houses
that no longer stand.
Today I open the ledger.
If the ink is blood, so be it.

A small tremor in the chest. He breathes through it.
Counts. The road continues, indifferent and holy.

CUT TO:

INT. CHUGH HOUSE — KITCHEN — SAME DAWN

SNEHIT dressed like a man going to court, not a temple.
Keys. Phone. Printout of cardiac device options folded
into his jacket like a talisman against God.

MAYA at the counter, palm on belly, watching him.

MAYA
If you go only to stop him, don't
go.
If you go to be his son, take
water.

SNEHIT
I'm going to keep a stubborn man
from turning our family into a
cautionary tale for people who
romanticize dying.

MAYA
 You're going because you're
 terrified of a quiet house.
 I am too. Terror is allowed.
 Cruelty isn't.

He stops. Looks at her. Love and war in the same face.

SNEHIT
 If the priest blesses this, I'll
 find another priest.

MAYA
 And if your father blesses you
 while he's leaving?

Snehit has no answer that keeps him righteous. He takes
 the water bottle. Leaves.

INT. SANNAH'S ROOM – CONTINUOUS

SANNAH pulls on a jacket over paint-stained clothes. On
 the wall, in pencil:

BLESS THE ROAD – LATER.

She looks at it. Does not erase it. Packs a sketchbook.

On the easel: the portrait advancing – Ram's eyes more
 finished than his mouth, as if the looking came first.

SANNAH
 (to the canvas)
 Hold the house. I'll bring him
 back as far as the driveway.

EXT. CHUGH HOUSE – DRIVEWAY – MORNING

Ram at the driver's door. Snehit at the passenger side
 like a checkpoint.

SNEHIT
 I'm driving.

RAM
 No.

SNEHIT

Your heart—

RAM

My heart is the reason we are
going. It does not get to choose
the music.

A beat. Snehit almost smiles. Hates that he almost smiles.
Gets in the passenger seat hard enough to make the car
complain.

Sannah's rideshare pulls up. She waves: I'll follow.

Ram glances at the tamarind. At the kite. At the house.

RAM (V.O.)

Empty chair, watch the door.
If I do not return as the man who
left, forgive the difference.

He starts the engine.

INT./EXT. RAM'S CAR — COAST ROAD — MORNING

Petrol dusk palette. Ash and teal. The world going dim and
bright in the same mile.

Snehit scrolls on his phone — articles, clinics, a draft
text to Dr. Ellis.

SNEHIT

There's a VSED protocol. Legal.
Supervised. You don't need
Sanskrit to stop eating.

RAM

You need Sanskrit to stop hating
the leaving.
Or you need love. I am using both
instruments.

SNEHIT

You used poetry when Mom died.
 Poetry didn't raise us. I did. Me
 and grocery lists and
 parent-teacher nights you forgot
 because a metaphor was
 "arriving."

Ram takes that like a hit he scheduled.

RAM
 Michchhami dukkadam
 (mich-CHAH-mee dook-KAH-dum).
 For every night you were the
 adult and I was the wound.

SNEHIT
 Don't you dare pay me in prayers.

RAM
 Then tell me the currency.
 I will spend whatever I have
 left.

SNEHIT
 Time. Stay. That's the only
 payment I'll clear.

Silence. The road curves. The Pacific flashes like a
 blade.

On the windshield – again – Radha in 8mm, turning toward
 camera, mouthing something we cannot hear.

Ram's eyes shine.

RAM (V.O.)
 I hear you.
 Not yet.
 Accounts first.

**EXT. CLIFFSIDE TEMPLE – ARRIVAL – DAY (MARBLE & GOLD
 ENTERING)**

Marble pillars rising from the edge of land as if the
 earth grew bones of light. Cedar roofs. Wind. Below: a
 long fall to water. Behind a gazebo: a waterfall, thin and
 constant, a white thread.

Priests in orange move without hurry. Somewhere a tone is hummed – low, communal, never fully resolving. The ear wants a final note. The note refuses.

Ram stands from the car carefully. Snehit hovers. Sannah arrives, sketchbook tight under her arm like a second lung.

A younger SEVAK approaches.

SEVAK
You are expected?
Or you are lost in a beautiful
way?

RAM
Both.
I am Ram Chugh. I wrote ahead. I
come for santhara guidance – for
forgiveness first.

The Sevak's eyes flick to Snehit – the human storm system – then to Sannah – the witness.

SEVAK
The saint is in the west shade.
Remove your shoes. Remove your
arguments if you can. The second
is harder.

Snehit keeps his shoes off and his arguments on.

EXT. TEMPLE – WEST SHADE / GAZEBO – DAY

THE SAINT – neither young nor performing age; orange cloth; eyes like cleared tables. Not cinematic "mystic." More like a person who has finished bargaining with himself.

Ram bows. Sits. Sannah sits slightly behind. Snehit stands until the Saint looks at him – then sits, jaw set.

SAINT
Speak your name and your
intention. Not your résumé.

RAM

Ram Chugh. Householder. Poet by
 need. My heart is failing. The
 doctors give me a season. I wish
 to undertake sallekhana –
 santhara – with as much
 equanimity as a stubborn man can
 learn in the time left.
 I do not come in despair. I come
 in decision.
 I come also in love. If that is a
 flaw in the vow, name it and I
 will try to thin it without
 lying.

The Saint studies him. Then Snehit. Then Sannah.

SAINT

Love is not the flaw.
 Clinging is the flaw.
 The difference is the whole path.

SNEHIT

With respect – this is my father.
 He is grieving my mother. He is
 dressing suicide in a word you
 will bless because it's old.

SAINT

(not unkind)

Old words are not automatically
 true. New fear is not
 automatically wisdom.
 Sallekhana is not suicide when
 passion is absent and death is
 already walking toward the door.
 If he uses the vow to flee pain
 he refuses to feel, it will not
 be sallekha. It will be a
 performance.
 That is why forgiveness comes
 before the fast.
 A man cannot thin the body while
 the accounts in him are
 screaming.

Ram nods. This is why he came.

RAM

Then let me settle accounts.

SAINT

Begin with the living. They can
still interrupt you.
The dead are excellent listeners
and poor correctors.

EXT. TEMPLE – CLIFF PATH – DAY

Ram walks the edge with the Saint, slowly. Sannah trails
with sketchbook. Snehit remains near the car a moment,
then follows despite himself.

Below: the Pacific chewing rock. No hurry. Infinite
appetite.

SAINT

People think the vow is about
dying.
It is about not dying as an
animal cornered in its own fear.
There is a difference between a
door and a trapdoor.

RAM

My son believes every door I open
is a trapdoor for him.

SAINT

Then your forgiveness must
include the future versions of
his anger.
Not only the man in today's
shirt.

They stop at a low wall. Wind. Ram's kurta flaps like a
weak flag.

RAM

In 1947 my father ordered me not
to look back.
I obeyed enough to live and
disobeyed enough to be haunted.
Is forgiveness for him, or for
the boy who wants the order
undone?

SAINT

Both.
 And for the old man who still
 thinks if he looks hard enough he
 can rescue the past.
 You cannot.
 You can only stop lying about
 what you saw.

Ram nods. Tears without drama – salt in wind.

EXT. TEMPLE – STONE COURT – LATER

A simple ritual space. Not spectacle. A bowl of water. A small diya. Wind worrying the flame.

Ram faces his children.

RAM

Sannah.
 I ask forgiveness for making you
 my soft place so entirely that I
 did not notice when you needed
 edges.
 For the years I spoke to your
 mother's photograph more fluently
 than to your life in another
 city.
 For teaching you that art must
 always be elegy.

SANNAH

(voice steady, eyes not)
 I forgive you.
 I also need you to forgive me –
 for leaving to LA when the house
 was still loud with her absence.
 I told myself it was school. It
 was oxygen.

RAM

Granted. Freely. You were not put
 on earth to be my nurse or my
 witness only.
 Tassa michchhami dukkadam.

They bow their heads. Sannah sketches one line on the page without looking – a hand.

Ram turns to Snehit.

RAM

Snehit.
 My son.
 I ask forgiveness for the
 half-father years.
 For letting grief make a cave and
 calling the cave prayer.
 For every time you brought home a
 grade, a bill, a fear, and I
 brought home a stanza.
 For making you compete with a
 dead woman for the ordinary bread
 of my attention.
 For surviving 1947 and then
 refusing, for decades, to tell
 you what survival cost – so you
 inherited the silence without the
 map.

Snehit's mouth trembles. He locks it.

SNEHIT

I hear you.
 I'm not a priest. I don't clear
 debts because the scenery is
 nice.

RAM

I am not asking you to be a
 priest.
 I am asking you to be free of me
 where I harmed you –
 so that when I go, you do not
 have to carry my unfinished
 apologies like another suitcase
 across another border.

SNEHIT

You want forgiveness so you can
 die clean.

RAM

I want forgiveness so you can
 live clean.
 My dying is already certain. Your
 freedom is not.

SNEHIT

I'll forgive you when you choose
to stay.

RAM

Then you are asking me to die as
your child, not as your father.
A child obeys. A father finishes.

Snehit stands. Walks to the edge of the stone court. Looks
at the drop to the sea. For a moment we fear the wrong
tragedy. He only breathes.

SANNAH

(soft, to Ram)
Keep going. The dead are waiting.
He'll either follow or he'll
weather.

EXT. TEMPLE – SIDE GARDEN – DAY

Sannah sits on stone, sketching Ram and the Saint from a
distance – two figures, one learning how to leave, one
already fluent in it.

SANNAH (V.O.)

(not sweet – exact)
I used to think forgiveness was a
feeling.
It is a posture.
My brother stands like a fist.
My father stands like a man
offering his throat to a word.
I stand like a witness who is
tired of being only eyes.

She flips the page. Draws the empty space beside them –
where a mother would be.

SANNAH (V.O.)

Ma, if you are anywhere that
sound can reach –
teach Snehit how to put the fist
down without calling it defeat.

INT. TEMPLE INNER HALL – DAY

Dimmer. Older stone. Photographs of teachers. The smell of incense and dust and time.

Ram sits alone before the Saint. Sannah at a distance. Snehit outside, on the phone – we see him through a doorway, arguing with the air of California.

RAM

I ask forgiveness of Radha –
for every poem I made of her
pain,
for the nights I wanted to follow
her early,
for the ways I used our children
as proof I was still in the world
when I was mostly not.

SAINT

Does she answer?

RAM

She answered before she died.
"Finish your work. Then come."
I am trying to understand if the
work is the vow... or the boy on
the truck I never spoke of... or
the man in the driveway who will
not forgive me yet.

SAINT

All three.
Equanimity is not the absence of
tasks. It is the absence of
thrashing while you do them.

Ram closes his eyes.

RAM

I ask forgiveness of my father –
who put his hand on my head in
1947 and said do not look back.
He saved my life and taught my
eyes a fear that became a
religion.
I have been looking ever since,
in secret, and calling it poetry.

The Saint's tone softens – not sentiment. Recognition.

SAINT

And do you forgive him?

RAM

Yes.

A man who has not crossed a
burning country should not judge
the grammar of a father's panic.

SAINT

And yourself?

Ram's face breaks – small, seismic.

RAM

That account is still open.

SAINT

Then we are not finished.
But you may speak the intention
of the vow here.
Speak it as decision, not as
theater.

Ram places Radha's PHOTOGRAPH on the stone between them.
The pocket over his heart is briefly empty – a
vulnerability.

RAM

Before the Arihants and Siddhas,
before this teacher, before the
children who love me in opposite
languages –
I declare my intention to enter
sallekhana when the body is ready
and the accounts are as clean as
I can make them.
Not to flee.
To meet.
To thin passion. To thin flesh.
To leave awake.

SAINT

Return when you are ready.
Readiness is not eagerness.
Readiness is when the house is
swept and the heart has stopped
bargaining.

Also – eat what you must until
then. Do not invent a faster
death to win an argument with
your son.
That desire – to die quickly – is
itself a passion. The texts name
it. I name it for you now.

Ram bows. Receives this like medicine that tastes of iron.

SAINT

One more thing.
When you forgive the dead of
Partition, do not forgive
"history."
History does not need your mercy.
Forgive the particular. Names.
Faces. The one silhouette you
still refuse to draw.

Ram flinches. The Saint sees it. Does not push – yet.

SAINT

You will know when the silhouette
is ready to be a person again.

EXT. TEMPLE – GAZEBO – AFTERNOON

Tea. The waterfall behind them. For a moment the family
looks almost ordinary – tourists of the sacred.

Sannah sketches the pillars. Snehit cannot sit still.

SNEHIT

What did he tell you?

RAM

To return when I am ready.
And not to hurry toward death to
win.

SNEHIT

Then you're not starting.

RAM

I started at the table.
Today I paid what I could.

Tomorrow I will fail again and
 pay again.
 Forgiveness is not a stamp. It is
 a practice. Like your
 spreadsheets. Like her painting.

SANNAH
 Like breathing with a bad heart.

Ram smiles at her – grateful.

A priest's tone rises and joins others – the unresolved
 chord. The air thins.

Ram's eyes unfocus –

THE DISSOLUTION – TEMPLE TOUCH

(a preview of the water-stage flood – chemistry knocking)

The temple tone and the waterfall braid.
 Ram's tea steam becomes incense becomes truck dust for one
 breath.

His pupils catch light wrong – too much night in day.

For three seconds the marble pillars are also the bars of
 a truck.
 For three seconds Snehit in the doorway is also Father at
 the slats.
 For three seconds Sannah sketching is also Biji folding
 cloth in Leah.

Then the present reasserts – rude, merciful.

KALI – time as thoroughness, not gore – runs one finger
 down an invisible ledger and looks at Ram as if to say:
 particular names, not "history."

The seam opened in Episode 01 widens.
 The fast will finish the tear.

RAM (V.O.)
 Not yet the full ocean.
 But the tide has my ankles.

EXT. TEMPLE PARKING / COAST – AFTERNOON

Returning to cars. Snehit opens the passenger door then
 stops.

SNEHIT
 I called Auntie Sharda. She's
 driving up tomorrow with "sense."
 I also left a message for a
 counselor who specializes in
 end-of-life coercion.

INT. CAR – AUNTIE SHARDA (PHONE) – DAY

AUNTIE SHARDA (60s) on speaker in a Lexus, freeway,
 jewelry of certainty.

AUNTIE SHARDA (V.O.)
 (through Snehit's phone,
 earlier, still ringing
 in his head)
 Santhara is for munis who already
 left the world. Your father still
 steals mango pickle and argues
 about cricket. This is depression
 with a Sanskrit app. You bring
 him to Artesia. We will feed him
 and scold him and he will
 remember he is not a saint.

SNEHIT
 (in temple parking,
 earlier beat – echo)
 Yes, Auntie.

He hangs up. The word saint sits in his mouth like a coin
 he cannot spend cleanly.

SANNAH
 Jesus, Snehit–

SNEHIT
 Don't. Someone in this family has
 to believe he can still be saved
 from himself.

RAM
 If I am coerced, it is by a heart
 muscle and a memory.
 Not by you. Not by a saint.

You may fight me. You may not
 turn me into a case file while I
 am still a father in a parking
 lot.

They hold. Wind. Gulls.

Sannah steps between them, palm to each man's chest – a
 human hyphen.

SANNAH

We are going home.
 We are eating dinner facing the
 empty chair.
 We are not calling the state on
 our father's soul in a temple
 parking lot.
 If you need to fight, fight over
 the dal like a normal family.

Snehit looks at her hand. At Ram's face. Gets in the car.

INT./EXT. RAM'S CAR – LONG SILENCE – DAY

Miles of coast. No dialogue. The prestige TV hold.

Snehit's hand on his knee opens and closes – Radha's kite
 lesson in the nerves.

Ram glances once. Sees it. Says nothing. Lets the son's
 body rehearse mercy without forcing the mouth to sign it.

On the radio – briefly turned on by accident – a fragment
 of a bhajan, then static, then off.

RAM (V.O.)

Thank you for the silence.
 It is the first kind thing we
 have done for each other all day.

INT./EXT. RAM'S CAR – COAST ROAD – LATE AFTERNOON

The light lowers. Memory thickens.

Ram drives. Snehit silent. The ocean blackening.

EXT. BOMBAY – NIGHT – MEMORY (HEAT, SODIUM LIGHT)

Younger Ram after a shift, paint in his hair, finds Radha waiting with tea on a stoop.

RADHA

You look like a man who has been
rude to his own body.

RAM

The body is a rented house.

RADHA

Then be a good tenant. The
landlord is not your enemy.
Also forgive the foreman. Your
anger at him is just your father
in a different shirt.

RAM

I don't want to talk about my
father.

RADHA

Then you will talk about him with
your heart until it fails.
Better to use your mouth.

Present Ram, driving, almost answers her across time:

RAM

(soft, now)

I am using my mouth.
Late. But using.

RAM (V.O.)

Now the dead.
Now the year the map tore.

His breath catches – not only disease. The road ahead
liquifies at the edges –

**EXT. BORDER ROAD – PUNJAB – AUGUST 1947 – NIGHT (SEPIA
EXODUS)**

Handheld. Torchlight. Dust. The truck. Bodies living and less living.

YOUNG RAM (10), crushed, brass pot, bundle, Father's hand on his head.

FATHER
Don't look back. Do you hear me?
Don't look.

Young Ram looks.

Fire on the horizon. A shape on the road. A sound a child should not have to file under "world."

And then – clearer than in Episode 01 –

A SILHOUETTE at the edge of the column, falling behind. A woman's posture. Grandmother's shawl-shape. Or not. The night steals certainty. The guilt does not.

YOUNG RAM
Biji—!

FATHER
Eyes down. Eyes down. If you name her, you will try to go back, and the back is teeth.

The truck lurches. The silhouette is swallowed by dark and distance.

Young Ram's hand bleeds around a kite string that is no longer attached to a kite – he has been holding the cut end without knowing.

Present Ram's VO under the boy:

RAM (V.O.)
I named her in my mouth and
nowhere else for eighty years.
Forgive me, Biji.
I was ten. I was obedient in the
way that becomes a wound.

EXT. BORDER TREE – 1947 – CONTINUOUS

They pass the TREE. His kite stuck in it – mustard-flower paper torn, string thrashing.

Young Ram's eyes stay on it until the angle breaks.

YOUNG RAM (V.O.)
If I leave the kite, am I leaving
her?
If I keep looking, am I killing
Father with my love of what is
gone?

INT./EXT. RAM'S CAR – PRESENT – CONTINUOUS

Ram has pulled onto the shoulder. Hazard lights. Hands shaking. Snehit half out of his seat.

SNEHIT
Dad – Dad – look at me–

RAM
I am looking.
That is the whole problem and the
whole prayer.

Sannah's car pulls in behind. She runs to the window.

SANNAH
What did you see?

RAM
The account that does not close
with words alone.
My grandmother – perhaps –
falling behind.
My father saving me by teaching
me abandonment as survival.
I forgive him.
I am trying to forgive the boy
who looked and did nothing but
look.

SNEHIT
You were ten.

RAM
Yes.
Tell that to the ledger. It has
no age field.

He laughs once – terrible, human – then steadies.

RAM

Michchhami dukkadam – to the
unnamed on that road.
To the ones who did not get a
truck.
To the ones who got a truck and
still did not arrive.
I cannot restore you. I can only
refuse to pretend the map was
clean.

Sannah cries quietly. Snehit stares at the ocean,
reconfiguring his father from stubborn old man to
historical animal.

SNEHIT

Why didn't you ever say?

RAM

Because every time I opened my
mouth, I tasted dust and thought
I would choke the dinner table to
death.
Your mother knew some. Not all.
Silence was my second marriage. I
am divorcing it before I die.

He puts the car in gear. Drives. Slower. The road home.

INT. OB/GYN CLINIC – AFTERNOON (INTERCUT / B-STORY)

MAYA on an exam table. Monitor glow. The underwater gallop
of a heartbeat – insistent, rude with life.

TECHNICIAN

Strong. Stubborn.

MAYA

Runs in the family.

She stares at the screen shape – not yet a face, already a
claim.

MAYA (V.O.)

(quiet, not performed)

If the old man leaves, who
teaches you that silence can be a
country?
If the old man stays against his
soul, who teaches you that
staying can be a violence?

She wipes her eyes before the technician turns back.

TECHNICIAN
Do you want to know the sex?

MAYA
Not today.
Today I only need to know it
wants to arrive.

INT. CHUGH HOUSE – DINING ROOM – EVENING

The empty chair. Ram sets a SECOND CUP of tea at that
place. Steaming.

Maya watches, hand on belly. Sannah sits. Snehit remains
standing.

RAM
For her.
For all of them.
We do not have to believe they
drink. We have to believe we owe
the gesture.

MAYA
My father died with a tube in his
throat. No one poured him tea.
They poured him time he didn't
want.
I don't know if what you're doing
is holy.
I know it is intentional.
Intentional is more than most
people get.

Snehit looks at the steam. At his wife. At his father.

SNEHIT
I'm still not forgiving you on a
schedule.

RAM

I know.
Sit anyway.

Snehit sits. Not surrender. Practice.

They eat – lightly. Ram eats. The Saint's warning present in every bite: do not hurry.

Sannah slides her sketchbook to Ram. A drawing of the temple pillars. In the shadow between them, lightly: a woman's silhouette.

SANNAH

You don't have to name her
tonight.
But she can have outline.

Ram touches the page as if it were a forehead.

INT. RAM'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Notebook. He writes a LIST OF NAMES – some clear, some question marks, some only descriptions ("man with the brass pot," "girl with the red ribbon," "Father," "Biji?," "Radha," "Snehit," "Sannah," "Maya," "the child not yet called").

Last name he writes:

RAM CHUGH

He underlines it once.

RAM (V.O.)

Forgiveness without
self-forgiveness is only
etiquette.
I am not ready.
I am closer.

He places Radha's photograph back over his heart.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT – FINAL PRESSURE

Snehit finds Ram's notebook open – not snooping by intention, snooping by fear. Sees the list. Sees his own name. Sees RAM CHUGH underlined.

SNEHIT

You're forgiving yourself on paper like it's a chore chart.

RAM

(gentle)

I have not forgiven myself. I have only admitted the account exists. You of all people should respect an open ledger.

SNEHIT

If you die, I will hate you for a decade. I'm telling you now so it isn't a surprise.

RAM

Then hate me in the garden. Hate me at the table. Hate me with your child in your arms. Just do not hate yourself for failing to keep a man from his own ending. That hate will not make a good inheritance.

Snehit slams the notebook shut – then opens it again, ashamed, smooths the page.

SNEHIT

I don't know how to be your son if I'm not saving you.

RAM

Then learn a harder job. Be my son while watching.

That lands like a verdict. Snehit leaves the room before he shatters on the furniture.

RAM (V.O.)

Tomorrow I will fail again.

Failure is not the opposite of
the vow.
Thrashing is.

INT. SNEHIT & MAYA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Maya asleep. Snehit on his phone – then turning it off,
ashamed of his own arsenal.

He whispers to the ultrasound print:

SNEHIT
Your grandfather is a country
with a burning border inside him.
I wanted him to be a suburb.
I'm sorry.

EXT. THE GARDEN – NIGHT

Ram under the tamarind. Looking up at the kite.

Sannah joins him with two blankets. Then – after a long
minute – Snehit appears in the doorway, comes out, stands
not close, not far.

The three of them and the tree. The stuck flight above.

RAM
When I was ten, a kite taught me
that looking has a price.
When I was a father, a string
taught your mother that grip is
not the only love.
I am trying, now, to hold you
without choking you –
and to let go without dropping
you.

SNEHIT
That sounds like a poem.

RAM
It is a manual.
You prefer manuals.

A ghost of a smile between them. Gone.

SANNAH
I'm not blessing the road yet.

RAM
I know.
Later is still a time.

He looks at Snehit.

RAM
I asked your forgiveness today
for the half-father years.
You refused the terms. That is
your right.
Hear this without answering:
I forgive you for the ways you
will fight me.
I forgive you for the ways you
already have.
You do not have to receive it. It
is still true.

Snehit's eyes fill. He turns his face to the dark house
wall like a man hiding from rain.

SNEHIT
If I say it back, you'll take it
as permission.

RAM
If you say it back, I will take
it as love.
Permission is a smaller word. I
am not asking for small.

Snehit walks into the house without speaking.

Sannah leans her head on Ram's shoulder.

SANNAH
He said it with his back. You
heard it, right?

RAM
I heard something.
I will not collect what was not
offered.
That also is forgiveness.

INT. DINING ROOM – LATER NIGHT

The second cup at the empty chair. Steam gone. Tea cold.

CLOSE ON: the surface of the cold tea – a slight reflection of the ceiling fan, chopping time.

Ram's hand enters frame. He does not drink it. He carries it to the sink. Pours it out slowly.

Water on stainless steel – a soft roar.

RAM (V.O.)
I release the gesture.
I keep the debt of love.
The difference is the path.

EXT. COAST – CLIFFSIDE TEMPLE – NIGHT (DISTANT)

The marble pale under moon. The unresolved tone, faint, as if the earth were humming in its sleep.

For one frame – Neon Mantra violet at the horizon – the silhouette of a woman on a border road, neither fully lost nor fully found.

RAM (V.O.)
Not yet.
But I am looking.
Father, you cannot stop me now.
I am old enough to pay for what I see.

EXT. THE GARDEN – DEEPER NIGHT

Ram alone again. The kite paper rustles.

He takes out the notebook. The name RAM CHUGH underlined.

He adds a line beneath the list:

READY IS NOT EAGER.
RETURN WHEN THE HOUSE IS SWEEPED.

A beat.

Then, almost against his will, a softer line:

SNEHIT, I AM STILL YOUR FATHER IF YOU REFUSE ME.

He closes the notebook.

INT. HALLWAY – NIGHT

Snehit stops outside Ram's door. Almost knocks. Doesn't.

Instead he places – on the floor outside the door – a bottle of water and a note:

FOR WHEN YOU'RE READY.

NOT FOR WHEN YOU'RE EAGER.

– S

He walks away fast, as if the note might chase him and demand he mean less.

Ram opens the door a minute later. Sees the bottle. Picks up the note. Holds it to his chest beside the photograph.

RAM (V.O.)

Not forgiveness.

A treaty.

I will take a treaty.

Empires have been built on less.

Families too.

He drinks one sip of the water. Sets it down. Does not empty it. The abstinence is still tomorrow's grammar. Tonight is the account book.

EXT. THE GARDEN – FINAL IMAGE – NIGHT

LOW ANGLE: the kite in the tamarind against stars.

A slow push in. Paper. Torn edge. String wound into bark like a scar that learned to be structure.

RAM (V.O.)

Old accounts.

Some paid in words.

Some paid in looking.

Some left open so the living have work.

Below, out of focus: three shapes – Ram, Sannah, and Snehit at different distances from the tree. Not united. Not gone.

The temple bell – far – once.

Then the sound of a truck on a road in 1947 – one second – gone.

Then only wind.

FADE OUT.

Above him: stars. The faint freeway ocean. The house with its one empty chair and its many full silences.

RAM (V.O.)
Mother... Father... Where do You
live?

A longer silence than Episode 01.

RAM (V.O.)
In the account that stays open on
purpose –
so that love has somewhere to
work.

HOLD on the kite.

A gust. The string creaks. Does not break.

Yet.

INT. TEMPLE – INNER CORRIDOR – DAY

Stone that holds coolness even in California heat. Ram walks slowly with the Saint. Sannah sketches from a bench. Snehit remains near an arch, half in shadow – a man who will not fully enter and cannot fully leave.

SAINT
Forgiveness is not a feeling that
arrives.
It is a decision repeated until
the nervous system believes you.

RAM

My nervous system was trained by
a truck and a pyre.
It believes in exits.

SAINT

Then teach it entrances.
Even now. Especially now.

They pass a shallow stone basin. Water trembling. Ram looks into it and sees – not his face first – the kite string scar on a boy's palm that is also his palm.

INT. TEMPLE – OFFERING ROOM – DAY

Small diyas. A woman stranger prays for a sick sister. Life continues around Ram's private apocalypse – Tarkovsky's democracy of the sacred: no one is the only pilgrim.

Ram places a single marigold. Not performance. Habit borrowed from marriage.

RAM (V.O.)

Radha loved flowers that died on purpose.
She said permanence is a rumor started by diamonds and bad husbands.

EXT. TEMPLE CLIFF – LONG HOLD – DAY

THE CAMERA does not cut.
Wind. Cloth. Water far below. Ram seated. Snehit standing. Sannah drawing.
Thirty seconds of almost nothing – which is everything.
A gull crosses. The unresolved temple tone continues under the wind.

SNEHIT

(finally)

When Mom died you disappeared into notebooks.
If you disappear into a vow I will have the same abandoned room with better branding.

RAM
 Then do not brand it.
 Sit in the room.
 I am trying to die without
 turning you into furniture.

Sannah's pencil snaps. She stares at the break as if it were an omen, then sharpens it with a blade from her pocket – practical, unsuperstitious, artist.

INT. CAR – PARKED AT TEMPLE – DAY

Snehit on phone with Maya.

SNEHIT
 He's... calm. That's what scares me. Calm people leave cleaner holes.

MAYA (V.O.)
 Then fill the hole with presence before it exists.
 Pre-grief is still love. Just early.

Snehit watches Ram through the windshield – old man speaking with a saint like two accountants of the invisible.

INT. CHUGH HOUSE – MEANWHILE – DAY

Maya rests. The house ticks. She places her hand on the empty chair for a moment – not sitting – blessing the absence as if it were a guest already.

MAYA (V.O.)
 (soft)
 If you can hear houses, tell him we are trying.

EXT. COAST ROAD – RETURN – GOLDEN HOUR

Long driving sequence. Light like honey over industrial California – beauty without permission.

Through the windshield: 8mm Radha again – longer this time. Wedding dance. Her mouth: LOOK.

Ram looks. At the road. At his son. At the impossible both.

RAM (V.O.)
 Forgiveness of the dead is easy
 to announce.
 Forgiveness of the living
 requires you remain in the room
 after the sentence.

SNEHIT
 Pull over.

RAM
 Why?

SNEHIT
 Because I can't breathe and I
 refuse to die in a metaphor with
 you today.

They pull onto a turnout. Ocean. Both men breathe.
 Sannah's car pulls in behind. Three doors open. Three
 people on a cliff's edge of ordinary panic.

SANNAH
 Drink water.

She means both of them. They do.

INT. HOUSE – EVENING – FORGIVENESS CIRCUIT CONTINUES

Ram asks Maya to sit. Offers pardon for bringing
 death-weather into her pregnancy.

MAYA
 I married a Chugh. Weather was in
 the brochure.
 I forgive you if you stop
 apologizing for existing.

RAM
 That may be the most advanced
 spiritual instruction I have
 received all day.

A flicker of laughter – necessary oxygen.

INT. RAM'S ROOM – NIGHT – WRITES LETTERS HE MAY NOT SEND

To Father. To Biji. To Radha. To Snehit. To Sannah. To the unborn.

He does not seal them. Leaves them under the photograph like a second heart.

RAM (V.O.)

If I die before I am ready, let these speak.

If I live long enough to speak, let these remind me I once knew what I meant.

INT. SNEHIT – INSOMNIA – NIGHT

He walks the house. Stops at the second cup cold on the dining table. Almost drinks it. Does not. Touches the rim where lipstick would be if ghosts wore makeup.

SNEHIT

(whisper)

I'm trying, Ma.

He makes it hard to be kind.

You made it look easy. That was your arrogance and your gift.

EXT. GARDEN – PRE-DAWN – AFTER EP02 NIGHT

Ram finds Snehit's water bottle treaty still outside the door. Refills it. Returns it to the same spot – a conversation in objects.

RAM (V.O.)

We are learning a language without verbs.

Good.

Verbs make us cruel when we are scared.

INT. TEMPLE LIBRARY NOOK – DAY

A shelf of worn books. Ram's fingers hover over a Hindi commentary, then withdraw – not accumulating wisdom as armor.

SAINT

You want a sentence that makes
your son agree.
There is no such sentence.
There is only your conduct over
the next weeks.
Equanimity is public even when
silent.

RAM

Then I will fail publicly and
correct publicly.
I have hidden failures in poems
for too long. Poems are excellent
liars.

EXT. TEMPLE STEPS – DAY – SANNAH AND SNEHIT ALONE

SANNAH

If you turn him into a court case
I will not help you.

SNEHIT

If you turn him into a painting I
will not forgive you.

SANNAH

Then we are both dangerous.
Good. He raised dangerous people.
Soft people do not survive
borders or California rents.

A long look. Truce of mutual threat – love's cousin.

INT. CAR – LONG SILENCE #2 – DAY

Snehit's hand opens and closes on his knee – string lesson
in the nerves again.

Ram sees it. Names nothing. Lets the body rehearse mercy.

Outside: fields, water towers, a schoolyard where children
run with cheap kites – living rhyme.

RAM (V.O.)
 The world keeps teaching with
 rhyme.
 I used to think rhyme was
 decoration.
 It is how God economizes on
 lessons.

INT. HOUSE – NIGHT – FAMILY EATS

Ram eats lightly (still pre-full-fast per saint). Steam.
 Ordinary clatter.

AUNTIE SHARDA (V.O.)
 (from earlier phone,
 echoing in Snehit's
 head)
 Feed him. Scold him. Do not let
 him become a story you tell to
 impress strangers.

Snehit passes dal to Ram without comment. Ram accepts. The
 pass is a bow.

INT. HALLWAY – NIGHT – SNEHIT ALMOST KNOCKS ON RAM'S DOOR

Raises hand. Lowers it. Places palm flat on wood instead –
 a blessing he will not admit.

SNEHIT
 (whisper)
 Don't go yet.
 I'm not ready to be the oldest
 man in the room.

From inside, faintly, Ram's voice – as if he heard through
 wood and blood:

RAM (O.S.)
 Then become ready without me
 rushing you.
 I can wait one more night.
 Waiting is also a practice.

Snehit closes his eyes. The treaty bottle sweats on the
 floorboards.

EXT. GARDEN – NIGHT – THREE DISTANCES

Wide shot held long:
 Ram under tree.
 Sannah on porch steps sketching.
 Snehit in doorway.
 Not united. Not abandoned.
 The geometry of a family learning a new physics.

Wind moves the kite paper. The sound is almost language.

RAM (V.O.)

Old accounts.
 Paid in looking.
 Paid in water left outside a
 door.
 Paid in not winning.

If there is a God of ledgers, let the ink dry without my
 son's name in the debt column.
 Put mine there. I have practice.

INT. TEMPLE – LONG TAKE – PRAYER HALL

Dozens of feet. Dust motes in shafted light. The camera
 tracks at human height behind Ram – we are pilgrim, not
 god.
 Snehit's shoes at the entrance like a border he polices.

A child laughs somewhere – life insists.

RAM (V.O.)

Forgiveness without the sound of
 the world continuing is only a
 spa for the ego.
 Let the child laugh. Let me be
 small in a large day.

INT. SAINT'S COUNSEL – EXTENDED

SAINT

List who you have harmed by
 silence.

RAM

My son. My daughter. My wife in
the years I made her carry my
unspoken truck. My father by
turning him into only a command.
Myself by calling numbness
dignity.

SAINT

List who has harmed you.

RAM

History. Men with maps. Time. My
own obedience. God if God is the
sort of clerk who stamps borders.

SAINT

Forgive without pretending the
harm was good.
Forgiveness is not a rewrite. It
is a release of the throat.

Ram's hand goes to his throat – finds breath.

INT. CAR – NIGHT DRIVE HOME – RAIN

California rain on windshield – not Punjab monsoon, cousin
to it.
Wipers as metronome.
No one speaks for miles.
Sannah follows in the other car – headlights like patient
animals.

SNEHIT

I keep waiting for you to ask me
to understand.

RAM

I ask you to remain.
Understanding is luxury.
Remaining is food.

SNEHIT

I'm remaining.
I'm angry while remaining.
If you need pure remaining, hire
a monk.

RAM

I need your impure remaining.
It tastes like family.

A ghost of a smile shared – lightning far inland.

INT. TEMPLE – WATERFALL GAZEBO – LONG COUNSEL

Water white thread constant. Camera holds faces more than dialogue sometimes.

SAINT
Your son believes forgiveness is
a switch.
It is a path with stones.
Walk it in front of him without
demanding he clap.

RAM
And if he places stones in front
of my feet?

SAINT
Then step carefully.
Stepping carefully is not the
same as turning back.

Sannah sketches the waterfall until the page warps with mist.

INT. HOUSE – FLASHBACK NIGHT OF RADHA'S DEATH – SNEHIT 15

Intercut briefly with present car:
Young Snehit outside hospital room.
Present Snehit outside temple.
Same posture – arms crossed against annihilation.

RADHA (V.O.)
(from memory, to Ram,
but we hear on both
boys' faces)
Teach them the difference between
leaving and arriving somewhere
they cannot follow yet.

Present Ram glances at Snehit in the passenger seat and almost speaks the line. Saves it for a better silence.

INT. CHUGH HOUSE – NIGHT – SANNAH PAINTS THE TEMPLE FROM MEMORY

Orange cloth. Unresolved tone suggested by color vibration.
She paints Snehit as a dark vertical at the edge – not villain – gravity.

SANNAH (V.O.)
If I can paint my brother's fear
without punishing him,
I will have learned something
from both parents at once.

INT. MAYA – JOURNAL – NIGHT

She writes to the unborn:

MAYA (V.O.)
Today your grandfather asked
forgiveness like a man settling a
country.
Your father refused the terms
like a man defending a border.
I loved both men for the same
hour without splitting in half.
That is my vow. Different from
his. Still a vow.

INT. RAM – PREDAWN – AFTER TREATY NOTE

He rewrites the list of names. Adds: THE UNNAMED ON THE ROAD.
Adds: THE CHILD WHO WILL NOT MEET ME IN THE ORDINARY WAY.
Adds: GOD IF GOD REQUIRES FORGIVENESS FOR BORDERS – I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO FORGIVE A MAP – I FORGIVE THE MEN WHO HELD THE PENS.

He underlines RAM CHUGH again – darker.

RAM (V.O.)
Self-forgiveness is the last
solid food.
I am still chewing.

INT. TEMPLE – SEVAK BRINGS TEA – DAY

Steam. Ram thanks him. Snehit refuses. Sannah accepts.

SEVAK

People come here to ask for miracles.
You came to ask for a clean exit.
That is rarer. Rarer is not easier.

RAM

Easier would be morphine and forgetting.
I have forgotten too much already to make forgetting my god.

INT. LONG WALK ON CLIFF PATH – FAMILY

Wide. Four figures if Maya came – she didn't – three.
Wind writes on clothes.
No dialogue for a full page of screen time – indicated by:

The CAMERA tracks behind them, then beside, then ahead looking back – faces, not tourist vista.
Snehit almost takes Ram's elbow, stops, lets him have balance dignity, then takes it anyway when the path narrows.
Ram allows it without joke. Progress.

INT. HOUSE NIGHT – FORGIVENESS OF SMALL THINGS

RAM

I also ask forgiveness for the burnt toast years.
For the cricket arguments.
For every time I said "later" to a story you wanted and later became never.

SANNAH

I forgive the toast.
I am still negotiating "later."

SNEHIT

I don't care about toast.

RAM

You do.
 Toast is how we say love when we
 are incompetent.
 You brought croissants yesterday.
 Same language. Different accent.

Snehit looks hit. Nods once.

EXT. GARDEN – FINAL IMAGE REINFORCEMENT BEFORE FADE

The second cup cold.
 The treaty bottle.
 The list with RAM CHUGH.
 The kite.
 Three distances.

RAM (V.O.)

If this episode is only accounts,
 let the next be flesh.
 Tonight I sleep as a man who has
 opened the ledger in public.
 That is more frightening than
 death.
 Good.
 Fright means I am not numb.

INT. TEMPLE BOOKSHELF – RAM TOUCHES THEN RELEASES A TEXT

Aparigraha practiced on knowledge itself – not hoarding
 scripture as armor.

INT. COAST TURNOUT – FAMILY SITS ON GUARDRAIL

Legs dangling toward iceplant and sky.
 For a minute they look like any family resting.
 Then Ram's hand goes to chest and the minute ends without
 drama – only awareness.

INT. HOME – SNEHIT REFILLS TREATY BOTTLE – NIGHT

He does it.
 Does not leave a note this time.

The refill is the note.

RAM (O.S.)
(from behind door)
Thank you.

SNEHIT
Go to sleep.

RAM (O.S.)
You first.

Neither sleeps first. Both try. That is the treaty in motion.

INT. TEMPLE – EARLY ARRIVAL EXTENDED

They arrive before the crowd. Stone cold underfoot. Ram removes shoes with care of a man undressing for surgery of the spirit.

Snehit lines the shoes up too neatly – control as love.

Sannah photographs the shoes without faces – archive of thresholds.

INT. SAINT AND RAM – FULL DIALECTIC

SAINT
Tell me what you want from the dead.

RAM
Pardon. Company. A face at the end of a dark hall.

SAINT
The first is possible. The second is not yours to command. The third may be mercy or chemistry. Do not build your vow on the third. Build it on the first and on equanimity.

RAM

And love?

SAINT

Love is the reason you must thin
clinging, not the reason you skip
it.
If you skip clinging-work, love
becomes a chain with perfume on
it.

Ram nods, stung, grateful.

INT. SNEHIT OUTSIDE – CALLS MAYA – EXTENDED

SNEHIT

There's a waterfall here that
never stops. It makes me angry.
Things that continue make me
angry.

MAYA (V.O.)

Continue anyway.
Continuing is our only genius as
a species.

He watches a stranger family take selfies at the cliff.
Hates them. Softens. Everyone is fighting something
invisible.

INT. RETURN ROAD – STORM LIGHT

Clouds. The Pacific goes from iron to hammered silver.
Ram asks Snehit to tell him something useful about the
baby.

SNEHIT

It kicks when I raise my voice.
So I'm learning to lower my voice
or leave the room.

RAM

Leave less. Lower more.
That is a better practice than my
poems.

INT. HOUSE – FORGIVENESS RITUAL WITH OBJECTS

Ram places on the table:
 photo of Radha;
 ice cream photo Snehit returned temporarily;
 Sannah's childhood drawing;
 a small stone from temple;
 the treaty bottle.

RAM
 These are my court.
 Judge me and release me where you
 can.

SANNAH
 Released where I can.
 Held where I must.

SNEHIT
 Deferred.

RAM
 Deferred is honest. I accept
 deferred.

INT. NIGHT – LONG INSPECTING OF THE LIST

Close on handwriting. Names. The pen pauses before BIJI with a question mark. He does not remove the question mark – honesty of uncertainty – but he whispers the name anyway.

EXT. TEMPLE STEPS – DAWN PEOPLE

Early strangers climb with their own ledgers. Ram among them is not special – comforted by that. Snehit stands like a hyphen between sacred and parking lot.

RAM (V.O.)
 Among ledgers I am ordinary.
 Good.

INT. WATERFALL MIST ON PAPER

Sannah's sketch warps. She keeps drawing through the warp.
Accuracy includes weather.

RAM (V.O.)
Weather is part of the line.

INT. CAR — RAIN — LONG

Wipers. Breath. Unsaid things fog the glass and are wiped
and return — the visual of forgiveness work.

RAM (V.O.)
What we wipe returns until we
change the air.

SNEHIT
I'm remaining impurely.

EXT. GARDEN THREE DISTANCES — NIGHT

Wide held shot. Ram / Sannah / Snehit. Kite. Treaty bottle
glow from porch light. A dog bark far. Continue holding.

RAM (V.O.)
Distances are honest. Tonight
honesty is love.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE

SANTHARA — Episode 02: "Forgiveness"
Old Accounts

Some accounts close. One silhouette remains.
The vow's intention is received. Readiness is not
eagerness.

Next: EPISODE 03 — "THE MUSE"
Solid food surrendered. Radha fills the hour.
Snehit learns his fight is grief. Ram learns the living
are also the vow.

END OF EPISODE 02

SANTHARA

Episode 02 – "Forgiveness"

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