

SANTHARA

"Dying with Equanimity"

Episode 03

"THE MUSE"

The Reason to Live

written by

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Approx. 60 minutes

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For producer consideration.

EPISODE NOTE

EPISODE 03 – THE MUSE

Ritual: Solid food surrendered. Meditation on the Self begins. Memory core: Radha – arranged marriage becomes love; muse who made a poet of a refugee. Snehit's resistance hardens into grief for the mother he never stopped missing. Letter plant pays: children are also the vow. Links from 02: treaty water bottle; open ledger; silhouette unnamed; readiness not eagerness. Links to 04: water stage; full dissolution; secret of looking.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE GARDEN – CHUGH HOUSE – DAWN

Petrol dusk. The tamarind. The kite. Dew like a second skin on everything.

RAM sits with a steel plate: two rotis, dal, a slice of mango. He looks at it as if it were a person he must break up with gently.

RAM (V.O.)
They say: solids first.
Not as punishment.
As honesty.
The body has been a guest who
overstayed and still paid rent in
love.
Today I begin to show it the door
without slamming.

He tears a piece of roti. Eats slowly. Not greed. Not performance. The last ordinary breakfast of a man who has decided.

Sannah watches from the kitchen window. Does not interrupt. Some last meals a daughter cannot join without turning them into theater.

INT. KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

SNEHIT enters with a paper bag – bakers, overcompensating – croissants, fruit, the American language of care.

SNEHIT
I got you real food. Not...
whatever that is.

RAM
(gentle)
That is real food. It is only
becoming symbolic because you are
afraid of symbols.

SNEHIT

I'm afraid of funerals that last
five weeks.

He sets the bag down hard. Maya winces, hand on belly –
further along now, undeniable.

MAYA
Sit. Both of you. The baby kicks
when you use the counter as a
drum.

They sit. Ram finishes what he will finish. Leaves half.
The half is the point.

RAM
After today – no solid food.
The saint said not to hurry. I am
not hurrying. I am sequencing.
Milk. Then water. Then the rest.
You may call it stubborn. I call
it grammar.

SNEHIT
I call a lawyer this afternoon.

SANNAH
Then call a lawyer. And still sit
at this table like a human being.

A beat. Snehit looks at the empty chair. For once he does
not fill it with argument. He fills it with looking.

INT. LIVING ROOM – MORNING – RECORDING

Sannah sets a cheap recorder on the coffee table. Artist
as archivist.

SANNAH
Tell me how you met her.
Not the pretty version. The true
one.

Ram almost refuses. Then nods. The work includes the
telling.

RAM
She was arranged.

I was a man with paint in his
lungs and a border in his sleep.
Her father thought I was safe
because I was quiet.
Quiet men are not safe. We are
warehouses.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL COURTYARD – INDIA – DECADES AGO – DAY (MARBLE & GOLD)

Marigold. Nervous relatives. Younger RAM in a stiff jacket. RADHA lifts the veil not as surrender – as inspection.

Their eyes meet. Something unplanned enters the plan.

RADHA

(low)

You look like someone who has
already lost a country.
Don't lose this one by being
brave in the wrong direction.

RAM

I don't know how to be a husband.

RADHA

Then be a witness. To me. To
yourself. To whatever God is
doing when no one is watching.
Marriage is just two people
agreeing not to look away.

Fire. Hands. Vermillion. The camera finds their joined hands – the same hands we have seen old and dying and paint-flecked.

INT. LIVING ROOM – PRESENT

Ram's voice rough.

RAM

I did not become a poet because I
was gifted.

I became a poet because she
required a language equal to her
face.

Sannah's eyes shine. The recorder light blinks like a
small heart.

INT. SNEHIT'S CAR – DAY

Snehit outside a low office building. Signage: family law
/ mediation. He does not go in. Sits with the engine off.

On his phone: draft email to adult protective services.
Subject line blinking.

He deletes the draft. Types another. Deletes that too.

SNEHIT
(to himself)
Coward either way.

He drives to a park instead. Watches a stranger teach a
child to throw a ball. Ordinary immortality. It ruins him
a little.

EXT. BOMBAY WORKSHOP YARD – YEARS AGO – DAY (HEAT HAZE)

Younger Ram sanding a car door. Radio film song. FOREMAN
jokes.

FOREMAN
Poet-saab, the fender is not
impressed by your feelings.

RAM
The fender will be beautiful.
That is also a feeling.

RADHA at the gate with a tiffin. The yard softens.

RADHA
Eat. Then make the car honest.
Then come home and make the poem
honest.
I will not kiss a man who lies to
either.

He washes his hands until the paint ghosts remain anyway.
She kisses his mouth as if the ghosts were part of the dowry.

INT. SANNAH'S ROOM / STUDIO – DAY

Canvas advancing. Ram's face clearer. Behind him: gold leaf suggestion of a woman – still not fully face.

Sannah paints Radha's eyes from memory and photograph and invention. Stops. Afraid of stealing.

SANNAH
(to the canvas)
I'm not replacing you.
I'm making a door.

INT. CHUGH HOUSE – AFTERNOON – SUPER-8

Snehit has found an old box. Projects Super-8 on a bedsheet: Radha young, Snehit as boy on a bicycle, Sannah spinning, Ram waving too long at the lens like a man who never trusted cameras not to steal.

On film, RADHA turns, laughs, mouths: LOOK.

Present Snehit freezes the frame with his hand in the light – shadow over her face – then removes it, ashamed.

SNEHIT
(whisper)
I forgot your voice.
I kept your rules and lost your sound.

Maya finds him like that. Sits. No speech. Her head on his shoulder. The film runs out in white.

INT. RAM'S BEDROOM – AFTERNOON – MEDITATION ON THE SELF

Ram on the floor, back against the bed. Eyes half-open. Brass diya unlit. The notebook nearby.

RAM (V.O.)
Who is the one who watches the pain in the chest?
Who is the one who loved her?

Who is the one who left a
grandmother on a road and called
it survival?

The room thins – not full neon yet – a rehearsal.

THE DISSOLUTION – CONTROLLED

(meditation opens the seam on purpose – soft endogenous bloom)

Ram on the floor, spine against bed.
Eyes half-open.
No fall this time – invitation.

The room's edges soften like wax near flame.
Phosphenes bloom behind lids: teal spirals, gold dust, a
kite's diamond geometry.

He does not fight sequence.
He lets memory arrive as weather.

Soft inserts – not full ocean yet:

Radha combing hair – oil smell so real his mouth waters on
milk-stage hunger.
Snehit at twelve, string biting palm – "not so tight."
Sannah's child-drawing: MAMA.
Biji's temple lamp – Saturday light.
Paint thinner – Bombay – love in a gate's shadow.

Then Radha sits across from him as if the bedroom were a
train compartment between worlds.

RADHA

Not yet.
You still think I am the prize at
the end of a fast.
I am not a prize. I am a
standard.
Finish the work.

She turns his face toward a door.
Through it: Snehit at fifteen outside a hospital room –
arms crossed against annihilation.

RADHA

He is also the vow.
You cannot thin yourself past
your children and call it purity.

That is only a more elegant
abandonment.

The bloom recedes like a wave that chose not to break yet.
Ram gasps – not drama – recognition.
The body files the lesson for the water stage to come.

INT. DINING ROOM – EVENING

No solid food on Ram's side. A glass of warm milk. He
holds it with both hands like a sacrament and a surrender.

Snehit stares at the milk as if it were an insult.

SNEHIT
This is insane.

RAM
This is Tuesday, in a particular
tradition, under a particular
sky.

SANNAH
He's not asking you to drink it
for him.

SNEHIT
He's asking me to watch.

RAM
Yes.
Watching is the hardest seva.
You have always preferred action.
Action is a kind of blindness
with better PR.

Snehit stands so fast his chair yelps.

SNEHIT
You want me to say it? Fine.
I am not angry about Santhara.
I am angry that Mom died and you
left the planet while still using
our bathroom.
I am angry that I became a
husband-shaped object at fifteen.

I am angry that every poem you
wrote was a door you closed in my
face and called art.

Silence. The empty chair seems to lean in.

RAM

Then we are finally talking about
the real vow.
Not the fast. The years.
Michchhami dukkadam
(mich-CHAH-mee dook-KAH-dum) –
again. Not to erase. To face.

SNEHIT

I don't want your Jain words.
I want my mother.

His voice cracks on the last word. He leaves. Maya starts
to follow; Sannah touches her wrist: give him the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY / SNEHIT – CONTINUOUS

Snehit leans against the wall under the Shiva tapestry.
The dance of destruction above a man learning he has been
grieving in the wrong costume.

INT. RAM'S ROOM – NIGHT – THE LETTER

Sannah and Ram sorting poetry books for "what to keep." A
thin envelope falls from between pages – Radha's
handwriting.

Sannah freezes. Hands it to Ram. He cannot open it. She
does, with his nod.

SANNAH

(reading, careful)
"Ram – if you outlive me, do not
make a museum of the house.
If the children fight you, let
them. Fighting is how Snehit
prays.
If you become stubborn about
dying, remind him – remind
yourself –
the children are also the vow.

Finish. Then come. Not before.
 Not to escape. To arrive.
 — R"

Ram weeps — first true open weeping of the series. Not elegant. Animal and holy.

Sannah holds him. The portrait in the other room seems to listen through the wall.

INT. LIVING ROOM — LATER — SNEHIT RETURNS

Sannah puts the letter in Snehit's hands without preamble.

He reads. Once. Twice. Sits in the chair nearest the empty one — not in it. Near it.

SNEHIT
 She always did this.
 Win from beyond the page.

RAM
 She is not winning.
 She is parenting.
 It turns out death does not end
 that job. It only changes the
 medium.

Snehit laughs once — broken glass sound — then cries without covering his face. Maya sits on the arm of his chair. Sannah on the floor. Ram with his milk, unfinished.

A family in the shape of a wound learning to be a room again.

EXT. THE GARDEN — NIGHT

Ram under the tamarind with the empty milk glass. Snehit joins — distance measured in years, shortened by inches.

SNEHIT
 I'm not blessing it.

RAM
 I know.

SNEHIT

I'm not calling the lawyer
tomorrow.

RAM
That is not the same as blessing.
I will take it.

SNEHIT
If you do this, I will be here.
Not as a priest. As the man who
still wants to fight you and will
settle for watching.

RAM
That is a son's santhara.
Thinning the need to control.
Harder than mine.

They do not hug. The air between them changes density.

INT. HOSPITAL — CARDIOLOGY FOLLOW-UP — DAY

DR. ELLIS reviews numbers. Ram thinner. Snehit present
like a bodyguard against metaphysics.

DR. ELLIS
If you stop solid nutrition, we
enter a different medical story.
I need you to understand muscle
loss, delirium risk, the timeline
compressing.

RAM
I understand compression. I was
born into a compressed century.
I am not asking you to approve. I
am asking you to tell my son the
truth without decorating it.

DR. ELLIS
The truth is: you are dying
whether you fast or not. The fast
may hasten. It may also give you
authorship.
Authorship is not my department.
Clarity is.

SNEHIT
Clarity is "don't do this."

DR. ELLIS
Clarity is "he is competent, he is informed, and my job is care not custody."
I can offer hospice either way. Hospice is not surrender. It is a team.

Ram nods gratitude. Snehit hears "competent" as a door closing.

INT. CHUGH HOUSE – AFTERNOON – AUNTIE SHARDA ARRIVES

AUNTIE SHARDA (60s) – jewelry, certainty, love like a verdict – sweeps in with tupperware.

AUNTIE SHARDA
I brought aloo paratha. You will eat. Saints can fast. Fathers feed grandchildren.

RAM
Auntie. Sit. Tea. No paratha for me.

AUNTIE SHARDA
Then this is not santhara. This is a mood.

SANNAH
It's both. Moods can be sacred. Ask any artist.

AUNTIE SHARDA
Artists. Jains. Poets. Everyone wants a special death. In my day we took what came and complained properly.

Despite herself she softens looking at Ram's face – the border still in it.

AUNTIE SHARDA
(quiet)

Your mother would have scolded
you and then sat on the floor and
held your feet.
I can only scold. Holding feet is
a younger woman's job.

She shoves tupperware at Sannah. Leaves with moisture she
refuses to name as tears.

INT. BEDROOM — YEARS AGO — NIGHT (MARBLE & GOLD)

Radha pregnant with Sannah. Ram's hand on her belly.

RADHA
If it is a girl, teach her to
leave rooms that make her small.
If it is a boy, teach him that
strength is not volume.
If I die before you — and I
might, the body is a bad narrator
—
do not make the children compete
with my ghost.
Ghosts are terrible parents. They
never get tired. The living do.

RAM
You will not die.

RADHA
Everyone dies. The vow is how you
love in the meantime.

Present Ram, hearing this in memory, whispers:

RAM
I failed that part.
I am repairing what can be
repaired in a season.

INT. SANNAH'S STUDIO ROOM — NIGHT — PAINTING THROUGH

Sannah paints Radha's mouth last — the hardest. Gets it
wrong. Scrapes. Tries again.

On a voice memo from earlier, Ram's recorded voice:

RAM (V.O.)
(from recorder)
She hated pretty poems. She said
pretty is for people who haven't
crossed a border.

Sannah writes on the stretcher bar of the canvas, hidden:

FOR THE WOMAN WHO MADE LOOKING MANDATORY.

INT. SNEHIT & MAYA — BEDROOM — NIGHT

Maya can't sleep. Snehit's hand on her belly. Kick.

MAYA
Your mother is in that letter
more than in any photo.
Maybe stop fighting your father
for her attention.
She already chose both of you.
That's why the letter exists.

SNEHIT
If he dies I will have no one
left to be angry at.
Anger is the way I keep her in
the room.

MAYA
Then keep her in the room another
way.
Tell the baby her name out loud
every morning.
Anger is a bad lullaby.

Snehit starts — soft, awkward:

SNEHIT
Radha.
Your grandmother.
She taught me string.

He cries into the pillow so the baby doesn't learn that
sound first.

EXT. THE GARDEN — LATE DAY — KITE ATTEMPT

Ram and Snehit under the tree with a step-stool – careful, after Ep 01's fall. Snehit climbs. Reaches the string. Does not free the kite. Touches it. Climbs down.

SNEHIT

Not yet.
If I free it now I'll pretend the
story is tidy.

RAM

Good.
Tidy is a lie we tell at
funerals.

They stand together looking up. For a moment: father and son in the same direction – the rarest shot in the series so far.

INT. CHUGH HOUSE – LATE NIGHT – SNEHIT READS OLD POEMS

He sits on the floor with a stack. Finds one titled only "R."

SNEHIT

(reading, private)
"She enters a room and the room
remembers its job.
I enter a room and the room asks
for her."

He almost throws the page. Instead he places it on the empty chair like a childish offering. Leaves it there.

INT. GARAGE – NIGHT

Ram's old car. Snehit opens the glove box: registration, mint tin, a photo of Radha younger than the pocket photo – laughing with ice cream, un-sainted, alive.

SNEHIT

There you are.
Not the goddess. The woman.
I missed you in high definition.

INT. SANNAH ON PHONE – LA FRIEND – NIGHT

FRIEND (V.O.)
You should come back. This is a
lot.

SANNAH
This is the work.
Not the painting. This.
If I leave now the portrait
becomes a lie.

She hangs up. Paints until her hand cramps. Stops. Sleeps
on the drop cloth.

EXT. GARDEN – NEXT MORNING – MILK

Ram with warm milk. Sannah counts sips without controlling
them.

SANNAH
Does it taste like grief?

RAM
It tastes like a border between
yes and no.
All sacred things do.

Snehit brings the paper. Does not read news aloud. Leaves
the comics section near Ram – a small mercy of ordinary
stupidity.

RAM
Thank you for the jokes.
Dying people are still citizens
of nonsense.

SNEHIT
Mom used to say that.

RAM
She invented half my wisdom. I
only had good handwriting.

A shared almost-smile. Rare metal.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE – DAY – SNEHIT ALMOST

Snehit in a waiting room. Number ticket in hand. Looks at families fighting over money and care.

He stands. Returns the ticket to the receptionist.

SNEHIT

Wrong war.

Walks out into harsh parking-lot light. Calls Maya.

SNEHIT

I'm coming home.
Tell him I still hate this.
Tell him I'm not leaving the
room.

INT. HOUSE – RADHA MEMORY – MONSOON NIGHT (MARBLE & GOLD)

Power out. Candle. Young Snehit and toddler Sannah asleep in a pile. Ram and Radha whisper.

RADHA

When they are grown they will
argue about who you loved more.
Tell them the truth: you loved a
wound and a future at the same
time.
If you simplify it, you will make
them smaller.

RAM

What if I fail?

RADHA

Then fail in their direction, not
away from them.
That is the whole religion I
trust.

INT. HOUSE – DAY – SANNAH INTERVIEWS MAYA ON TAPE

SANNAH

What do you see when you look at
him?

MAYA

A man trying to die without
making his children evil for
surviving him.
That is a kind of genius.
Stubborn genius. Still.

SANNAH

And Snehit?

MAYA

A man who thinks love is a fire
extinguisher.
Sometimes the house needs to burn
a little to tell the truth.

INT. RAM ALONE – AFTERNOON – WRITES TO RADHA

RAM (V.O.)

(writing)

My love –
Solid food is gone.
I am not coming early.
Snehit is learning string again
without knowing it.
Sannah paints you into the air
behind my head like a second
spine.
If the vow is wrong, meet me at
the error and correct me with
your mouth.
If the vow is right, keep the
porch light on.
I have always been bad at dark
houses.

INT. SNEHIT AT WORK – DAY – HE LEAVES EARLY

Office fluorescent. He stares at a spreadsheet until the
numbers look like border maps.

BOSS

You can take the week.

SNEHIT

I'm taking the season.

If that costs me the job, the job
was too small for the death in my
house.

He boxes a photo of Maya from his desk. Leaves. No hero
shot. Just a man choosing the correct smaller room.

EXT. PARK – SNEHIT AND SANNAH – DUSK

Sibling truce walk.

SNEHIT
Do you ever hate her for dying?

SANNAH
I hate the year. I hate the
silence after. I don't hate her.
Hating her would be too much like
hating the part of me that still
waits at doors.

SNEHIT
I hated him for living wrong
after.
Now he's dying right and I hate
that too.
I'm consistent.

SANNAH
You're grieving. Consistency is a
corporate value. Drop it.

They sit on a bench. California evening. For a minute
neither performs their role in the family play.

INT. HOUSE – NIGHT – RAM TELLS THE BOMBAY STORY FULL

Family present. Milk in hand.

RAM
I painted dents out of rich men's
cars and wrote poems on the backs
of invoices.
Your mother said my hands were
two countries – labor and
language – and she refused to
colonize either.

When she laughed, the workshop
 became a temple for twenty
 seconds at a time.
 That is how I survived until the
 heart began its quieter
 Partition.

SNEHIT
 Why didn't you tell us stories
 like this when we were kids?

RAM
 Because I thought stories were
 for when the pain cooled.
 Pain never cooled. I delayed.
 Delay is a passion. I am thinning
 it.

INT. DINING ROOM – NIGHT – BUTTON

Ram at the table alone. A plate has been left by someone
 kind – solid food, habit.

He looks at it a long time.

Then pushes it away.

The sound of ceramic on wood – small, absolute – as loud
 as a gun in a quieter show.

RAM (V.O.)
 Radha.
 I am not coming early.
 I am coming through the living.
 If that makes the road longer,
 lengthen it.
 I have been a refugee before.

On the empty chair: the letter, folded, weighted with a
 spoon.

CLOSE ON: Sannah's wall pencil – she adds under BLESS THE
 ROAD – LATER:

THE LIVING ARE ALSO THE VOW.

INT. HOUSE – MORNING – FIRST DAY WITHOUT SOLIDS

The kitchen behaves like a crime scene of habit. Toaster. Bread. Snehit catches himself mid-butter, stops, furious at the toaster for existing.

SNEHIT

The whole house is an advertisement for chewing.

SANNAH

Then go chew outside. Don't punish the appliances.

Ram at the table with warm milk, both hands, like prayer and surrender braided.

RAM

In Bombay I watched men eat like the plate might flee. Hunger makes theology fast. I am trying to make theology slow.

INT. RAM'S ROOM – DAY – MEDITATION LONG SEQUENCE

Hold on Ram's face. Breath. Ceiling fan. Light moving across the Shiva tapestry in the hall as door opens and closes.

RAM (V.O.)

Who watches the watcher?
Who loved her?
Who left the boy on the truck and the boy in the hallway outside a hospital room?
If the Self is one, why does it wear so many costumes of guilt?

Images arrive as soft inserts – not full neon:
Radha combing hair.
Snehit at 12 with kite string.
Sannah's child-drawing: MAMA.
Grandmother's temple lamp.
Paint thinner smell (sense memory as cinema).

INT. EXT. – SANNAH FILMS THE HOUSE ON HER PHONE

Not content. Archive. Empty chair. Tamarind. Ram's shoes.
The second cup. Her own face in a mirror surprised by
adulthood.

SANNAH (V.O.)
If I paint only beauty I will
betray him.
If I paint only ruin I will
betray her.
The marriage was both. The death
must be both.

INT. LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON – SUPER-8 EXTENDED

Longer projection scene. Family watches. Radha waves.
Young Snehit shows off a missing tooth. Ram on film looks
at Radha the way temples look at sky.

Present Ram whispers:

RAM
Pause.

Sannah pauses on Radha mid-laugh.

RAM
There.
That is the face that made a
refugee believe in permanent
things.
She was wrong about permanent.
She was right about belief.

Snehit leaves the room. Soft close of door. Not slam.
Progress.

INT. GARAGE – SNEHIT AND THE ICE CREAM PHOTO

He sits on an overturned bucket. Speaks to the photo.

SNEHIT
He is using you as a runway.
I want to hate that.
But you would have understood the
runway.

You understood every dramatic man
 you married – there was only one
 – and you still did the taxes.

He laughs. Breaks. Puts the photo in his shirt pocket –
 mirroring Ram's gesture without noticing.

INT. HOUSE – EVENING – LETTER READ ALOUD FULLY AGAIN

Sannah reads Radha's letter a second time for Maya who
 missed the first collapse.

MAYA
 She parented from the page.
 That is unfair and perfect.
 Unfair because you can't argue
 with ink.
 Perfect because ink does not get
 tired.

SNEHIT
 I'm tired.

RAM
 Then rest in the house of the
 living.
 I will keep the night watch with
 the dead.
 We are splitting shifts. Like new
 parents.

The line lands – he is parenting them into his death.
 Snehit hears it. Hates it. Needs it.

INT. SANNAH'S ROOM – NIGHT – PAINTING RADHA'S HANDS

Close work. Knuckles. Bangles. The hand that tied string.

SANNAH
 (to paint)
 Teach me how to hold without
 cutting.

She paints until the hand on canvas can almost teach her
 back.

EXT. GARDEN – NIGHT – RAM AND MILK GLASS EMPTY

He has finished the milk. Stares at white film on glass walls.

RAM (V.O.)

Solids gone.
The body files a complaint.
I receive the complaint like a
polite nation receives a storm.
I do not pretend the storm is a
metaphor.
It is weather.
I am weather too.

Snehit arrives with a blanket. Drops it on Ram's shoulders. Sits. No speech for a long held shot.

Two men and a tree and a kite.
The Muse is absent and everywhere – in the discipline of
not filling silence with winning.

INT. HOUSE – CONTINUOUS DAYS – MONTAGE OF THINNING (PETROL DUSK)

Not music-video montage – duration collage:
Ram measures milk in the same glass.
Snehit cancels meetings by text, one-word apologies.
Sannah's canvas gains a millimeter of gold leaf a day.
Maya sleeps in short chapters.
The ceiling fan keeps the only steady meter.

RAM (V.O.)

Time used to be a hallway.
Now it is a room with the
furniture removed.
I can hear my own blood as if it
were a guest speaking in the
walls.

INT. DR. ELLIS – VIDEO CALL – DAY

On laptop. Ram in frame, thinner. Snehit hovering.

DR. ELLIS

I'm documenting capacity.
Orientation questions. Not a trap
– a record.

RAM

Ask.

DR. ELLIS

Who is president? What year? Why are you refusing solid nutrition?

RAM

I know the president. I know the year. I refuse solids because my death is already certain and I wish to meet it awake under a discipline older than this laptop.
I am not confused. I am inconvenient.

DR. ELLIS

Inconvenient and competent can coexist.
Hospice referral stands.
Hydration guidance stands. My door stands.

Snehit's jaw: the word competent like a lost court.

INT. AUNTIE SHARDA – SECOND VISIT – DAY

She brings kheer, then sees the milk-only reality and sits heavily.

AUNTIE SHARDA

Your mother fasted for moon days and still fed us like an army. You always chose the dramatic interpretation of every scripture.

RAM

And you chose the practical. Between us we almost made a whole religion.

AUNTIE SHARDA

(softer)

If you see her – your Radha –
 tell her the pickle recipe she
 never wrote down.
 I have been guessing for nineteen
 years and my pride is tired.

Ram laughs, wet. She feeds Sannah by force of habit.
 Leaves a blessing on Maya's head like a stamp.

**INT. RADHA MEMORY – ARRANGED MARRIAGE WEEK – NIGHT (MARBLE
 & GOLD)**

Long scene. Oil lamp. Radha and Ram newly married,
 awkward, electric.

RADHA
 You flinch when I touch your left
 hand.
 What lives there?

RAM
 A string cut me when I was ten.
 The scar remembers better than I
 do.

RADHA
 Then I will touch it until the
 scar learns a second story.
 Not erasure. Second story.

She does. He weeps without understanding why. The series'
 entire thesis in a thumb on a palm.

INT. RADHA MEMORY – FIRST CHILD – HOSPITAL (MARBLE & GOLD)

Snehit newborn. Ram terrified.

RAM
 He is so small. Borders are
 large. How do people do this?

RADHA
 Poorly. Repeatedly. With help.
 Write him a poem later. Right now
 wash your hands and hold him like
 you mean the future.

Ram holds. The future grips his finger with insulting strength.

INT. PRESENT – SNEHIT HEARS THIS STORY TOLD

Ram telling Sannah on tape; Snehit listening from hall.

SNEHIT
(enters)
You never told me you were scared
of me.

RAM
I was scared of the world. You
were the proof I had made a
hostage for it.
Fear made me stern. Sternness
made you useful. Usefulness is
not the same as being loved well.
I am correcting the equation
while I still have chalk.

Snehit sits on the floor like a student. Lets the
correction stand.

INT. LAWYER WAITING ROOM – REVISITED – DAY

Snehit again. This time he enters the office. Speaks five
minutes. Leaves without filing.

LAWYER
If you change your mind–

SNEHIT
I changed my mind in the parking
lot of a temple.
If I unchange it, it won't be
because a form was ready.

INT. HOUSE – NIGHT – FIGHT REPRISE THEN BREAK

Snehit erupts over the milk, the silence, the portrait
turning Ram into myth.

SNEHIT

Stop making him legendary while
he's still burping!
Let him be small enough to stay!

SANNAH
He is small! That's why the vow
is large!
You only respect size when it
looks like control!

RAM
Enough.
Both of you are right and both of
you are loud.
Loudness is a passion. Sit.

They sit. The empty chair seems to nod.

RAM
Your mother hated pretty fights.
She liked exact ones.
The exact fight is this: I am
leaving. You are loving. Those
verbs collide.
We will not solve the collision
with volume.

Long silence. Exact.

INT. SANNAH – PAINTS THE LETTER INTO THE CANVAS EDGE

Tiny script in the underlayer where only x-ray or God
could read:

THE CHILDREN ARE ALSO THE VOW.

SANNAH (V.O.)
I hide messages for the future
the way he hid poems in invoices.
Inheritance is just smuggling
with better manners.

**EXT. GARDEN – DAWN – RAM TOUCHES THE KITE STRING WITH A
POLE**

Not climbing – lesson learned. Nudges. The kite shifts.
Does not fall.

RAM

Not yet.
Readiness is not eagerness.
Even for metaphors.

Snehit on porch with coffee, watching, not stopping him –
the new job: watching.

INT. DINING ROOM – NIGHT – PLATE PUSHED (RECONTEXT)

The plate of solid food someone kind left – again.
Ram looks at Snehit, at Sannah, at the portrait leaning,
at the letter under the spoon.

RAM (V.O.)

Radha –
I push the plate not to win.
I push it to sequence.
I push it because the living are
fed and I am becoming lighter for
the crossing.
If this is wrong, you will scold
me in the only voice I ever
obeyed without resentment.

Ceramic slides on wood.
The sound – again – like a quiet gun.
Hold on the empty chair as the sound decays.

INT. HOUSE – WEEK WITHIN THE EPISODE – MILK DAYS

Calendar of thinning:
Day marks on a notepad in Sannah's hand – not morbid,
practical.
Ram's belt tightened.
Snehit learning to look without fixing.

INT. TAPE ARCHIVE – SANNAH LABELS FILES

"Baba_on_meeting_her"
"Baba_on_Bombay"
"Baba_on_Snehit_as_baby"
"Baba_on_the_truck_partial"
"BabaLaughs_rare"

She listens to the rare laugh three times. Cries once.
Labels again.

INT. SNEHIT – DRIVES TO THE COAST ALONE – NIGHT

Sits in car outside temple without entering – rhyme with Ep02.

Speaks to Radha's ice cream photo in his pocket.

SNEHIT

If I let him go, am I failing
you?

If I force him to stay, am I
failing him?

You always hated false binaries.
Give me a third rail.

No answer. Foghorn. He drives home in the third rail of return.

INT. RAM AND SANNAH – COOKING SMELL WITHOUT EATING

Sannah fries onions for the household. Smell fills.
Ram inhales as if eating through air.

RAM

This is also food.
Do not tell the strict ones.
I am becoming a heretic of aroma.

SANNAH

Your whole marriage was heresy
against loneliness.
Continue.

INT. LETTER – FULL CONTEXT SCENE

Where the letter was kept: between pages of a poem about rain.

Radha's handwriting better than Ram's.
A smudge that might be kitchen oil.

Snehit photocopies it on his phone. Sends to himself. Does not send to anyone else.
Private scripture.

INT. END OF EP03 – EXTENDED BUTTON AFTER PLATE

The plate pushed.
 Hold on ceramic.
 Hold on Snehit's face receiving the sound.
 Hold on the letter under the spoon trembling slightly from
 the table's vibration.

RAM (V.O.)
 The Muse is not gone.
 She has become method.
 Method is less romantic than
 face.
 Method will save our children
 from my worst poetry.

Snehit picks up the letter. Puts it in his own pocket –
 next to the ice cream photo – inheritance physically
 transferred without ceremony.

INT. HOUSE – MULTIPLE DAYS – THE MUSE IN OBJECTS

A) Radha's sari in plastic – Sannah unwraps edge, smells,
 rewraps.
 B) Ram's wedding ring on a string around his neck now that
 fingers thin.
 C) The empty chair given a clean cushion – Maya's doing –
 respect not occupation.
 D) Super-8 box labeled in Radha's hand: "DO NOT PROJECT
 NEAR FOOD – RAM CRIES AND SALTS THE RICE"

INT. INTERVIEW TAPE – RAM ON LOVE – LONG MONOLOGUE

RAM
 People think the Muse is
 inspiration.
 She was interruption.
 She interrupted my silence, my
 pride, my desire to be only a
 wound walking.
 She made me make things –
 children, dinners, apologies,
 poems that were less false.
 If Santhara has a muse, it is
 still her – not as prize, as
 standard.
 I do not go to collect her.
 I go because she taught me how to
 finish a thing without abandoning
 the people inside the thing.

SANNAH
 (soft)
 That is the line.
 That is the whole show.

She is half joking. She is not joking.

INT. SNEHIT – WORK CLEANING OUT DESK – DAY

He finds a drawing his child-self made in some old folder
 Maya saved – stick family.
 He tapes it above the kitchen sink at home later.
 Living museum without death-curation.

INT. FIGHT NIGHT EXTENDED – AFTER THE LETTER

Snehit circles the living room with the letter.

SNEHIT
 She always sided with the living.
 You're using her to die.

RAM
 I am using her to die correctly.
 There is a difference.
 Incorrect dying would be to stay
 as a monument of fear for your
 comfort.
 You are not a child. You are
 allowed discomfort that makes you
 larger.

SNEHIT
 I don't want to be larger. I want
 my dad.

RAM
 I am here.
 Larger and here.
 For a little while.
 Take both.

Sannah steps between – not to stop – to translate.

SANNAH
 He is not choosing her over you.

He is choosing a door.
 Doors are not mothers.
 Stop making doors into mothers so
 you can hate them cleanly.

Snehit stops pacing. The accuracy hurts. He sits.

INT. NIGHT – RAM DREAMS RADHA WITHOUT NEON – MARBLE ONLY

Soft. She cooks. He washes. Domestic eternity.
 She turns:

RADHA
 Tomorrow you will want to eat a
 roti because fear is hungry.
 If you eat from fear, eat.
 If you refuse from pride, refuse
 pride first.
 I did not love a proud corpse.

Dream ends on the sound of present milk warming.

INT. DAY – FIRST HUNGER CRISIS

Ram dizzy. Snehit panics toward juice. Sannah checks
 Lena's notes. Ram asks for milk, not solids – sequence
 held.

RAM
 See?
 I can need without undoing the
 grammar.
 Need is not the enemy. Theater
 is.

Snehit sits on the floor until his own legs work.

INT. SANNAH FINISHES THE EYES ON THE PORTRAIT

Last work of episode before plate button.
 The eyes look back – Ram's looking made permanent.

SANNAH
 (to painted eyes)
 You will keep looking when he
 can't.
 That is your job.

My job is the living.

INT. BOMBAY MEMORY — NIGHT MARKET — MARBLE & GOLD

Ram and Radha young, sharing one plate because money is short and love is not.

RADHA
If we get rich, do not get
polite.
Polite kills heat.

RAM
If we get poor, do not get cruel.
Cruel kills the rest.

RADHA
Deal.

They shake on it greasy-fingered. Present Ram, in milk days, whispers "deal" to the empty chair.

INT. PRESENT — SNEHIT WATCHES THE PORTRAIT OVER HOURS

Time-lapse without VFX: light moves across painted Ram face.
Snehit falls asleep in the chair opposite.
Wakes.
The eyes still look.
He does not cover them.

INT. SANNAH AND MAYA — KITCHEN TALK

MAYA
When the baby comes I will need
you both not to make the child a
replacement for him.

SANNAH
Agreed.
The child is a continuation, not
a patch.

MAYA

Tell your brother. He speaks
patch-language when scared.

INT. RAM TEACHES SANNAH A LULLABY FULL – NIGHT

He sings fully – Punjabi and English – thin voice exact.
Snehit listens from dark hall and mouths words he pretends
not to know.

INT. DAY – HOSPICE SOCIAL WORKER VISIT – BRIEF

Soft questions. Ram clear. Family exhausted. Worker leaves
resources. No villain. System as neutral weather.

INT. PLATE BUTTON EXTENDED AFTERMATH

After ceramic sound:
Snehit picks up the plate, wraps the food, puts it in
fridge labeled THIS IS NOT DEFEAT – FOR THE LIVING.
Small comedy of grief.
Necessary.

INT. THE WEEK OF MILK – MORNING RITUAL EXTENDED

Alarm. Fan. Heat water. Cardamom for others. Milk for Ram.
Sannah times nothing. She presence-times.

Snehit brings the newspaper and then stops bringing news
of the world – the house is world enough.

INT. TAPE – RAM ON PARTITION PARTIAL – HE STOPS

RAM
There was a truck–
(stops)
Not yet. The muse first. The
truck later. Sequence.

SANNAH
Okay.
We can wait for the truck.

She clicks stop. The click is mercy.

INT. RADHA MEMORY – FIGHT ABOUT SILENCE – FULL SCENE

RADHA

You go quiet like a man entering
a temple and then you stay quiet
like a man hiding in a well.
I cannot live in a well with you.

RAM

The things in my head have teeth.

RADHA

Then teach them manners or spit
them out on the table so we can
look.
I married you, not your museum of
pain.

He tries to speak the truck. Fails. She holds him anyway –
not as reward for speech – as refusal to abandon the mute.

Present Ram, hearing the memory:

RAM

I am spitting it out now, my
love.
Late. Table. Teeth and all.

INT. SNEHIT AT THE LAWYER – FULL SCENE THEN EXIT

LAWYER

Capacity, coercion, undue
influence – these are the frames.

SNEHIT

The frame is my mother died and
my father learned the wrong
lesson about staying.
Can you file that?

LAWYER

...No.

SNEHIT

Then I am in the wrong building.

He leaves. Outside, sky huge. He laughs one hard sound and calls home: "I'm coming. No paperwork."

INT. PORTRAIT — SANNAH PAINTS RADHA'S MOUTH WRONG THEN RIGHT

Scrapes. Tries. Remembers the ice cream laugh. Gets the mouth not perfect — exact enough.

SANNAH
Exact enough is love.

INT. FAMILY WATCHES SUPER-8 TO THE END OF REEL

White flare. End.
They sit in projected white on their faces like afterlife light that is only lamp.

RAM
That white — do not fear it.
It is only the end of a reel.
Life has different mechanics.
Still — not so different.

INT. NIGHT — SNEHIT PUTS LETTER UNDER HIS PILLOW LIKE A CHILD

Ashamed. Does it anyway.
Sleeps the first true hour in days.
Dreams of string not cutting.

INT. PLATE — BEFORE PUSH — EVERYONE WATCHES

The plate is an altar of ordinary food.
Ram looks at each face.
Pushes.
Sound.
Hold faces.
Hold empty chair.
Hold portrait eyes.
Hold Snehit's pocket where letter and photo now live together.

RAM (V.O.)
Muse —
I have made the living the vow.

Correct me if I fail in the next
rooms of the fast.
I am listening in the only way
left: by continuing.

EXT. GARDEN – MILK LIGHT – MORNING

Petrol dusk thinning toward gold. Ram's glass of milk on the outdoor table catches a white coin of sun. A fly lands on the rim and leaves. The kite's torn edge ticks like a weak second hand. Sannah's bare foot draws a slow circle in dust. Somewhere a neighbor mows – ordinary metal smell of cut grass entering the vow's air like a reminder that the world has not paused its chores for one family's sacred difficulty.

RAM (V.O.)
The muse is method now.

INT. HOUSE – CORRIDOR OF PHOTOGRAPHS

The camera tracks past frames: wedding, babies, a picnic where Radha's mouth is open mid-sentence. Ram's finger, thin, touches the glass over her mouth as if to finish her sentence with heat. He does not speak. The hallway fan lifts a corner of a wall calendar – days becoming abstract.

RAM (V.O.)
Her mouth still moves in glass.

INT. SUPER-8 DUST – AFTERNOON

Motes in the projector beam like karmic gold. On the sheet Radha waves. Present Snehit raises his hand without irony and waves back. The gesture undoes him. He leaves the room before the reel ends; Sannah stays until white.

RAM (V.O.)
My son waves at light. That is
prayer.

SANNAH
Stay until white. Learn endings.

INT. STUDIO ROOM – GOLD LEAF

Sannah breathes on gold leaf and seats it behind painted Ram with a brush's patient violence. Specks stick to her cheek. She looks like a worker in a temple that also sells art. Outside, Snehit's car door slams – not anger, arrival.

RAM (V.O.)
Gold is not vanity. Gold is how
we admit radiance without owning
it.

INT. KITCHEN – ONION END OF DAY

Onions in oil. The smell is home. Ram stands at the threshold inhaling as if chewing through the nose. Snehit plates food for three living bodies and sets a fourth empty plate briefly by mistake, then removes it carefully, as if apologizing to physics.

RAM (V.O.)
Smell is the last honest food.

SNEHIT
Four plates is a habit. I'm
breaking habits carefully.

EXT. TAMARIND – NIGHT MILK DONE

Empty milk glass. White film. Moon. Ram and Snehit share a blanket without admitting they share. The kite is a black shape against lesser black. A long hold. A longer hold. The episode earns its quiet.

RAM (V.O.)
Silence with him is denser than
talk against him.

INT. LETTER UNDER SPOON – NIGHT

Insert: Radha's handwriting. The spoon's weight.
 Condensation of some earlier cup near it. The plate-push
 still rings in the wood of the table like a small
 permanent weather.

RAM (V.O.)
 Ink parents harder than breath
 sometimes.

RAM (V.O.)
 The children are also the vow.

EXT. STREET – SNEHIT WALKS

Suburban dark. Sprinklers. He passes a house with a loud
 TV laugh track and envies the simplicity of canned joy.
 Returns. The porch light left on for him – Sannah's doing.
 He switches it off and on again as thanks without words.

RAM (V.O.)
 I am still a father if he returns
 to a dark porch and finds it
 willing to light.

SNEHIT
 Leave it on next time. I can take
 the light.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE

SANTHARA – Episode 03: "The Muse"
 The Reason to Live

Solid food is surrendered. Radha fills the hour.
 Snehit's fight reveals itself as grief.
 The letter names the work: the children are also the vow.

Next: EPISODE 04 – "DISSOLUTION"
 Water. Full neon. Partition's full account. The silhouette
 named.
 The family stops arguing with death and starts
 accompanying it.

END OF EPISODE 03

SANTHARA

Episode 03 – "The Muse"

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